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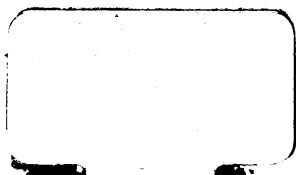
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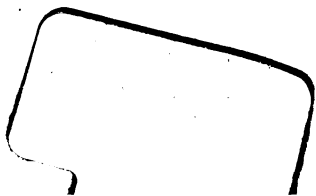
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THE  
Sacred and Sovereigne  
Church-Remedie:

OR,

The Primitive and Apostolicall way of  
composing Ecclesiasticall Differences, and  
establishing the Churches of Christ.

Wherein the authority and utility of lawfull Councils  
and Synods is asserted and vindicated, and divers  
of the sad Controversies of the times  
modestly debated;

First preached in the Parish Church of great *Tarmouth*,  
and now published for a preservative against the poyson  
of Anti-Synodall suggestions, and a preparative to the  
receiving of what mercy God shall please to convey unto  
his Church in this Kingdome, through the hands  
of the present reverend Assembly  
of Divines.

---

*Conciliorum in Ecclesia saluberrima auctoritas.* August. Epist. 128.  
*Quod a multis queritur, facilius invenitur.* Whittak. contra Bel-  
larm. Quest. 5. cap. 6.

---

By *John Brinsley.*

---

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*Viris tam Eruditione quam Pietate conspi-*  
*cuis, GULIELMO TWISSO S. T. D.*  
*Prolocutori ac Praesidi dignissimo, reliquoque Theologo-*  
*rum choro in Synodali conventu, Doctrinae Sanitati,*  
*cultus Pietati, politae Euxariae, Ecclesiaeque*  
*Paci serio & sedulo operam*  
*navantibus.*

*Haec Conciliorum Synodorumque vindicias, ca-*  
*terasque de deplorandis quibusdam praesentis aevi con-*  
*troversis candidas ac amicales disceptationes, quales,*  
*quales, D. D. D.*

*Joannes Brinsleius,*

Ras.



I Have perused diligently this Treatise, called, *The Sacred and Sovereign Church-Remedie*, and finding it penned with much strength, candor, and modesty, and desiring some healing plaister for our sad Divisions, affix this Approbation, and

Imprimatur, *In Cranford.*

Jan. 16. 1644.



# THE SACRED AND SOVERAIGNE Church-Remedie.

ACTS 16. VERSE 4. 5.

*And as they went thorow the Cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained by the Apostles and Elders which were at Hierusalem.*

*And so were the Churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.*



whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning (saith S. Paul) for our instruction, our direction; for the informing of our judgments, for the regulating of our practice. And lastly of such use is this portion of Scripture which I have now singled forth; wherein we have set forth unto us *The Sovereigne Church-Remedy, or the Primitive and Apostolicall way of composing Ecclesiasticall differences, and settling and establishing the divided distracted Churches of Christ, viz. by delivering to them the Synodical Decrees of a venerable Council to keep.* So run the

Rom. 15. 4.

## The Sacred and Sovereigne

words of the Text; *As they were born the Cities, they delivered them the decrees, &c.*

And *who* were they that delivered these decrees? *what* decrees did they deliver? *to whom* did they deliver them? *to what end* did they deliver them? *what* was the *success* and *fruit* of this delivery? Let these five serve for the *parts* of the Text; all which I shall (God willing) *pass* over by way of *Explication, Observation, Application*, with as much brevity and perspicuity as possibly I can. Let your *Attentions, your eares, and hearts* goe along with me, and that without either *preiudice, or partiality*. It shall be much against my will if in handling this subject I offer *any violence* to the *Text*, doe any inurie to the *truth*, *any disservice* to the *Church*, or yet give any just offence to any whose faces are *Sion-wards*.

Part I.

Acts 15. 40.

41.

Begin with the first, of which not much. The *Messengers, who* they were that undertooke, and made deliverie of these decrees to the Churches; *viz. Paul, and Silas*. So much we may learne from the last verse but one of the Chapter foregoing. *Paul chose Silas and departed, &c. going through Syria and Cilicia* (as the last words have it) *confirming the Churches*, confirming them in the *faith* by their *Doctrine*; withall having a speciall regard to their *unity and Peace*.

Rom. 1. 7.

1 Cor. 1. 3.

2 Cor. 12.

2 Thef. 3. 16.

2 Cor. 13. 11.

1 Thef. 5. 13.

1 Cor. 1. 11.

1 Cor. 11. 18.

Verf. 17.

1 Cor. 3. 3.

This the *Apostle* every where shewes himselfe very *sollicitous* of, and *solicitous* for, earnestly wishing it. *Grace and Peace, is his constant salutation* to the Churches. *Now, the Lord of peace himselfe give you peace alwayes by all meanes*, it is his farewell to his *Thessalonians*. In both meaning not onely (though principally) *inward*, but also *outward* peace, seriously exhorting to it, *finally brethren be of one minde, live in peace*, 2 Cor. 13. *Be at peace among your selves*, 1 Thef. 5. 13. *Being zealous for their peace*, he is as *jealous* of their *divisions*; receiving the intelligence of them not without great regret and sorrow. So much he intimates to his *Corinthians*, *It hath beene declared to me of you, my brethren, that there are divisions among you*, 1 Cor. 11. 1; *Church divisions, when you come together in the Church, I heare there are divisions among you* (*ἔχθρη καὶ ἑβρίσματα*.) This *Paul* taketh notice of, not without a sad resentment, which he expresseth by taxing and reproving them. *In this I praise you not* (saith he in the verse foregoing) *in invidia*. There is a *meiosis* in the word; *lesse said, more intended*. *I praise you not*, i. e. *I blame you, dispraise you*. *Reproving them*, he chargeth this upon them as an ill symptom, an argument and evidence of their *carnality*. *Whereas there are among you*

you enuyings and strifes, and divisions (Or, oration), factions, as the margin reads it) are ye not carnall? i. e. in a greater measure such, having more flesh then spirit, more corruption then grace; charging these divisions home upon them which gave way to them, he chargeth them more home upon those who were the *Authors* and *fomenters* of them, wishing them to be taken notice of and avoided, as men infamous and dangerous. Now I beseech you, brethren, marke them which cause divisions contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. I, to be cut off. I would they were even cut off that trouble you, saith he to the Galatians, speaking of the false apostles, who by introducing Circumcision, and pressing it as a necessary Ordinance, had troubled the consciences of weak Christians, and disquieted the peace of the Church: These he wisheth that they were cut off, that the Church were freed of them one way or other. So truly zealous was this blessed Apostle of the Churches peace, and so jealous of their divisions, that he was willing and ready to doe any thing which lay in his power to procure the one and to beale the other. Upon this ground it was that he circumcised Timothy in the verse before the Text. This he did, not that he put any religion in, or apprehended any necessity of that then dying Cerimony, but onely to comply with the Jews, so farre as safely he might, in a thing then merely indifferent. He circumcised him (saith the third verse) because of the Jews, viz. that he might take that scandall out of their way, and so maintaine the peace and unity of the Church. And upon the same ground it is, that here in the Text, passing throt the Cities he deliuered these decrees to the Churches, viz. that he might beate those breather, and make up thole rents which some differences in opinion had made amongst them.

Behold here an excellent *parame* (as for all Christians in general, so more specially) for the *Ministers* of the Gospell, teaching them to make this one part of their worke, to procure the Churches peace. As to maintaine truth, so peace. God hath put them together [*love the Truth and Peace*] let not any dare to put them asunder, especially the Ministers of the Gospell, who are Ministers, as of Truth, so of Peace. Let them make it their joynt worke, as to defend and vindicate the one, so to preserve and procure the other; taking heed of being any wayes accessory to the making or continuing of breather, the breeding or feeding of divisions. A

Rom. 15. 47.

Gal. 3. 12.

Acts 16. 3.

Ad sowerdam  
charitatem, non  
ad pietatis ex-  
ercitium. Caly  
ad loc.

Obfer.

Zach. 8. 19.

Gal. 5. 2. 7.

greater.

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greater dis-service cannot be done to a besieged City, then to make a breach in the walls of it. Such is the condition of the poore Church of God (as at all times, so) at this day, a *besieged City*; farre be it from the *watchmen* to make; or to be any wayes accessary to the making of *breaches* in the walls of it; far be it from them to sow the seed of divisions in this field, which where they take rooting, prove like all weeds to good corn, hindring the growth of Religion, sucking out the very heart and life of Ordinances. Paul writing to his *Corinthians*, he chargeth this upon them, *that they come together not for the better but for the worse*. 1 Cor. 11. 17. *publike Ordinances did them no good, they were never the better, rather worse for partaking in them.* And whence was this? the next verse yeolds this as one reason of it, *For first of all when you come together in the Church, I have there are divisions amongst you; where there are divisions, schismes, factions that have taken rooting in a Church; if let alone, they will even blast the most sacred Ordinances of God, rendering them in a great measure inefficuall.*

Oh that the sad experience of the times were not too cleare, too full an evidence for this truth: whence is it that *publike Ordinances* are by many so slighted, neglected, if not contemned? The *Sacrament of the Lords Supper* so little regarded? people can be well content to live without it, feele no want of it, care not whether they partake in it or no. The *Word* how powerfully soever dispensed in the ministry of it, yet it findes not that power, that welcome in the hearts of people which heretofore hath done: certainly for this we are in a great measure beholding to the divisions of the times, which having bespoken and taken up the heads and hearts of people, and busying them with controversies and disputes (of some of which we may say, as Paul doth, touching those *fables* and *genealogies*, which he somewhat *Timothy* of, *viz. that they minister questions rather than edifying*) they have left little roome for matters of greater concernment: So as hereby the worke of the ministry is not a little disadvantaged and hindered.

Great cause then have we to be warrie how we have any hand in sowing any of these pernicious seeds: where the field is *cleare*, it must be our care to *keepe* it so; where it is *syled*, it must be our endeavour to *cleare* it; contributing everie of us what we may to the healing of these

1 Cor. 11.  
17, 18.

1 Tim. 4.

Applic.  
generall.

## Church-Remedie

these breaches, where they are made: parting with much of our *owne*, I, what ever is our *owne*, our *owne wills*, our *owne Liberties*, our *owne profits*, our *owne credit* and *reputation*; I, if neede were, our *owne lives*, for the effecting of this *cure*: Readily imbracing all *opportunities*, wisely improving all *advantages* which God shall put into our hands, for the *quieting*, *setling*, *establishing* of the Churches. So doe *Paul* and *Silas* here in the Text, having the *Synodicall decrees* in their hands, in all places where they come they deliver them; so applying that *remedie* which providence had provided for the healing and composing those differences which were then broken in upon the Churches, to the disquieting of their *peace*, and endangering of their *state*. Here is a *patterne* for all of us of the *Ministerie*.

And in particular here is a *warrant* for me for taking up this portion of Scripture at the present. What sad divisions both in *Judgement* and *Affections* are broke in upon the *Church* of God in this Kingdome, as well as upon the *state* at this day, I shall not neede to tell you. We *feele* of them, and the whole Christian world *rings* of them. As it is in the naturall, so we find in this *Politick & Mystick* bodie. *Anima sequitur temperamentum corporis*. The *soule* followeth the temperature of the bodie; and the *Church* the temper of the *state*. This *Dyscrasie*, like a feverish distemper, it is to be felt more or lesse in every member of this bodie. Touch where we will, we shall finde the Churches *pulse* beating very unequally. We in this remote angle, this *toe* (as I may say) of the Kingdome, however (blessed be God) we are not sensible of such *paroxismes*, do not *feele* of it so much as some other parts do, yet can we not say, we are free.

Particulars

Now in this case I cannot but look upon it as a dutie, in imitation of the Apostle here, to take everie opportunitie to contribute what I am able to the staying, and if it might be, to the *quieting*, and *quelling* of these differences, at least in this place. This being the marke whereat I aime, and that with a single eye, let me now in the name and feare of God advance, passing to the second particular, wherein we meet with the *plaster* which this skilfull *surgeon* applieth to this *sore*; the *remedy* which this wise *Physitian* ministers to this *maladie*, viz. a receipt of *Synodicall Decrees*; so it followeth.

And as they went thro' the Cities, they delivered them the Decrees Part. 2. which were ordained of the Apostles and Elders at Hierusalem.

Here is the *Quid*. What it was that *Paul* here maketh deliverie of: viz. *Decrees*: Decrees made by the Apostles and Elders; Decrees made by the

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*Apostles and Elders at Hierusalem.* And who were these *Apostles* and *Elders*? what were these *Decrees*? why made at *Hierusalem*? upon these three I shall insist severally.

Quest. 1.

1. *Who were these Apostles and Elders?* A. For the former, I shall not neede to spend time or words about it. There were not so many of that highest forme of *Extraordinarie Ministers*, but that they may be, and are well known, both *who* they were, and *what* they were.

Quest. But who or what were these *Elders*? here we shall meet with some scruple.

Phim. An.  
not. in Act.  
15.2.

Ans. *Elders*, *πρεσβυτεροι*, *Presbyters*, i. e. say the *Rhemists*, *Priests*. So they render it in the second verse of the Chapter foregoing, [ *to the Apostles and Priests* ] a word, say they, ecchoing and answering to the Originall both in sound and sense. But leaving them with their affected title, favouring too strong of *Judaism*; the word properly signifieth (as they themselves (with what reason I know not) in all other places where it is used in that fifteenth Chapter, as also here in the Text, render it) *Ancients*; a French word, which our English renders, *Elders*.

Anciens,  
Frenchi.

The word in Scripture is used two wayes; properly, improperly; either for *Elders* in age, or by office. *Elders* in age, *Ancients*; *Rebuke not an Elder*, saith the Apostle to *Timothy*, 1 *Tim.* 5. meaning an *Elder* in age, as the *Antithesis* in the latter part of the verse explains it; *Rebuke not an Elder, but intreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren*.

1 *Tim.* 5.1.

Exod. 4.29.

24.1.

Acts 4.5.

*Elders* in office are of two sorts; *Civill*, *Ecclesiasticall*. *Civill*, temporall *Rulers* and *Governours* amongst the *Jews*; Thus in the book of *Exodus* we often read of the *Elders of Israel*, &c. and so in the fourth of the *Acts* we reade of an *Assembly of Rulers and Elders*; &c. i. e. lay *Elders*, *civill Elders*, whom for distinction sake we finde sometimes called *πρεσβυτεροι τῶ λαῶ*, the *elders of the people*. Letting them passe.

Math. 21.23.

Cartwright in  
Annot. super  
Act. 15. v. 6.

*Ecclesiasticall Elders*, Church-officers set over the flock (the Church) to teach it, to govern it. Of these our reverend *Cartwright* (as many others) make two kinds; some *Teaching* and *Governing*; others onely *Governing*; grounding his distinction upon that knowne place in *Timothy*, 1 *Tim.* 5. 17. out of which he resolves the Question now propounded, who were these *Elders* which were joyned with the *Apostles*? why, either both these, or else onely the latter;



latter, viz. the governing Elders; considering (saith he) that Bishops (which were the preaching Elders) were supplied by the Apostles.

To this last clause of his I cannot subscribe. Certainly besides the Apostles here were other preaching Elders, Pastors, and Teachers, who must not be excluded out of this word Elders. For the former, whether there were two such distinct kinds of Elders at that time; and whether both of them are to be understood by the word here in the Text, I will not peremptorily determine. My purpose being to wave & decline (as much as may be) all collaterall controversies & disputes, which I do not meet with full in the Text. Let this be sufficient, Church-officers they were; Ecclesiasticall Elders. Such were the Apostles themselves (though in an higher forme, having in their function something extraordinary) and such were the other Ministers of the Church, to whom was committed the charge of the flocke to feede and rule it. Both Elders: so Saint Peter calleth himself and them, both in one verse, 1 Pet. 5. 1. *The Elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an Elder, &c. Feed the flocke of God, taking the oversight thereof.* And these Elders we here finde meeting together in this Synod, this Concell, this Assembly (call it as you will.)

1 Pet. 5. 1.

And who so fit to meet upon such an occasion as persons of that Quality? Who so fit to debate, determine, state, regulate Church-affairs, as Church-Officers, persons devoted, and set apart to the service of the Church? Such were the Members of this first Synod, (which without question was intended for a pattern to all succeeding Ages, so all Expositours, till some few within the last fifty years have looked upon it) Apostles and Elders; such Church-Officers as the times then afforded. To them Saint Luke in the Chapter foregoing refers the negotiating and handling of this Synodicall consultation. They were they which convened. So you have it, vers. 6. *The Apostles and Elders came together to consider of this matter.* The Apostles and Elders. *Non dicit Lucas totam Ecclesiam* (saith Calvin upon it.) The Evangelist doth not say the whole Church met together, but the Apostles and Elders. And by them was the businesse debated, decided, determined. So you have it expressly in the Text. *They delivered them the Decrees which were ordained of the Apostles and Elders; not of the whole Church, but of the Church-Officers in the name of God convened together.*

Obser.

*Sciamus hic formam & ordinem in eodem Synodis divinitus prescribit, Calvin in Act. 15. 6. Conciliorum qui sit usus & legitima forma, Aret in Act. cap. 15. in Analys. Act. 15. 6. Calvin. ibid.*

And who so fit to deal in businesse of that nature, as persons of that

that *Quality*? Who so fit to consult, debate, determine *Church-differences*, and so to settle the affairs of the Church, as *Church-Officers*? viz. The *Elders* which rule well, (as the Apostle speaks) *especially they which labour in the Word and Doctrine*? Those Texts alledged by the *Rhemists* in their *Annotations* upon the place last cited, how ever they are by them drawn beyond the staple, and pressed beyond their intention, yet are they not wholly to be slighted; there being enough in them to bear out this cause, and to give some Reason for it. Under the *Law* the Ordinance was expresse. Hard, and difficult Controversies were to be determined by the *Priests*, &c. Deut. 17. 8. *If there arise a matter too hard for thee, &c. Thou shalt come to the Priests, the Levites: i. e. Priests of the Levitical stock.* A like word was that which came to the Prophet *Haggai* from the Lord, *Haggai 2. Thus saith the Lord of hostes; Ask now the Priests concerning the Law, saying, &c. To the same purpose is that known place of the Prophet Malachie, Chap. 1. v. 7. The Priests lips shall preserve knowledge, and they shall seek the Law at his mouth: Custodient, requirant; so the Original hath it. They shall keep, and they shall seek; or as our Translation renders it, They should keep, they should seek.* This is Gods Ordinance, that the *Priests lips* should be a *Promptuarium*, a *Cellar*, a *Buttery*, a *Pantry*, a *Store-house* of all kinde of *learning* and *knowledge*: What ever it is oftimes *De Facto*, *De Jure* thus it should be. And in that respect:

R. 1.

Calvin Aft.  
15.6.

First, They should be the most fit to be employed in businesses of this nature, in *Church-differences*, *Church-affairs*; being such as do *Doctrina & judicio pollere*; (to use *Calvins* words) Excell and go beyond the ordinary sort of people in Divine learning, and solid Judgement: Such they either are, or ought to be: *Their lips should preserve knowledge.*

R. 2.

Calv. ibid.

Secondly, This is more proper for them (*Church-Officers*) then any others; and that in respect of their *Office*. Upon this ground did the Church at *Antioch* here refer their differences to the *Apostles* and *Elders*. And upon this ground did they undertake the hearing and determining of them. This they did, *Non tantum ex Charitate, sed ex Officio*; not meerly out of *Charity*, but out of *Duty*; in as much as this properly appertained to their *Office*. *Ratione Officii* (saith *Calvin*) *hujus causa legitimi erant Judices*. In regard of their *Office* they were the proper Judges in this cause. And so must *Church-Officers* in all succeeding ages of the Church be allowed to be in  
Ecclesi-

Ecclesiasticall matters, Church-differences, or affairs, *Judges*, not chief, and *principall*, (for that is the *Word* it self,) but *Ministeriall*; *Job. 33. 23.* *Interpreters of the Law*, declaring the minde and meaning of God in it; and so determining controversies, and ordering all things according to the rule of the Word.

See here then a warrant for that course which the *State* of this Kingdom hath pitched upon, in gathering together a select company, though not of *Apostles*, yet of *Elders*, such as the present condition of the Church affords, to consult about the affairs of the Church; to examine and decide the unhappy differences which disquiet, and indanger the State of it, and to regulate and order in all things according to the Word. Let not this be looked upon by any as a *new*, or yet *humane Invention*. Sure I am for the *substance* of it, it is not so. As for some *circumstances*, if there be not that formality in them which were to be desired, the present necessity must plead an excuse for that defect. But for the substance of it, it is no other then a *Divine Ordinance*, warranted and presided by this first pattern, this first *Synodical Assembly* of the *Apostles* and *Elders at Hierusalem*.

*Applic.*

I know, against this divers things have been, and will be objected. *In this first Councell here were Apostles as well as Elders; and not onely they, but others, even the whole Church met together.* But it is not so in our *Synods*, our *Assemblies*.

*Object.*

*Object. 1.* Here were *Apostles*, men divinely and immediatly inspired; men of *infallible spirits*, upon whose Judgements the Church might safely rely, and to whose determinations others might safely subscribe. But we have none such, neither hath the Church had in any age since their time.

*Answer.* To this I shall have occasion (God willing) to answer more fully in the sequell of the Text. For the present, onely know we, that though the Church hath no *Apostles*, nor *Prophets*, yet it hath *Pastours* and *Teachers*, such as do succeed the *Apostles*, though not in their *Chaire*, yet in their *Doctrine*, and *ordinary Ministry*; *Elders*, to whom God hath committed the chief care and *oversight* of the Church to *feed* and *govern* it. *1 Pet. 2. 5.*

Besides, as for the *Apostles*, how ever they were Members, and chief Members of this *Councell*, yet are we not to look upon them as sitting there in the *capacitie* of *Apostles*, as men *immediatly inspired*; but as assembling together with the rest of the *Elders* to debate, and

*Act. 20. 28. 29.*

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determine the controversies presented to them in a *Synodical way*. But of this (God willing) more hereafter.

*Ad. 15. 2.* *Object.* 2. For the latter Branch of the *Objection*: viz. That the Councell at Jerusalem did not consist onely of *Apostles* and *Elders*, Ecclesiasticall persons, but of *others*. For this the 2. *vers.* of the 15. *Chap.* seemeth to expresse; where it is said, That the *Church at Antioch* determined to send *Paul* and *Barnabas*, and certain [others of them.]

*Aretius ad Locum.*  
*Alios ex parte adversa Cerinthi & Judæizantium.*  
*Corn. a Lap. ibid.*

*Ans.* But who were these others? *Aretius*, not without good probability, conceiveth them to be some of the *opposite party*, whom they sent together with the *Apostles*, that they might have a fair hearing and proceeding. So much (me thinks) the former part of the Verse, compared with the latter, seemeth to impart: *When Paul and Barnabas* (saith the Text) *had had no small dissention [with them,]* (viz. those false teachers,) *the Church* determined that *Paul and Barnabas*, and certain [other of them] should go up to *Jerusalem*. Where *ἄλλοι*, & *ἑτεροὶ*, [with them] and [of them] seeme to relate the one to the other. Certainly some of them were there present in that Councell; to whom else speaketh the Apostle *Saint Peter* in the tenth verse of that Chapter, *Now therefore why tempt ye God, &c?* And these (as I take it) were those *ἄλλοι*, those *some others* there spoken of.

*Ad. 25. 10.*

*Ans.* 2. But let it be granted that there were some other sent, some from amongst themselves, yet whom shall we conceive them to be? Certainly some of their *Elders* delegated and commissioned by the Church for that service; *Messengers of the Church*, as the Apostle phraseth it, speaking of some (whether *Barnabas* or *Silas*, or *Luke*, it is variously and uncertainly conjectured) who were employed from the Church of *Jerusalem* to the Church at *Corinth*, he calleth them *ἄποστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν*, *Apostles*, *Ambassadors*, *Messengers of the Churches*. And surely such must these (*certaine others*) be.

2 *Cor. 24.*

*Object.*

But it will be replied, in this *Councell* here were not only *Ecclesiasticall Elders* and *Officers*, delegates of the Churches, but here is a *whole Church*, even the whole Church of *Jerusalem*; so it seemeth by the 23. *vers.* of that 15. *chap.* where *Messengers* are chosen, and sent away from the Councell by the whole Church; *It pleased the Apostles and Elders, with the whole Church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch.*

*Ad. 15. 23.*

*Ans.* For answer to this, what is there meant by the *Church*,

is uncertaine, whether the whole *multitude* of believers belonging to the Church at *Hiernsalem*, or only \* the Officers of the Church, or else that *Synodicall body of Apostles and Elders*. For the latter of these, and against the former it is argued not without some probability the whole *Church of Hiernsalem* is cannot be.

First, that *Church* being so numerous, all the members of it could not possibly meet at one *Synod*.

2. But secondly suppose such a possibility, yet what authority had the Church of *Jerusalem* to send such *binding decrees* to any other Churches? *Par in parem non habet potestatem*; one Church hath no power over another. The Church at *Hiernsalem* had no more power over the Church at *Antioch*, then the Church at *Antioch* had over the Church at *Hiernsalem*. And therefore it is probably concluded, that by the *Church* there must rather be meant that *Synodicall Assembly*, (a representative Church) then the whole multitude of believers.

But it is said expressly, the *multitude* was there; so it is said, *vers. 12. All the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Paul and Barnabas.*

A. To this it is answered, that by *το πλῆθος*, the *multitude* there we are to understand not the whole multitude of believers, but of the *Apostles and Elders* met together *Synodically* from divers Churches, being in number many, so Master \* *Beza* and divers other *Expositors* conceive of it, referring these words to the sixth *vers.* of the *chap.* Certainly, as for the whole multitude of believers (as I said) they were at that time too numerous to convene at such a meeting.

Ob. But it is replied, though not all, yet some, and many of them might be there present, though not the whole Church, yet a good part of it, so the word [*Church*] is used *Synecdochically* in *vers. 3.* of that *chap.* where it is said, that *Paul and Barnabas were brought on their way by the Church.*

Ans. In answer to this take these four things.

First, whether *de facto* they were so or no, is uncertaine: the evidence brought for it is not demonstrative.

Secondly, suppose some of them were there present, which for my owne part (I confesse) I am not unwilling to grant, the word *πλῆθος*, *multitude*, seeming to me to import so much, by comparing it with *Act. 2. 6.* where the same word is used, *Συνῆλθε τὸ πλῆθος*; *The multitude came together.* &c. (In which sense also I acknowledge the

\* *Tota Ecclesia loci, i. e. Clerus totus Ecclesia illi serviens. Jun. Animad. in Bell. Contr. 4. de Concil. c. 15. n. 19. Vid. M. Rutherford.*

\* *M. Rutherford due right of Presbytery. pag. 385, 366.*

*Multitudinis nomine intellige, non totam Ecclesiam, sed totam Apostolorum, & Seniorum ceterum. Beza ad Loc. Similiter Piscator. Schol. 161. Jun. Animad. in Bell. Contr. 4. de Concil. c. 15. Sect. 19.*

*Vers. 3.*

the word *Church* in the place forenamed seemeth most genuinely to be understood, as appeareth by comparing it with *vers. 4.* of the *chap.* where the *Church* is distinguished from the *Apostles & Elders.* Yet was it only *de facto*, not *de jure*; by *permission*, not *commission*; they were not called thither, nor by any law required to be there; their presence there was only *accidental*, by reason of their vicinity and nearness, dwelling in the City where the Synod did sit, otherwise the Church at *Antioch*, and some other of the Churches had as much both right and reason to have been there, as they; being as nearly, or more nearly concerned in the business there agitated then they.

Fieri quidem  
potest, ut cor-  
ram plebe ha-  
bita fuerit  
disputatio,  
sed ne ad  
tractandam  
causam vulgus  
promissuè suis-  
se admissum  
quæspiam puta-  
ret. Cal. in  
c. 5. v. 6.  
Object.

Thirdly, admitting them to be there present, as *spectators* and *bearers*, yet can it not be proved that they were admitted any wayes to joine in the debate or discussion of the matters in controversy, the sixth *vers.* of the *chap.* appropriates this to the *Apostles and Elders.*

Fourthly, However (in the fourth place) they had no power of *voting* or *determining*, that was peculiar to the *Apostles and Elders*: so you have it in the Text, which tells us, that the *Decrees* which were here delivered, were *Decrees ordained by the Apostles and Elders*, not by the *multitude*, not by the *whole Church.*

But why then are the *Synodical Letters* written in their name, if they had no voice in making the *Decrees*? so the tenor of them runs, *The Apostles, and Elders, and Brethren send greeting, &c. vers. 23.*

To this it is answered. First, who or what these *Brethren* were is uncertaine, the vulgar *Latine*, (which all the *Romish Interpreters* follow) by taking away the *copula*, makes them all one with the *Elders*; *The Apostles, and Elders, Brethren*: but that may not be allowed, the originall making them distinct, *et oi oi apostoi and Brethren*, passing by that, by the words immediately foregoing it should seem that *Judas* called *Barsabas*, and *Silas* were two of these *Brethren*, so they are there called, *chief men* (*in yudeis oi prime, leading men*) among the *Brethren*. Now what they were you may learne from the 32. *vers.* of the *chap. viz. Prophets*, (*Judas and Silas being Prophets*) First, *Doctores Ecclesie, Teachers of the Church*, (of which sort they had then many, as you may see *vers. 35.*) whether of the Church at *Antioch*; or at *Jerusalem*) is not agreed: but *Prophets* they were, persons in office, such were they, and probably such were the rest of the *Brethren* there mentioned.

Ans.  
Apostoli &  
seniores si-  
ares. v. 1.  
Vers. 22.  
Prophete, num  
Proprie, num  
Metaphorice.  
Corn. a Lap.  
Prophets at  
Antioch. Ru-  
therfords Due  
Right. p. 400.  
Doctores in  
Ecclesia  
Hierosolymi-  
tana. Beza ad  
Loc. vid.  
Act. 15. 33.

2. But (secondly) suppose it that by Brethren there we are to understand persons *out of office*, yet can it not be concluded thence, that they had their *vote* in this Assembly: onely, (as *Calvin* conjectures with good probability) they assenting and subscribing to what the Council had done, the *Apostles and Elders* make use of their *concurrance*, in commending the result of their consultations to the rest of the Churches. Certainly, more then this cannot be made of it, for otherwise what power had the *Brethren*; (suppose the whole Church of *Jerusalem*) to make Decrees for, and impose laws upon other of the Churches?

\**Cerrissimum est illos fuisse convocatos, quorum nomine sententia lata fuit, & litera scripta.*  
D. Ames. Bef. Ener. de. Concil. c. 2.

Q. But yet, why then should the *Messengers* be sent, & the *Letters* written in their names? Surely it cannot be, but that they should have a place and *vote* in that Councell, in whose names the *\*Synodical Letters* were written, so our late reverend and learned professour at *Frasler* concludes it.

A. To this it is answered by the present severend & learned professour at *St. Andrees*, that *St. Paul* in some of his Epistles joyneth others with himself in the *Inscriptions or Subscriptions*: as for instance, the first Epistle to the *Corinthians* runs in *Pauls* name, and *Sosthenes*; *Paul* called to be an *Apostle*, &c. and *Sosthenes* our brother. The second Epistle, as also that to the *Colossians*; in *Pauls* name and *Timotheus*, *Paul* an *Apostle* &c. and *Timotheus* our brother. The two Epistles to the *Thessalonians* run, *Paul* and *Sylvanus* and *Timotheus* to the Church of the *Thessalonians*. Thus are others joyned with him, as partners in the *Inscriptions*, though the Epistles were none of theirs, but *Pauls*: As for them, they were none of them *immediately inspired*; as *Paul* was, and consequently could be no collateral writers, having any hand in *indiring* and *penning* those Epistles; but only their names joyned with his, as being *approvers* of the doctrines and exhortations there delivered, that thereby the more respect might be procured thereunto. From whence our learned Doctor *Scaer* observes well, that *It is lawfull to use (humana subsidia) humane help* for the *advant age of the truth*. Instancing in this particular case we have now in hand; *The Apostles, and Elders, and Brethren*, (saith he) go jointly in the decrees at *Jerusalem*, that by universall consent Gods people might be more *swayed to obedience*: the concurrence of the *Brethren* is made use of in commending those decrees to the Churches, which yet they had no hands in debating and determining.

M. Rush. P. 379. ibid.

1 Cor. 1. 1.  
2 Cor. 1. 1.  
Col. 1. 1.  
1 Thes. 1. 1.  
2 Thes. 1. 1.

Dr. Scaer, in 1 Thes. 1. 1.

Object. Why, but it is yet objected, whether it was so or no here

Regula juris.

de facto; yet de jure it ought to be so: *Quod omnes, ab omnibus; ibi* which concernes all, might to be handled and concluded by all: It is the usual plea for Popular Government (I. e. No-Government) in Congregationall Churches.

*Ans.* To this we answer, that this Argument (whatever force is in it in some other cases) in this case it pleads for an impossibility: for all to meet together in a *Provinciall*, much more in a *Nationall*, much more in an *Oecumenicall* and *generall* Councell or Synod, is a thing altogether impossible: and therefore of necessity some are to be selected and chosen for all: I shall not need to tell you how it is in our *Parliamentary Assemblies*; the things there handled, they are of generall and univerrall concernment, *property* and *liberty*, &c: not the meanest person but is interested in them, yet in as much as the whole Kingdome cannot meet together, the trust is committed to a few, who are to consult and determine in the name of the rest: surely, of necessity so it must be in the *Church*, because all cannot meet in a *Synodical* way, therefore some persons of trust are to be selected and imployed about that service: for which who can be conceived so fit as those, who by their office are *overscers* to the flock, set over them by God to *feed*, and to *gouverne* them?

*Nicemini pri.*  
*man per Con-*  
*stantinum.*  
*Constantino por-*  
*lianum pri-*  
*man per Theo-*  
*dosium Jun.*  
*Chalce donense*  
*per Martia-*  
*num. vid*  
*Præfat. Con-*  
*cil.*

*Quest.* But what then are all others wholly excluded from having any thing to do in such *Assemblies*? what say we first to the *Christian Magistrate*?

*Ans.* To him we willingly allow what God hath given him, an interest, a *potestative* interest, an interest of *power*, and that both in the *convening* and *confirming* of such *Assemblies*.

*Imperatores*  
*crebro adfue-*  
*runt, nec solum*  
*presentes erant,*  
*verum etiam*  
*rebus jam*  
*conclusis cum*  
*Episcopis sub-*  
*scripse unt.*  
*P. Mart. Loc.*  
*Com in*  
*J. 49. 23.*

1. In *convening*, that the Churches may meet in this way by his *authority*, under his *wing*, by his *allowance*, under his *protection*; thus were the ancient *generall Councells* called by the authority of the *Supream Magistrate*, the *Christian Emperours*; some of them graced and honoured with their personall *presence* and *subscriptions*: and thus in *topical* Councells, (as they call them) particular, *Classicall*, *Provinciall*, *Nationall* Synods, (where it may be had) the concurrence of the *Christian Magistrate* is still to be looked at and desired; who being by God appointed to be *Custos et vindex utriusque tabule*, the *keeper* and *protector* of both *Tables*, and a *father*, (as to the *State*, so) to the *Churches*, (*Kings shall be thy nursing fathers*,) ought consequently, *virtute officij*, to comply with all waies and means which may procure the peace and welfare of the one, as of the other.

2. As



2. As in convening, so in *confirming*; this did those *Christian Emperours* to those *generall Councils*, and this honour we willingly give to the *Civill Magistrate*, that he should be under Christ (whose Vice-gerent he is) the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the *beginning* and *ending*, the *first* and the *last*, in these *Ecclesiasticall meetings*: which being *congregated* by his authority, by the same authority ought to be *ratified* and confirmed; that so the greater obligation may be layd upon all sorts of persons for the observing of those decrees which are so ordained, herein also the *Magistrats concurrence* is to be desired, inasmuch as he is by vertue of his office, *the Minister of God unto his people for good*, and that not only their *naturall good*, to preserve their *lives*; or their *civill good*, to maintaine their *estates* and *liberties*; or *morall good*, to restrain them from *vice*, and encourage them to *vertue*; but also their *Ecclesiasticall* and *spirituall good*, to maintaine their *Religion*, the true *worship* and service of the true God. Thus then the *Magistrate* is not excluded. Rom. 13. 4

*Quest.* But then it seemeth the rest of the *people* are.

*Ans.* Not so neither: to them I shall freely allow whatever they may justly challenge, if not more, willing rather to yeeld a *scruple* to them, then take a *graine* from them. As

First, an interest in the *election* and *delegation* of persons to be betrusted with that service.

Secondly, a liberty to communicate their *doubts* and *desires* in waies fitting and convenient.

Thirdly, a liberty of *presence* to some, (as conveniencie will permit) that they may be *bearers* and *witnesses* of the proceedings.

Fourthly, a liberty of *speech* unto such as shall be after a speciall manner interested in the *businesses* agitated.

Fifthly, and lastly, the *consent* and *concurrence* of such persons or *Churches*, as may procure respect unto the truth, may be desired and made use of.

All these (for my own part) I am not unwilling to grant, and methinks (if my eyes deceive me not) I see them all layd forth before me in this pattern which I have now in hand, this *first Council* at *Hierusalem*. Where

First, *Paul* and *Barnabas*, and whoever were sent with them, were sent by the *Church*, [*They*] determined that *Paul* and *Barnabas* &c. Chap. 15. 1  
 should go up to *Hierusalem*, vers. 2. viz. the *Church*, as the next Vers. explains it.

## The Sacred and Sovereigne

Secondly, sending the *persons*, they send their *cause* with them, *Corpus cum causa*, they determined they should go up about this question, Verſ. 2. viz. touching *Circumcision*, whether necessary or no.

Thirdly, here was the *ῥῆ μαθητῶν*, the *multitude*, a convenient number of the people, to heare, and see, and bear witness of their proceedings, Verſ. 12.

Fourthly, here was the *opposite party*, who had a liberty to declare their judgements, and to plead for themselves, as I have already cleared it from the 2. & 10. Verſes of that Chapter, and may appear further by that heat of disputation which was in the Councell, Verſ. 7.

Fifthly and lastly, here was the *consent* and *concurrence* of the *brethren* and the *whole Church* of Jerusalem taken in, and made use of to procure the more respect to the decrees of the Councell, with the rest of the Churches, Verſ. 22, 23.

In all these we find a popular *concurrence* and *influence* with and upon this Councell: but now what was beyond this; as the *defining* and *determining* of the differences, and *ordering* of decrees, that was the *Apostles* and *Elders*; so you have it expressed in the Text, *They delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the Apostles and Elders.*

And thus you see who were the proper members of this first Councell or Synod, which I have insisted a little the longer upon, (as to lay a good foundation for such superstructures as shall afterward be built upon it, so) to shew you the groundlesse of that *Odium*, which by some unreasonable men is cast, not only upon the present Assembly in this Kingdome, but upon all Church Assemblies of like nature, viz. because they consist chiefly and mostly of *Ecclesiasticall persons*, \* *Divines*, (as they scornfully term them) *Pastors* and *Teachers*, such Church officers, as the present state of the Church affords herein what new thing do they see? what more then is to be seen in this first Councell, where the members of the Councell were *Apostles* and *Elders*?

*Observ.* By them were these decrees ordained, viz. by a *joint consent*, not by any one of them, not by *Peter*, not by *James*, nor by any one other: from whence it may be rightly concluded against that *Antichristian* usurpation of the *Pope*, who takes upon him to make binding decrees for the Churches, alone. This is more then his pretended Predecessour St. *Peter* would d. But that I passe by.

\* *Compassionate Samaritan.*

*Non a Petro  
ne Papa Occu-  
menico, non a  
Jacobus, &c.  
Beza in Text.*

2. Come we now to the second branch of this second particular, *viz.* What were these decrees which were ordained by the Apostles and Elders, and here delivered by Paul to the Churches? For answer, will you know the particulars? read the 20. or 29. Vers. of the Chapter foregoing, there you shall find a summary of them, *viz.* that they should abstaine from meat offered to Idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication; The three former of them things in their own nature indifferent: The latter (fornication) esteemed little more (as it seemeth) in those times, (at least) amongst some of the Gentiles; who account it, if a sin, yet a very veniall one; these the Council by a joint consent interdicts and prohibits. and these prohibitions the Evangelist here calleth by the name of Decrees, *Synodal Edicta, Decreta*, the same word we find used in the second of Luk. Ver. 1. There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, *Synodal* And so againe, in 17. Act. Ver. 7. where Jason and the rest of the brethren are accused that they did contrary to the Decrees of Caesar, *ἄνωγοι τῶν Συνοδικῶν*. Thus were the civil decrees of Princes and States then called, and by the same name the Evangelist here calleth the Ecclesiasticall determinations of this Synodical Assembly, *Synodal Decrees.*

Concubinatus: cujus tantum concuerudinem fecerant gentes, ut propemodum instar legis foret. Calv. ad Loc. Non est fugium (mibi credit) adolescentium. scolarium. Tet. Adelph. Luk. 2. 1. Act. 17. 7.

Observ. 11. Where (to passe over things as briefly as I may) take we notice (in the first place) of the misconception and mistaking of some, who look upon this first Councell, only as a pattern of one Sister Church giving advice and counsell to another; were there no other argument to discover the nakednesse of this evasion, this one word in the Text alone were sufficient; where the Evangelist speaking of the results of their consultations, calleth them not Counsell, not brotherly advices, but *Synodal Decrees*: Decrees are more then Counsell, and surely such were the determinations of this first Synod, more then bare counsell; here were constitutions and decrees, *Synodal ut in Act. Decrees which were ordained*; and these decrees they are imposed upon the Churches; not only propounded and commended to them; but imposed upon them: not only propounded by way of advice, but imposed by way of injunction, *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost; and to us, to lay (enrribid 20, to impose) no greater burdens, &c.* certainly here was more then the advice of a sister church: what had a sister church to do to make decrees, and impose injunctions upon a sister church? the church at Hierusalem upon the Church at Antioch, being in respect of any authoritative power every way equall to her self? To yet that passe,

Chap. 15. 28.

## The Sacred and Sovereigne

*Obser. 2.* In the second place. See here *what power a lawfull Councell or Synod being by lawfull authority in the Name of Christ convened and met together, have in matters of Ecclesiasticall concernment, viz.* A power not onely to *consult, and debate, and advise*; but to *determine Ecclesiasticall differences, and to ordaine decrees which may be binding to the Churches.* Such power the *Apostles and Elders* being here at the *motion of, and by delegation from the Churches met together, assume unto themselves.* They came together to consider of this matter, *vers. 6. chap. 15.* and having considered of the Church differences, they *determine* them; determining them, they draw up *Ordinances and Decrees* concerning them, which are here by the *Apostles* delivered to the Churches to *keep.*

*Obser.* True (it may be said) they might doe it, but so may not any other *Councell or Synod* in any succeeding age of the Church. And why not? why, they were *extraordinary persons, endued with an extraordinary and infallible Spirit, by which they were guided and directed in the whole procedure of this businesse.* And consequently might doe that which is not to be drawne into preident by any after them, who are not assisted with the same Spirit. They were *Apostles*, having an *Apostolicall* authoritie, and so might ordaine *Decrees, and make Lawes* for the Churches, which for any others after them, to attempt were no lesse then high and unwarrantable presumption.

*Ansiv.* Here is the maine and principall evasion whereby all the Arguments taken from this first pattern of *Synodicall Assemblies* are supposed to be eluded and made void. Give me leave to close with it as briefly (and yet as fully) as I can. In way of answer averring the contrary to this confident supposition, *viz.* That the *Apostles, however they were extraordinary persons, and in penning of sacred Scriptures were assisted and directed by an immediate Spirit, yet in this businesse they did not proceed by vertue of any Apostolicall authority, as men immediately inspired, but onely as Pastors and Teachers, assisted by the direction of an ordinary spirit.* That it was so, the evidence is cleare, and I think undeniable.

*Argument I* . . . For first, wherefore else should *Paul* have made this journey from *Antioch to Hierusalem?* *Paul* as an *Apostle*, he was able to have decided and stated all these controversies alone as well as all the *Apostles* with him; all being guided by one and the same Spirit. So as, had he herein made use of his *Apostolicall authority*, he should not have

have needed to have gone to confer with any other of the *Apostles* about it. This course we see he had before declined in a matter of far greater consequence then this, *viz.* upon his first receiving of the *Gospell*, having received it by *divine revelation*, and immediate *inspiration*, he did not adresse himself to the *Apostles*, or any other for the instructing and confirming of him in that doctrine. So he tels his *Galatians*; 1. *Gal.* 1. 16. 17. *When it pleased God to reveale his Son in me, &c. I conferred not with flesh and blood. i. e.* not with his owne carnall reason (so *Parcus*) or rather (as *Cabbin* and *Beza*) not with any mortall man whatever; Neither went I up to *Hierusalem* to them who were *Apostles* before me. True it was, after some time he went up thither once and againe, as you may see *Chap.* 1. *vers.* 18. *Chap.* 2. *v.* 1. First three yeeres after, then *fourteene* yeeres after, and both times he had *communication* and *conference* with the *Apostles*; But as for any *instructions* from them, or *confirmation* by them, or any other, as he saith it not, so neither did he finde it. *God's* *apostles* *in conference* (saith he) they added nothing unto me, *v.* 6. Certainly then had *Paul* stood upon his *Apostolicall* spirit, as he needed not; so he would not have gone up to *Hierusalem* to hold a conference with other *Apostles* about this businesse, being of far lesser concernment then the maine doctrine of the *Gospell*.

Rat'one sua  
humana; Pa-  
rem. Cum quo-  
quam mortali-  
um, Cabv. Beza  
ad loc.

Gal. 2. 6.

2. Suppose he did condescend beneath himself for the satisfi-  
faction of the *weak brethren*, and for the stopping of the mouthes of  
*opposites*, to hold a conference with the *Apostles* about this busines,  
so to take in their concurrence and mutuall consent; yet why  
should the *Elders* be joyned unto them? That they were joyned  
with them in the whole procedure of this businesse, both in the  
*consultation* and *determination*, is most apparent from the sixth verse  
of the Chapter foregoing, and from the words of the *Text*. In  
both these they were *joyned* with the *Apostles*, *joyned commissi-*  
*oners*. Now in case the *Apostles* had proceeded, as men immediatly  
inspired, what need had they to have made use of their concu-  
rence? Or what could the *Elders* any wayes contribute to them?  
If the *Apostles* themselves could *in conference adde nothing unto Paul*,  
much lesse could the *Elders* adde any thing to the *Apostles*.

Argum. 2.

3. But (thirdly) Suppose that as *Paul* required the concu-  
rence of the other *Apostles*, so the *Apostles* required the concu-  
rence of other *Elders* still for the more full satisfi-  
faction of all parties; yet why should they proceed after that manner, by way  
of

Argum. 3.

Chap. 15. 7.

of *diffusion*, and *diffusion*? That this was their way; the seventh verse of the foregoing Chapter maketh it cleare. *When there had been much disputing.* Here was not onely *controversie*, but *mutua controversia*, a great and earnest *disputation*. The points propounded were controverted and agitated *pro* and *con*, on both sides, to blot out the truth. Now what needed this, had the Apostles been immediately inspired? *Immediate inspirations* are like the *sun-beams*, which are not brought unto the eye by any such *crooked* and *winding* rayer as they are sometimes painted, but by direct lines. Thus are immediate inspirations brought unto the minde. *The word of the Lord came unto the Prophets*, and so it came unto the Apostles, who being immediately inspired, *spoke as they were moved* (*impulsati*, carried on) by the holy Ghost, and that without any such consultations with themselves, or others.

2 Pet. 1. 21.

Put these three together, we shall need no other evidence to cleare this truth, that the Apostles in this Council did not sit and act in the capacie of Apostles, as *extraordinary Ministers* of Gods Church, neither did they proceed in this business as *immediately inspired*.

*Object.* No (you may say?) why, their words seeme to make it plaine, exprelly avering so much, that what herein they concluded and agreed upon, it was by the direction and instigation of the Spirit. So run the letters of the Council: *It wanted good to the holy Ghost and to us.* ] is a to the Spirit *suggesting*, to them *consentient*. To the Spirit as the *master*, to them as the *schollars*, subscribing to their masters Dictates. Or, *To the holy Ghost and to us, i. e.* to us being assisted and guided by the *instinct* and *suggestion* of the holy Ghost.

Chap. 15. 28.

*V. sum est Spiritui sancto & nobis, i. e. nobis ex instinctu Spiritus sancti.*  
Hend. Piscat.  
Corn. à Lap.

*Answe.* That the Apostles were thus assisted and guided must not be denied. But what kinde of *instinct* or *suggestion* was this? was it *mediate* or *immediate*? *ordinary*, or *extraordinary*? Here is the knot of the controversie. *Papists* generally contend for the latter, supposing it to make something for the *infallibility* of their Councils, which they look upon as directed by the same unerring Spirit. But this (whoever be the Patrons of it) our reverend and learned *Cowright* in his answer to the *Rhemists* (who were of the same opinion) censureth for a *fond imagination*. *It seemeth* (saith he to them) *that ye understand not what is meant by those words of the Council.* [*It pleased the holy Ghost and us.*] *The meaning is not* (saith he) *as you fondly imagine, that they were immediately inspired of God.*] This he

Corn. à Lap.  
Lorin.

*M. Cart. Annot. in Rhem. ad loc.*

avers

avers (as you see) with great confidence: And this had maketh good by an *argument* (which as yet hath not, neither doe I thinke ever will be soundly and satisfactorily answered) taken from the words themselves, which say as much of the *Elders* as of the *Apostles*. *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.* ] But this will not, cannot be said, of the *Elders*, that they were immediately inspired; much lesse of the *people*, whose presence and consent he conceiveth them to have made use of.

An *immediate inspiring spirit* then it was not. What then? Why, an ordinary *Synodical spirit* (as the learned *professour of Scotland* calleth it); even the same *spirit* which is promised to all the faithful *Ministers* of the Church to the end of the world; [*Loe I am with you alwayes to the end of the world;*] Especially being so convened and met together in the Name of Christ: *Where two or three are met together in my name* (in my authority) *there am I in the midst amongst them*, Mat. 18. A promise which (though not onely, yet) primarily and properly is to be understood of such *Ecclesiasticall meetings* of *Church-Officers* assembled together to consult about the affaires of the Church. Christ promiseth to be in the midst amongst them, both *assisting* and *ratifying*. Thus was he present with this first *Councell*: And thus is he at this day present with all *Assemblies* of like nature, meeting and proceeding after the same manner that they did.

M. Rutherford.  
Due right of  
Presbyteries,  
p. 360.  
Matth. 28. v.  
last.  
Mat. 18. 20.

*Quest.* But what then? may all, or any other *Assemblies, Synods, Councils* in succeeding ages presume to take up their words, and say the same of their decrees, *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us*? Here is an argument which is looked upon by many, as not onely *Militant*, but *Triumphant*.

*Ans.* In answer herunto I list not to lend an ear to what our adversaries of Rome earnestly contend for. This first *Councell* (say *Bellarmino* and the *Rhemists*) *hath given this forme of speech to all other Councils lawfully called, and confirmed, viz. by the Pope* ) to say the like; *It hath pleased the Holy Ghost and us.* ] Letting that passe which cannot be made good, unlesse it be understood of that *holy Ghost* which the story tells us was carried from Rome to Trent in a *Cloak-bag*. For my own part, I shall return to this *Objection*, or *Question*, this three-fold Answer.

Bellarmino. de  
Councilis. cap.  
10. Bellam. ad  
loc.

History of  
the Council  
of Trent.

1. *De facto* it must be acknowledged that the *Councils* of old, forse, many of them have made use of a forme of speech not un-

like to this. The ancient Father *Cyprian*, with some other of the *Cyprian Epist.* Fathers of an *African Council*, making report unto *Cornelius* their  
 14. ad *Cornel.* Bishop of *Rome* what the Council had agreed upon, they use these  
 words, *Placuit nobis, sancto Spiritu suggerente.* It hath seemed good to us  
*Verba non nunc* by the suggestion of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon *Pamelinus* notes, that this  
*solum, sed ol. m* used in Councils: This they have said. And  
*usitata in Con-*  
*cilis. Pamel.*  
*Annot. in Cyp.*

2. *De debito.* This all Councils and Synods should be able to  
 say; Decreeing nothing but what they may be able to say of, as the  
*Mr. Ruber-*  
*ford. Due rights*  
*of Presbyteries*  
*par. 1. p. 372.*  
*Apostles* and *Elders* doe here of their determinations, *It seemeth good*  
 to the Holy Ghost and to us; to him our *Master*, to us his *Schollers*.  
 Herein this first should be a pattern to all succeeding *Councils* and  
*Synods*, shewing them, not what *de jure* they may doe, but what *de*  
*debito* they should doe, viz. so to proceed, as they may say, *It seemeth*  
*good to the Holy Ghost and to us.*

3. *De Licito*; this they with holy reverence may say, when they  
 proceed as the *Apostles* and *Elders* here did, viz. by the *Direction*  
*Cap. 15. v. 7,*  
*8. vers. 9. 14,*  
*15, 16, 17.*  
 of the *Word*. So did the *Apostles* themselves here proceed, ground-  
 ing and bottoming their *Decrees* upon *Scripture*, seconded with  
 some evidences from *Heaven*. And thus did that *African Council*  
 proceed: *Cyprian* with the *Fathers of Africa* (saith our judicall *Fulk*)  
*Dr. Fulk An-*  
*not in Rhein.*  
*A. 15. 28.*  
 did declare unto *Cornelius* Bishop of *Rome* upon what authority of *Scriptures*  
 their determination was grounded, &c. And hereupon it was (saith  
 our Reverend *Cartwright*) that the *Apostles* saide, that it pleased the  
 Holy Ghost, viz. the Holy Ghost speaking in the *Scriptures*. *Scriptures*  
 (we know) they are no other but the *breath* of the Holy Ghost, endit-  
 ed by him. And hence it is, that the one is sometimes put for the  
 other. *Scripture* sometimes put for the Holy Ghost. *The Scripture*  
*forseeing* (saith *S. Paul*) i. e. the Holy Ghost the Author of them.  
 And the Holy Ghost sometimes put for the *Scripture*; Wherefore, as  
 the Holy Ghost saith, *To day if you will heare his voyce, &c.* saith the *A-*  
*postle* citing that of the *Psalme*, which was endited by the Holy  
 Ghost. And thus in the Text, *It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost,*  
*and to us;* viz. to the Holy Ghost speaking to us in the *Scripture*.  
 So the *Greek Scholiast* (cited by *M. Cartwright*) expounds the place.  
 Now then, what ever lawfull *Council* or *Synod* met together in  
 the Name of *Christ* shall proceed after the same manner, as the  
*Apostles* here did; making the *Word* their rule and direction, ground-  
 ing their determinations and decrees thereupon, either upon the

*M. Cartwright*  
*Annot. ibid.*

*Gal. 3. 8.*  
*Heb. 9. 7.*  
 The Holy  
 Ghost is there  
 set down, for  
 that *Christ*  
 had not taught  
 this, but the  
 Council ut-  
 tered them  
 grounded on  
 the *Laws*, in  
*Cartwrightes*  
*Occumonia ad*  
*Ec.*

expresse



expresse letter of it, or upon just and necessary consequences, and inferences drawn from it, however they may for reverence sake to that first Councell (which in some respects) is not to be patterned by any succeeding Synod, viz. in respect of the persons of the Apostles there present, men of an extraordinary function, and assisted at this time (no question) though not with an *immediate*, yet with a more then ordinary measure of an ordinary spirit, proportionable to that highest place, which they then occupied in the Church and in that Councell (decline the forme of words by them used, (as Mr. Cartwright observes, that the African Councell upon that ground (as he conceives) did) yet without either *Blasphemy* or *Presumption*, it is conceived that they may to the same effect say of their decrees, that they are the minde of the *Holy Ghost*, as well as their minde; for which this *patterne* may bee their *Warrant*.

And thus I have (as I hope) sufficiently cleared this scruple, as also answered this objection touching the *extraordinary quality*, and *immediate assistance* of the Apostles in this first Councell. So as this *beaten Masse* being now stopped, and this trite evasion put by, what remains but that the conclusion should stand firme? viz. *That a lawfull councell or Synod being met, as the Apostles and Elders in this first Councell were, and proceeding after the same manner as they did, may determine Church-differences, and ordaine Decrees for the Churches to keepe.*

*Quest.* But how farre reacheth this *Synodical Power*? and in what cases may they make such Decrees?

*Answer.* In answer hereunto I shall purposely decline (as much as may be) all collaterall controversies, as viz. whether such Synods be invested with a power of *Jurisdiction*, reaching to the censuring of persons *crimonous*, or *scandalous*. I will not goe from what the Text directly leadeth me to. The Decree here delivered by Paul and Silas to the Churches, we shall finde them directly concerning two things, *Doctrine* and *Practise*; *Doctrine*, whether *circumcision was then necessary*, or no. *Practise*, whether they should then *eat things offered to Idols*, or no, &c. Both these the Councell here states and determines.

First, declaring the *erroneousnesse* and *dangerousnesse* of that opinion, which some would have obtruded upon the Churches under their name, viz. touching *circumcision*, disclaiming it as none of

*Lorin ad Loc.*  
*M. Cartwright*  
*ibid.*

This Councell hath not given this forme of speech here used to all other Councells, how lawfully soever called and confirmed, except their determination may be warranted as this was, by the Holy Scriptures.  
*D. Fulk Annot. in loc.*

6. 15. v. 24.  
28.  
Vers. 29.

theirs: This they doe, *explicitly* vers. 24. *implicitly* vers. 28. Then interdicting and prohibiting them the use of some things which then were, or were accounted *indifferent* unto them, vers. 29. These two the sentence of the Councell here *directly* reacheth, (not to speake what it doth *obliquely*, how it also reacheth the *persons* of those who had beene the *broachers*, of that *new Doctrine*, whom it passeth a sharp censure upon, *viz.* declaring and pronouncing them to be *Troublers of the Church*, and *subverters of soules*, vers. 24.) And these two the sentence of lawfull Councells, and Synods may reach, they being invested with a double power; the *one Dogmaticall*, the other *Directive*; (not to speak of that *corrective* power, the power of *censures*, which if it bee not *Formally*, yet *Virtually* and *Eminently* it must bee conceived to bee in such Councells.)

1. They have a *Dogmaticall* or *Doctrinall* power in declaring of *Doctrinall Truths*, or *Errors*. This power (I thinke) will be yielded them at all intelligent hands; even by those who in other cases are most tender and jealous of allowing them any power of Jurisdiction: And it is no more then what the example of the Church at *Antioch* leadeth us to, who in a *Doctrinall* point of difference which could not be satisfactorily determined amongst themselves, they referre it to the concurrent judgement of other Churches met together in a *Synodicall way*; wherein (finding it agreeable to *Scripture* and *Reason*) they *acquiesce*, and rest satisfied. A pattern for the Churches in all succeeding ages, shewing them what they are to do in like cases. But to let this passe as a truth confessed by all who are not more wedded to their own private fancies and wills, then either to *Scripture* or *Reason*.

2. The second branch of this *Synodicall* power is *Directive* in matters of *Practice*. Such a power we find the Councell here exercising upon the Churches; regulating them as touching their practice: And surely this may lawfull *Synods* doe, lay out the Churches way for them, order them in matters *Ecclesiasticall*, *ordaining Decrees* touching what they are to doe, or not to doe; which *Decrees* may be *imposed* upon the Churches.

*Quest.* But what then? Hath such a Councell or Synod an *absolute Legislative* power to make *Laws*, and impose what *binders* they please upon the Church?

*Ans.* Not so: The power of a Councell or Synod is not *Magisteriall*,

*seruall, but Ministeriall; Not absolute but limited.* Many limitations may be assigned, wherby this power is determined, and bounded. I will touch onely upon two.

1. *They may doe nothing against any law of Christ, who is the onely Law-giver of his Church.* Here is no room for *non obstante's*, Christs Lawes being irrevocable, unalterable, they may not be so much as *tamperd with* by any particular persons, nor yet by any combinations of *Men or Angels.*

Deut. 4. 2.  
Rev. 22. 18.

2. *They may ordaine nothing but what they haue a warrant from the word for.* A warrant either *explicit, or implicit*, either a particular or generall warrant; either a particular warrant in expresse termes, or at least a generall warrant clearly hold forth under those generall rules of *Order, Decencie, Edification.*

1 Cor. 14. 40.  
verf. 26.

Such were the decrees which the Councell here ordained. They imposed nothing upon the Churches, but what they had a warrant from the word for. Either an expresse and particular warrant. This they had for the prohibiting of *jurisdiction*, which being taken literally & properly (as I conceive (by M. Beza's leave) that here it must) is expressely condemned in the word. Or else a generall warrant. This they had for all the rest, the prohibiting of the eating of *Idolatrye*, things offered to Idols, of *bloode*, of things strangled; the two latter branches of the Ceremoniall Law, all of them at that time in their owne nature *indifferent*; But the use of them was at the present become *scandalous* and offensive to the weak brethren, and so tending rather to *destruction*, then to *edification*. Hereupon, though they had no expresse word of Scripture for it, yet proceeding upon that generall ground, they prohibe the use of them for that time, though otherwise in themselves indifferent.

2 Cor. 10. 8.

By the same rules are other *Councils* and *Synods* to proceed. And consequently ought not to impose any thing upon the Church, but what they conceive to be *necessarie*. So did the Councell here. *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden then these necessarie things.* The things by them here imposed were all *necessarie*. Necessarie either simply and *absolutely* by an *intrinsicall* necessitie, necessarie at all times. Of this kinde was the abstaining from *fornication* or *respectively* by an *extrinsicall* or *accidentall* necessity, necessarie *pro tempore*; for the present time. Such were these other things here prohibited, though in themselves, in their owne nature *indifferent*, yet in respect of the *scandal* all than occasioned by the use of them, they

verf. 18.

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they were for the time *necessarie* to be declined, and abstained from. And surely such should the *Decrees* and *Constitutions* of all Councils and Synods be, *viz.* touching things *necessarie*, *necessarie* to be observed or avoided. *Necessarie* (as I say) either *simply* in themselves, in their owne nature, at all times; or *necessarie* in respect of the *present state and condition*, *necessarie* for the time: which things in their owne nature indifferent may be; as the words of the Council here make it plain, which speaking of things in themselves *indifferent*, yet calleth them *necessarie*.

*Quest.* What then? *doth the authoritie of the Council or Synod change the nature of the things, of indifferent making them necessarie?* This our Adversaries of Rome contend for. It is their Glosse upon the twentieth verse of this fifteenth Chapter. See here (say they) *the great Authoritie of Gods Church, and Counsels which may command for ever, or for a time, such things as be fit for the state of times and nations without any expresse Scripture at all, and so by commandment make things necessarie which were before indifferent.* And this many of our divines have unwarilie, and unsuspectedly swallowed. Our learned and judicious Doctor Fulk, that *Malleus hereticorum*, in his Annotation upon that glosse of the Rhemists, sticks not to grant them what therein they desire; in matters of *indifferencie* (saith he) *we yeeld to your observation.* And it hath been (specially of late times) a received maxime, that *authoritie conaning upon things in their owne nature indifferent, changeth the nature of them, and maketh them of indifferent necessarie.*

*A.* But to this we cannot subscribe. Certainly the Church hath no such power to change or alter the nature of things, either to make things *necessarie indifferent*; or things *indifferent necessarie*, which in M. Cartwrights judgement is all one. The reason which he giveth for it, is convincing. To give the Church any such power, were to give it a power over and above the scriptures, in as much as the *indifferencie* of things is founded upon the Scriptures, from whence they have their middle and indifferent nature.

*Quest.* But was it not so in this first Council? did not they by imposing of these things upon the Churches make them *necessarie* which were before *indifferent*?

*Ans.* I answer, No, they were *necessarie* before they imposed them.

2. How can that be? What, *necessarie*, and *indifferent* both?

*Ans.* Yes; *indifferent* in themselves, but *necessarie* in respect of the *present occasion.* And henceupon it was that the Council imposed them, because

Rhem. Annot.  
in Ab. 25. 20.

Dr. Fulk An-  
not. ad Lec.

Mr. Cart-  
wright Annot.  
ibid.

because they apprehended them so to be. Marke it. These things were not therefore necessarie, because they imposed them; but, because they were for the time necessarie, therefore they imposed them. As for the things themselves, the nature of them was not changed, nor altered by their command coming upon them. As they were indifferent before, so they remained indifferent still, viz. indifferent in themselves, and in respect of conscience: onely made necessarie by accident, in regard of the present occasion, for the avoiding of scandall, and for the procuring and preserving of the Peace and Unitie of the Church.

And thus have I as briefly, as plainly, as fully as I could, endeavoured to cleare up unto you this much controyerted point touching the power of lawfull Councils and Synods in ordaining Decrees which may be imposed upon the Churches. That which remains is the application, wherein I shall be as brief as I may.

Is there such a power in lawfull Councils and Synods? then take we heed every of us how we oppose, or resist, this power. We know what the Apostle saith of Civil power, the power of Magistracie, and I think I may say the same of Ecclesiasticall power, the power of Councils, and Synods lawfully convened, lawfully proceeding, and lawfully confirmed, *whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the Ordinance of God.* The ordinance of God. So it hath been looked upon in all ages of the Church hitherto; And sure I am, it is not yet written with a *sun-beame by the finger of God himself, that it is not, so.* Take we heed then how we oppose, how we resist this way, lest in so doing we run unawares into a *ΘΕΟΜΑΧΙΑ*, at least *running the hazard of fighting against God.*

To bring the Application home to the present times, I shall not neede to tell it you that this is the way that the State of this Kingdome have at this day pitched upon, for the composing of Ecclesiasticall differences; and for the reforming and establishing of the Church of God amongst us, viz. to call together an Assembly of this nature, wherein they have for substance, (and I think for circumstance, so far as the present state of the times would permit,) endeavoured to follow this Primitive pattern: let me onely perswade with you to take heed of admitting, entertaining any prejudiciall thoughts against this way: such thoughts there have been, and daily are let fall by some ill advised tongues and pens (no question) secretly set a work by *Satan*, (as *Peter* was to dissuade his master from going up to *Hierusalem*) if it might be, to suffocate the Churches hopes in

Applic.

Rom. 12. 2.

Theon. p. last.  
Ewith Mr.

I. G. in his  
ΘΕΟΜΑΧΙΑ  
had consulted  
with his own  
principle  
about this.

Math. 16. 23

the

Psal. 2. 3.

Zach. 11. 7.

the wombe, or to stife them in the birth; take we heed how we take them up, how we give any lodging to them; far be it from every of us, who professe our selves the *loyall subjects* of *Jesus Christ* to harbour such a *rebellious resolution*, as that of those in the *Psalme*, *Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us*; Nay, (Brethren) first let us see what these *bonds*, what these *cords* will be, before we offer any such intentionall violence to them; possibly, they may be such *bonds* as will have *beauty* for their companion; *bonds* like *bracelets*; which by *binding* may also *adorn* and *inrich* the Spouse of *Christ*, no other then the *bonds* of *Jesus Christ* himself, wherewith to be bound is the truest *libertie*: possibly they may be such *cords*, as you shall find made all of *Scripture* *strands*, all of *Gods* own *spinning*, only *wristed* and *put* together by *men*; and shall we resolve aforehand to *break these bonds and cast away these cords*?

*Object.* I know what is at the tongues end of some already, what will presently be replied: To submit our selves to any such binding power, or to any decrees made by such a power, what were it, but to *betray and forfeit our christian libertie*? It is the known plea which the *Anabaptists* take up against *civill* power; and it is made use of by many against this *Ecclesiasticall* power. For Answer.

*Ans.* *Christian libertie*; and might not the *Christians* at *Antioch* and elsewhere have taken up the same plea had they apprehended any weight in it, or reason for it, when the *Decrees* here spoken of were tendered to them by *Paul* and *Sylas* to keep? what, *betray their christian libertie*, by subjecting themselves to the ordinances of men? But we hear no such words from them, neither let there be any such thoughts amongst us, for which I am sure there is no just ground: *Synnicall*, *Ecclesiasticall* power (as well as *civill*) is not incompatible with *christian libertie*, they may both well stand together.

That will soon appear, if we do but rightly understand what *christian libertie* doth signify; it is not a *licence* for christians to *think*, and *speake*, and *pen*, and *do* what they list, as some by their practice in these licentious times seem to conceive of it; nor yet an exemption from the yoke of any *lawfull authority*, whether *civill* or *Ecclesiasticall*; nor yet a *licence* for every particular person, or combinations of persons, to set up the worship of *God* in what way, and after what manner seemeth good unto them; but a *liberty purchased* by *Christ* for christians, whereby their consciences are set free; here is the proper seat of this liberty; not the outward but the inward man, not the

the *band* or *tongue*, but the *conscience*, which is hereby set free, as from the *rigour* and *curse* of the *morall law*, and from the *obligation* of the *ceremoniall law*, so generally from all obligations and bonds, save only such as God himself shall impose upon it: this is *christian liberty*. Now this liberty is no waies infringed, either by any *civill* or *Ecclesiasticall power*, in as much as neither of them claymeth any *Jurisdiction* or *power* over the *conscience*, either to *binde* or *absolve* it. As for the *Decrees of Councells & Synods*, (to hold to them) they do not properly and immediately, as comming from them, reach the *conscience*: it is but a mistake (to make the most charitable construction of it) which is charged upon Assemblies of this nature; that they *I. G. Theomak, command all mens judgements and consciences to bow down at the feet of P. 45. their determinations*: What Protestant Councell or Synod ever yet claymed such a jurisdiction? true it is, the *matter* of their *Decrees* may reach the *conscience*, being such things as are commanded or forbidden in the *Word*; now *conscience* is bound to observe and obey, but not by vertue of any *humane Decree*, but of the *divine Law*, which hath laid that obligation upon *conscience*. As for other things which are in their own nature *indifferent*, neither commanded nor prohibited in the *Word*, but only made *necessary for a time*, in respect of some present occasion, these may be imposed; but how? what, upon *conscience*, as things necessary in themselves? No. *Ecclesiasticall Decrees*, (as I said before) they do not change the nature of things, but impose them, and leave them as they finde them; finding them to be *necessary* in themselves, (made so by the *Word*, they now impose them as *necessary*; finding them to be *indifferent* in themselves, (left so by the *word*) they now impose them as *indifferent*; only made necessary for the time. In the meane time no waies touching the *conscience*, further then as the *Word* bindeth it.

To instance in these *Decrees* which the *Text* pointeth at; here are *Decrees ordained for the Churches to keep*, *obligatory Decrees*, but no waies binding *conscience* further then the *Law of God* bound it. The *Councell Decree*; they should *abstaine from fornication*, now this they were bound to before, by an *expressse* and particular *Law of God*: The *Councell Decree*, they should abstaine from *eating things sacrificed to Idolls, &c.* and these they were now bound to by a *generall Law*, the *Law of charity*, which required they should (as much as might be) avoid what was *scandalous* and offensive to the weak brethren, and apply themselves to such waies and courses, as might procure

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procure and maintaine the *peace* and *unity* of the Churches, thus were they *bound*, yet without any impeachment to their *christian liberty*: for in the former of these their Christian liberty had no place; it being a thing simply necessary to abstaine from fornication; in the latter their Christian liberty was still preserved and maintained intire and whole, in as much as these things were not imposed upon *conscience*, as things necessary in themselves; only the outward *use* and *exercise* of that liberty was for a time *limited* or *restrained*, which (morall necessity so requiring) questionlesse without any wrong or injury may be done, either by a mans self, or others in *authority*, *civill* or *Ecclesiasticall*.

Where (by the way, before I passe any further) let me only give a touch upon an *error*, then which I do not know any that these *luxuriant* times have put forth of more dangerous consequence, *viz.* That things *indifferent*, when commanded, should become *unlawfull*; such rocks the shifting of the wind of late hath carried men upon: not long since the tenet was; Things *indifferent*, when commanded, become *necessary*: now on the other hand; Things *indifferent*, when commanded, become *unlawfull*, extreames both, like *Scylla* and *Charybdis*; it is not easie to say whether of the two the more dangerous. I have given a  *caveat* touching the one already, let me now do as much for the other: That *authority* by commanding things *indifferent* should make them *unlawfull*, how can this be? if so, sure the ground and reason of this unlawfullness, must be either in the *authority* commanding, or in the thing commanded, or in the person obeying: now for the former of these, the *authority* being *lawfull* cannot leave such a *stain* upon things, that by touching of them, meddling with them, it should make them of *lawfull* *unlawfull*. As for the second, the things themselves they are not changed, the *nature* of them is not altered; if they were *indifferent* before, they are *indifferent* still, *viz.* in reference to *conscience*. As for the third, the persons obeying being *pure*, all things are *pure* to them. How then can it be, that by passing thorrow the hands of authority, things should contract such a *maligne quality*, that of indifferent they should become *unlawfull*? for my own part I must professe, that amongst all the monstrous and mishapen conceptions which these brooding teeming times have hatched and brought forth, I do not know any more prodigious then this. Certainly the Primitive times were never acquainted with such a *Doctrine*. The *Decrees* pointed at in the Text, they were mostly



mostly about things in their own nature *indifferent*; yet the Councell imposeth them, prohibiting the Churches for a time the use of things otherwise lawfull. Now (surely) had they apprehended that their imposition would have changed the nature of things, so as to make them of indifferent unlawful, they would not have had any hand in *commanding*, nor yet the Churches in *obeying*. But I forbear to reason any further against that, for which, I suppose, scarce a shadow of reason can be given: I rather passe on to some other *Objections* and *Allegations*, which finding them to be but bladders full of wind, I shall only prick them, and leave them to evaporate of themselves.

*Object. 2.* In the second place it is alledged that this *binding power* being allowed to any such *Synodical Decrees*, it may prove prejudiciall to the *Church*, and to the *Truth*; a thing which experience maketh good. The Councils which we read of in the new Testament, wherein there was a concurrence of the *Civill* and *Ecclesiastical* power, did they not give sentence against *Christ* himselfe, against his *Apostles*, against their *way* and *Doctrine*? Of latter times how prejudiciall have many Councils been to the Church in condemning the *truth*, in countenancing and confirming of *errors*? Instance but in that one Councell of *Trent*, then which never was there any undertaking more threatening to the *Church*, more pernicious to the *truth*.

*Answe.* We answer: It is true, thus it hath been, and thus it may be; but what of this? *Things the more excellent in their use they are, the more dangerous they may be in their miscarriage*: Great Ordnance in a Fort or Castle; being well managed and plyed against the enemy, they are the strength and security of a Citie; but being turned against it, they batter it down: Even of such use are *Councils* and their *Decrees*, *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, to the *Church*; now who will thinke Forts and Bulwarks fit to be flighted, and all their Ordnance to be dismounted, because possibly they may prove disadvantageous.

*Object. 3.* But it will be further urged, Experience hath found Councils of this nature to be often prejudiciall, seldome advantageous to the Church; witness that (now trite and threadbare) testimony of that ancient Father \**Greg. Nazianzen*, that *Dura querimonia*, (as *Calvin* truly calleth it) that harsh and rigorous complaint

E 2

plaint

Mat. 23. 39.

66.

Act. 4. 9. 6.

\* 7. G. Theo.

mak. p. 44.

Dura Greg.

Nazianzeni

querimonia.

Calv. in Act.

15. 2.

Air se nullius

Synodi bonam

exitum vi-

diffe, & malo-

rum occasiones

hoc modo non

van subleas

quam antea

fuisse Greg.

Naz. ad Pro-

copium, Epist.

42.

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plaint of his, wherein he professeth, that for his part, *he never saw a good end, or desirable successe of any Councell, or that they procured any decrease, but rather an increase of evils to the Church.*

*Ansiv.* To this home charge set on by a single testimony, take answer briefly:

*Care et successibus, opto, Quisquis ab eventu rem judicat.*

*Concil. Nicen. habit. Anno 330. Greg. Nazian. serm. 11. Anno 371.*

*quod quodammodo sumus invocamus. Pope. Wicentii. conventus Synodum, nihil est, ut quoniam si dem scribi dum in verbis pugna est, dum de novitatibus questio est, dum de ambiguis occasio est, dum de auctoribus querela est. dum de studiis certamen est, dum in consensu difficultas est, dum alter alteri Anathema esse capit, prope jam nemo Christi est. H. lat. ad Constans Imperat. Haec Nicenam Synodum secuta sunt tempestates, non Synodi quidem, sed humanum improborum vitio. Whitaker contra Durandum de Conciliis. Ingenius contra Orbis, & Arrianum se esse miratus est. Hieron. adversus Lucifer.*

1. *To judge of things by the successe and event oft-times proves but an unrighteous judgement.* Hopefull undertakings, though never so wisely projected, and well intended, may yet possibly miscarry: Usefull *Institutions*, not onely *humane*, but *divine*, may at sometimes prove unsuccessfull and inefficall: And so may it possibly fall out with the most promising *Synods* or *councils*. But where is the fault? what in the undertaking, in the *institution* it selfe? Not so, but in the persons perverting, or opposing it. So saith our learned and judicious Dr. *Whitaker*, concerning that first and great Council of *Nice*, held a little before *Naxianzens* dayes, of all Councils the most famous since the Apostles times, yet (as *History* complaines) it did not finde that successe which was desired and hoped for. The evils of the Church were not decreased, but rather increased by it: sad stormes and tempests followed upon it. But whence was this? *Nax Synodi quidem, &c.* The fault was not in the *Synod*, but in wicked and perverse men opposing and making head against it: Even as it is with the *Gospel* it selfe, where it cometh it hath ordinarily a *Sword* attending upon it, (*I come not to send peace, but a sword, Mat. 10. 34.*) But what is the cause of this? Not the *Gospel*, which is in it selfe the *Gospel of peace*; but those rebellious ones who will not submit to the *Gospel*.

2. As for this testimony of *Naxianzen*, the learned cannot but wonder that such a passage should fall from such a pen. *I cannot but wonder* (saith our worthy *Whitaker*) *that that Father should judge so perversely, and write so bitterly concerning Councils.* But herein he was

*Non possim non mirari. Non invenimus de Conciliis rem inique judicasse, & acerbe scripsisse.*

*Whitaker contra Campianum de Conciliis.*

alone.

alone. As for the rest of the *Fathers*, we shall finde them cleare of another minde, judging and speaking as *honourably* of Councils and Synods, as *Nazianzen* did *concessely*; concluding them to be not onely *usefull*, but in some cases *necessary*. That of *Augustine* is well known, *Conciliorum in Ecclesia saluberrima auctoritas*; *The Authority of Councils is most wholesome for the Church*, saith he, speaking of *Generall Councils*: And *Cyprian* saith as much or more of *Topicall particular Synods*: *Neesse habuimus, &c.* We held it *necessary* (saith he) to gather and celebrate a *Council of many Priests* (or *Ministers*) *assembli-  
ng together*: So as against this one singular testimony of this single *Father* we may well oppose the dissenting judgement of all the rest.

3. Suppose that *Father* in his time never saw any good end of *Synods*? What shall we thence conclude against them? Upon the very same ground might the promoters of this charge as well conclude against our *Parliamentary Assemblies* in this Kingdome. Touching which, for our parts, many of us here present may say as *Nazianzen* doth there of *Councils*, that in our time we have not seen a desirable successe of them; they have not answered our hopes and expectations, but most an end have left us in *statu quo prius*, in the same, if not in a worse condition then they found us; and yet I hope neither they, nor any other who are true-hearted to their Countrey, will dare to speake a word, or entertain a thought against the use, utility, and necessity of them.

4. Suppose that *Nazianzen* might say that he had not seen any good successe of Councils in his times. Shall we therefore say the like of all other Councils? What say wee to this first Council held by the *Apostles* and *Elders* at *Hiernsalem*? had not this a good end? Let the Text informe us what was the successe of it. *And so were the Churches established, &c.* ] What say we to many other Councils in after ages? instance in those 4. first *generall Councils*, so universally received and approved of by the Church. However the immediate successe of some of them did not answer expectation for the setting of *Peace* and *Trueth* in the Church, yet shall we say, that the Churches of God in after ages are not beholding to them? *Councils* and *Synods* in this are sometimes like unto *Comets* (let not any pervert or abuse the comparifon) which have not their effect till some yeers after their appearing. I remember what the *Apostle* saith of *Parents*, they doe (or ought to doe) *They*

2 Cor. 12. 14. *up for their children.* And this have the *fatbers* of those *Councels* done, laid up for posterity, laid up many precious truths, which have been usefull to the Church of God in all succeeding ages. Ungratefull should we be, should we not acknowledge our selves beholding to them, and many other *Councels* and *Synods* since those times. Not to go far back. What think we of those *Synods* or *convocations* (call them as you please) in this Kingdom, where in the *Articles* of our *Religion* were drawn up and agreed upon, and by Law established? What think we of the late *Synod* at *Dort*? or of the later *Assembly* in *New-England*, to which that *Plantation* (under God) owes not a little of her present subsistence?

Not to multiply words. Certainly such is the utility, such is the necessity, if not of *Generall Councels*, yet of *Topicall*, *Particular*, *Nationall*, *Provinciall Synods*, that the Church in this declined condition cannot well subsist without them. And therefore let all take heed how they goe about to prejudicate either themselves or others against this *Sovereign Church-Remedie*. Which what is it, but as if one should endeavour to loath a sick man of his *poison* before it come at him? Then which, what greater dis-service and injury can possibly be offered and done both to *Physitian* and *Patient*?

I know there are yet some other *Arrows* let flye at these *Synodicall Assemblies*; but I finde them such, as light as well upon this first *Councell* at *Hierusalem*, as upon those which have or shall succeed it, and in that respect the lesse to be regarded. As *viz.*

Theomak. p. 33  
 ωειοωωω  
 φρρρρρρρ  
 εδδδδδδδ  
 Ηοη.

*Object. 1.* That they are prejudiciall to mens *gifts*, and *parts*, and *industry*, *conspiring* them all into a *Synodicall circle* (as one unhappily expresseth it) *suffering* them *onely* to dance there.

*Answe.* And might not the Churches to whom *Paul* here maketh delivery of these *Synodicall Decrees*, have taken up the same exception against this *Councell* at *Hierusalem*? to which (as it is alleged) some of them were not called so much as to shew their judgements.

Theomak. p. 47

*Object. 2.* Not unlike is that other; that *Assemblies* of this nature are commonly swayed and carried by a few. *It is usuall.* (saith the same Author) *that in such Councels, some one or few of predominant parts, or authority amongst them, sway and steere all the proceedings, and all the judgements and affections of the rest, though conscientious and learned to a degree. So that upon the matter and just account, the resolutions of*

*Comp.*

*Councils and Synods themselves, are but the fruits and puttings forth of the learning and judgement of a very few men.*

*Ans.* And was it not so in this first Councell at Hierusalem? were there not here some *leading men* amongst them? Is not that the very Epichete which the holy Ghost giveth unto Judas and Silas? that they were *ἡγούμενοι*, *chiefe men* (or *leading men*, as the word properly signifieth) amongst the brethren, at whom no question the rest had a speciall eye. And were not the Apostles, Peter, and James, and Paul, such as by whose *predominant parts* and *authority* the proceedings of that Councell were mainly swayed and steered? And yet for all that was that a *free* and *orderly Councell*. And so may others after it be. But I will say no more in this cause: neither was I willing to have said so much. Onely taking notice of a *dangerous designe* set on foot by some, and driven on by others, for the prepossessing and forestalling the minds and hearts of the people with prejudicate opinions against the determinations of the *present Assembly* in this Kingdome, what ever they may be, and thereby to blast all the hopes which the Church of God may conceive from thence; I could not but thinke it my duty to say what I have done, that it might serve both as an *Antidote* and *Preparative* unto you of this place, to preserve you from the danger of this *infection*, and to prepare you for the receiving and entertaining of such *messages* as God shall send unto us by the hands of those whom at the present by his providence he hath set a worke as his Instruments for the finding out and revealing of his minde and will unto his people.

Come we in a word or two to the third and last branch of this second particular, which I will but opely touch upon, therein making amends for my necessitated prolixity in the two former, *viz.* the place where this Councell was held, and these Decrees ordained; *viz.* at Hierusalem.

*Quest.* And why there rather then elsewhere?

*Ans.* Take a reason or two.

1. To let passe the *conveniency* of the place, which being the *metropolis*, the chiefe City of that Kingdom (as London is of this) was most commodious for such a meeting, whither persons from all parts were wont to resort.

2. In the second place, (as it was the chief *Citie*, so it was the chief *Church*, being the *first Church*; The first. 1. For *time*; the first

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first place where the Apostles after the *Ascension* of Christ gathered and constituted a Church. 2. the first for *number*, the number of beleevers belonging to that Church being very great ( as I shall have occasion ( God willing ) to shew you anon ). 3. the first for *Honour* and *dignitie*, highly accounted of by all other of the Churches. In some sence a *Mother-Church*. So the rest of the Churches (many of them) looked upon it. *Non secus ac Matrem colebant*, ( saith *Calvin*.) They respected and honoured that Church as a *Mother-Church*. And so indeed she was : 1. In as much as the Gospell first went out from thence. So it was foretold, *The Lord shall send the Rod ( or Scepter ) of thy strength out of Sion*, *Psalm* 110. It is spoken of Christ Now what is the *Rod* (or *Scepter*) of Christ? why, his *word*, which is called the *Scepter of his strength*, because it is the powerfull instrument whereby Christ brings, and keeps the world in subjection to himself. Now this *Rod*, this *Scepter* was to go out of *Sion*, out of *Hierusalem*. So the Prophets both *Esay* and *Micah* explain both the one & the other, *The law shall go forth of Sion, and the word of the Lord from Hierusalem : Isa. 2. Micah 4.* Thus it was foretold, and thus it came to passe. Behold the accomplishment of these prophecies at the day of *Pentecost*, when the Apostles being filled with the Holy Ghost preached the Gospell at once to *all nations*, to some almost of everie nation. By which meanes the Gospell was conveyed through the world. Like *water* ( it is *Calvins* similitude ) which is conveyed from one *fountain* through many *channels*, and conduit-pipes to divers places. Thus did the Word of the Lord go forth from *Hierusalem*. And in that respect a *mother Church*. 2. A mother Church out of whose *loines* ( as I may say ) many other Churches were issued, having their Originall from thence, being but as so many *slips* and *off-seis* from that first *Root*. In which respect the Church of Hierusalem is called by some *Ecclesie Surcularis*; being like a *Tree* full of yong shootes, and *branches*, many of which are in time transplanted elsewhere. So was it with that Church ; many of the members thereof were in time translated to other parts, by which meanes the Gospell was dispersed, and the Churches increased. And hereupon it was that the rest of the Churches gave so much honour to that Church, being ( as you see ) a *mother Church*. 3. Againe a mother Church, as *breeding* of Churches, so *feeding* them, like a naturall mother ready upon all occasions to draw forth her *breasts* to give them suck. Ready to contribute her best *counsels* and *advices* for their *instruction* and *edification*. Bur this was not all.

Calvin in A.R. 15.v.2.

Psal. 110. 1.

Isa. 2. 3. Micah 4. 2.

Acts 2.

Ex eo fonte Evangelium quasi per rivus deductum fuerat. Calv. ib. M. Baal's triall of Seperat. p. 261.

3. In the third and last place, here was the greatest number of Apostles and Elders ordinarily to be met with. For besides those which kept an ordinarie constant residence and incumbencie there, (of which there were not a few, for that Church being great, her officers were many) there was a kinde of generall Remonstrances, where both Apostles, and others, upon occasion were wont to meet. As for Apostles, how many were here present at this time it is not certaine. Would we give an ear to that old counterfeite Clemens, he would tell us that all the twelve, how ever dispersed through the world, yet at this time by a divine instinct they were brought together, that they might joyne in this Council to plead the cause of Christianitie against Iudaisme. But this Legend our very Adversaries of Rome (though otherwise readie enough to hearken to such Traditions, and willing to owne and make use of that forged *Authors*) were ashamed of, and for this passage (amongst others) of the booke also. And well they may; In as much as one of the twelve by name James the brother of John (as themselves take notice of it) was before this dead, being put to death by Herod, as you may see it, *Act. 12.* All of them then could not be there. Not to hearken to the conjectures of others who will tell us of Peter, James, and John being there. The storie here maketh mention onely of the two former, (besides Paul, and Barnabas, the one an Apostle, the other an Evangelist.) What Elders were here present, we finde it alike uncertaine; but certainly, as the *qualitie* to the number of them was very considerable.

*Clem. Conf. l. 6. cap. 12. 1*

*Vide Corn. a Lapid. in Act. 15.*

*Act. 12. 2. Corn. a Lap. ibid. Lorin. ibid.*

*Quest.* Why, but how many (over they were, is scorned by the Text that they were all of the Church of Hierusalem.

*Ans.* Not so. This will never be proved, neither doth the Text make any thing for it, but rather against it. Marke the words, They delivered them the Decrees which were ordained of the Apostles and Elders which were at Hierusalem. [i.e.] Jerusalem. Not the Apostles and Elders [i.e.] of Hierusalem. So the phrase of Scripture elsewhere runs, where it speaketh of the officers of such a place. The elders of Ephesus, *Act. 20.* The Ance of the Church of Ephesus, *Supra* *Itanamar* *Sup. Rev. 2.* But these, the Apostles and Elders in, (or at) Hierusalem; i.e. those who were assembled together there at that time.

*Mr. Rutherford. Due right of Presbytery P. 402.*

*Act 20. 17. Rev. 2. 1, 8, 12, 18.*

*Object.* Why, but it is replied, James challengeth these Decrees to be theirs. *Act. 21. 25.* As touching the Council [i.e.] have written

*Act. 21. 25.*

ten and concluded, ] saith he, speaking to *Paul* concerning these Decrees,

*Answer.* We answer, this *James* speaks not *exclusively*, as excluding others, whether *persons* or *Churches*, who had any hand in that businesse: certainly, as for *Paul*, whom he speaketh it to, he had as maine a stroke in the debating and determining thereof as *James* himself, and *Barnabas* the like, besides many other *Elders* and *Prophets*, and that not only of the Church of *Jerusalem* and *Antioch*, but (as is very probable) of other Churches elsewhere, who were all interested in the making of these Decrees.

Act. 15. 12.

Vid. M. Ruth.  
ibid. p. 401.

True it is, a perfect list and Catalogue we have not, either of the severall *persons* which were sent, or of the severall *Churches* sending their *delegates* and *messengers* unto this Councell, only *Hierusalem* and *Antioch* are named: but in all likelyhood there were others as well as they; two reasons are alleadged for the ground of this conjecture.

1. Other Churches were concerned, and interested in this businesse, as well as *Antioch*, viz. the Churches in *Syria* and *Cilicia*, who were troubled with this doctrine, and had their souls perverted as well as *Antioch*.

Act. 15. 23.

24.

2. The letters of the councell are directed to them as well as unto *Antioch*, and binding decrees sent unto them: both these you may see in the 23, & 24. Verses of that 15. Chapter.

Now from hence we reason: First, *de jure*, that of right these Churches ought to have sent their *delegates* and *messengers* about this businesse as well as the Church of *Antioch*; according to the fore-named *Maxime*, *Quod omnes concernit, &c.* That which concerneth all, ought to be handled of all, which is true, being rightly understood, viz. *suo modo et gradu*, every one according to their place and order. Secondly, *de facto* it seemeth that they did so, in as much as the Councell directs their Letters alike unto them by names, as unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in *Antioch*, which seemeth to import, that all of them joyned in the referring of this question and cause to the determination of that Councell; and so accordingly it was, not by the Apostles and Elders of *Hierusalem* only, but by the Apostles and Elders in or at *Hierusalem*, viz. assembled there at that time: but it was my promise, not to insit upon this; and therefore having only cleared that scruple, I shall now dismiss it; and with it the second particular in the Text: viz. What *Paul* & *Sylva* here made delivery of.

Chap. 15.  
Vers. 23.



3. Passe we now to the third, viz. to whom these decrees were delivered: the Text answereth it, *As they went through the cities they delivered the Decrees unto them.*] Unto them? what, to the whole cities? Not so: but to the churches in those Cities: so the next Verse maketh it out, *And so were the churches established.*

Observ. Cities and churches in phrase of Scripture are sometimes put the one for the other, in that 14. of the Acts, Vers. 23. it is said, that Paul and Barnabas ordained Elders in every church, καὶ ἐκκλησίας, church by church; In the 1 Tit. Vers. 5. it is said, that Paul left Titus in Crete to ordaine Elders in every city, καὶ πόλιν, city by city, so as these two, in every church, and in every city, are ἰσοδυναμῶντα, phrases adequate and equipollent, used indifferently the one for the other: As they went through the cities they delivered the decrees unto them, i. e. to the churches in those cities.

Reas. The phrase will not be unfruitfull, cities and churches put one for the other; how so? what, were they alwaies of the same latitude and extent? was every whole city a church, so as all that dwelt within the one, were also members of the other? Not so: sometimes indeed it so happened, that (if not the universality, yet) the generality of a city imbraced the Gospell in an outward profession of it: thus we reade of Samaria, that when Philip came and preached the Gospell to them, the people with one accord (saith the story) gave heed unto those things which he spake, Act. 8. so as it is most likely, that the whole city in a manner received the Gospell, even as before the whole City had given heed to Simon Magus, and were carried away with his sorceries and enchantments, (they gave heed to him from the least to the greatest, Vers. 10.) So now they were generally brought to imbrace and professe the faith: so much may be collected from the 12. Vers. where it is said, when they believed Philip, viz. those which had been seduced by Simon, even the whole city, which is further confirmed from the 14. Vers. where it is said, that the Apostles at Hierusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word, importing, that the Word had a generall (if not an universall) entertainment in that City. Now in this case, (which let it be observed) a whole City was taken in, and associated into a Church: thus we reade of Samaria there: When they believed they were baptized both men and women, Vers. 12. The generality of the people were all joyned to the Church. However some of them were unworthy, and afterwards upon discovery were ejected and cast out againe, as you may

Verf. 21.

may see it in *Simon Magus*, in the sequel of the Chapter. And thus in like cases it may and ought to be, when the generality of a people in such a *town*, such a *city*, do embrace the Gospel, professing faith and obedience, to believe on Christ, and to submit to his government. In this case the *whole multitude*, not only may, but ought to be received into *Church-society*. However some may be unworthy, who, upon the manifestation thereof, may and ought to be cast out againe by the censures of the Church duly exercised.

Col. 4. 5.

But this case was not very ordinary with the Apostles. Commonly the *City* and the *Church* were two distinct things, the one far larger than the other; the *City* an ample *convent*, the *Church* a small *band* all contained in it; a *peculiar society* selected out of the multitude. Paul writing to his *Colossians*, willet them to *steale wisely towards us* *for which we are without*, Col. 4. And who were they? Why, generally all *Infidells* and *unbelievers*, who though they were within the *City*, yet were without the *Church*, within the walls of the one, but without the pale of the other; interested in the *immunities* and *liberties* of the one, not so in the *priviledges* of the other; having *no will converse* with the members of the Church, but no *Church-communication*.

Quest. Why then are *Cities* and *Churches* put one for the other?

Ans. Take it in a word, because the whole company of Christians, of professors, within such bounds and limits, viz. within the *City* and the *adjacent territories* were meant to be framed into one Christian society or Church.

Ezek. 1. 16.

Obser. So many *Cities*, so many *Churches*, and no more; so much this phrase imports, and it will not be amiss (my brethren) for us to take speciall notice of it, lest in going about to multiply Churches, to erect and set up Churches in Churches, (like *Esaie's* wheels, one within another,) and thence to *transforme* in their motions, as these were, but in this rather like the *wheels of a clock*, which move divers and contrary waies, we transpasse and transgress not only against the phrase of Scripture, but against the *primitive* and *Apostolicall practice* intimated unto us in that phrase. Looke (I beseech you) through the whole new Testament, and see where you find mention made of any more Churches in a *Town* or *City* than one: true, we read frequently of the Churches of *Judea*, & the Churches of *Asia*, *Blacedonia*, *Galatia*, &c. many Churches in one Kingdom, in one Province, but no where

Act. 16. 9.  
2 Cor. 8. 1.  
Gal. 1. 2.

where of the Churches of *Philippi*, of *Corinth*, of *Sardis*, or yet of *Jerusalem*. But still the Church.

*Quest.* Why, but may there not then be more Congregations in a City than one?

*Ans.* Surely yes. (and I heartily wish that it were so in this place) where the number of a people professing the Gospel is so increased, as that they cannot assemble together in one place, now it is not only lawfull and expedient, but even necessary, that they should be divided into severall Congregations. Thus (for my own part) I cannot but think that it was in some of the Cities forenamed, at least in *Jerusalem*, where the number of believers (as the story tells us) was in a little time so exceedingly increased, first to three thousand, *Act. 2.* not long after to six thousand, *Act. 4.* which five thousand, however *Celsus* and some others look upon it as the small number, the whole number of believers taking in the former Church thousand; yet many (I think the most) other Expositors conceive of it rather as a new addition, five thousand added to the former three thousand: thus amongst the *Ancients*, *Jerome*, *Augustine*, *Chrysostome*, *Lyranus*, *Bedae*; amongst *Moderns*, *Cornelius a Lapide*, *Arantius*, which last Author giveth a double reason why he conceiveth it should be so, (to me both very probable.) For first, in reckoning of the former three thousand, the *Evangelist* did not take in the hundred, and twenty, the first fruits of the Church, spoken of in the first Chapter, but only set down the new addition which was made; so here in setting down the five thousand he may seem to have no reference to either of the former numbers, but to show what a new increase and accession there was. And secondly, hereby not only the increase of the Church is set forth, but also the increase of the efficacy of the Word, which grew stronger and stronger, fetching in first three thousand, then five thousand, which five thousand (as it is further noted by some) are there said to be men; the number of whom was about five thousand, *ἐὶς ἑξήκοντα τὸν ἄνδρα*, *numerus virorum*. If so, what then shall we conceive the number of the women, (not to speak of children) who in devotion have been ordinarily observed not to come short, but rather to go far beyond the other Sex. To go on, after this we yet reade of new additions, *Act. 5.* it is said, that *Boliziers* were there added to the Word, *multitudo* both of men & women. In so much that in a short time the number of them was grown very great: so much that speech of *James* & the Elders of

*Act. 2. 41.*  
*Act. 4. 4.*  
*Calv. Pijlat.*  
*ad Loc.*

*Vide Cornel.*  
*a Lap. ad Loc.*

*Act. 1. 15.*

*A Lap. ibid.*

*Famineus sex-*  
*us pre viris*  
*magis solei esse*  
*deventus idem.*

*Act. 5. 14.*

## The Sacred and Sovereigne

Act. 21.  
Verf. 20.

Myrias conti-  
net decem mil-  
lia.

Act. 19. 19.

Jud. verf. 14.

Luk. 12. 1.

Heb. 12. 22,

len unto Paul imports, *Act. 21.* where speaking of the believing Jewes, who joynd themselves to the Church of Jerusalem: Thou seest brother (say they) how many thousand Jewes there are which believe, &c. The word in the originall is *ἑκατὸν μυριάδας*; and it properly signifieth how many ten thousands? and so we finde it translated elsewhere, *Act. 19.* Where the *conjurings books* which were burnt are estimated, the totall is computed to be about *fifty thousand pieces of silver*, *Verf. 19.* *μυριάδας πέντε*, five Myriads, five times ten thousand, so in the 14. *Verf.* of the Epistle of Jude, we reade of *ten thousand of Saints*, *ἑκατὸν μυριάδων*. Whether the word should be so strictly taken in this place of the *Acts*, I will not contend: but certainly, take it how we will, it imports an exceeding great number, well nigh *innumerable*: so I finde the word in two places translated, *Luk. 12. 1.* it is said, that *there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people*; the word is the same, *τῶν μυριάδων*. So againe, *Heb. 12. 22.* we reade of *an innumerable company of Angels*, *μυριάδων ἀγγέλων*. And such was the number of the believing Jewes which had joynd themselves to the Church of Jerusalem, almost an innumerable company, so as they could not possibly meet all together in one place to partake of the Ordinances. To me it is no question, they had severall Congregations:

*Quest.* But were not these then severall Churches?

*Answer.* No. Severall Congregations, but one Church; the Church of Jerusalem, even as it is in a great City: there may be severall Societies and companies, according to severall trades and mysteries; and those so many petty corporations, who may have their severall Halls, and their severall meetings, and yet all making up but one Incorporation, to which they are all subordinate because all under one and the same Government and Governours: even thus may it be in the Church, (and in the Primitive state of it, I conceive so it was.) In one City, and the adjacent territories there may be many Congregations, and yet but one Church; inasmuch as they may be united by the same Lawes, have communion in the same Ordinances, and be linked together under the same spirituall Guides and Officers. Surely in all probability thus it was, at least in some of the Proto-Primitive Churches. And why not now?

*Vid.* in Baals tryall of the grounds tending to separation. p. 296.

But (not to wade too farre into this collaterall Controversie, from which I have bound my selfe before) however, certainly to multiply Churches in one Towne, one Citie; especially to set up Churches

*Churches in Churches*, the one extracted out of the other, this hath no President, no warrant, no maintenance, no countenance from any phrase of Scripture, or practice of the Apostolicall times.

*Object.* No? it will be said; What say we then to the Jewish Church? Did not the Apostles set up Churches in that Church, and those extracted out of it?

*Answer.* To this shadow of an Argument it is soon answered. Here was not one Church set up in another, but many set up upon the ruines of one: so as the setting up of the one was the pulling down of the other. Even as, the Apostle saith of the two Covenants, old and new, The first was taken away, that the second might be established; Heb. 10. Heb. 10. 9. So was it with these two Churches: that legall, this Evangelicall. As for the Jewish Church, it was now like the Jewish legall covenant, which the Apostle speaketh of, Heb. 8. calling it *το παλαιον η ο ητοιμασεν*, *Antiquatum quid, & senescens*, a thing which was Antiquated, and made old: *ετοιμασεν*; *ετοιμασεν*; nigh to vanishing, ready to disappear, and come to nothing; so as here was onely a new edifice to be erected upon those ruines, a new Church to be set up in an Evangelicall way, where that Legall Church had been. Now I confesse, had we to deal with rigid down-right Separatists, who looke upon our Churches as no true Churches of Christ, but *Anti-christian Synagogues*, fit to be dissolved and pulled down, saying of them in the *Edomites* language, *Rase them; rase them; even so the foundation thereof*; Psal. 147. 7. then might this Argument have some colour of strength in it. But otherwise where our Churches are acknowledged as true Churches, in this case to set up a Church in a Church and so extract the one out of the other, (I say it again, and I wish it may be taken notice of) it is a thing which Scripture will give no warrant, no president for.

*Quest.* But suppose a Church be defective, or corrupted; in this case what shall we doe?

*Answer.* Not presently think of pulling it down, and setting up another, (Was it not the very case of the Church of Corinth? and yet we doe not read of any that went about to set up a Church in that Church, under pretence of walking in a purer way) but rather endeavour by all meanes to purge and reforme it. This will we doe by our houses, if they be foule, we will sweep them; if decayed and impaired, though it be in some of the principals, we will not presently think of pulling them down, and building others out of their timbers.

2 King. 12.  
14.

bers and materials, but *repare* them: And thus did King *Jehoshaphat* for the house of his God, the *Temple*: finding it *ruinous*, he gave order (not to pull it down and build a new one, but) to *repare* it. O that we would all of us entertaine such thoughts concerning the *Church* or *Churches* of God in this Kingdom! It is a thought which God hath already put into the heart of the *State* of this Kingdome; and what *progreffe* and *procedare* is already made in the work, I shall not need to tell you. I hope, time ere long will declare it. Herein then let all our hearts close and comply with theirs; every one in our places doing what we may to further so pious an undertaking; in the meane time taking heed of adventuring upon *new wayes*, which we have neither *precepts* nor *presidents* in Scripture for. What way of *gathering* & *setting up* of *Churches* the Scripture holdeth forth unto us, you may see by what hath been already said. Those which embraced the faith within such a circuit, within the bounds of a *Citie*, and the *adjacent Territories*, they were all framed together into one *Christian society* or *Church*. And hence is it, that *Cities* and *Churches* in phrase of Scripture are (as you see) put the one for the other, as elsewhere, so here in the Text, *As they went through the [Cities] they delivered unto [them], &c.*

*Quest.* Delivered them? But what *Cities*, what *Churches* were these?

*Indefinitum equipollet universalis.*

*Ans.* The Text layeth it downe in *indefinite* words, carrying with them the force of an *universall*, viz: what ever *Cities* they passed thorough, where there were any *Churches* they delivered these *Decrees* unto them.

*Quest.* Here a scruple may arise. Why should the *Apostles* here deliver these *Decrees* alike unto all the *Churches* where they came, when as all of them did not appear at this Council? As for *Hierusalem* and *Antioch*, and the *Churches* of *Syria* and *Cilicia*, these *Decrees* were proper for them, in as much as they had received both the *Question* and *cause* to the determination of this Council, and had their *Agents* there to deal for them. But had not some other of the *Churches*. How then could these *Decrees* be *obligatory*, and binding unto them, which they had no hand in making of, or *affirming*?

*Ans.* To this is answered, that though these *Decrees* were nonbinding to them *formally*, yet *liberally* and *admodum* they were. As for *Jerusalem* and *Antioch*, and such other *Churches* as concerned

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red with them in this *Appeale*, they were bound *formally* by an *Ecclesiasticall* bond or *tye*: Even as those which put a *businessse* to *Arbitration*, they are *formally* bound to stand to what their *Arbitrators* shall agree upon, so it be not against *Law* and *Reason*. Besides the bond of *Equity*, they have also a *Civill, Formall Obligation*, under which they lye: So was it with those Churches which had referred their cause to this *Councell*, and had sent their *Delegates* thither, they were now bound by a double bond, not onely that generall *Morall* bond of *Equity* and *Right*, but by a *Formall, Ecclesiasticall* bond to submit to the *Determinations* of that *Councell*, so farre as they they were agreeable to the *Word*. But now for other Churches, though they did not lye under such a double obligation, yet under a single one they did. Though they were not so *formally* bound as the other, yet *virtually* they were, and *morally*, in regard of the *Equity* and *Reason* of those *Decrees*. It is *Dr. Ames* his determination touching *Councils*, and their *Decrees*. *Tantum valet Decretum concilii quantum valet ejus ratio. A Decree of a Councell carrieth so much weight with it, as there is Reason in it.* Now these *Decrees* here agreed upon in this *Councell*, they were all *Rationall* *Decrees*, agreeable to *Scripture* and *sound Reason*: And being such, they were in this respect obligatory to the rest of the Churches, even to those who did not appeare at that *Councell*: And upon this ground it was that the *Apostle* here maketh delivery of them wheresoever he came. *As they went iborom the Cities they delivered the Decrees unto them.* ¶

Vid. Mr. Ruberfordi Dne Rights of Prefbyeries, p. 400

D. Ames Bel-larm. Enervat. de Concil. c. 3.

*Quest.* But yet it may be said againe, *Wherefore deliver them to all?* Possibly, and probably some of the Churches were not interested, and concerned in these differences: And if they were, yet *why might they not be left to their Christian liberty*, to doe as they saw convenient in these *indifferent things*? *Why might they not rather be left every one to their own way in these matters of lesser difference?*

*Ans.* No, this the *Councell* thought not convenient; they make an *Order* against it; and in prosecution of that *Order* the *Apostle* here where-ever hee commeth maketh delivery of these *Decrees*. And wherefore this? why, that he might by this meanes bring all the Churches to *Unity* and *Uniformity*; *Unitie* in judgement and affection, and *Uniformity* in practice; that they might all be of one heart, and of one way.

*Observ.* An usefull observation which meeting me so full in the way, I may not haule it. *Unity and Uniformity among the Churches is a thing to be earnestly desired and endeavoured.* This was a thing which

Oferra

this blessed *Apostle*. set much by. His requests to, and prayers for the Churches are well knowne. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded, &c. that ye may with one minde and one mouth glorifie God; it is his prayer, for his *Romans*, Rom. 15. Now I beseech you, *Brethren*, by the name of the Lord *Jesus Christ* that ye all speake the same thing, and there be no divisions, or schismes among you, but that ye be perfectly joynd together in the same minde, and in the same judgement; it is his first request which he maketh to his *Corinthians*, 1 Cor. 1. And as it is the first, so it is the last, his *Alpha* and *Omega*. Finally, brethren, farewell, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one minde, live in peace, &c. it is his farewell to the same Church, 2 Cor. 13. Onely let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ, &c. that ye stand fast in one spirit and one minde. It his charge to his *Philippians*, Phil. 1. If there be any consolation in Christ, &c. Fulfill yee my joy, that ye be like minded, &c. So hee prosecuteth the same charge with most patheticall enforcements in the chapter following. Thus did *Paul* stand affected towards the *Unitie* of the Churches to whom he writeth.

And as to their *Unity*, so to their *Uniformity*; hereupon it was, that what he ordered in one Church, he willed that it should be observed by all. Thus in that 1 Cor. 7. having answered and stated certain doubts and questions propounded to him by his *Corinthians*, as viz. touching single life and marriage, the co-habitation of persons unequally yoked, Beleevers and Infidels, &c. he tells them that the Orders and Directions which hee sent unto them were no other then what he gave in common to all the rest of the Churches. And so ordain I in all Churches, vers. 17. Thus againe chapter 16. taking order touching the time and manner of making collection for the poore Saints, he prescribeth one Order for all the Churches. Now concerning collection for the Saints, as I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so doe yee, vers. 1. And upon the same ground it was, that having the Decrees of the Councell at *Hierusalem* in his hands, he maketh delivery of them where ever he commeth; not onely to the Churches to whom they were by name directed; but to all other Churches. As they passed throu the Cities, they delivered the Decrees to them.

AA. 15. 23.

Applicat.

And was *Paul* so active, so forward in this businesse? let not any of us be backward with it, much lesse averse against it. Certainly *Unity* and *Uniformity* are a matter of greater concernment to the Churches then commonly they are taken to be, making much both for their safety and beauty.

I. For their safety. It is not for nothing that *Paul* writing to his



his *Philippians* in the place forenamed putteth these two together; *That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one minde, striving together for the faith of the Gospell; And in nothing terrified by your adversaries.* ] were it so that the Churches were of *one minde*, and would *συνάγειν*, *strive together* for the Gospell, *going out as one man* against the common enemy, as the tribes of *Israel* are said to have gathered together against *Benjamin*, *Judg. 20.* then would they be terrible as an *Army with banners*: so as they should not need to feare the Adversary. Their *Unity* under God would be a speciall meanes of their safety. Whereas their *divisions* are like *breaches* in a common *banke*, letting in a *Sea* of evils upon them: or like the breaking of the *ranks* in an *army*, which is the next way to let in the *enemy*, and so to rout the whole *body*. *Unity* in *judgement* and *affections* (the one of which much depends upon the other, for where *judgements* are divided, though it ought not to be so, yet such is the corruption in the Heart of man, which is like unto *tinder* ready to take fire by the least spark that falleth into it, there will ordinarily be some alienation in *affections*) maketh much for the Churches *security*.

Phil. 1. 27, 28.

Judg. 20. 1.  
Cant. 6. 4.

2. And so doth *Uniformity* make much for the *beauty* of it. Even as in a *City* where the buildings are *uniforme*, much of one height and one fashion, it is a *gracefull* prospect. So is it in the Churches. ] To see them not onely worshipping the *same* God, but worshipping him after the *same* manner; all worshipping before one *Altar*, as *Hezekiah* commanded all *Judah* and *Jerusalem* to doe. And that not onely enjoying the *same* Ordinances for *substance*, but as much as may be, the *same* administrations for *circumstance*; certainly there is a *beauty* in this *uniformity*. It was not for nothing that the *ten bases* in the temple, the supporters to the *great Lavatorie*, the *molten Sea*, were all alike; *all of them had one measure, and one casting, and one size*. This made them the more comly. And so is it with the *Ordinances* of God, when they are (as it were) cast into the *same mould*, dispenced after the *same manner*, it addeth an *external* grace and *beauty* to them.

2 Chro. 32. 12

1 Kings 7. 37

To these two I might yet adde two more, and I shall not need to go far to seek for them. I finde them both in the close of the Text. This maketh much for the *establishment* and *augmentation* of the Churches.

3. For their *establishment*. And so were the Churches established ] *viz.* by and through the means of that *unity* and *uniformity*, which were procured by the making and delivering of these Decrees.

4. For their *augmentation and increase*. So were the Churches *increased*.] A fruit (saith Chrysostome, cited by Lorinus upon the Text) of Pauls condescension and compli-  
ance in circumcising Timothee, of which you reade in the verses foregoing. This did he for the preserving of *unity and concord*, to which end also he delivered these Decrees. And behold the issue and fruit of both. And so were the Churches *increased*.] *Concordia res parva*.— Things small in their beginnings by concord and agreement rise oft-times to an envied height. So it is with *States*, and so it is with *Churches*.

Applic.

And is it so? why then let not any of us be backward or unwilling with what may be so advantageous to the Churches of God in these Kingdoms. Surely it is not without reason that other Churches have had such an eye hereupon. The Churches in *France*, *Low-Countries*, elsewhere, none more then the Churches in *New-England*, where we may see all the Churches within one and the same jurisdiction precisely put into the same posture, the same way, as for *Doctrine* and *Worship*, so for *Discipline* and *Government*. O let it be the joynt desire and endeavour of us, and of all the Lords people amongst us, that it may be so with the Churches of God in *this*, and (if it may be) in the *neighbour Kingdoms*.

Motive 1.

To set on this *motion*, let me take up and make use of a double *motive*. The former taken from the promise of God. Gods promises are or ought to be our *Directions and Encouragements*, shewing us both what we are to seek, and what successe we may expect in seeking.

Now this is one thing (amongst many) which God hath promised to his people, to his Churches under the Gospell (a branch of the *New-covenant*) that he will give them *one heart, and one way*. So you have it, *Jer. 32. 39. I will give them one Heart and one Way; i. e.* (as the Geneva Glosse explains it) *one Consent and one Religion; or Unity and Uniformity. Unity in Judgements and Affections; [I will give them one Heart.] Uniformity in Worship, and (haply) in Discipline, [I will give them one way.]* This promise, for my own part, I look upon as not yet having had the full accomplishment. Certainly both these will God doe for his Church, and that not only in the *triumphant* state of it in *Heaven* (where there is and ever shall be a perfect *Unity* and a perfect *Uniformity*. No difference in *Judgement*, no jar in *Affections*; there *Luther and Zwinglius* agree well enough; no difference in *worship* or *practise*. All worship the same God after the same manner. Nothing but a perfect *harmonic*) but also in the *militant* or rather *triumphant* state of it upon *earth*. Such

Jer. 32. 39.

Rev. 19.

e state (I verily beleeve) there shall be, when the Church shall triumph over her conquered enemies, *Gog and Magog*. And then shall there be a blessed harmony amongst the people of God themselves. Then shall *the wolfe dwell with the lambe, and the leopard lie downe with the kid, &c.* Isa. 11. 6. Christians though naturally of different tempers and dispositions, yet their spirits shall close together. There shall be no more such differences as now there are. They shall think and speak one and the same thing; there shall be but one *lip*; and they shall walk in the same *way*. As for those odious and opprobrious *nicknames* which have been, and yet are, not without some unkinde and unchristian heat cast in the faces one of another by such as professe the Name of Christ, they shall then be taken away and forgotten. There shall be no more mention of those differing and distinguishing *titles*, whereby the severall *opinions* or *ways* of the Churches are notified and signified unto us; as of *Lutheran, Calvinian, Diocesan, Presbyterian, Classicall, Congregational, Independent, &c.* Certainly there is a *grave* a digging for all these, wherein they shall be buried in everlasting forgetfulness, never to rise again, which shall be after the destruction of *Antichrist*. Then shall there be a sweet and heavenly comfort and harmony amongst those who have overcome the *beast*: *They shall* (then) Rev. 15. 3. *all sing* (the same song) *even the song of Moses, and song of the Lamb,* as you have it, *Rev. 15. 3.* O blessed times! which methinks all the Lords people should look at (in some measure) as *Abraham* is said to have done at the *day of Christ*, the day of his *Incarnation*, Joh. 8. 56. *John 8.* with *desire* and *exultation*; or as the *creatures* are said to look at the time when the *sons of God shall be manifested* (which some refer to the times I am now speaking of) with an *ἀνυπόκριστα*, an *earnest expectation* and looking out for, earnestly desiring and longing to see what we beleeve; that (if it be the will of God) we may yet reap some of the *first fruits* of the accomplishment of this promise even in our dayes. Hereunto let all of us be stirred up to contribute, as our *prayers*, so our joint *endeavours* for the effecting of this great work, this blessed *unity* and *uniformity* amongst the Churches, particularly and specially among the Churches of God in *this* and the *neighbour Kingdoms*. Rom. 8. 19.

To which (let this be a second motive) we are bound by a speciall ingagement, *viz.* by the late *solemn Nationall Vow and Covenant*, wherein (amongst other things) we have promised this for one, *viz.* to *endeavour the bringing of all the Churches in the three King-*

Motive 2.

## The Sacred and Sovereigne

doms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in Religion, confession of faith, forme of Church-Government, &c. This is our Vow, a solemn Vow, from the obligation whereof no power under Heaven can absolve and discharge us. In the feare of God then remember our Vow, and set our selves to pay it. In the meane time taking heed of adventuring upon any such wayes or courses, as may at least seeme crosse and contrary hereunto. Amongst which I shall earnestly desire that this may be seriously and fully considered by all conscientious Christians amongst us; whether in this interim of time, whilest that one way is seeking out, which being most agreeable to the Rules of the Word, may be also most expedient to the present state of these Kingdoms, whether (I say in this conjuncture of time) to set up new Churches in new wayes, and those such as we are (at least probably) perswaded will not be embraced by any of the three Kingdoms. Whether this can be conceived to be a proper way and means to compassse that end, and to bring about that designe. Whether wayes of Division and Separation can be thought to tend and lead to this desired Conjunction and Uniformitie. Every of us, in the presence of God, before whom we now stand, put this case to our selves, and let Conscience passe a free and impartiall verdict upon it; which if it passe against it (as surely if it proceed according to the evidence of Reason, it must) then take we heed not only how we joyne in such wayes, but how we give any countenance to them, lest we should seeme to be accessary to so great an evill, as the breach and violation of so solenne a vow and covenant.

*Object.* But it will be said, Suppose a way to be the way of God, may it not then be set up, maugre all such pre-ingagements?

*Answer.* To this let me answer these three things:

1. This is but a *supposition* (as touching any particular way) not grounded upon apparent evidence; at the best a doubtful and questionable truth, not granted nor yet pleaded.
2. But secondly, suppose this supposed way to be [a] way of God, yet doth it not thereupon follow that it should be [the] way of God, the way so laid out for all the Churches, as that they should all be found to walke precisely in the same path, so as not to vary a hairs breadth from it. I remember it is an observation of our late pious and reverend Doctor Preston touching the wayes of God, that in there is a length and a straitnesse, so also there is a latitude, a breadth in them. So it is in respect of particular persons. The way to some man (saith he) is broader then to others, and so the same man in some places broader

*broader, in some narrower.* One man may doe that which another may not doe; and the same man may do that at some time, and in some place, which in others he may not doe. And why may it not be so with Churches? Or why should the *common Church-way* be thought straiter then a *private path*? For my own part, I must freely professe (if it be an error, yet it is a charitable one) I cannot but conceive and apprehend such a *latitude* in the way of *Church-government*, as that severall Churches may have severall wayes in divers circumstances differing the one from the other, and yet each be a *way of God*; in as much as each of them in *substantials* may be conformed to the same *expresse and particular* rules of the Word, and in *circumstantials* to those *generall* rules of *Order, Decency, and Edification*, which oft-times in the *application and use* of them differ and vary according to the difference of *times and places*, and *conditions* of persons, and such other circumstances. So as away may be a *way of God*, and yet not so *the way* as that it must of necessity be set up in all the Churches.

And herein I do not go alone. Mr. Calvin, I am sure, will bear me company, who in molding and setting up that *form of government* in the Church at *Geneva*, was far from any thoughts of binding all the Churches to follow that *president*, and to conform themselves to that *pattern*. He did not dream that that was the *pattern in the mount*. No, herein he professeth to leave what he took, a liberty to the Churches to mold themselves into such wayes as may be most expedient for them. His words are not unknown, writing upon 1 Cor. 11.2. *Scimus enim unicuique Ecclesia liberum esse, &c.* We know (saith he) that there is a liberty left to every Church to set up such a forme of *Policie, or Government*, as may be most apt and profitable for it selfe, (viz. in respect of *Circumstantials*.) And he alleadgeth this reason for it: *Quia Dominus nihil certi prescripserit; Because our Lord and Master Christ hath not punctually and precisely prescribed any such form* as all the Churches should be obliged to. This was his judgement after a long search to finde out what was revealed in this particular, and I wish it were received amongst the Churches. I know no one *principle* that would conduce more to a happy and blessed *pacification* then this. Whereas on the other hand, the stamping of a *Jus divinum*, a *Divine Right* upon any one forme, so as to make it *in omnibus* a *standard* for all other Churches; I cannot but look upon it as a *ground or occasion* of an *everlasting* parallel never to be decided and taken up, till *Elias* (as the Jews say) or the

*Scimus enim unicuique Ecclesia liberum esse policie formam institueri sibi aptam, &c. uti legitur; Quia Dominus nihil certi prescripserit. Calv. in 1. Cor. 11.2.*

Mat. 17.11.

Messias.

Joh. 4. 25.

*Messias* (as the woman of *Samaritan* hath it) shall come, who will tell us all things.

3. But thirdly, suppose this way to be *the way of God*, yet I beseech you let it be enquired whether *this way and manner of setting it up* be the way of God or no. At such a time, whilest *authority* is at work, using the best and most hopefull *indeavour*s for the discovering and finding out what way is most agreeable to the Rules of *Scripture*, and most expedient for the state of the three Kingdoms, with a full purpose to set it up in a regular and orderly way in this *method* for private persons to anticipate and forestall those religious intentions, by setting up a supposed way of God without, if not against the authority of the *Christian Magistrate*, and that to the present disquietment of the Churches peace, the indangering of her future subsistence, and the eminent hazard of betraying both *Church* and *State* into the hands of the common enemy; whether this (I know not) be *the way of God* or no, I propound it to the serious and sad consideration of all those who are conscientiously wise. And so leaving this third maine particular with them, I shall now passe on to the fourth.

Part 4.

4. The fourth maine particular in the Text (wherein I will be as brieve as possibly I may, hasting towards the conclusion of the Text) is the *immediate end* wherefore *Paul* and *Silas* here make delivery of these Decrees, *viz. quatenus, to keep*. They delivered them *the Decrees for to keep*.] To keep, not only in memory, nor yet only upon record, but to observe them, to submit & yeeld obedience to them.

Here is the generall end of all Decrees, all *Laws* and *Constitutions*, whether *Divine* or *Humane*, *Politick* or *Ecclesiasticall*; they are all made to be kept. We have to deal with the latter, *Ecclesiasticall*

Observ.

*Decrees and Constitutions*, which (being such as these here in the Text, they) both may and ought to be kept. It is that which *Paul* praiseth his *Corinthians* for, 1 *Corinth. 11.* Now I praise you, Brethren, that ye remember in all things (or as the *Geneva* readeth it according to the

1 Cor. 11. 2.

2d word a po.

Originall, \* *all my things*) and keep the *Ordinances* as I delivered them to you.] The *Ordinances*, *quatenus*, the *Traditions*. So *Paul* calleth the *Directions* and *Advices* which he delivered to the Churches, whether by *mouth*, or by *pen*, or by *hand*; by *mouth* or *word* in his

2 The 2. 15.

*preaching*; by *pen* or *writing* in his *Epistles*; by *hand*, as here in the Text he delivered the Decrees of the Councell with his own hand to the Churches. And these *Ordinances*, these *Traditions* of his the Church of *Corinth* kept.

Quest.

*Quest.* But what *Ordinances*, what *Traditions* were these?

*Ans.* To this it may be answered, *Pauls traditions* which he delivered to the Churches, were of two sorts, *dogmaticall* or *rituall*; *dogmaticall* concerning *faith* and *good works*; of these speaketh the Apostle in that *2 Thef. 2. 15.* *Now therefore brethren stand fast, & hold the traditions which yee have been taught, whether by Word or by Epistle.* *Rituall*, concerning *rites* and *orders*, *civill* or *religious*, which againe are distinguished into two sorts, some *perpetuall*, others *temporary*, the former to be observed at all times in all places, such are those *orders*, which he delivereth to the Church of *Corinth*, touching the administration of the *Sacrament of the Lords Supper*, *1 Cor. 11. 23.* *I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.* The latter to be observed only for a time, such were these *decrees* which here in the Text he maketh delivery of to the Churches, they were *ordinances* to be observed but for a time, not for ever; for (as *Calvin* well observeth) *Paul* himself afterwards, when the ground & reason of these *injunctions* was ceased, he set the Churches at liberty from the observation of them, as you may see *1 Cor. 10. 25.* where he giveth his *Corinthians* a generall licence touching meats, *Whatsoever is sold in the shambles that eat, asking no question for conscience sake.*

D. S. later  
S. hot. in  
1 Cor. 11. 23

2 Thef. 2. 15

1 Cor. 11. 23

Calvin ad  
Text.

1 Cor. 10. 25

Thus you see what *Pauls traditions* were, and in these you may see what *Ecclesiasticall Decrees* may be, *viz.* *councils* and *constitutions* both *dogmaticall* and *rituall*, concerning *faith* and *good works*, concerning *rites* and *orders* to be observed in the Churches. Now all these (being such as *Pauls traditions* were,) they are to be kept. As for the two former, I suppose there will be no difference about them: *Dogmaticall doctrines* and *perpetuall orders* having the Word for their expresse and cleare warrant, (as they ought to have,) they challenge an absolute obedience. The Question will be all about these last sort of *Decrees*, *Rituall ordinances* or *orders of temporary observation*, whether these, being imposed, should be kept or no.

Traditiones ad  
Ordinem et  
Religionem per-  
tinentes. Cal-  
Quae ad  
iustitiam  
externam, et  
decorum in  
cat. bus Eccle-  
siasticis obser-  
vandam spe-  
ctant. Bez.  
Sclain. Par.  
ad Loc.

Now to this case the Text cometh home. Such were the *Decrees* (as I have shown you) which were here delivered; and yet we see them here delivered to the Churches to *keep*; and even such were these *Ordinances*, these *Traditions*, which *Paul* speaketh of to his *Corinthians*, *I praise you that you keep the Ordinances*, *viz.* those *rituall Ordinances*, those *Orders* which he had prescribed them to observe in their *Church-meetings*, so the place is unversally understood by all *Expositors* that I meet with; and these *Orders* that Church generally had observed: however in some particulars they (at least

1 Cor. 11.  
v. 3, 4, 5. &c.

some of them) affected an unapprovable and undecent singularity, viz. the men prayed and prophesied with their heads covered, whilst the women fate by with their heads and faces uncovered, unvailed, for which the Apostle reproveth them in the verses following: yet generally they had a respect to all the orders prescribed by him, they remembered all his things, (his orders) and kept all his ordinances, and that with a speciall observance, so much the Word in the originall (as Beza notes upon it) imports, *καταξεναι*, i. e. *summo studio observatis*, they observed them very studiously, and heedfully, and that not only for matter, but for manner and forme, as the next clause expresseth it: *καταξεναι, κατὰ δὲ ὡς, as I delivered them,*] this did they.

Vid Par. ad  
Loc.

And surely (beloved) where we meet with the like ordinances, the like Ecclesiasticall Decrees & Constitutions, commended to us with at least a generall warrant from the Word, with all handed unto us by lawfull authority, here we ought to yield a like obedience. So much those generall Texts being rightly understood will extort from us, *submit your selves to every ordinance of man for the Lords sake*, 1 Pet. 2. *ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake*, Rom. 13. Both which places however properly relating to civill, yet by way of parity they may also be extended to Ecclesiasticall authority, (especially when backed with civill) which now must be submitted to, and that for conscience sake, though not for conscience of the thing commanded, yet of the power commanding: the thing it self may be indifferent, and yet our obedience necessary, viz. in regard of the generall command, and therefore saith the Apostle there, *Ἀνάγκη ὑμῶν ὡς ὁ δαί, you must of necessity be subject*. To like purpose also is that Text to the Hebrewer, (however too rigidly pressed by Romanists to inforce or countenance a blind obedience,) *Heb. 13. Obey them that are over you in the Lord, ( τοῖς ἡγουμένοις, Ducitoribus, your Leaders, your Rulers,) And submit your selves,*] which is meant properly of Ecclesiasticall Guides and Governours, who are to be hearkened to and obeyed in what they require from God and for God.

1 Pet. 2. 13.  
Rom. 13. 5.

Heb. 25. 17.

Applicat.

And with such an obedience let not any of us be unwilling. We know not (my brethren) how soon some Decrees of the same nature with those in the Text, may be brought unto us, agreed upon & recommended by a double Council, the one Ecclesiasticall, the other civill. Now take we heed how we take up resolutions aforehand, whether of opposing or not obeying. Certainly, however quiet and conscientious not obeying both may and ought to finde a very favourable and indulgent interpretation; yet presumptuous disobeying justly subjects



subjects a man to the highest of censures. Expreſſe for this purpose is that *Judiciall Law*, (which hath a great deale of *Morality* couched in it) *Deut. 17. The man that will do presumptuously, & will not hearken unto the Priest, or to the Judge, even that man shall dye, and thou shalt put away the evill from Israel,*] Take we heed then how we entertaine any thoughts that way, but rather prepare our eares and hearts to hearken and heare what the Lord God will say to us; what message he will send by the hands of those his servants, who have been so long a time enquiring after his pleasure, which being made known unto us, resolve (in what we may) to submit and obey. So did the Churches here, to whom *Paul* and *Sylva* delivered these Decrees, they delivered them to be kept by them, and so they were. For, as it followeth in the next words; *And so were the Churches established, viz. upon the delivering and observing of these Decrees.*

Deut. 17. 12.

Psal. 85. 2.

*Quest.* But what then, are we to shew the like respect to all *Ecclesiasticall Decrees* now, as the Churches did to these?

*Answer.* I answer, (as before) where they are like unto these, *pious and profitable Ordinances*, grounded upon the Word immediately or mediately, not imposed upon conscience, not enjoying any thing as necessary, not obtruding any thing as a part or meanes of worship, but what the Word hath made so: now they challenge a like respect as these Decrees did.

*Quest.* But what then, must we yeeld a *blinde obedience*, submitting without *discussing*? So it seemeth the Churches here did.

*Answer.* Neither so, nor so: as for the Churches, they indeed received these Decrees, and kept them accordingly as they were delivered. But to imagine, that either the *Apostle* in delivering, or they in receiving, required or yeelded a *blinde obedience*, is foully injurious to both. Surely, if *Pauls Doctrine* might be examined as it was by the *Bereans*, and they highly commended for it much more might these Decrees be scanned by the Churches, to whom they were brought, they being not the *immediate issues of an extraordinary inspiration*, as the other was, (as I have already shewn you,) and so may it, and ought it to be with all Decrees of the like nature. To think of yeelding a *blinde obedience* to them, were as great a wrong and injury to them, as to our selves: Decrees, (being such as they ought to be,) they ever bring light with them, whereby they may be discerned and discovered to be as they are. And by this light Christians both may and ought to judge of them, *viz. judicio discretionis*, (so it be done modestly and humbly) bringing them to the *Touch-stone*, to the *Rule*,

Act. 17. 11.

Ha. 8. 29.

Act. 5. 29.  
\* *Viz.* When  
they com-  
mand or for-  
bid us any  
thing contra-  
ry to the  
word of God,  
Genev. Gl. ad  
19c.

the rule of the *Word*; and the rule of rectified and sanctified *Reason*. This is the *old way*; and it is an *everlasting way*. To the *Law an. to the Testimony*, if they *speake not according to this Word*, it is because there is no light in them. ] Shall we finde any *Decrees* of men to be uche not agreeable to the *Word*, to the *particular* or *generall* rules of it, but clearly *contrary* to it? now the case is ruled; *It is better and safer to obey God, then men*. Better now *modestly* and *quietly* not to obey men, then *presumptuously* and *knowingly* to disobey God. But finding them to be such as are not contrary to this word, but consonant thereunto, now look upon our pattern, and doe likewise; *As they went through the Cities they delivered them the Decrees for to keep*; which accordingly they did; So much appears (as I told you) from the *event* and *successe* of this undertaking, which is the fifth and last particular in the Text, to which I now hasten.

## V E R S E 5.

*And so were the Churches established in the faith and increased in number daily.*

Ofero.

SEE here the *successe* of this first Council, so *managed*, so *professed* as you have heard. *Successelesse* it was not. *All Councils then are not so*. If any of them at any time prove so, let it not be imputed to the *Ordinance*, but to some *accidental*, *personall* miscarriage. Otherwise the *Ordinance* it selfe is very promising, very usefull and hopefull, very profitable and advantagious to the Church: So was this first Council, this *Pattern* of Councils, the *successe* and *event* whereof (as the Text informes us) was double. Hereupon there accrued unto the Churches a double blessing: The one of *Confirmation*, the other of *Augmentation*. *Confirmation*, they were *established in the faith*: *Augmentation*, they were *increased in number daily*. Upon these two I shall look two wayes; first, *severally* and *simply*, then *joyntly* and *relatively*, viz. as they both stand in a joynt reference to that first particle in the verse; [ *So* ] *So were the Churches established*, and *so were the Churches increased*, &c. A word of each: Beginning with the former, the *Churches Confirmation*.

*And so were the Churches established in the faith* ] They were *established*, and they were *established in the faith*; so I break them in two.

1. They were *established*, *εταπε:ντο, confirmabantur*, they were *confirmed*,

*firm'd, settled: Seeing* presupposeth an *unsettling*. And surely such was the state of these Churches before. *Paul* brought these *Decrees* unto them, they were *unsettled, shaken*.

Behold the proper fruit of *Divisions and Dissensions*; where they take place, they *unsettle*, they *shake*; *unsettle a State*, *unsettle a Church*, *shake both*. This *David* found true by experience in his Kingdome. *Heale the breaches thereof, for it shaketh*, Psal. 60. Both *Church* and *State* were *unsettled* by reason of those *Civill. broyles*, those home-bred *divisions* in his Kingdome. And I shall not need to tell you that we have found the like in this Kingdome. Was ever *State*, was ever *Church* more *unsettled* then ours at this day? And whence is this? why, this have our home-bred *divisions*, *dissensions* done. To hold to the Text; the *unsettling* of the *Church*. This will *Divisions* doe, *Divisions* in *judgement*; I, and those sometimes *sleight* ones. Such were at least some of those which had broke in upon these Churches; *sleight differences*, one would think, whether they should eat such or such *meates*, *blood*, *things strangled*, &c. yet even these had an influence upon the Churches, for the *unsettling* of them.

Observa

Psal. 60. 2.

Appl. Let not *sleight differences* then be *sleighted* of us, much lesse *pertinaciously* and *obstinately* maintained by us. But do what we may all of us for the *healing*, for the *composing* even of them. So long as these continue, and break forth, there is little hope of the Churches *establishment*, which is a thing that all the Lords people ought seriously both to desire and endeavour, let that be a second *Observation*.

*Church-establishment* is a thing much to be desired and sought after. It is the Lords promise to his Church under the Gospel, *Is. 2.* repeated *Mic. 4.* *The mountain of the Lords house shall be established in the top of the Mountains*. A blessing much to be desired for all particular Churches, that they may be established, settled in a quiet and steady way, put into a *solid* and constant frame and temper (as the word in the Text signifieth) Such a frame and temper I shall not need to tell you what a blessing it is in the *naturall* body, it is no lesse in the *mysticall*.

Obfer. 2.

Isa. 2. 2.

Mic. 4. 1.

*Reas.* Not to use many *Arguments* and *Reasons* about it; I finde one insinuated in the text: *Church-confirmation* maketh much for *Church-augmentation*. Mark the connexion of these two together; *So were the Churches established and increased*. The latter depends much upon the former, *Church-encrease* upon *Church-establishment*: where Churches are divided, distracted, *unsettled*, there can be nothing more prejudiciall to the *growth* of them, and of *religion* in them. Their *union*, *settlement*, *establishment* maketh much for the *encrease* of both.

H 3,

Applic.

*Applie.* And doth it so? Then let every of us be put in minde to seek this great blessing for the Church or Churches wherein we live: Taking heed of being any wayes accessory to the *unfeeling* hereof; whether by *hatching* or *brooding* any new opinions, or setting up any new *wayes*, which have not cleare light and warrant from the word. In these cases let that of the Apostle take place with us; *Hast thoue Rom. 14. 22. faith? have it to thy selfe.* Hast thou a strong apprehension and firm persuasion touching something which is not so fully and clearly revealed in Scripture, as that others may see it? have this *faith* to thy selfe; enjoy thine own *opinion* and *conscience*, but let it not break forth to the offence and *scandal* of others, much lesse to the *trouble* and *disquietment* of the *Church*, the settlement whereof ought to be exceeding precious in our eyes. And so let it be. Every of us seek it. Seek it by *Prayer*: *Ye that are the Lords Remembrancers keep not silence, give him no rest, untill he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.* Seek it by all *holy endeavours*, every one in our places, *private* persons in theirs, and *publike* persons in theirs, all of us willingly embracing, and carefully improving what ever *advantages* or *opportunities* God shall put into any of our hands, for the effecting, the furthering of so *great*, so *good* a work. So doth the Apostle here in the Text: He receiveth the *Decrees* from the Councell; and receiving them, delivereth them whereever he cometh. And what was his aime therein? why, that the Churches might be *settled*, might be *established*.

*Quest.* But what establishment was it that *Paul* here principally eyed and looked at? *A.* The next word resolves it, *in vultu*; So were 3. 9. the Churches established in Faith. ] i. e. in the Doctrine of Faith, the true 4. Religion of God: So the word is frequently used in Scripture, Faith put for the whole Religion of God: *Calvin* gives a reason for it, viz. because Faith in Christ is the foundation and ground-work of all. And this it was that *Pauls* eye was here mainly upon; not so much the setting of an externall Order in the Churches. This indeed he endeavoured, but (as *Calvin* saith of it) this was but *veluti parergon, & accessorium*, a thing which he undertook by the by, as being conductible and subaltern to his maine design, which was the Establishment of the Churches in the Faith.

*Observ.* As for Externall Order indeed, it is a thing of great concernment to the Churches, without which they will never be thoroughly established. Thence is it the Prophet *Esay* puts these two together, *Isa. 9. 7.* To Order and to establish, speaking of the Church: But the Kingdome of God is above it. *Regnum Dei externo ordine altius est, ac prestantius.*

The Kingdom of God (saith Calvin) which consisteth in the doctrine and practice of Faith & Holinesse, it is a thing of a more transcendent and excellent nature, then externall Order is. *Superiore gradu locatur religio, & pietas.* (So he goeth on,) Religion and true piety are to be looked on as things in a higher sphere, to be far preferred before Order & Discipline.

Reason. And great Reason they should be so, in as much as the one maketh only for the *bene esse*, the other for the *esse*: the one for the well-being, the other for the being of the Church. There may be a Church, (an Ecclesiasticall Church, I, and an Integrall one too) without Order, but not without Faith, the Doctrine and Profession of the Faith, wherein lyeth the Essentiall State of a Church. Not to dwell upon it.

Applic. Learne we hence how to look upon these two, faith and order, viz. upon the one as the *Mistresse*, the other as the *hand-maid*; so they are, and so let us account of them; giving to each that respect which is due unto them: not preferring the hand-maid before the Mistresse, not standing so much upon Order, as that in the mean time we should seem to neglect the faith. True it is, both are to be stood upon, and contended for, but not with a like heat. As for the faith, we have an expresse warrant for that, *That ye contend earnestly for the faith, Jud. 3.* I do not finde the like for Order. However take heed, lest our over-eager contestations about the one, which is but the necessary, prove prejudiciall and detrimentall to the other, which is the Principall. Let our first and maine care be for the faith: so was Pauls here in the Text, he delivereth these Decrees for the regulating of the Churches in these externall observances: wherefore? why, that they might be established in the faith: this was the *pearle* in his eye, the main thing which he aimed at. The other was only in order, in a way of subserviency unto this.

A pattern in speciall to the Ministers of the Gospell, shewing them what should be their maine designe in the course of their Ministry, viz. to propagate the faith; to set up the true Religion of God, true piety, and godlinesse, faith and holinesse in the hearts and lives of their people. As for matters of order, having just occasion, they may and ought to deale with them, that so they may approve themselves faithfull SteWARDS, not decayning any part of the truth, not *flourishing* is declare unto their people the whole Councell of God, (as Paul saith of himself, *Act. 20.*) But their maine and principall worke should be the establishing of the Churches in the faith: this is the maine end of our Ministry, so saith Paul of his Apostleship, *Rom. 1. 5. We have received grace and Apostleship,*

*Ecclesia per fidem habet suum statum essentialem; & per combinationem, Integrallm. D. Ames. Med. Theol. l. 1. c. 33.*

*Jud. v. 3.*

Applic.

*1 Cor. 4. 1. & Act. 20. 27.*

*Rom. 1. 5.*

(i. e.

(i. e. the grace or gift of Apostleship) for obedience to the faith among all Nations; i. e. that by his Ministry the Gentiles might be brought to imbrace the faith, the Doctrine of the Gospell. The best service that the Ministers of Christ can do for their Lord and Master: hereby is his name exalted, hereby is his Scepter and Kingdome advanced, hereby is he set upon the Throne. It is a mistake, (but too common in the times) to think that the Kingdome of Christ should consist either wholly or chiefly in the Externall Politie and Government of the Church. No. our Saviour himself, Luk. 17. teacheth the Pharisees to entertaine higher thoughts and more sublime conceptions, touching his Kingdome, telling them first, that the Kingdome of God commeth not with observation, vers. 20. i. e. (saith Beza) *ita ut observari possit*, (so as it may be observed and taken notice of by any outward garbe that it hath; or (as others) it doth not consist in externall observation. Then, that it is *aliquid intus*, The Kingdome of God is within you, i. e. (as it is commonly expounded) in your hearts and souls, which exposition whether it be proper for that place or no, I will not now contend. But this I am sure to be a truth; the Kingdome of God and of Christ is chiefly spiritual and inward, a Government exercised in the hearts and souls of men, where Christ setteth up his throne, his scepter, ruling there by his word and spirit, subduing rebellious lusts, bringing them under, and keeping them under, bringing every thought into obedience, to the obedience of faith. As for the externall Order and Discipline of the Church, if it do belong properly to the Kingly Office of Christ, yet it is one of the least parts of it. So let Ministers

And so let the people look upon it, not spending all, or the chief of their time, about matters of Church-government, Discipline, studying this, discoursing of nothing but this, as if this were the Cardinall businesse, the maine hinge, upon which all Religion turned; nor yet so overzealously affecting this, that for want of what herein they would have, they should renounce Church-Communion, and distaste all other the Ordinances of God, even those soul-saving Ordinances, wherein the Doctrine of faith is held forth with power and efficacy, Word and Sacraments. No, let your maine care (my brethren) be for the faith, the Gospell of life and salvation, that you may, established in that, growing up in that, *Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord, and Saviour Jesus Christ*, (saith St. Peter) in the speculative and experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is the knowledge which must and will establish you; be yee therefore established in it; that you may be (as the same Apostle exhorts) *suppel to wisen, steadfast in the faith*; not like children

Luk. 17.  
v. 20, 21.

Vers. 27.  
Vid. Bez. ad  
Loc.

2 Pet. v. last.  
1 Pet. 5. 9.

children, (as St. Paul presseth it upon his Ephesians) tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftinesse of them which lye in waite to deceive. Thus is it with multitudes of well meaning souls at this day, who being unstable, ungrounded in the faith, are carried away, some with the Anabaptist, others with the Antinomian, a third with the Familist, &c. That it may not be so with us, labour we to be confirmed and established in the faith which we have received, growing up in it.

Eph. 4. 14

Observ. This we are to do at all times, but specially then, when God affordeth us more speciall means of growth and establishment, when God (as it were) soliciteth us herewith by the labours and endeavours of his servants. It is an observation hinted to me by Master Calvin upon the words, upon Paul and Silas coming to the Churches, and bestowing their labours upon them, *Non were they established in the faith*: where means of confirmation are wanting, there weaknesse and unsettlednesse are the more pardonable, rather to be pitied than censured; but where God doth send his servants, able & faithfull instruments, who do put forth themselves in the use of all possible endeavours, for the setting and establishing of a people in the faith, here God expecteth from them growth and increase answerable.

Calv. ad L.

Applic. Take this truth home to your selves, and make Application of it as you shall see occasion. I shall now passe on to the second particular, the second fruit of the Apostles endeavours, and that is the Churches Augmentation.

And so were the Churches increased in number daily. In number, it may be understood two waies, with reference either to Persons or Churches, the number of persons was increased, or the number of Churches was increased.

Each a good hearing, so is the latter. To hear that the number of Churches is increased. But understand it rightly, viz. If this increase be by way of addition, not of division, the latter is of sad consequence. To heare of Churches multiplied after the same manner as the leaves and fishes in the Gospell are said to have been, *interfrangendum*, multiplied by breaking, by dividing; one Church broken into many, and that through Schismes and Divisions, this is a sad multiplication. The Lord keep his Churches from such increase. True it is, where a Church is grown over numerous, or some of the members of it are upon occasion to be transplanted, in this case Educere Coloniam, to draw forth a Colonie, a Congregation, one or more, to plant elsewhere, (as probably it was in the Church of Jerusalem) it may be both warrantable and necessary,

Observ.

Mat. 14. 19

Baals Trye of the growth of Separation. p. 261.

necessary. But to multiply Churches by *breakings*, by *divisions*, this (I say) is a *sad multiplication*. But having only touched this, I leave it, leave it to the *Donatist* and *Separatist*, the *first* and *last* Authors of it.

The Text (as I conceive) confines me to the former; *They were increased in number* [i. e. the Churches already planted and constituted; they were increased in number of *members*, in number of persons joining themselves to their Communion: So the original carries it; *εσπερονον*, *Esuberabant*, (saith *Beza*;) *Abundabant*, saith the *vulgar*; they *abounded in number*, like a tree which putteth forth young *shoots*, and *branches* abundantly. So was it with the Churches now, even as it was with the Church of *Jerusalem* before, the Church of the believing *Jewes*, to which God made daily new *additions*, and those (some of them) wonderfull ones, *The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved*, Act. 2. *The number of the Disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly*, Acts 6. So was it now with the Churches of the *Gentiles*: Upon *Pauls* coming to them they also were multiplied and increased in number daily.

*Obseru.* A good and a blessed hearing, to heare of such a *multiplication*, such an *increase*. It was the first blessing which God pronounced upon *mankinde*, *Crescite & multiplicamini*; *Increase and multiply*: a *barren wombe* in it self is a *curse*, a *fruitfull* one a *blessing*; and so is it with a barren and a fruitfull Church. Where God giveth to a Church (as the Prophet threatens that he would do to *Israel*;) a *miscarrying* or *barren wombe*, and *dry breasts*, so as there is no increase, this is a sad and ominous judgement; whereas (on the other hand) to see the Churches *fruitfull*, like the *Sheep* in the *Canticles*, whereof every one is said to *bear twins*, and *none to be barren amongst them*, all bringing forth children unto God, *increasing in number daily*; it is one of the greatest blessings that *Earth* can receive from *Heaven*.

*Applic.* And is it so? why then let all of us do what in us lyeth to further this *increase*: taking heed of being any occasions of *hindring* it, whether by our *scandalls* or *divisions*; both which oft times cause the Churches wombe to *miscarry*, by bringing an evil report upon the good waies of God, discouraging others from adventuring upon them, who, it may be, had some eye towards them. Taking heed of this, of being any waies accessary to the Churches *barrenness*, do what we may to further her *increase*, every one in our places, *Ministers* in their places endeavouring as *spirituall fathers* to *beget sons and daughters into God*, by the *incontrollable seed* of the *Word*, that so we may every of us be able to say at that great day, as the Prophet *Isaiah* once.

Act. 2. last.  
Act. 6. 7.

Gen. 1. 28.

Ios. 9. 14.

Zant. 4. 2.

Applic. A

Cor. 4. 15.

Pct. 1. 23.



## Church-Remedie.

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once did, Behold, Lord, here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me. Magistrates in their places, shewing themselves nursing fathers and nursing mothers to the Church, so as upon their knees the Churches may beare children, (as Rachel once said of her self and her maid Bilhah, Gen. 30.) Parents and Masters of families in their places, endeavouring to bring up their children and servants in the knowledge and feare of God, that so they may be true living members of the Church, not only like wooden legs or armes tyed on to the body, having only an outward visible communion with the Church, but like naturall members, they may be knit both to the head and body by joints and ligaments, so as the Church may be increased with the increase of God. Private persons in their places, not only joyning themselves to the true Churches of God, but endeavouring what in them lyeth, to winne and gain others, specially by their holy and exemplary conversation and demeanour, Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good work, may glorifie your heavenly father. Glorifie him, as by other waies, so by comming in and putting themselves under his government; to which purpose there is scarce any one means more effectually available, then for Christians to thrive and growe in grace. So much Master Calvin collecteth out of the Text from the connexion of these two together; the Churches were established in the faith, and increased in number daily. The growth and proficiency of those which were first called to the faith in these Churches was a speciall meanes to bring in others.

Isa. 8. 18.

Isa. 49. 23.  
Gen. 30. 3.

Col. 2. 19.

Mat. 5. 6.

*Immit quatuor-  
nus fide pro-  
ficiunt qui  
primi sunt  
vocati, plures  
ad Christum  
adducere. Cal.  
ad Loc.*

Old members in a Church (it is a comparison which Calvin giveth me the hint of) they are like old stanks in a Coppice, or like old Vines or Poplars, or the like trees, which being once thoroughly rooted themselves, they put forth many imps and young shooters from their roots: So was it here in these Churches. The first members of those Churches being rooted and established in the faith; the Churches were daily increased in number; *Ac si propagine fides latius ad alios serperet*, (saith my Author) As if their faith being spread abroad had been a means to propagate itself unto others; so it often commeth to passe. It is that which Paul telleth his *Corinthians*, concerning their forwardnesse in works of charity and mercy. Your zeale (saith he) hath provoked very many. And so is it with faith and holinesse. To be zealous in profession, and conscientious in practice; it is a most effectuall incitement to provoke, to draw, to win others: and in this way let all private Christians be active and forward, that so they may do what

Calu. ibid.

2 Cor. 9. 2.

## The Sacred and Sovereign

in them Iyerb, to help forward this blessed *Augmentation and Increase* of the Churches.

And thus have I looked upon these two fruits of the Apostles endeavours severally, and simply. It remains now that we put them together, considering them *jointly and relatively*, as they stand in joint reference to that first particle in the Text. [*So*] were the Churches established; and [*So*] were the Churches increased.

*So*] What, merely by the delivery of these Decrees? Was this the proper and immediate cause of the Churches *confirmation and multiplication*?

*Ans.* Not so: The Decrees here delivered were not masters of Faith, but of Order, and consequently not apt to produce such noble effects as these were, to work such an establishment, such an increase, being but Decrees touching *meates*. Now (as the Apostle saith) *The heart must be established with grace, not with meates*: The proper and immediate *instrumental cause* of both these was *Faiths preaching* of the Gospel to the Churches.

*Quest.* What influence then had these Decrees hereupon?

*Ans.* I answer, they were, though not properly *Causa efficiens*, yet *removens* and *promovens*; though not the immediate *Efficient cause* of both these, yet the *promoving* and *furbering* cause, facilitating the work, and making way for it, and that by *removing obstacles* and impediments, and putting the Churches into such a posture, such a state, as they might be fit to be wrought upon by the preaching of the Word. Even as it is with *Physick*, however it self be not *Nouritive*, yet by removing *obstructions*, it putteth the body into such a state and temper, as it may be apt to receive nourishment from such meanes as shall be applyed unto it, proper for that purpose. Even so was it here. The Churches being *distempred*, and out of course by reason of some jarres and differences, which (no question) much obstructed and hindred the course of the Gospel, the Apostle by applying and ministering of this *Sovereign Remedy*, a *Recipe of Synodical Decrees*, he put them into such a temper, as that his Ministry might take place with them, both for their *confirmation and increase*.

*Observ.*

And of such use *Ecclesiasticall Decrees* may be, and often are; though they be not *meat*, yet they may be *medicine*: making much for the propagation of the Gospel; and that especially by composing *Church-differences*, which otherwise would be a maine obstruction and hindrance to it. Of this latter we have had but too much experience. How