

T T E

# Government of the Church of CHRIST,

And the Authority of Church Judicatories established on a Scripture Foundation : And the Spirit of rash judging arraigned and condemned.

OR

The Matter of Difference between the Synod of *Philadelphia* and the Protesting Brethren justly and fairly stated.

B E I N G

An Examination of two Papers brought in by two of the Protesting Brethren, and read Publickly in open Synod in *May* 1740. And also of an Apology brought in, subscribed by the Protesting Brethren, and read also in open Synod in *May* 1739.

---

By JOHN THOMSON *Minister of the Gospel.*

---

*Acts 17 11. These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of Mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these Things were so.*

*Isai. 8. 20 To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them.*

---

P H I L A D E L P H I A:  
Printed by A. BRADFORD, at the Sign of the BIBLE,  
in Front-street, 1741.



To the Candid and Christian

# READER.

Christian Reader,

**T**HE following Performance such as it is, being swollen to a greater Bulk than at first intended. I must not now take Time and Room to add much more. As to the Subject Matters therein handled, as they are of common and very momentous Concern to Christians of all Ranks, Stations, and Capacities. So in a particular Manner it concerns us in this present Juncture, and in this Part of the World, to give Diligence to have our Judgments well informed, and fixed on a sure Scripture Foundation, concerning these Matters; considering how many wild confused Notions are roving in plenty among weak inconsiderate and undiscerning Professors. And, would to God I could say, they are not too common, and too industriously maintained among some who sustain the Character of Ministers of the Gospel.

I sincerely declare that these Confusions and Disorders, which have abounded and raged so much among us of Late, have given me as much Uneasiness,



*siness, and Matter of serious Concern, as any Thing in the World ever did, the Salvation of mine own immortal Soul only excepted; and that not so much because I was at a loss how to judge for my self, whether these disorderly violent new-fangle Motions and Stirs about Religion were right or wrong in themselves. (For as many can witness from my frequent and publick Declarations to my own Congregation and else where, I have from the very first, had in the general, the very same Opinion of them that I now have, as I explain my self in the following Sheets) but because I was at a Loss how I might in many Cases bear Testimony against them with necessary Prudence and Caution, and effectually, so as to be an Instrument to put a stop to the growing Confusion, and quench the Flame of Religious Frenzy, which increased so awfully among us, and in the mean Time not lay a stumbling Block before many weak, yet I hope sincere Christians, by appearing against what they in a mistaken Zeal, were so exceedingly fond of as the Work and Power of Gods Grace in an extraordinary Degree, yet my Conscience would not allow me to be altogether silent, but hath obliged me every now and then, to bear Testimony against what I saw amiss; tho' God knows, with an heavy Heart; knowing and finding that the more forward and faithful I was in warning the People of my own Congregation, the more I was maligned, despised, bated and forsaken by my own People: So that as the great Apostle says, I was counted their Enemy because I told them the*

Truth. Its unaccountable that not a few are obliged in private Conference to acknowledge the Falshood of some Doctrines, as well as condemn the rash-judging Conduct of our protesting Brethren, and their Admirers, and yet because of an overgrown Conceit which they have entertained of these new-fangle Preachers, as being Men singularly holy and pious, and zealous for the good of Souls; that they still continue to despise their own Pastors, on their Account, as sapless lifeless Preachers, because they decline the Use of such hideous unscriptural Language and Dialect as can serve only to fill weak Minds and Fancys with confused Fears and Terrors rather than in a rational Way to convince them from Scripture, of their Sin and Misery, and need of a Saviour.

I think it might be enough to ingage every considering Person, at least every professed Presbyterian to stand still and pause a little, and consider, whether it can be a wise and safe Course to run headlong after these Men who directly and avowedly, in Principle and Practice, preach and act contrary to the very Doctrines and Rules of our presbyterian Church as expressed in our Westminster Confession, Catechilins and Directory. Besides what is said in the Body of this Performance, I will here recommend to the serious Consideration of my Readers what we have in our Confession Chap. 1. Article 6. & Chap. 31. Art. 3. in the former we have these Words, And there are some Circumstances concerning the Worship of God, and Government of the Church, contrary to human

**ACTIONS** and Societies, which are to be ordered by the Light of Nature, and Christian Prudence according to the general Rules of the Word, which are always to be observed. *And in Chap. 31. Art. 3d. we have these Words* : It belongeth to Synods and Councils, ministerially to determine Controversies of Faith, and Cases of Conscience, to set down Rules and Directions for better ordering of the publick Worship of God, and Government of his Church, to receive Complaints in Cases of Male Administration, and authoritatively to determine the same, which Decrees and Determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with Reverence and Submission not only for their Agreement with the Word, but also for the **POWER** whereby they are made, as being **AN ORDINANCE OF GOD**, appointed thereunto in his Word. *And if we take but a transient view of the Scriptures alledged by that Reverend Assembly, we shall easily see, first, that some of the Matter of the Decrees of Acts 15. was indifferent in its Nature, not being moral, 2dly, that these Decrees were binding upon all, whether there were Negatives or Minorities or not. Yea 3dly, that these Decrees were binding upon those Churches which had no Hand in making them, as appears from Acts 16. v. 4, 5. where we have an Account of Paul's delivering the Decrees to other Churches to keep, after that he had left Antioch; from whence he had been sent with Barnabas as Commissioners to get the Controversy determined.*

Now its plain to every considerate Reader, that our protesting Brethrens Principles and Practices, are diametrically contrary to what is laid down in both these Articles in all the Clauses here recited, and particularly as to making Rules and Directions, and Authoritative Decisions of Controversies, as well as the POWER by which these Rules and Decisions are made. Which Conduct of theirs, how it can agree with their solemnly adopting the Westminster Confession and Directory, I cannot comprehend, nor how they can justly claim the Denomination of Presbyterians, while they avowedly preach and act contrary to the very Plan of Church Government contained in this Confession and Directory, from whence we have the Denomination of Presbyterians, and by which we are known and distinguished from other Denominations of Christians. But, I refer the Reader, for the more full clearing of this Point, to what is offered in the following Sheets, in answer to the Appology of May 1739.

I would further add, that since I have read and considered Mr. Whitefield's Letter to the Querists, wherein he corrects and makes a kind of an acknowledgment of some of his Errors in his printed Sermons, I cannot forbear being almost fully persuaded in my Judgment that he is a downright Deceiver, or else under a dreadful Delusion. However, as I'm informed, his Admirers do reckon all his Corrections to his Advantage, and praise, him on account of his apparent readiness, with a great shew of Meekness, Humility and Self-denial, to acknow-

ledge his Errors, and so are ready to take his Excuses for these Errors for good and sufficient. Yet I do sincerely profess, that this very Letter gives me a worse Impression of the Man, than ever I had before, and I think it my Duty to give a short Hint of some of my Reasons.

First, as to his Correction of his Errors, he is so exceeding trifling and superficial, as if he thought them of little or no Moment. Can he or any of his Admirers think that a few Pages in Octavo, in such a loose Paper would be a sufficient Plaister for the spreading Scare over so great a Part of the Christian World, I mean the Dominions of Great Britain unto which his Books are spread? while Thousands are in danger to be deluded and led astray by his Books, that in all likelyhood will never see his Corrections. And if they did, what Benefit can they receive? seeing he is at no Pains to shew wherein either the Error, or Danger of it lyes; nor is it possible for any to understand his Corrections, unless they had his former Writings, which are Corrected, and the Scruples of the Querists by them to compare them together.

Again, some of his worst and most dangerous Errors, he refuses to give up, as that of denying the Covenant of Grace, in his Letter against the whole Duty of Man, his implicitly maintaining and defending his Quaker Principles of walking, and being led by the Spirit, in Opposition to, and independent of the written Word, as we all know the Quakers do, his Pretence to immediate Revelation, in respect of particular Promises being  
made

made to him by the Spirit, his absur'd Interpretation of the Apostles Commission to baptise in the Name of the Holy Trinity, i. e. according to him, into their Nature &c.

But what of all sinks him lowest in my Opinion, is, tha. Apologetic Declaration which he gives us of his receiving the Spirit of Adoption before he had conversed with one Man, or read one single Book on the Doctrine of Justification by free Grace; which is as much as to say, that by immediate objective Revelation by the Spirit, without Book or Instructor, he had revealed to him all the Doctrine of the Gospel that are needful in Adult Persons in order to their acting Faith in Christ for Adoption; which is more than has been granted to any ordinary Person, or Saint, since the World began, viz. to reveal to them by immediate objective Revelation by the Spirit, what was before revealed to the Church. Even Paul was sent to Annanias, and Cornelius was recommended to Peter for Instruction in such Matters as had been before Revealed.

1r. Whitefield in his own Account of his Life tells that when he was ordained, he was Twenty one Years and seven Months Old p. 51. And that about nine Months before his Ordination, as I can collect he received the Spirit of Adoption, about twenty years and ten Months old Page 35. between these two Seasons he came to be acquainted with the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, and not by Works p. 40. and before

all these Passages he tells us p. 34 that while the Physician was purging his Body, Gods Spirit was purifying his Soul.

Quest. 1. It Mr. *Whitefield* was not adopted till above twenty years old, and then was a stranger to the Doctrine of Justification by Free-Grace; about what Subjects of Religion did he and the *Wesley's* converse when they were so often together?

Quest. 2. How does his reading the new Testament and many other good Books received from the *Wesley's* before his Adoption agree with his receiving the Spirit of Adoption before he read a single Book or conversed with one Man on the Doctrine of free Justification.

Quest. 3. How could he receive the Spirit of Adoption at about twenty years of Age, and at the same Time be ignorant of the Doctrine of Justification? could he be adopted by Faith in Jesus Christ, and yet depend on Works for Justification?

Quest, 4. How could he pray acceptably in the Name of Christ as he says he often did; while a Stranger to Justification?

I Think there are so many Inconsistencies and Contradictions in the Account which he gives of himself in his Life and Journals, if it were worth while to gather them out, that the whole will be found to be nothing but mere confused inconsistent religious Jargon, contrived to amuse and delude the simple; and perhaps a little



little Time may discover more of the Mystery of Iniquity than the World is aware of as yet.

And when I observe the Conduct of our protesting Brethren with respect to him, in several Respects, such as their praying for him by Name in public, their Industry to excuse his Errors, and many Ways testifying their excessive Esteem and Regard for him, as if he were something more than human, while they so freely condemn their Brethren as graceless, some of them leaving their own Congregations on Sabbath Days, to attend upon him, as if he could carry them under his Wings to Heaven; I cannot but pity their Folly, and wish freedom to them from their captivating Delusion.

I know not how Mr. Charles Tennent will come off for his bold and publick Vindication of these very Errors of Mr. Whitefield, which he himself acknowledges, and corrects. I think if Mr. Charles has the least degree of Feeling left him in these Matters, he may be convinced of, and blush for his presumptuous Boldness, in understanding, so publickly in a News-Paper, to defend and vindicate what he had either not considered, or did not understand, or perhaps both. Can Mr. Charles think that any, who hath read the Minute of the Presbytery of New-Castle annexed to the Queries, will or can possibly believe him to speak either Truth or according to his Conscience, when he puts a Meaning upon his own Part of the foresaid Minute, which according to the obvious Sense of the Words, it cannot possibly bear; But it may be hoped that this will be a Warning to him  
and



and all other raw self-conceited Novices, not to be for the Future, too forward to appear in print, upon controverted Points which they have not studied, lest they affront themselves, by discovering, not only their Rashness but also their Ignorance and Weakness of Judgment, which otherwise possibly the World would not have Occasion to discover.

In the following Performance I have, on purpose omitted to take Notice of the first Part of the Apology preceding the thirteenth Page as I remember, as also another Paper to the same Purpose, not because I look upon it as unanswerable, for I think quite otherwise, but because I judge, that that former Part of the Apology must of Course have the same Fate with the latter which I examine in this Performance: For if the Synod hath no Power to make any Rules or Orders which shall bind their Members, then certainly all Rules made by them are null and void of themselves; but if our Synod hath Authority to make Rules at all, it will be easy, in my Judgment to defend our Synods Acts.

Reader, if thou art one who hast conceived such an extraordinary Opinion of the protesting Brethren on account of their apparent Godliness and Zeal, as for their Sakes to despise other Ministers, or if thou hast learned of them to condemn all such Ministers as graceless, who do not approve of, nor imitate their Managements, and all by an implicit Faith in what they say, I say, if this be thy Case I have little Expectation that thou wilt have Patience to read, much less to get Light or Conviction

viction by or from what is here submitted to thy Consideration. But if thou wilt act the Part of an unprejudiced impartial Reader, and Berean like, bring the Matters debated to the Touch-Stone of God's Word, I am not afraid but before thou read the Piece quite over (provided thou keep thy Temper) thou wilt at least see some Cause to think, that its not so safe as thou thought, to be sick of the Corinthian Disease, to be puffed up for one Minister against another, and to say, I am for Mr. W. and the protesting Brethren in Opposition to the other Members of the Synod. I would also give thee another Word of Caution, in telling thee that its no easy Matter to lay aside Byses and Prejudice for one Party against another; nay that the Difficulty is so great, that without the Assistance of Divine Grace thou't not be able to overcome that Native Principle of Party-Humour, that's in all Men by Nature, so as to read and judge impartially. And therefore seeing the Matter is of Moment, and so nearly concerns Conscience and Duty, I would earnestly recommend it to thee, to be an humble and earnest Supplicant at the Throne of Grace, for the Holy Spirit to lead thee into all Truth, as to the Matter here debated, so that thou may'st be preserved, or reclaimed from every Error that may marr thy spiritual Good and Edification. Unto the guidance of that Spirit I commend thee and this Performance in thy Hand, and profess my self in all Sincerity a willing Servant for thy Souls Good,

John Thomson.

## P O S T S C R I P T.

I doubt not but many who censured my last Performance because my Name was not prefixed, will like this the worse when they see my Name added to it. What a great Pity it is that any Persons should be prejudiced either for or against any Thing of this Nature, by their Affections or Disaffection to the Author, rather than the Merit of the Cause that is pleaded, and that by such Prejudices, they should render themselves incapable of receiving the Good and Benefit, which otherwise, such a Performance might possibly yield!

---

## The Government of

# The Church of Christ &c.

**T**HE Divisions and Misunderstandings which have of late all of a sudden arisen to such a Height in this little infant Church, cannot but be Matter of very serious and sorrowful Consideration to every un-biassed Christian, who hath the Peace and Prosperity of Zion at his Heart. Its doleful to think, and Consider, how by these Divisions, so many, and in some Places the greater Part of Congregations are so fill'd with Prejudices against their own Pastors, that altho' they can charge them with nothing exceeding human Frailty, and the sinful Infirmities that in some Measure cleave to the best of Christians; yet they openly, by Speech and Behaviour, declare their utter Disesteem and Contempt of them as if they were the Worst and Vilest of Men, magnifying their failing, misrepresenting their justifiable Conduct, and raising and spreading false and lying Reports, upon them.

Now altho' there are few or none, far or near, but have heard enough, & more than is true, in Relation to these Divisions, yet there hath not, that

that I know of, been any thing published to the World, setting this Matter in a clear Light. I have thought therefore that it maybe to some good Purpose to make an attempt of this Kind, to let the World see the true State of the Case, as it stands between the Synod and the protesting Brethren : and then let every one judge for himself. Altho' by the by, a party humour hath got such strong hold of a great many, that they can suspect nothing that comes from the party they join with, nor approve or believe any thing that comes from their Opposite,

However let that be as it will, I will endeavour to set this Matter in as clear and just Light as I can attain unto, and commit the success to him who hath all events in his own Hand.

So far then as I can see into this Matter, the great Difference between the protesting Brethren and the Synod consists in these two particulars : First these Brethren have conceived so exceeding low and bad Opinion of the generality of their Brethren, judging them to be quite void of Grace yea and Worse, even designed Enemies to the Life of Religion : and accordingly they esteem it a Work of the Highest, and most exalted Charity to resque the Multitudes of perishing Souls, that are under their Care, from the Jaws of everlasting Destruction, by perswading them to believe that these Ministers are as bad as they represent them to be. Any who reads Mr. *Gilbert Tennent's* Sermon concerning unconverted Ministers, may clearly see this to be the Case, particularly in  
P. 17.

P. 17. where, after he hath called the Ministers against whom he is declaiming by such Names as these, viz. *Swarms of Locusts, crouds of Pharisees &c.* He clearly Explains himself and Shews whom he intends while he says, they are blind who see not this to be the Case of the Body of the Clergy of this Generation; which is yet farther evident by comparing this with his introduction to a Discourse which he read in Publick, before the Synod last *May*; says he *Moderator* and Reverend Brethren, I think I am obliged in Duty, to God and you to present the following paper to your Consideration, which contains my reasons for suspecting that a NUMBER of the Ministers of this Synod are in a carnal State; this Introduction and the foresaid Sermon clearly Illustrate and Explain one another as to the Persons or Party of which he judges so severely.

And that Mr. *Tennent* is not alone in thus judging his Brethren does also appear from a Paper much of the same Stamp, which Mr. *Blair*, also read before the Synod, which contains these Words. *But indeed how can such (viz. Ministers) perform this Duty to any good Purpose, who are Strangers to any such Experience themselves:* Add to this that our protesting Brethren have been very industrious to entertain their Auditories with Declamations against these *Pharisee* Teachers, in their Itenerations or Travellings amongst us; and all their Admirers and Followers do plainly enough declare that they understand them to intend the Ministers who differ from them;

besides that Mr. *Gilbert Tennent* and some others of his Party have been so particular as to Mention the Names of some of their Brethren whom they thus condemn as carnal and unconverted.

A Second particular wherein the Difference between these Brethren and the Synod doth consist is, the vastly different and opposite Judgment and Sentiments of the one and the other, particularly in Relation to Church Government. The Judgment of the protesting Brethren, in reference to Church Government, appears both different and Opposite, not only to the Synod, but also to all that hold by the Presbyterian Plan. What I Ground this Allegation upon, is contained in their Apology P. 28. 29. Where they have

“ these Words. They i. e. Presbyteries have  
 “ likewise Liberty to agree and conclude among  
 “ themselves, upon such things as appear to them  
 “ to have a good Tendency to the Advancement  
 “ of Religion, and are agreeable to the Word  
 “ of God, and so engage themselves voluntarily  
 “ to the Observation of these Things; provided  
 “ that they do not incroach upon the just Liber-  
 “ ties of the People under their Charge, nor  
 “ pretend to bind their dissenting Members to  
 “ observe their Agreements, who may have  
 “ a Different View and Apprehension of them.

“ Likewise it is reasonable and useful that Sy-  
 “ nods, consisting of several Presbyteries, meet  
 “ together, whether Matters may be brought by  
 “ way of Appeal or Reference from particular  
 “ Presbyteries, in order to obtain the Judgment  
 and

“ and Sentiments of a greater Number upon  
 “ them, for in the Multitude of Counselors  
 “ there is safety : and accordingly it is no doubt  
 “ their Duty to take such Cases under their Con-  
 “ sideration, and give their best Advice in them.  
 “ But we think that they should not proceed with  
 “ any further Authority, except in such Cases,  
 “ wherein God hath given particular obvious  
 “ Directions in his Word, which is to be exact-  
 “ ly followed ; and eventhen they do no more  
 “ than shew what is the Mind and will of God  
 “ in such Cases, and declare their own Resolu-  
 “ tions to act accordingly.

From which Words it is plain and evident that  
 Presbyteries and Synods, when regularly consti-  
 tuted, have no Authority at all, in our Brethrens  
 Judgment, either over their Members or Peo-  
 ple ; for first they say that their Determinations  
 are not to be binding upon dissenting Members,  
 which is to sap and overthrow the very Funda-  
 mental Laws of all Societies in the World : For  
 how is it possible that any Society can stick to-  
 gether unless either all be Subject to the Autho-  
 rity of one, or the Minority be concluded and  
 determined by the Majority ? Unless we should  
 suppose, what's not to be expected in this imper-  
 fect State, that all will still be unanimous in their  
 Votes. Was it ever yet heard of, that any So-  
 ciety was either incorporated, or did incorporate  
 themselves under any Form of Government, but  
 that every one who would enjoy the Benefits and  
 Priviledges of such an Incorporation, or social  
 B 2 Union



Union, should submit to the Rules and Orders of it, whether they approved of these Rules or not?

They say also that Synods should consider such Things as come before them by Reference or Appeal, and give their best Advice, but should not proceed with any further Authority, (which plainly says that they have no Authority at all,) but only a privilege to give their Advice, which every one apart might do, yea every private Christian; so that according to them a Synods Determination hath no Authority in it more than the Advice of an equal Number of other Men which is evidently to divest such a Judicatory of all Authority to rule and govern Christs Church; which is to overthrow all Order and Government in it. For if the Apellants or Referrers judge the Advice of one or a few Dissentients better than that of the Majority, they are as free to take it, according to this Plan.

Its said also that Presbyteries must not inroach upon the Peoples just Priviledges or Liberties, which doth imply that the People who are ruled, notwithstanding that they have devolved all their Right in Authority and Government, upon their Representatives, are still the Judges of their own Liberties, even after they have entrusted these Liberties in the Hands of their Representatives, which also overthrows all Authority and Government; for Church Judicatories being a Representatives of the whole collective Body which they represent, must of Course be the only proper  
Judges

Judges of the Just Liberties of the whole Body, and of every particular Member thereof as such, and while he continues a Member. And to be sure no Church Judicatory will ever incroach upon what they judge to be the just Liberties of the Church or Body Collective which they represent.

That these Brethren differ from the Synod in Principles of Order and Government, doth also appear from the Conclusion of Mr. *Gilbert Tennent's* Paper of May last, containing his Reasons for suspecting his Brethren to be unconverted, his Words are these. " Besides the remarkable Success that God has given of late to Mr. *Whitefield's* travelling Labours, and others in this Country, makes me abhor the slavish Schemes of Bigots, as to confinement in preaching the Gospel of CHRIST." which plainly shows with what disdain he beholds and looks down upon that Order which not only Presbyterians, but also all other Churches have, carefully observed; viz. that every Pastor should stick by his own Flock; unless when sent on the Churches Errand elsewhere: And particular Care has been taken to prevent one Ministers preaching in anothers Bounds to the Disturbance of the Peace of the Church; but I will not now further insist upon this, but return and inquire into, and examine the first ground of Difference between the Synod and the protesting Brethren; viz. the extremely bad Opinion which these Brethren have conceived of the other Mem-

bers of the Synod ; which as I have already noted, plainly appears from Mr. *Tennent's* Printed Sermon against unconverted Ministers, and also from his and Mr. *Blair's* Papers read publickly before the Synod in *May* last ; their publick praying and preaching against Pharisee Preachers, and their Admirers applying what they say of this kind to all that differ from them ; to which I may add, that several of them have been so plain and particular as to name some of those Ministers whom they count graceless.

I will therefore take a View of this bad Opinion which they have conceived of us, together with the Reasons thereof as they are expressed in Mr. *Gilbert Tennent's* Paper of *May* last ; concerning which, before I come to particulars, I would make this general Remark, viz. that Mr. *Tennent's* Design, in the Manner of his giving in the Reasons of his Suspicion, as well as in the Matter of these Reasons, is plainly all of a Piece with his and other protesting Brethrens Conduct viz. to beget and propagate an Odium against their Brethren, in the Minds of the Populace. Otherwise why did he not deal with his Brethren whom he suspected, by Word or Writing ? Why did he not accuse them to their respective Presbyteries ? And why did he not make known his Suspicions and Reasons of them to the Synod at an Interloquitur ? But all at once produced them in Publick Synod before the Populace, in such a Manner, and at such a Time when the Synod could not inquire particularly into the  
Truth

( 9 )

Truth of the Allegations which would have taken up more Time, than the Synod could possibly then afford, viz. to discuss said Allegations, against the particular Ministers who should be alledged to be guilty. But the Reproach must be publickly read, and every Hearers Mind fill'd with Jealousies of they knew not whom, and consequently in general, of all. How agreeable this is to the Love and good Will which he professeth to his Brethren, let God and the World judge; or how agreeable to the Directions of *Matthew* 18. where private Admonitions are first directed unto, before Publick Proceedings be entered. But such a Method as this, tho' Scriptural, would not so well have answered his Design, which was by one Blow, to knock all his Brethrens Characters on the Head in an undistinguishing Manner.

I now proceed to examine the Sufficiency of Mr. Tennent's Reasons for suspecting his Brethren as unconverted, And his first Reasons is in his own Words as follows.

“ First their Unsoundness in some principal  
“ Doctrines of Christianity that relate to Experience and Practice, as particularly in the following Points.

“ 1st. That there is no Distinction between the  
“ Glory of God and our Happiness, that self  
“ Love is the Foundation of all Obedience.  
“ These Doctrines do in my Opinion intirely  
“ overset (if true) all supernatural Religion, render  
“ Regeneration a vain and needless Thing.

“ involve a crimson Blasphemy against the Bless-  
 “ ed God, by putting our selves upon a level  
 “ with him.

“ Secondly, that there is a certainty of Sal-  
 “ vation annexed to the Labours of Natural  
 “ Men. This Doctrine in my Opinion suppo-  
 “ ses the greatest Falshood, viz. that there is a  
 “ Free-Will in Man naturally to acceptable  
 “ Good, and is attended with the most dan-  
 “ gerous Consequences, viz. fixing Men upon  
 “ their own Righteousness, and utterly over-  
 “ throwing the Covenant of Grace: For if  
 “ there be a certainty annexed to the Endeavours  
 “ of Natural Men, it must be by Promise; but  
 “ a Promise is a Debt. As these Opinions are  
 “ contrary to the express Testimony of Holy  
 “ Scriptures, our Confession of Faith, and Chris-  
 “ tian Experience; they give me Reason to sus-  
 “ pect at least that these who hold them are rot-  
 “ ten hearted Hypocrites, utter Strangers to  
 “ the saving Knowledge of God and their own  
 “ Hearts.

In these Words we have Mr. *Tennent's* first Reason why he suspects his Brethren to be rotten hearted Hypocrites, Strangers to God and their own Hearts, viz. because they are unsound in the Faith as to some principal Doctrines. The first Instance consists of two Branches, first that the Glory of God and our Happiness is one and the same, secondly that Self-Love is the Foundation of all Obedience. In this double Instance I suppose

pose Mr. *Tennent* hath Reference to the Dispute that for some Time subsisted between him and Mr. *Cowel*.

Altho' I will not take upon me to justify these Expressions as sound in their most obvious Meaning, yet I think its a very strange Stretch of censoriousness and rash judging, to conclude the Person unconverted who useth them. / Our Happiness and the Glory of God i. e. his manifestative Glory, or declarative Glory, which results from thence are so inseparable, and so near of kin, that to condemn all as unconverted who think they cannot distinguish them, is I think, an uncommon Stretch of rash judging. Our Assemblys Catechisms join the Glory of God and Man's Salvation together, as the Chief i. e. compleat adequate ultimate End of Man. May not a Person, even a Minister be a true Penitent? Hate and be a resolved Enemy to all Sin? May he not truly receive and rest on Christ as offered in the Gospel, as his Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption; as his Prophet Priest and King? May he not be born again? And may he not preach and press the Necessity of Regeneration, in the most earnest Manner, and from the most pure Motives? And in the mean Time labour under such Confusion of Ideas, as to Occasion him to say that the Glory of God and the Happiness of his Creatures are the same Thing?

Again as to the other Expression that Self-Love is the Foundation of all Obedience. Altho' we should grant that it is unguarded and perhaps unsound; yet who, in the World, before Mr. *Tennent*, ever dreamed, that its of such a Nature as to prove the Ufer of it intirely unsound in Fundamentals? What altho' this Expression doth by Consequence, overthrow the Necessity of Regeneration, and infer Blasphemy against God? as Mr. *Tennent* ailedges, yet perhaps he who useth the Expression doth neither see nor own the Consequence. Yea further Self-Love is so incorporated with our rational Constitution, that its simply impossible for us to renounce it, it is supposed in all the Promises and Threatnings of the Word, of both Law and Gospel, it is supposed in our Happiness which is joined together with the Glory of God, as Mans chief End, in our Catechism; and therefore it must be acknowledged to be, tho' not the Sole and Adequate, yet the partial and inadequate Foundation *s. e.* Motive of our Obedience; Love to God, because of his lovely Perfections; Love to our selves, from a Necessity arising from our rational Constitution and Principle of lawful Self-Interest, or Self-Preservation; and a Principle of Benevolence or Love to our Fellow Creatures, I think may all be safely enough taken in under the Notion of the Spring or Foundation of our Obedience to the Will of God in all such Matters where this threefold Principle can take Place. And therefore I cannot see but that a truly godly Person may both  
 think

think & say that that Self-Love, i. e. Spiritual Self-Love (but not carnal) which doth prompt the Person who hath it, to seek and desire Regeneration and sanctifying Grace as a principal Part of his Happiness, is the Foundation of all Obedience; tho' in Truth, Love to God, and regard to his Glory is to be joined therewith. I think I may refer it to Mr. *Tennent's* own Conscience, whether a respect to the Recompence of Reward hath not Influence upon him, as it had upon *Moses*, to invigorate and encourage him to his Work and Duty.

I would ask *Mr. Tennent* whether *Mr. Whitefield* is not as heretodox in his Letter against the whole *Duty of Man*? where he twice, in a very few Lines, denies that God made a second covenant with *Adam*, or any of his Posterity; and so denies, the covenant of Grace. I would also ask why he did not condemn *Mr. Whitefield*, as a carnal Minister, because of such a fundamental Error? and for asserting that God Justifies the ungodly as ungodly, and while ungodly; but I doubt not but *Mr. Gilbert* would soon find a Salvo for these and many other Instances of false Divinity in that Gentlemans Writings, as some others of the Prottesting brethren did the other Day, when some of *Mr. Whitefields* Expressions were a little looked into by the presbytery of *New-Castle*.

A 2d False Doctrine which *Mr. Tennent* alledges as a Mark of unconverted Ministers, is that there is a certainty of Salvation annexed to the  
the



the Labours of natural Men, which Doctrine he by some Arguments confutes. If there be any of the Members of our Synod of this Judgment, it is more than I know, and I'm perswaded there are very Few, for my own Part I know not one whom I so much as suspect in this Particular.

Its true, we all may and ought to preach and tell natural Men, that if they will repent & believe the Gospel they shall be Saved. But this neither says nor Infers that they can do this, without the Assistance of divine, renewing, regenerating Grace: but by complying with the divine Call, i. e. by repenting, and believing, the Person that was natural before, shall certainly have an Evidence in himself, if he can but see it, that he is assisted by supernatural Grace, to do what he could not do by any natural abilities which he had before. I really Question whether there be a Member in the whole Synod who maintains the foresaid Doctrine in Terms: altho' it's possible that some unguarded Expressions might inadvertently drop from some, which might be interpreted to that purpose.

But to conclude that Persons are rotten heart-ed Hypocrites ( as Mr. *Tennent* doth ) and utter Strangers to the saving knowledge of God, and their own Hearts, who may have drop't inadvertent Expressions upon that Subject, or who might even be in an Error of Judgment in this Matter; is a most unaccountable Stretch of rash judging, while the necessity and undeterredness of supernatural Grace are still maintained. If any of us  
had

had argued as Mr. *Tennent* doth, directly contrary to express Scripture, he would have no doubt Triumphed in it as a sure Mark of our unregeneracy; says he, if there be a certainty of Salvation annexed to the Endeavours of a natural Man it must be by promise; but says he, a promise is a Debt, but says the *Apostle Gal. 3. 18. & Rom. 4.* Throughout, *what is of Promise is not of Debt but of Grace.* Debt and Promise are set in direct Opposition to each other by the inspired Apostle, but by Mr. *Tennent* they are reconciled & made one and the same. Believers obtain the reward of eternal Life by vertue of a divine Promise on which their Faith is founded, yet not of Debt, but of free Gift.

They who would set up for critical Censurers of others, had need to be very accurate themselves, for *Turpe est doctori cum culpa redarguit ipsum*, it's a shame to be guilty of the same Fault of which we accuse others.

It's worthy noticing here, that these Instances of unsound Doctrine which Mr. *Tennent* brings as Marks of an unconverted State, as I think they are far from proving his Point, so I'm perswaded that there are not past two or three if so many that he can so much as alledge to have uttered them, and yet he brings them in as a general ground of Suspicion equally applicable by Hearers to every Member of the Synod; but that eminent Servant of Christ the Rev. Mr. *Whitefield* may print what in all probability is false in Fact, as well as false Doctrine, and yet never be thought the worse of, for his so doing. 2dly.

2dly, Mr. *Tennent* takes Notice of some Faults in preaching, which he reckons as so many Marks or Signs of an unconverted State, his Words on this Head are as follows.

“ 2dly, there be these Things in respect of preaching of some of our Number, which induce me to suspect the State of their Souls; Namely

“ 1st. Their preaching seems to be powerless and unfavoury, Christ preached with Authority and not as the Scribes; If any object and say how can they be known? I answer Christ's Sheep hear his Voice. Living Men have Sense and Savour.

“ 2dly Too general, not searching Sinners Hearts as narrowly as they ought, not giving them their Different Portions according to the Apostle *Paul's* Directions to *Timothy*.

“ 3dly, Soft and flattering, some seem to be afraid cry aloud & not to spare, afraid to use the Terrors of the Lord to persuade Men. This seems too like Men pleasing and fear of the Cross, whatever plausible Pretences are offered to palliate it by, by cowardly covetous Souls notwithstanding.

“ 4thly, Legal, many are for crying up Duties, Duties, and urging natural Men to them almost constantly as if outward Things were the whole of Religion: Is not this like the foolish Builders to pretend to Build a Fabrick without a Foundation? it's true, the externals of Religion are to be pressed in their Place;

“ but

\* but their insufficiency without inward good prin-  
 \* ciples ought to be shown; he sure that would  
 \* build High, must dig deep and lay the Foun-  
 \* dation low: but I doubt there are not many  
 \* among us that open the nature and urge the  
 \* necessity of Conviction of our damned State  
 \* by nature.

\* 5thly Unsuccessfully, with appearance of  
 \* Contentedness under it, *Aaron's* Rod blos-  
 \* somed and brought forth Almonds, while the  
 \* rest of the Rods were dry and barren, and  
 \* by this the Divine call of that Tribe was  
 \* manifested while bare Pretenders were baffled.  
 \* God will not send Ministers for nothing, no  
 \* sure whom he sends, *and who stand in his*  
 \* *Council shall profit the People.*

What ground *Mr. Tennent* hath for this Ac-  
 cufation, and against whom its designed I know  
 not. I'm not so well acquainted with all my  
 Brethrens Manner of preaching as to be able ei-  
 ther to justify or condemn them on this Score,  
 no doubt we all come short of our Duty in ma-  
 ny respects, and our wiser Course would be, 1st.  
 to cast the Beam out of our own Eyes before  
 we challenge the Mote in our Neighbours.  
 That *Mr. Tennent* hath such certain Knowledge  
 of his Brethren's Conduct in these Respects, as  
 to be able to advance such publick Accusations,  
 I cannot believe, or that the Degrees of these  
 Faults are really so great and the Practice  
 of them so habitual and constant as to give  
 Ground for so severe a Judgment. I have really  
 better thoughts of the generality of my Brethren  
 that

that tho' they be not all *Boanergeses*, yet they strive faithfully to warn the wicked, as well as incourage the Godly; nor do they insult so upon eternal Duties, as to neglect vital Religion and the necessity of Regeneration; and I'm firmly perswaded that many of these, whom he Presumptuously condemns, at last will be honour'd with well done good and faithful Servants. Mr. *Tennent*, by saying that Christs Sheep hear his Voice, and living Men have Sence and Savour, would seem to prove that gracious converted Hearers can discern between Converted and Unconverted Ministers, by hearing them Preach, which is such a Rediculous falshood that it deserves not a rational Confutation. And what he says of *Aarons* rod that budded, as an Evidence to prove the divine Choice of that Tribe, its hard to know what he would prove thereby, to his purpose, for certainly there were many wicked Priests and Levites in that tribe tho' their Divine Call to minister in holy things was confirmed by the forelaid Miracle. In sum, altho' we suppose some of the Brethren to be in their Measure guilty of some of these Faults in their Preaching, yet I cannot but look upon Mr. *Tennent's* charging his Brethren in general with it as meer Calumny and Slander contrary to *Pf. 15.* yea he is guilty of what he condemns, in not giving them their different Portions according to the Apostles Rule, and so is self condemned as an unconverted Minister.

What

What he says concerning the Unsuccessfulness of Ministers as a Mark of their unconverted State, would with equal Force of Reason condemn some of the most eminent Prophets of old, as Elijah, Jeremiah, &c. and as to the Brethrens Contentedness under this Circumstance, is more than he can know : And besides, how can he know how successful or unsuccessful his Brethren are in their Work ? If Conviction of Sin. Reformation from it, and fleeing to Christ for Mercy, may be accounted Success, I hope there is something of that follows upon our Ministry ; If Instruction, Edification, and Confirmation in the Ways of Faith and Holiness, be reckoned Success, I hope there is something of this also ; altho' we have all Reason to lament that there is so little : But if crying out in our public Assemblies, to the Disturbance of the Worship of God, and if falling down and working like Persons in Convulsions ; I say, if those Things only be reckoned Signs of Success, I must own I do not understand it. I think converting Grace works rather on the Soul and rational Parts and Powers than on the Body. And tho' I think it a very desirable Thing to see the inward Concern of the Heart venting itself by Tears and apparent Concern in the Countenance ; yet, that public out-crying in a Congregation, to the Disturbing thereof, and the Work of God, I mean the Hearing of the Word, is a sure Mark of the Spirit and Power of God, I am yet to learn. Yea, some of our Protesting Brethren begin now to speak against it, and declare that it's none of God's Work, nor a sure Evidence of his Grace : And yet it would seem to be the Want of this on which *Mr. Tennent* builds his severe Sentence, which he with a daring Presumption passeth upon his Brethren, some of which, in my Judgment, have more evident Marks of true Grace than he, altho' I am far from judging his spiritual State, but leave this Part to him to whom it belongs.

*Thirdly*, *Mr. Tennent* also takes Notice of some Things in a Practice of his Brethren as Symptoms of an unconverted Estate ; his Words are these :

“ These Things following respecting their Practice, incline me  
“ to suspect their Estate.

“ *First*, Great Stiffness in Opinion, generally in smaller Mat-  
“ ters where good Men may differ, continual Perckness and Con-  
“ fidence, as if they were infallible ; which shew<sup>e</sup> that the Pride  
“ of their Understanding was never broken, <sup>and</sup> that they feel  
“ not the Need of Christ as a Prophet. 2<sup>d</sup>, Opposing of God's

“ Servants and Work, insisting much upon the real or supposed  
 “ Imprudences of God’s Servants, but passing over in Silence their  
 “ valuable Qualities and worthy Actions, this looks *Pharisee-* and  
 “ Devil-like, notwithstanding all the Colourings of crafty Men.  
 “ 3<sup>ly</sup>, A Notion that Men may live godly in Christ, and not suffer  
 “ Persecution. Some among us seem grossly ignorant of this  
 “ Gospel-Doctrine, they think that the Power of Religion may  
 “ be ordinarily carried on amongst a professing People without  
 “ Opposition or Division, whereas our Lord informs us that he  
 “ came to send Fire on Earth, and Division; they seem to ima-  
 “ gine that there is a great Difference between the old *Pharisees*  
 “ and the dry Formalists of this Generation, whereas in Substan-  
 “ tials they are the very same, they are both of the same Father,  
 “ of the same Nature, and under the same Government. 4<sup>ly</sup>,  
 “ That there is no knowing of People’s States; tho’ there is no  
 “ infallible Knowledge of the Estates of some attainable, yet there  
 “ is a satisfactory Knowledge to be attained: Ministers crying  
 “ out against this, is an Evidence of their Unfaithfulness in ne-  
 “ glecting to use the properest Means to convince Sinners of their  
 “ damnable State, it also shews their Ignorance of divine Things,  
 “ or manifests their Consciousness of their own Hypocrisy, and  
 “ Fear of Discovery. 5<sup>ly</sup>, Letting out Men to the Ministry  
 “ without so much as examining them about their Christian Ex-  
 “ periences, notwithstanding of a late Canon of this Synod, en-  
 “ joining of the same; how contrary is this Practice to the Scrip-  
 “ tures, and to our Directory, and of how dangerous Tendency  
 “ to the Church of God? Is it probable that truly gracious Per-  
 “ sons would thus slight the precious Souls of Men? 6<sup>ly</sup>, More  
 “ Zeal for outward Order than for the main Points of practical  
 “ Religion; witness the Committees slighting and shuffling the  
 “ late Debate about the Glory of God, and their present Contem-  
 “ tion about the Committee Act: This is too much like the Zeal  
 “ of the old *Pharisees*, in tithing Mint, Annis, and Cummin,  
 “ while they neglected the weightier Matters of the Law. These  
 “ Things, my Brethren, I mention in the Fear and Love of God,  
 “ without personal Prejudice against any; that God who knows  
 “ my Heart, is Witness that I heartily desire the Conviction of  
 “ those Ministers whom I suspect, and that they may be as burn-  
 “ ing and shining Lights in the Church of God: But I am ob-  
 “ liged in Faithfulness to God and the Souls of Men, to make  
 “ mention of these Things, which are distressing to my Heart,



“ as some of the Reasons why I protest against all Restraints in  
 “ preaching the everlasting Gospel in this degenerate State of  
 “ the Church. Rules that are serviceable in ordinary Cases,  
 “ when the Church is stocked with a faithful Ministry, are no-  
 “ toriously prejudicial when the Church is oppressed with a car-  
 “ nal Ministry. Besides, the remarkable Success that God has  
 “ given of late to Mr. *Whitefield's* travelling Labours, and several  
 “ others in this Country, makes me abhor the slavish Schemes of  
 “ Bigots as to Confinement in preaching the blessed Gospel of  
 “ Christ. I am, Reverend Gentlemen, your Well-wisher and  
 “ humble Servant,

*Philadelphia, May 29, 1740.*

G. T.

It might have been reasonably expected that when Mr. *Tennent*  
 was about to produce his Reasons for condemning his  
 Brethren in the Ministry as unconverted, because of their evil  
 Practices, that he would have advanced some of the Vices or sin-  
 ful Practices contained in the black Catalogues of either the Old  
 or New Testament ; but not one Article of his Accusation against  
 them in relation to their Practice, is to be found in any of those  
 black Rolls, but instead thereof there is nothing but a mere  
 Hotchpotch of incoherent and impertinent Stuff, such as I must  
 confess I have never met with in all my little Reading, since I  
 was capable to take a Book in my Hand. Among all the six  
 Articles which he advances against his Brethren's Practice, there  
 is not one Particular that's commonly ranked among the Vices or  
 Immoralities of wicked Men : Yea, none of the first four, except  
 the second, can, in any Propriety of Speech, come under the No-  
 tion of Practice at all ; the first is only an Allegation of Bigotry  
 to our own Opinion, and the third and fourth contain mere Mat-  
 ter of Principle or Opinion, and have nothing of Practice in them ;  
 yea, he himself denominates the third a Notion. But let us take  
 a brief View of the particular Articles of Accusation under this  
 third general Head. And the

First Thing we are charged with, is our Stiffness in Opinion in  
 smaller Matters. If the Opinion we maintain be true and right,  
 surely it's no Fault to be stick in it, if it be false why doth not  
 Mr. *Tennent* give Instances, and prove their Error ; and if they be  
 in such Things wherein good Men may differ, how can Stiffness  
 in either Side prove the differing Parties to be unconverted ?  
 which is the End of Mr. *Tennent's* Allegation. And further, I



challenge Mr. *Tennent* and all his Party to give one Instance of any Person or Member in the Synod, yea, I may say in the Province, who either exceeds or is near an Equality to Mr. *Tennent* in this very Particular of Stiffness in Opinion, and therefore by his own Argument, he hath never felt his Need of Christ as a Prophet, the Pride of his Understanding hath never been broken; can Mr. *Tennent*, or any for him, give one Instance of the least Yieldingness of Temper in any one Particular wherein he hath differed from his Brethren, small or great? and therefore, if this Argument hold, Mr. *Tennent* is yet in an unconverted State.

The second Article of Accusation is our opposing of God's Work and Servants: It's true Mr. *Tennent* hath been opposed and contradicted, as to some false Doctrines which he preached, alledging that every true Convert is as sensible of his own good Estate as he would be of a Wound or a Stab, or the blowing of the Wind; if this be the Opposition he complains of, let it be so, I think false Doctrine is none of God's Work; it's like these false Doctrines, together with the Dialect of black-guard Russians brought into the Pulpit, such as, *old gray-headed stinking Devils, Lumps of Hell, incarnate Devils, your damn'd Duties, you'll go to Hell with your Prayers*, with many other such Expressions, are among the real or supposed Imprudences, which Mr. *Tennent* is offended that there should be taken any Notice of, and alledgeth that it's *Pharisee*- and Devil-like to mention them.

A third Article is, a Notion that Men may live godly and not suffer Persecution; but how comes this Notion in as an Accusation of Men's Practices; I thought Notions and Practices were different Things; and that any of us have ever alledged that the truly Godly may live wholly free of Trouble or Persecution of every Sort, is, I am persuaded, an Imagination of Mr. *Tennent*'s own Brain: I challenge him to give one Instance among the whole Synod of one that asserts any such thing. Yet the Church of Christ hath many times, in her particular Branches or Parts, been favoured with Grace and Freedom from both Persecution and Division, altho', by reason of remaining Corruption, these external Blessings and the Power of Godliness have not long subsisted together. Mr. *Tennent* says that they (*viz.* the unconverted Ministers) seem to imagine that there is a great Difference between the old *Pharisees* and the dry Formalists of this Generation; and I say that Mr. *Tennent* seems to me to imagine that every Imagination of his crazy Brain heated and excited by un-

charitable Prejudice against his Brethren, altho' never so groundless, is infallibly true ; if any be so foolish as to imagine that there is none in this Generation like the old *Pharisees*, it's only needful to evince the contrary, to point out Mr. *Tennent* and his protesting Brethren, who are in many Respects as like unto them as one Crow's Egg is like another ; I speak only as to those Things which are visible, but will not presume to judge of their spiritual State, lest I should be too like unto them.

Fourthly, Another Article of Accusation against us is, that we say there is no knowing of People's States : I know none who denies a Judgment of Charity concerning our Fellow-Christians spiritual Estate, founded upon their pious Profession and suitable Practice compared together ; it's a Pretence to a Spirit of discerning, which some, and particularly Mr. *Tennent* pretends to, by their rash judging and condemning of others, a notable Instance whereof is this very Manuscript which I am now examining, as also his Sermon concerning unconverted Ministers ; I say, it's a Pretence to a Spirit of discerning, which we cry out against, judging it to be the divine Prerogative, and is incommunicable to any Creature, as is plainly intimated in John ii, 25. *Jesus needed not that any should testify of Man : for he knew what was in Man ;* the Disciples knew not *Judas* ; nor did *Peter*, after he had received the Holy Ghost, discern the Hypocrisy of *Simon Magus*, nor of *Ananias* and *Saphira*, when they were baptised, until by immediate Revelation, it was made known, on Occasion of their Prevarication about the Price of their Land. *Acts v, 1.* And if to oppose or cry out against this Pretence to a Spirit of discerning, be, in Mr. *Tennent's* Judgment, a Mark of an unconverted State, of Unfaithfulness in the Use of the properest Means of Conviction, and of Consciousness of Hypocrisy, as Mr. *Tennent* speaks, I hope I shall hold this Mark still ; but in all my Acquaintance with the inspired Word I have not met with one Text to found this Mark upon ; yea, I take it to be my indispensable Duty to bear Witness against such blasphemous Presumption as to assume the divine Prerogative, and judge Men's Hearts and spiritual State.

Fifthly, As to what Mr. *Tennent* says about letting out Men to the Ministry, without examining them about their Christian Experience ; we are directed by the *Westminster* Assembly, to inquire touching the Grace of God in the Candidate, and if he be of such Holiness of Life as is requisite in a Minister of the Gospel ;  
but

but how Mr. *Tennent* has come to know the Practice of our several Presbyteries, in reference to this Matter, so surely; as to make it the Matter of such a public Accusation, I know not; for my own part I take it to be mere Calumny, and Mr. *Tennent* is herein guilty of taking up a Report against his Brethren. / Either he hath been present at such Instances, or he hath not; if he hath been present as a Member of the Presbytery, he is involved in the Guilt; if as a Spectator, he should have taken a regular Way to declare his Dislike of such Misconduct, by complaining of it to such Presbyteries, or entering Process against them; if he were not present, he is guilty of Slander in taking up a Report and spreading it in an irregular Way without regular Process. But suppose that a Presbytery might be guilty, in whole or in part, of such an Omission, is it not an unheard of Stretch of rash judging, to infer that such a Presbytery was or is all unconverted? tho' such a Neglect can no wise be justified in itself. I'm persuaded and am partly sure as to the Practice of some Presbyteries, that it's not ordinary or habitual in their Practice to neglect this Part of their Work: It's possible that the Members of a Presbytery may be in general so well acquainted with a Candidate, in private Conversation, as to those Things, so as not to judge it needful in a judicial Way to insist so much upon them as otherwise they might. But I strongly apprehend that the Examination about Christian Experience, which Mr. *Tennent* intends, is something for which we have no Ground nor Foundation in Scripture, more than we have for auricular Confession.

By Examination, then, about Experience, he either means an Inquiry into their Acquaintance with practical and experimental Religion, by asking such Questions at the Candidate as will give him an Occasion to discover his Acquaintance with them, without laying him under a Necessity of discovering the spiritual Secrets of his own Heart, but only *in Thesi*, or in general, to declare his Knowledge and Sentiments about such Things, as for Instance, how the several true Graces and their Counterfeits may be safely distinguished. &c. which Examination I take to be that which is recommended by the *Westminster* Assembly: Now, as to such an Examination as this, I'm persuaded that none of our Presbyteries do neglect it. But, zly, if by Examination about Experiences, Mr. *Tennent* means an Examination of the Candidate concerning his own personal Experiences in particular, or his Evidences of Grace and Regeneration, (which I strongly conjecture

is Mr. *Tennent's* Meaning) I acknowledge I am yet to be convinced and instructed, that either it is a Presbyteries Duty to require this Discovery, or a Candidate's Duty to submit unto it, farther than a Profession of Faith in the Doctrines, and Subjection to the Laws of the Gospel goes : I think these personal and secret Things are rather the proper Matter of free intimate private voluntary Conversation between or among intimate Bosom-Friends ; I'm fully persuaded that no Judicatory upon Earth hath just Right or Authority to require of me a particular Declaration of the spiritual Secrets of my Heart, or what passeth between God and my Soul ; altho' it is a Presbyteries Duty to inquire what Acquaintance I have of these Things, querying so as to give me an Occasion to declare my Acquaintance with them ; even as a Minister may make a probable Discovery of his Acquaintance with and Experience of them, by his pertinent and feeling Discourse about them, either in a Sermon or Conference, without declaring his own personal Interest in the Particulars he is discoursing about ; and to make the Omission of such an unwarrantable Examination as this, a Mark of an unconverted State, is an Instance of rash judging, which hath its equal no where but in the Writings and Expressions of Mr. *Tennent* and his Adherents. , However, this Mark is of notable Service to him, for by it, with one Blow, whole Presbyteries are condemned and casheer'd as unconverted graceless *Pharisees*.

Sixthly, What Mr. *Tennent* offers concerning the Zeal of Ministers for outward Order, superior to their Zeal for more weighty Matters, must be acknowledged to be a Fault where it prevails ; but that the Committee, to whom the Consideration of the late Dispute between Mr. *Tennent* and Mr. *Cowel*, was committed, was guilty hereof, in their Conduct in relation to that Affair, compared with their Conduct in relation to the Committee-Act, is what I cannot yet see ; nor hath Mr. *Tennent* offered one Word of an Argument to prove it, besides his bare Say-so ; by the Committee-Act I suppose he means the Synod's Act for Examination of Candidates, previous to their entring upon Tryals.

But did not Mr. *Tennent* himself acquiesce in the Result which the Committee brought the foresaid Controversy unto & when both he and Mr. *Cowel* in open Synod declared their Assent unto the Truth and Soundness of the Form of Doctrine, in relation to the Glory of God, which some Members of the

Committee agreed upon and brought in to the Synod ; and consequently was not he Partaker of the Committee's Sin of slighting and shuffling that Debate ? while he acquiesced in their Determination ; altho' upon After-reflexion, as since appears, he hath withdrawn his Approbation and Acquiescence, and intends to revive the Controversy : And if the Committee's Conduct in that Matter be a good and sure Mark of their unconverted State, surely Mr. *Tennent*'s acquiescing in it and agreeing to what they did, can be no good Mark of Grace in him. And is it not strange Logic to alledge, that, because the Members of the Committee would not recede from the Act for examining Candidates, which they judged rational and agreeable to Scripture, that therefore they are guilty of so much Contentiousness as to prove them unconverted ; while in the mean time Mr. *Tennent* and his Party were as stiff and contentious for the opposite Side of the Question ; and that in a Matter which Mr. *Tennent* himself reckons a small Matter, such as tithing of Mint, Anis and Cummin. Did the Synod's standing by their own Judgment in this Matter, which they reckon momentous, tho' Mr. *Tennent* reckons it small, I say did the Synod's standing by their own Judgment prove them graceless ? and did Mr. *Tennent* and his Party's obstinately contending about what they themselves reckon small Matters, like tithing of Mint, prove less against them. Now let the impartial Reader judge upon what slender Grounds Mr. *Tennent* hath proceeded not only to suspect, but to judge and condemn his Brethren ; but blessed be God, we believe in a Judge who is both more righteous and more merciful, and therefore it's but a small Matter for us to be judged of Man's Judgment.

In the Conclusion of this Performance Mr. *Tennent* in solemn manner invokes the Heart-searching God to be Witness to the Sincerity of his Affections to his suspected Brethren ; as to this, I leave him to the God to whom he appeals, both as his Witness and Judge : I shall also leave it to God and the World to judge, whether his monstrous, rash and uncharitable Judgment against his Brethren, being built upon such weak and inconclusive Reasons, be a sufficient Reason for him to cast off all Subjection to the Rules of a Presbyterian Church, whereof he professeth himself to be a Member ; as if Irregularity, Anarchy and Confusion were the properest Means to restore the decayed Life of Religion.



In the two last Paragraphs of this Performance we have Mr. *Tennent* speaking his mind very plainly : In the first, that this Church is so far from being stock'd with a faithful Ministry, that it is oppress'd with a carnal one.

In the latter he in as plain Terms expresseth his Sentiments concerning all Church-Order, and Relation between Pastors and their Flocks, and their Obligation to stick by them, or take care of them : These Things he abhors as the slavish Schemes of Bigots, and the Observation of them as a Confinement in preaching the Gospel. By this one bold Stroke all Order and Government is at once knock'd in Pieces, and our Directory exploded as a slavish confining Scheme : What can we expect next, but in like manner he will strike at our Confession and Catechisms, by wholesale, (as he hath already made some bold Strokes at some particular Doctrines) and so declare his Abhorrence against being tied up to the Observation of the slavish doctrinal Schemes of Bigots contained in our Confession, &c. or any Forms of Doctrine of human Composition ; and so the Conclusion is, in short, he will preach when he pleases, where he pleases, and what he pleaseth, without being accountable to any earthly Judge or Judicature. May the Lord preserve his Church from such a Scheme of Confusion as this !

Thus I have taken a View of Mr. *Tennent's* Reasons for judging his Brethren in the Ministry to be unconverted ; and considered their Strength : And let any impartial Reader judge whether the Word of the living God gives any, even the least Ground, for our judging and condemning one another for Reasons of such a Stamp or Nature. And altho' Mr. *Tennent* only says that he suspects his Brethren, yet it's plain that the Drift of his Discourse, compared with his Purpose and Practice agreeable thereto, doth, to a Demonstration, prove that he not only suspects but actually condemns them, and proceeds as if he had actually convicted them of the Charge both before God and Man.

I will now proceed to take a View of what Mr. *Blair* hath in another Paper of Complaints against his Brethren, wherein, tho' in a much more soft and moderate Stile, yet he is, in my Opinion, guilty of the same rash judging and condemning his Brethren as a Generation of unconverted Men, who are so far from promoting a Work of Grace and the Interest of Religion in the World, that they rather oppose it : And upon this Supposition taken for granted, declares his Resolution to cast behind his

Back the ordinary Rules in the Exercise of his Ministry, and at People's Invitation to go and preach, without Regard to any Order or Relation of People to their own Pastors, whom he deems and condemns as graceless and Enemies to vital Religion, and hath since, in Pursuance to the foresaid Declaration, preached within the Congregations of other Ministers, without their Consent, at the Instance of a disaffected Party.

Concerning this Paper of Mr. *Blair's*, before I consider the particular Parts thereof, I make the same general Remark upon it which I made concerning Mr. *Tennent's*, viz. That whatever Regard Mr. *Blair* doth in Words profess towards his Brethren, whom he herein censures, yet the Manner of his Procedure doth plainly declare that he aims at the ruining of all his Brethren's Character in an undistinguishing manner, by bringing in and reading his Complaints before the open Synod, and all the Congregation present, without naming the Persons he complains of, and without having dealt with them, either in a private Christian Way by Word or Writing, or by debating and prosecuting them before their own particular Presbyteries, according to the Directions of *Matthew ch. 18.* but, as I said before, this Method, tho' according to Scripture Rule, yet would not have so effectually answered his End.

I now proceed to consider the Contents of his Paper in particular ; and

*First*, his Introduction runs thus :

“ *Reverend Fathers and Brethren,*

“ The low State of Religion and experimental Godliness  
 “ within our Bounds, has been long to me, as well as some  
 “ others, a Subject of very many sad and melancholy Medita-  
 “ tions ; and being convinced that several among us in the holy  
 “ Ministry are far from being so faithful as they ought to  
 “ be in their Endeavours to promote it, yea, by their bad  
 “ Conduct in many Instances, have a very pernicious Influence  
 “ upon the precious Interests thereof ; this likewise has justly  
 “ been a very afflictive Consideration : Whereupon I judged  
 “ it might be expedient and needful, as a Piece of Duty and  
 “ brotherly Love, to represent to this Synod the several Evils  
 “ justly to be complained of, but too common amongst it's  
 “ Members, whereby a good Conscience should be discharged,  
 “ in giving in a faithful Testimony for Truth and vital Reli-

" gion, which by such bad Measures in those who by their ex-  
 " alted Characters in the Church of God, are bound to be its  
 " zealous and painful Promoters, is reduced unto and kept in  
 " so languishing a Condition, and whereby our Brethren should  
 " be lovingly dealt with both for their personal Good and  
 " public Usefulness. Having communicated these Thoughts to  
 " some of my Brethren who were afflicted with the same View  
 " of Things, they cheerfully concurred in the Motion: And  
 " therefore, *Reverend Gentlemen*, we humbly beg Leave, with  
 " all due Regard and brotherly Love at this Time to offer to  
 " your Consideration some of the Evils which we are aggrieved  
 " by in some of our Brethren of this Synod, and that both as to  
 " their private Conversation, their Method and Strain of preach-  
 " ing, and their judicial Proceedings in Presbyteries.

As to the general Complaint which Mr. *Blair* in this In-  
 troduction makes concerning the low State of Religion and  
 experimental Godliness, and the Influence which the Negli-  
 gence and Remissness of Ministers in the Duties of their Office  
 and Station have upon the same, I acknowledge that I be-  
 lieve there is too much Ground for it, and that it is just  
 Matter of Mourning and Lamentation to all who have the  
 Welfare of *Zion* and Prosperity of Souls at their Heart; yea,  
 I am firmly persuaded, that our Barrenness and Fruitlessness  
 under the Means of Grace, the Decay of vital Godliness in  
 both Ministers and People, our too great Ease and Contentedness  
 with a lifeless lukewarm Orthodoxy of Profession, is one prin-  
 cipal Evil whereby our God hath been provoked against us,  
 to suffer us to fall into such Divisions and Confusions as we  
 are now visibly involved in; and O that the Lord by his holy  
 Spirit would send a Reviving to his own Work in the Hearts  
 and Lives of both Ministers and People: But that the Publi-  
 cation of such a Complaint in such a manner, before more  
 private and Christian Methods have been taken, is a proper  
 Expedient to heal this evil Disease, I cannot yet see; but rather  
 think that it hath a visible Tendency to obstruct and hinder  
 the Remedy; by possessing People's Minds with such Jealousies  
 and Prejudices against their own Pastors, that it's put out of their  
 Power to contribute anything to their spiritual Good, other-  
 wise than by their Prayers to God for them, which is now vi-  
 sibly the very Case, through the in' fatigable Industry of our  
 protesting Brethren, whereby vast Numbers of our People are



fully persuaded that we are all a Company of graceless Men, Enemies to true Godliness, who neither can nor desire to do Good to Souls. As to the bad Measures by which some Ministers are alledged to act against the Interest of Religion, we will have Occasion to consider them when we come to where Mr. *Blair* explains himself in particular:

The first Part of Mr. *Blair's* Complaint is against his Brethren's Conduct in their private Conversation; his Words are as follows :

“ As to the first Head of Grievances, we cannot but complain of the Unprofitableness of the general Conversation of too many amongst us, whereas they ought to be improving all Opportunities for promoting the great Ends of their high Calling, as Men who are intent upon doing Good to the Souls of Men; upon the contrary, they spend the Time of their occasional Conversation with People generally in discoursing about secular trivial Affairs, with an Air of Pleasure and Satisfaction therein, and Unconcernedness about their great Business, which is too plain an Evidence that that is the Element which is most agreeable to them to live in; Earthly is the general Vein of their Conversation, in this Strain they will converse in a free and lively manner, even with those who have little or no Appearance of vital Religion, or so much as the very Form, without ever troubling themselves with more desirable as well as more necessary and useful Discourse: How unlike this is to the Example of our glorious Master and his blessed Apostles, it is easy to discern; And moreover, by this Conduct Sinners are hardened in their careless Security and Unconcernedness about the great Affairs of their Souls; how little Impressions are the Doctrines which their Ministers preach like to have upon them, when they see how little they have upon themselves; they are apt reasonably to conclude, that, whatever their Minister may say in a Sermon, (when he must say something about Religion) yet he does n't mean nor desire that they should be very deeply and heartily concerned about their eternal States.

“ Another Thing which is worse and of a more pernicious Tendency, is their endeavouring to prejudice People against the Work of God's Power and Grace in the Conviction and Conversion of Sinners, where-ever there are any hopeful Appearances of it amongst us, calling it Enthusiasm and mere

working of the Passions, the groundless Fears and irrational Phantasms of ignorant People, entirely owing to their Weakness; their speaking against such of their Brethren, as are most zealous and faithful for the promoting of Sinners true Conversion to God; and that with the Appearance of the greatest Dislike against them; and speaking against good People as proud censorious self-exalting Persons, because they can't be so blind as not to see that many are in a Christless unconverted State, and because they would hope better of their own State from what God has done for them and wrought in them. Such Discourse as this is very agreeable and sweet to carnal graceless People: who hate the Power and Life of Religion, and hardens them in their Sins and damnable Presumption.

“ Furthermore, it seems some give Countenance and Encouragement to ungodly Frolicking and Merriment, such as Singing and Dancing at Weddings, and that when severals of the Company are much intoxicated with strong Drink.

“ Finally, the unsuitable earthly and vain Discourse of some upon the Lord's Day.

“ Now can it be reasonably expected that Ministers of this Stamp will be useful in promoting the Kingdom of Christ? No, they are rather the Promoters of the Devil's Kingdom, and Enemies to the Interest of Christ, under a shameful Disguise: Pardon our Plainness upon this Occasion; we cannot forbear expressing our just Indignation and Regret.

In this Complaint or Charge there are four distinct Articles; the first whereof is, that we are carnal and earthly in our Converse with others, and do not improve Opportunities in private to promote the spiritual Good of Souls: As to this, I freely acknowledge that there is too much Ground of Complaint upon this score; and I may charge myself in particular with being guilty of misimproving many a precious Opportunity that might have been improved to much better Purpose, for Edification both of myself and others; and I doubt not but those who are least guilty in this respect; yet are far from being able to justify themselves, so as to venture to cast the first Stone, as Mr. Blair seems to do; and yet I hope the Generality of us are not degenerate to that desperate Degree in this Matter, as to prove us altogether graceless; or to give our Hearers just Ground to believe that we don't desire them to be deeply or heartily con-

concerned about their eternal Estates. May God give us all Grace to be careful to reform what in this respect is and hath been amiss!

As to the second Thing in private Conversation, which Mr. Blair complains of in his Brethren, is their endeavouring to prejudice People against the Work of God's Power and Grace in the Conviction and Conversion of Sinners, where-ever there are any hopeful Appearance of it, with more to the same Purpose; all which I take to be downright Calumny, so far as I know. It's true there are some Things in our Brethren's Conduct which we cannot but condemn, and have condemned and spoken against both in private and public; and some Things also which are the frequent Effects of their Preaching on many of their Hearers, which we cannot esteem so highly of, as both they and their Admirers do.

First, In their Conduct their bold and uncharitable rash judging of their Brethren, and others, as graceless, upon insufficient Grounds. 2ly, Their unwearied Industry to possess our People with Prejudices against us, and to persuade them to think as meanly of us as they themselves do, by calling us carnal, unconverted, Enemies to the Life of Religion, with an hundred more hard and reproachful Names; see Mr. Tennent's Sermon concerning unconverted Ministers. 3ly, Their irregular intruding upon other Men's Charges in a disorderly Way, contrary to all Presbyterian Rules, yea, all Order and Government, which require that every Officer should have and stick by his own Post and Charge, and not intermeddle with anothers, without Order or Consent. Besides, several Things are advanced in Doctrine which we judge erroneous: As, That every true Christian is sure of his own Conversion; Every adult Person when he is converted must be able to tell the Time, Place, and Manner of his Conversion, or else be condemned as a carnal unconverted Person; that no adult Person is converted without first undergoing an high Degree of legal ungracious preparatory Convictions and Terrors; with several other Points of Doctrine which have no Foundation in the Word of God, nor are they agreeable to our Confession, &c.

Again, There are some Effects which their Preaching have on many of their Hearers, which are cried up as the mighty Power of God going along with these Ministers Labours: viz. many Persons crying out aloud in the midst of the Congregations

gations in Time of public Worship, and others falling down half dead, or working like Persons in Convulsion-Fits; which, tho' I will not here take upon me to account for, yet I am sure they are neither the Work of the Spirit of God, *i. e.* his gracious saving Work, nor yet sure Evidences of it in the Persons who have them: For, as to the Custom of crying out in the Congregations, the Spirit of God neither can nor will counter-act himself or his own gracious Designs; now to cry out in a Congregation in Time of public Worship, is to oppose and hinder the Success of the Word preached at the same Time, while both the Cryers and others are thereby hindered and diverted from hearing the Word, which the holy Spirit would never do. And as to Persons falling down in Fits like Convulsions, both in Time of Sermon, and at other Times when no Worship is in hand, this cannot be reasonably thought or judged to be the Work of the Spirit and Power of his Grace; both because both the Persons falling and Beholders are thereby hindered in their attending the Word preached in the mean Time; and also because the Spirit works upon our Souls and reasonable Faculties in a Way agreeable to our reasonable Nature, (and not immediately upon our Bodies) exciting to the Exercise of our Thoughts and Reason about our Souls Concern, by the Means of and according to the Word: Again, we have no Instances of such Effects following or accompanying the preaching of the Word in Scripture.

Again, another Effect is that the Hearers are often seized with such dreadful Fears and despairing Terrors, as can proceed from nothing else but Unbelief, and the Suggestions of the Devil; and others are made to believe strange Delusions, such as that they must die such a Night; that the Day of Judgment is come; that they see Christ, and familiarly converse with him; some see or think they see shining Lights about them when at their Devotion; others are seized with strong Fears of seeing or meeting with the Devil; some think they actually see him: Now surely none of these Things can be truly called the Work of God's Spirit or Power of his Grace. One to my own Knowledge, after three Days of a pleasant deluding Dream of being with Christ often, yet came to be undeceived, and was under great Discouragement when she came to be convinced of her Mistake. Now surely it is downright Calumny and Slander to alledge that we prejudice People against the Work

Work of God, because we sometimes declare our Judgment concerning such Particulars as these, which we verily are persuaded are not the Work of God either in Ministers or People.

Another very notable Effect of our Brethren's Preaching, especially upon their Admirers, is that they quickly get a double Portion of the censorious rash judging Spirit, so that they cannot forbear judging and condemning all as carnal and unconverted Wretches, who differ from them, and speak against these new-fangle Strains, which certainly cannot be the Work of the Spirit, because so directly contrary to the Word.

It's true, since our Brethren have thus itinerated, there are, as I'm informed, and partly know, a great many who are stirred up to have more serious Thoughts about their Soul's Concerns than ever they had before; which is a Thing truly to be rejoiced in: And many, it's said, are much reformed in several Particulars of moral Practice, which also is just Matter of Satisfaction; may the Lord grant that it may be more and more so, and that it be not only a short Fit or Flash! But first, this is not peculiar to our Brethren's Admirers, but is also to be found with those who are utterly against their rash judging and disorderly and divisive Practices: Again, it's also very observable among our Brethren's Admirers especially, that a Spirit of Spite, Contempt and Disdain hath got such Possession of them, that they can neither speak of nor to those who comply not with their new-fangle Measures, but with great Bitterness and Disaffection; which, I'm sure, favours more of the Devil than of the Spirit of God.

I will not say but some of us may be in some measure guilty of the third Article of the above Complaint, yet, I'm persuaded, not to such a Degree as to occasion so public and solemn a Complaint: I believe a Minister may be present at a Wedding where there is Singing and Dancing, and perhaps some intoxicated with Liquor, and yet not be justly chargeable with these Evils, as our Saviour was at the Marriage of *Cana*. I believe also, that the Lord allows a well-regulated cheerful Rejoicing in the Participation of the temporal Fruits of his Bounty on such Occasions, otherwise he would not have countenanced such a Meeting with his Presence, much less supplied their Scarcity of Wine by a Miracle; tho' in the same time I also believe, yea



am sure, that these Occasions are too often sinfully abused to Intemperance and other sinful Vanity.

What Ground Mr. *Blair* hath to accuse his Brethren of profaning the Sabbath with idle worldly Discourse, is more than I can tell, perhaps none of us are entirely innocent in this Matter, if Mr. *Blair* be, I am not ; yet I hope most of us strive to sanctify the Sabbath conscientiously, tho' not with that tender Watchfulness that we ought. May the Lord forgive us, and enable us all to study Amendment !

I readily grant that those Ministers who make no Conscience of such Sins and Duties as these, may be liable to Mr. *Blair's* severe Censure. I'm sure it's most unjust Severity to call all the Promoters of Satan's Kingdom, and Enemies to the Interest of Christ, who, tho' they may sincerely and habitually aim at their Duty in these Particulars, yet through remaining Corruption, and frequently occurring Tentation, may be guilty in many Instances : If this Severity be justifiable, I doubt if Mr. *Blair* would go scot-free ; and if he chargeth his Brethren with these Evils, as if they allowed themselves in the habitual Practice of them, it's, I dare say, groundless Calumny ; and if his Master and ours pardon his unjustifiable rash Severity in judging, we may well pardon his Plainness ; for I think his Sin and Fault lies in the former rather than in the latter.

Another Complaint which Mr. *Blair* makes against his Brethren, respects their Manner of Preaching ; his Words upon this Head are as follows :

“ In the next place, as to the Strain and Way of Preaching  
 “ not uncommon among us, it is not adapted, as it ought to be,  
 “ to the obtaining the great End of preaching, *viz.* the Conver-  
 “ sion of Sinners to God, and the carrying on of the Work of  
 “ Sanctification in his own People : Do not many corrupt the  
 “ Gospel of the pure Grace of God with legal Mixtures, and  
 “ so (*kapélevein tòn lógon*) deal with the Word as Hucksters too  
 “ often do with their Liquors ? When they speak to the Uncon-  
 “ verted, (if at any time, through a strange Chance, they hap-  
 “ pen to be so distinguishing and particular) they will direct  
 “ them to the Practice of such particular Duties, to abstain  
 “ from all known Sin ; to confess and grieve for all their Sins,  
 “ to be constant and earnest in Prayer, and the like ; and then  
 “ upon their Observance of those Things, they plainly in Effect,  
 “ if not expressly, promise them Acceptance with God : It's true,  
 “ they

they will readily add, through Christ, but still if People act according to their Scheme of Doctrine, the very Rise and first chief Ground of their Trust and Dependance is their own Doings, they will expect and depend for Acceptance with God through Christ, because they do so and so; and thus their Faith and Trust is originally bottomed upon themselves and their own Doings, as the very Foundation of it; their Works of Righteousness is that which affords this Faith and Peace, or rather arrogant Presumption to their Souls; but most generally they will not be so particular as to distinguish between the Converted and Unconverted, but speak to their Hearers *in Cumulo*, by the Lump, and direct them to be conscientious in the Performance of religious Duties, and so trust in Christ and him only for their Justification and Salvation, but do not faithfully tell them, that all the Unconverted and Unconverted among them, tho' they profess otherwise, do depend on their own Righteousness, and not entirely on the Righteousness of Christ, nor make it plain unto them, shewing them how and wherein they do so, and thus poor People, through the Blindness and Unfaithfulness of their Guides, are settled in a dead Formality, resting in their own wretched lifeless religious Performances, imagining all the while that they believe in Christ and look to him only for Salvation, when there is no such thing. The Preaching of such Ministers hath little or no Tendency to produce in Sinners a soul-humbling Conviction of their Sin and Misery, their utter Undoneness without Christ, and absolute Necessity of the Redemption that is in him, that so they might be brought off all their own Righteousness to the Righteousness of Jesus; nay, this is plainly nothing of their Desire or Design, for where Convictions of this Kind appear they will ridicule and speak contemptuously of them.

Another very just and clamant Cause of Complaint is, their laying down such loose and undistinguishing Marks of true Christians for People to try themselves by, whereby they may very readily deceive themselves to their eternal Ruin; they will give such Characters as these, as sure Evidences of a Person's being truly godly and Heirs of eternal Salvation, *viz.* if Persons be conscientiously strict upon the Sabbath-day from the Beginning to the End of it; if they continue the whole Course of their Life to practice the Duty of

" secret Prayer ; if they are conscientious in the Performance  
 " of secret Duties as well as of that which is more public, and  
 " the like ; all which Characters Persons may justly appropriate  
 " to themselves, and yet be entire Strangers to the renewing  
 " and sanctifying Grace of God in their Hearts. How little  
 " Care is taken closely to search the Hearts of People, in order  
 " to convince such as are deceiving themselves with mere Shews  
 " and Appearances of Religion, while the Truth and Reality of  
 " saving Grace is not in their Souls : And if at any time hypocriti-  
 " cal formal self-righteous Persons are in any measure discovered,  
 " how little Endeavour is used to awaken them out of their stu-  
 " pid Security, by a plain, faithful, and solemn Remonstrance  
 " of their wretched and damnable Estate ; they are dealt with in  
 " more smooth and tender Language, lest they should be too  
 " deeply troubled and concerned about their perishing Condition.  
 " Thus by these Methods precious Souls are settled upon their  
 " Lees in a Christs Estate, and built up in their Self-deservings.  
 " Some of the most necessary and important Doctrines of the  
 " Gospel are too little, at least too superficially insisted upon :  
 " How little is the true Nature and absolute Necessity of Con-  
 " version, and the new Birth insisted upon ? so that many People  
 " with Grief of Heart declare they never heard much about it,  
 " but still imagined, from their Minister's Preaching, that so con-  
 " tinue in the Way of all commanded outward Duty, with such  
 " good inward Dispositions as they could come at, would do well  
 " enough.

" Moreover, (not to speak of their dull and lifeless Way of  
 " delivering the solemn Truths of God, as if they were Matters  
 " of little Moment, and they cared not whether one Soul received  
 " saving Benefit by them or not) we cannot but be offended at  
 " the common Way of making general Application of Sermons,  
 " without distinguishing between the Precious and the Vile, the  
 " truly Godly and Ungodly : Hence People, who are naturally  
 " inclined enough to think well of and deceive themselves,  
 " hardly know that there are two such Ranks as Converted  
 " and Unconverted among them ; both the Promises, Threat-  
 " nings, and Directions are given out in an undistinguish'd Mass  
 " for every Hearer to apply as he pleases ; which certainly is  
 " not the Way to build up, quicken and comfort the People of  
 " God, and it gives great Occasion to the Ungodly to deceive



“ and ruin themselves : Dogs will take the Children's Bread  
 “ when there is no Guard against it.

I confess I am at a loss to know what Mr. *Blair* means by this Accusation : Is it not a Minister's Duty and Work to press these Things upon unconverted Hearers ? And have we not Commission from God to tell them that if they be sincere and consciencious in them, they shall obtain Pardon and Acceptance through Christ ? Doth not God promise to the *Wicked that if he will forsake his unrighteous Ways, and wicked Thoughts, and turn unto him, he will have Mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon ?* *Isai. lv.* If this be to huckster the Word, or encourage to trust in their own Doings, then I must say that the Scriptures and the Spirit of God speaking in them, encourageth Sinners to do so : Every one that is anything acquainted with these Things, cannot but see that to urge the Necessity of sincere Repentance and Reformation upon Sinners, (as well as Faith) and to promise them Pardon and Acceptance through Christ upon their so doing, is perfectly according to the Tenor of the Gospel, and is so far from being inconsistent with renouncing our own Righteousness, and relying wholly on Christ's, that it necessarily implies it. It's very true that a Tincture of the old Covenant-Frame doth by Nature so prevail in Sinners, that they are still inclin'd to do Gospel-duties in a legal Way, and depend upon them as so many good Works, for Acceptance with God ; which had much need to be guarded against both by Ministers and People ; and which I hope we are all careful to do : But simply to condemn the pressing of Gospel-duties, and encouraging to them by Gospel-promises, as a huckstering the Word, is, I think, blasphemously to reproach what God hath made every Minister's main and principal Work and Duty : It's true, Sinners cannot perform these Duties acceptably without regenerating Grace, nor are they to expect Acceptance for them when performed by Grace ; but yet this is as true, that Sinners are in the Word called upon to perform them, and have the sure Promise of Pardon and Acceptance, in a Way of free Grace, upon their Performance of them, tho' not for them ; and when the Sinner, in Obedience to the Call of God, does really and truly repent, reform, and pray, &c. in Sincerity, then he has Ground in himself, if he could see it, to conclude that he is by supernatural regenerating Grace enabled to do what by Nature he had neither Power,  
 Will

Will nor Inclination unto, and so hath just Ground to look upon his Repentance, Reformation and good Works, as his best Evidence of his own true Grace and Interest in the Promise, tho' not as the Foundation or meritorious Cause of his Claim. And I'm fully persuaded, that if Mr. *Blair* designs anything further in his Complaint against his Brethren, he wrongfully reproacheth them; and if this be all which he lays to their Charge, tho' Mr. *Blair* should condemn them, yet the Lord, who is both his and our Judge, will approve of them in this Particular, it being according to his Word, the Strain and Tenor of the Gospel.

Mr. *Blair* further says, that his Brethren in Preaching make no Distinction between the converted and unconverted Part of their Hearers, but speak to them by the Lump: I cannot suppose that he means that they do not make a personal Distinction, but only that they make no Distinction of Characters, which, I'm persuaded, is mere Calumny, and which, because it's not possible for Mr. *Blair* to know such a Negative, by his own personal Knowledge and Observation, he must have it by Report from others, which makes him guilty of taking up and spreading an evil Report against his Brethren, contrary to Ps. xv. To believe evil and diminutive Representations against Ministers, upon the Report of disaffected Persons, is an aggravated Sin in any, and is doubly aggravated in a Minister; but industriously to publish and spread it, is worse. However, Mr. *Blair* hath the noble heroic Example of the Reverend Mr. *Whitefield* for his precedent in this Practice, which will undoubtedly screen him from all Censure, at least with those who are their Admirers; but Mr. *Whitefield's* Example will be but a slender Excuse in the great Day of Accounts.

Mr. *Blair* further complains, that we do not tell our Hearers that all unconverted Persons trust in their own Righteousness, and not in the Righteousness of Christ; and that we do not shew them wherein they do so. That all unconverted Persons trust in their own Righteousness is an evident Falshood; for sure such as despair absolutely of Salvation are unconverted, who yet do not trust in their own Righteousness; but in my poor Opinion it would be more intelligible and more convincing, as well as more agreeable to Truth, to tell them that unconverted Persons, while such, can have no just Claim to the Righteousness of Christ, and that, if they do trust in it, they will

will deceive themselves, while in that Estate; that is, while they have not truly received him; and given themselves up unto him according to the Terms of the Gospel: For that too too many do really (I do not say in a right Manner as they ought) trust in Christ's Righteousness, being rationally convinced that they neither have nor can have any sufficient Righteousness of their own, who yet have no just Claim, being yet void of regenerating Grace, and never yet having embraced, received and submitted to Christ upon his own Terms, *viz.* in all his Offices and Benefits, as their Prophet and King, as well as Priest; I say that there are too many knowing formal Professors, who thus presumptuously, yet really, that is, not feignedly, trust in Christ and not in any Righteousness of their own, is, I think, not to be doubted; a temporary or historical Faith is a real, tho' not a saving Faith, as a Repentance unto Death is a real, tho' not a saving Repentance, and as legal Convictions are real, tho' not saving. And I am persuaded that not a few are careful to warn their Hearers of the Danger of such Presumption.

But Mr. *Blair* is yet more liberal of his Calumnies, when he saith that it's not our Desire to convince Sinners of their Need of Christ, but that we rather ridicule and oppose such Convictions; May the Lord convince and forgive this rash judging Brother! I have already taken Notice of what some of us have spoken against in these Brethren's Conduct, but that we have ever ridiculed or spoken against Convictions of Sin and Misery, or Need of Christ and regenerating Grace, is, I dare say, a devilish Slander; and I'm heartily sorry that ever such a serious Person, as I take Mr. *Blair* to be, should have been so far byassed from the Paths of true Christian Charity, and engaged in the Interest of him who is the Father of Lies and Accuser of the Brethren, but I am not without Hopes that he may yet be brought to see his Mistake, and that, when he is converted, he will strengthen his Brethren, whom by such Conduct he hath enveavoured so much to weaken. I hope I need not caution the intelligent Reader that I have no Intention to insinuate that Mr. *Blair* is in an unconverted State, or stands in need of Conversion in any other Sense than the Apostle *Peter* did, after his denying of Christ. What is now cried up so much for Conviction and the Work of God, I am persuaded will be found in too many to be only the Excrescencies of Unbelief, Weakness of Mind, confused irrational

nal Terrors; and if there be any thing more than what may be produced by ordinary second Causes, I'm afraid, it's of an Original not only inferior but opposite to the holy Spirit, that it's rather diabolical than divine; altho' I'm far from alledging that all in whom these Symptoms appear, are void of the saving Work or Grace of God.

Another Thing Mr. *Blair* complains of is the Looseness of the Marks laid down by Ministers, whereby People may try their spiritual State, and mentions three of them, *viz.* a strict Observation of the Sabbath-day, Constancy and Perseverance in secret Prayer, and a conscientious Performance of secret as well as social Duties. It's true, the external Part of all these and all other good Works may be performed by graceless Persons to a greater Length and Degree as to what is visible, than some real Christians: Yet,

First, To be constant and persevering in them is a good probable Sign or Symptom. 2ly, These and such other good Works, compared with their proper inward Motives and Springs of Action, *viz.* Love to and Delight in God, and Hatred of Sin, Self-Denial, &c. will, I think, amount to such a distinguishing Mark as a Christian may safely depend upon; and I am sure, no Pretence to inward Marks or Graces, without a competent Proportion of congenial Fruits, will ever amount to a Mark or Character of a true Christian: And I dare challenge Mr. *Blair* to give an Instance in the whole Synod of one Minister, who holds or preaches, that these external overt Duties, abstracted from their congenial inward Graces and Affections, are sufficient Marks of a sanctified or converted State. But I take this to be all of a Piece with the other Fruits of a calumniating Spirit and Disposition, which hath got Possession of Mr. *Blair* and some more of his Brethren, whom yet I hope to have the Root of the Matter in them, altho' I know they have not, at least some of them, so good an Opinion of me; but it is a small thing for me to be judged of Man's Judgment.

What Mr. *Blair* farther saith concerning Ministers seldom or never preaching concerning the Nature and Necessity of Conversion, is also another Slander, an evil Report taken up from prejudiced Persons. O what a dreadful and mischievous Thing is it for Ministers to have their Ears open to receive evil Reports of their Brethren! It's evident to a Demonstration

tion, that this is one main Stratagem of Satan, at this very Juncture, whereby he hath, as with a Wedge, split and divided this little Church in Pieces. One of my Hearers a few Months ago told me, that he remembered not to have heard me preach before on a certain Point of Religion, which I then was upon in my ordinary; and yet the Truth of the Matter is, that I had not only given frequent Hints of it, but also spent a considerable Part of some Sermons upon it within these few Years, as I found in my Notes upon a Review: Now if this Person should come to Mr. *Blair*, and by way of Complaint inform him, that I never touched upon such a Doctrine, and Mr. *Blair* upon this should make a public Complaint thereof, tho' he should not name me in the Case, how unchristian would it be? and yet I am persuaded that this is the very Case.

What Mr. *Blair* observes concerning the dull and lifeless manner of delivering of Sermons, has, I think, but little in it. The natural Tempers and Gifts of Men are known to be so vastly different, that the truly Zealous may seem to be less lively than many Formalists and Hypocrites, in their Delivery, besides the different Frames that Persons may be in at different Times.

Mr. *Blair* renews his Complaint against us for Undistinctness in Preaching, *viz.* that we make too general Application, not distinguishing between the Precious and the Vile; as if we applied the Promises and Threatnings promiscuously to the Godly and Graceless; which Complaint I think I have sufficiently answered before. Would Mr. *Blair* have us to make a personal Distinction among our Hearers? or does he mean that we preach that Promises belong to the Wicked as well as the Godly? common Sense may teach every one upon how poor a Foundation this must stand. Can Mr. *Blair* restrain the Dogs among his Hearers from laying hold of the Children's Bread? or can he prevent the fearful doubting Christian from being too forward in applying to himself the Threatnings which he designs against the Graceless and Unconverted? if he can, he hath both Satan and the Hearts of his Hearers more under his Command than I believe any finite Creature can justly pretend to. It's true, I have been told that some of the Brethren of Mr. *Blair's* Party, after having industriously wrought upon the Passions of their Hearers, until they had brought them to cry out, to the Disturbance of the Congregation, that then they would exhort them

them to be still, and, in a Way of Comfort, speak to this Purpose. *My dear Friends, compose yourselves, and take Comfort, it's not you I pronounce these Threatnings against, it's those hardened Wretches which are not moved nor concerned at all; obviously intimating that such as cried out, and they only, were rightly and duely concerned and exercised: if it be the Want of such Distinguishing as this which Mr. Blair complains of, I must own that I never use it, nor do I desire to have the Occasion of using it.*

But there are Practices now-a-days grown very customary in Preaching and other public Administrations, which to us look very like Faults of a very pernicious Tendency, which neither Mr. Blair nor Mr. Tennent have taken any Notice of in their Papers, nor elsewhere that I know of, whether because they have not heard of them, or because they look upon them as no Faults, or because they themselves and their Party are guilty of them, or for what other Cause they have omitted them, they themselves best know.

First, Some have preached up what I and many more take to be false Doctrine, of which I gave an Hint before, and shall not now add.

2ly, Some of them in their Prayers ask of God either to convert or confound those whom they call *Pharisee Teachers*, a Petition which hath no Foundation in the Word of God: And considering that they make it sufficiently known whom they intend, it shews what Interest we have in their Prayers.

3ly, Some of them preach up the national and solemn League and Covenants; and give the Breach of these Covenants as the great and principal Cause of the great Decay of Religion among us: Others of the same Party never mention it, that I hear of. Some of them oblige Parents to these Covenants at the Baptism of their Children; and others do not. Yea, the same Persons sometimes oblige Parents to these Covenants, and sometimes do not; as for Instance, Mr. *Alexander Craighead* and Mr. *John Cross*. Some who are most fond of these Covenants, as a darling Topic, yet do, or have statedly prayed for Mr. *Whitefield* by Name, whose professed Principles oblige him to be an Enemy to both these Covenants, as to one main and principal Design of them, viz. the Establishment of Presbyterian Church-Government, and renouncing of unscriptural Ceremonies of Worship; he being a professed Member of an Hierarchical or Prelatical Church, which

R

hath



hath no small Number of unscriptural Ceremonies, which Mr. *Whitefield* freely useth when he officiates in an *English* Church.

Some pray publickly for the Curse of God upon all the Breakers of these Covenants, and in the mean time are daily transgressing the established Rules of that Government which these Covenants oblige to observe, and which they themselves solemnly promised to observe, both when licensed and ordained.

4ly, They have fallen into a Custom of confirming their Assertions in public, by solemn Oaths, as if their Swearing could add Authority or greater Credibility to Gospel-Truth.

5ly, They strive to fright their Hearers into confounding Terrors, by pronouncing them damned, and decline giving them Comfort until they have been as long under these Terrors as the Preacher thinks meet, unwarrantably separating the Law and Gospel, which should be joined together; and refusing to set Life as well as Death before their Hearers, contrary to both Scripture-Precept and Precedent.

6ly, There is a Manner of Diction or Phraseology become exceeding common and much in Vogue, which is a downright Disgrace to the sacred Function of the Ministry of the Gospel, such as calling the Prayers and Duties of the Unconverted, *damn'd Prayers, damn'd Duties*; saying, *that they'd be damn'd and go to Hell with their Prayers*; calling their Hearers *damn'd, damn'd double damn'd, Lumps of Hell, incarnate Devils*; *that they are damned already*; *that their Souls are in Hell, tho' they are alive on the Earth*; *that they are cursed, and ought to curse themselves*; and praying them *to curse themselves*; asserting that *to judge well of a Person's State by his good Behaviour, is a barbarous bloody murdering Charity*; calling aged People, *old stinking Devils, old grey-headed Devils*; asserting *that they are ten thousand million times worse than Devils*; speaking to Christ in such Words as these, *I summon thee, Lord Jesus, to come down, come down, come down, you promised me last Night to come down among us this Day, come down, come down*, striking with a Bible and stamping from Side to Side of the Pulpit: It would be endless to mention the many wicked profane Reveries which are borrowed from *Billingsgate* rather than from the Holy Scriptures, which are obtruded upon poor abused, amused, ignorant People as Dictates of the Holy Ghost, whereby many weak Minds are terrified out of their Wits and Senses, made to cry out

out and fall down as Persons dead or in Convulsions ; and this is cried up as the mighty Power of God, putting forth itself in the Conversion of Sinners : This Manner, of Preaching is not noticed by either *Mr. Tennent* or *Mr. Blair*, which they not being ignorant of, but in part using it, it seems that they look upon it as justifiable ; these are therefore either no Faults at all, or at most but only the Imprudences and Failings of great and good Men, which rather should be passed over in Silence, as *Mr. Tennent* speaks in his Paper above ; and therefore by my mentioning them I shall only give farther Proof of my graceless State : But be it so ; I am as bad already in his Books as I can be. *Mr. Blair* in his last Paragraph complains of our Carelessness in inquiring into the State of our Flocks ; and of our admitting Men to the Ministry, without inquiring into their Experiences : His Words are as follows,

“ In the last place, As to their Presbyterial Proceedings, that  
 “ which we shall chiefly take Notice of, is, that many are ad-  
 “ mitted into the Ministry without ever being examined con-  
 “ cerning their Experience of a Work of God’s renewing sanc-  
 “ tifying Grace in their own Souls : And indeed, (what I had  
 “ almost forgot) many Ministers take no care, either in their  
 “ pastoral Visitations, or occasional Conversation, to examine  
 “ their People about this Matter, of whose Souls they have  
 “ taken a solemn Charge ; they never strictly examine into  
 “ their spiritual State ; no not in order to their Admission to  
 “ the Lord’s Table, which is most manifest and horrid Un-  
 “ faithfulness : But indeed, how can such perform this Duty to  
 “ any good Purpose, who are Strangers to any such Experience  
 “ themselves. But to return to the Case of Candidates for  
 “ the Ministry : If they are but pretty moral in their Lives,  
 “ free of gross Scandals, profess orthodox Principles, and have  
 “ a Competency of human Accomplishments, then there is no  
 “ Stop in the Way ; they are licensed and ordained without  
 “ inquiring for or receiving any satisfactory Account from them  
 “ of their Experience of the saving Grace of God in their  
 “ Hearts ; thus an unconverted Ministry is freely introduced  
 “ into the Church. And what can be expected of such Mi-  
 “ nisters (unless the Lord convert them) but that they will dis-  
 “ like and oppose the Work of God, and prove pernicious  
 “ Instruments to keep People deceived and secure. Is there not  
 “ then a crying Necessity for faithful Ministers to travel, in



“ order to awaken secure Sinners, and remove their damning  
 “ Delusions, wherein they are encouraged and built up by their  
 “ Teachers? And indeed, unless we can see hopeful encouraging  
 “ Appearances of a Work of God's converting Grace in such  
 “ Ministers, we believe we shall find ourselves obliged in Duty  
 “ to our glorious Lord, to answer the Invitations and Desires  
 “ of People groaning under the Oppression of a dead unfaith-  
 “ ful Ministry, by going to preach to them where-ever they  
 “ are, that they may be farther confirmed in and edified by  
 “ the Truth, as it is in Jesus, and that others may be undeceived  
 “ and awakened out of their false Security. We can, with  
 “ the utmost Sincerity of Heart, declare ourselves exceedingly  
 “ grieved, that we find ourselves under any Necessity of this  
 “ Nature upon the fore-mentioned Accounts; but how can we  
 “ look upon our poor Fellow-Creatures in such deplorable Cir-  
 “ cumstances merely as idle and mournful Spectators, without  
 “ ever attempting to afford them any Assistance or Relief? A  
 “ violent and extensive Opposition has been made against the  
 “ Work of God by our Ministers, more especially since he  
 “ hath been pleased to carry it on in such a great and glo-  
 “ rious Degree; and can we, with a good Conscience, behold  
 “ this without endeavouring, as much as in us lies, to deliver  
 “ Souls out of the Snare whereby they are in Danger of be-  
 “ ing entrapped, and eternally ruined by their Guides? and  
 “ that in a Time when the Lord is in an eminent Manner  
 “ smiling. —

Here Mr. *Blair's* Paper ends without a Conclusion, I suppose  
 because he had mislaid the Paper which contained what should  
 have followed.

Mr. *Blair* in his last Paragraph complains of our Careless-  
 ness in enquiring into the State of our Flocks: And would to  
 God there were not so much Guilt, in this respect, lying upon  
 us, as I'm afraid there is; for my own Part, I'm far from plead-  
 ing Innocence in this Matter, whether Mr. *Blair* or his Party  
 can, they should know best. / But as I said before, with respect  
 to Candidates for the Ministry, when considering Mr. *Tennent's*  
 Paper, so I say now, with respect to our dealing with private  
 Christians; I am not convinced that it is our Duty to require  
 or exact of a Person a Declaration of his gracious State, or  
 his personal Experiences, in order to their Admission to the  
 Sacrament: Yet, when in Christian Discretion it may appear  
 a pro-

a probable Expedient to make way for our speaking to the Persons Conscience, for Conviction, Instruction or Comfort, in secret Conference, I'm not against making an Inquiry even into the Person's own Experience, yet so as that still the Person hath a just Right to be free or reserved, as his own Judgment or Discretion may lead him; neither do I think we can justly debar him from Privileges, for Want of a Declaration of his personal Experiences, provided he have a Competency of Knowledge, an unblemished Character, and makes a Profession of sincere Resolutions to engage in and keep Covenant with his God and Saviour: But Mr. *Blair* can easily account for our Deficiency in these Things, by observing that we have no Experience of these Things ourselves. But how does he know it to be so? or how can he justify his rash judging and condemning them for what he knows not? Dare Mr. *Blair* affirm that every Minister is an absolute Stranger to Christian Experience, who thinks it not his Duty to go so far in inquiring into the Experience of others, whether Candidates or Professors, as he does; this would be unaccountable Arrogance indeed, to think that all true Christians must see these Things in the very same Light with himself, or else be condemned as unconverted Persons and Strangers to Christian Experience.

As to what he says of our Neglect of making Inquiry into the Experience of Candidates for the Ministry, I need not say much now, having had Opportunity of speaking to it, when considering Mr. *Tennent's* Paper: That we allow ourselves to neglect all Inquiry about the Grace of God in Candidates, is a downright Slander and Falshood; that in some Instances we may be too deficient, is readily acknowledged, as well as in many other Parts of our Work; but that Mr. *Blair* hath a Right to exalt himself thus, as a Superintendent above his Brethren, and publickly to condemn and censure all in the Lump, for this or any other Deficiency, while he himself may be also culpable, for aught I know, in this and other Particulars, is what I cannot justify. As I have already said, to exact a Declaration of personal Experiences, I think doth not ly before us; but to examine the Candidate concerning his Acquaintance with experimental Religion, by asking him such Questions as may oblige him and give him Occasion to declare his Sentiments and evidence his Knowledge of these Things in *Thesi*, or in general, is what we ought carefully to do. / No

Man nor Judicature on Earth hath a Right to know my spiritual State, farther than a Profession of the Faith of the Gospel, and owning Subjection to its Precepts, goes. None has Right to know the secret Intercourse between me and my God, or between me and my own wicked Heart and Satan's Tentations; these Things are among the religious Secrets which I have a Right to conceal or discover, as Christian Prudence and Discretion shall direct.

In this last Paragraph Mr. *Blair* goes on to declare his own and others Purpose and Resolution, without Regard to Order or pastoral Relation between Ministers and People, to preach the Gospel where-ever they are invited, in Compliance, as he supposes, to the Call of divine Providence, for the Relief of poor starving and perishing Souls under the Care of us graceless and unfaithful Ministers. He also complains of a violent and extensive Opposition that hath been made unto the Work of God in his and his Brethren's Hands: As to the first, it plainly implies a sentencing and condemning his Brethren as graceless and unfaithful, which is all of a Piece with what he hath formerly said; and serves, with a demonstrative Clearness, to declare that where-ever he or any of his Party go to preach to People belonging to other Ministers Charges; that in particular they judge and condemn these Ministers as graceless and unfaithful; otherwise they would not so incroach upon their Congregation, so that by this Mean we may come to a clear Interpretation and Application of their undistinguishing Accusations and condemning Sentences, to the particular Ministers against whom they are intended.

As to the violent Opposition which hath been made unto the Work of God in their Hands, I shall not now enlarge, having already observed in what respect any of us have opposed them; leaving the World to judge, whether, what we have opposed or spoken against, be the Work of God, or rather something else, which deserves not so glorious a Title. However, we rejoice that the great God, who over rules all Events for his own Glory and the Good of his Church, doth make the Truths of the Gospel preached by these Brethren, effectual in many, to stir them up to a more serious Consideration of their Soul's Concerns, than ever before; I also hope, that our gracious Lord will give us, who are in the Ministry, Grace to observe and obey his Voice by his Providence to us, to search and  
try

try our Ways, and turn again unto the Lord; to search out our own real Faults and Short-comings, in our Christian and ministerial Capacity, and to study Repentance and Reformation, as there is great Need we should; the general Lifelessness and Lukewarmness of the present Age, no doubt, hath had too much Place with us, and Influence upon us: May the Lord teach us now to hear the Rod, and who hath appointed it, and without Delay to obey his Call to us thereby! / And I think we had much Need of the Guidance of his Holy Spirit in both Ministers and People, to teach us to distinguish between the Chaff and the Wheat, between what is agreeable to the Will and Word of God and what is not, in our Endeavours after Reformation, or reviving of true Godliness, which we stand so much in Need of; lest we lose our Charity, while we are seeking for Piety; lest, while we look for true Conversion, we be deceived with Delusion, and lest, while we affect a free and unrestrained Preaching of the Gospel, we bring on Anarchy and Confusion, and Overthrow of all Order and Government; and at last be driven off the very Foundation of Gospel-Doctrine contained in the Scriptures, and most excellently summed up in our Confession and Catechisms; some of which Doctrines are already boldly struck at by some of our new-fashion Preachers, as the Covenant of Grace by Mr. *Whitefield*; that all true Christians have Assurance, by Mr. *Gilbert Tennent* and others; the Bindingness of pastoral Relation between Pastors and their People, &c. by Mr. *Tennent*, in his Sermon *against unconverted Ministers*.

Thus I have taken a View and Survey of Mr. *Gilbert Tennent's* and Mr. *Blair's* Papers, which contain the Reasons why they so peremptorily judge and condemn their Brethren by whole-sale, by whole Presbyteries and Committees, as unconverted, and Heart-enemies to vital Godliness: Now let the World judge, as God himself undoubtedly will judge, whether those Reasons be a sufficient Ground for their so severe Sentence against us. But Glory be to our heavenly Father, who hath appointed a Day in which he will judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained; and Glory to our gracious Redeemer and Judge, who is an Heart-searching God, and who will approve of true and sincere Grace, tho' weak and defective both in Exercise and Fruits, it being his own Image, and the Work of his own Spirit, where-

where-ever he finds it; and will, for his own Name's sake, forgive all our Iniquities, covering our Nakedness with the Robes of his own imputed Righteousness; so far will he be from censuring us with an unjust Severity, as these Men presumptuously do. May the Lord convince and forgive them! and I hope he will, in his own good Time. And so I have finished what I intended to say concerning the first principal Part of the Difference between our Protesting Brethren and the rest of our Synod.

I forgot to take Notice in its proper Place of a Kind of Entertainment, with which these Brethren very frequently entertain their Hearers, *viz.* a vain-glorious Boasting of their own good Estate; that they shall certainly stand on the right Hand of Christ at the last Day, and with him pass Sentence upon their unbelieving Hearers. I will not presume to pass Sentence concerning their Estate, nor yet concerning their Assurance thereof; but I never, either by Reading or Conversation, understood that it was usual or customary for assured Christians, in such a vulgar and popular Manner to boast of this great and sweet Attainment: For to what Purpose? Their Hearers have only their Word. Ministers should preach Gospel-Truths, which they can confirm with a *Thus says the Lord*, out of Scripture; but not their own personal Attainments or Experiences, which they can only confirm with a *Thus I say*: the white Stone and new Name are only known to the Person who hath them; a Stranger cannot intermeddle with this Joy. I do not say that all Declarations of a Christian's Assurance is faulty; but I think, frequent popular Declarations of this Kind are faulty with a Witness.

Again, Another Practice which I briefly hinted at before, is their frequent confirming their Doctrines and Assertions with Oaths, which I think is a palpable Breach of the *third Command*: Can our Oaths confirm any Gospel-Truths? or can they stand in Need of such a Confirmation? Indeed, if a Minister be under a Necessity to confirm any Matter of Fact, which, as to the Credit of it, depends upon his own Veracity, and cannot be confirmed any other Way, as the Apostle Paul did, in such a Case I would not censure such a Way of speaking; but it should be with Care and in a Case of unavoidable Necessity. Frequently to swear in Preaching, to confirm what

we assert, supposeth that our Oath can add Certainty to what is attested by divine Authority, which is most absurd.

I will now proceed to enquire into the Validity of the second Ground of Difference between the Protesting Brethren and us, *viz.* their Judgment or Principles in relation to Church-Government, quite different and opposite unto the Principles of Church-Government contained in our Directory and maintained by our Synod; which plainly appears from the above Quotations out of their Apology.

Besides what I have already briefly offered in Opposition to the Judgment and Principles of these Brethren, in relation to Church-Government, I will here add some farther Considerations to the same Purpose. And

First, I will lay before you the Sentiments of our Protesting Brethren in their own Words, as we have them expressed in their Apology *Page 9.* in the three following Propositions.

“ *Propos. I.* That there is a Parity or Equality of Power  
“ among Gospel-Ministers.

“ *Propos. II.* That a Presbytery or the smallest Association of  
“ Ministers have a Power from Christ to ordain. Hence

“ *Propos. III.* That Presbyteries have Authority from Christ  
“ to examine all Candidates, (who regularly offer themselves)  
“ respecting all Qualifications that are necessary for the Mi-  
“ nistry.

And in *Page 28, 29.* in five Paragraphs or Assertions, which, together with the above Propositions, I take to contain a plain Declaration of their Principles in relation to Church-Government; for it would be too tedious to transcribe all their Arguments against the Synod's Acts: Their Words are as follows:

First, “ Particular Presbyteries ought undoubtedly to meet to  
“ enquire into the Fitness and Qualifications of those who offer  
“ themselves to the sacred Work of the Ministry, and either  
“ to admit or refuse them, according as they find them qua-  
“ lified, and likely to do Service or Disservice to the Church  
“ in that Office.

2ly, “ They have Liberty and Authority also to deny Church-  
“ Communion to and cast out of Communion such as by plain  
“ Scripture-Directions are disqualified for it, either by such fun-  
“ damental Errors in Doctrine, or enormous Practices, as are  
“ inconsistent with true Christianity, and to inflict such Censures



“ upon irregular Church-Members, as God in his Word makes  
 “ due to such Offences as they are guilty of.

3ly, “ In Cases of Conscience proposed to them, or Cases  
 “ of Difference regularly brought before them from particular  
 “ Congregations, they ought to give their deliberate Judgment,  
 “ with their best Counsel and Advice.

4ly, “ They have likewise Liberty to agree and conclude  
 “ among themselves upon such Things as appear to them to  
 “ have a good Tendency to the Advancement of Religion, and  
 “ are agreeable to the Word of God, and so engage them-  
 “ selves voluntarily to the Observance of these Things, pro-  
 “ vided that they do not encroach upon the Liberties of the  
 “ People under their Care, nor pretend to bind their dissenting  
 “ Members to observe their Agreements, who may have a dif-  
 “ ferent View and Apprehension of them.

5ly, “ Likewise, it's reasonable and useful, that Synods con-  
 “ sisting of several Presbyteries, meet together, whether Matters  
 “ may be brought by Way of Appeal or Reference from parti-  
 “ cular Presbyteries, in order to obtain the Judgment and Sen-  
 “ timents of a greater Number upon them ; *for in the Multi-*  
 “ *tude of Counsellors there is Safety.* And accordingly it is no  
 “ doubt their Duty to take such Cases under their Considera-  
 “ tion, and give their best Advice in them ; but we think that  
 “ they should not proceed with any further Authority, except  
 “ in such Cases wherein God has given particular obvious Di-  
 “ rections in his Word, which is to be exactly followed ; and  
 “ even then they do no more than shew from the Scriptures,  
 “ what is the Mind and Direction of God in such Cases, and  
 “ declare their own Resolution to act according thereto so far  
 “ as they are concerned.

Now let us proceed to consider what they say, as to their  
 “ genuine Intent in these Words. And

First, As to the first Proposition, I readily grant that it is a  
 Maxime universally received by Presbyterians.

As to the second Proposition, it is very lame and defective,  
 or else our Presbyterian Constitution is so ; for he makes a  
 Presbytery to be the smallest Association of Ministers, with-  
 out mentioning of ruling Elders, who, according to our Pres-  
 byterian Constitution, make up one essential Part of our Pres-  
 byteries : And so at one Blow our Constitution is mank'd of  
 one essential Branch of the Subject of Government.



And again, I think this Proposition is very ambiguous: If by the smallest Association of Ministers they mean the smallest Company, who not being Members of an higher Judicatory, do agree to associate and join with one another stately for the Exercise of Church-Government among themselves, being first agreed as to Principles of Faith and Government; which was the Case of our Church here some more than thirty Years ago, when the Reverend Mr. *Jedidiab Andrews* was ordained Pastor to the Presbyterian Congregation of *Philadelphia*: Or, if by the smallest Association of Ministers they mean the lowest Judicatory of Ministers, who, according to the general Orders and Directions of their superior Judicatory, are erected into a Presbytery, and so meet regularly and stately for the Exercise of Discipline and Government; as is the Case of our ordinary Presbyteries, belonging to our Synod: I say, in either of these Cases I acknowledge the Position to be sound, provided that the grand Blank of ruling Elders be duly made up; otherwise, in a constitute Church no Association of Ministers, greater or smaller, without ruling Elders, can be a Presbytery, according to our Presbyterian Plan.

But again, if by the smallest Association of Ministers they mean any Number of Ministers meeting not according to the Order or Appointment of the Judicatories to which they belong, but perhaps contrary to it, an Association in this Sense I take to be no Presbytery, and consequently have no Power to act judicially in any thing; and what they should do in such a supposed Case would be entirely schismatical, and null as to that Church to which these Members did formerly belong: If such an Association should designedly in a schismatical Way divide and rend themselves from their own Church or Judicatory, yet while they justly claim the Title of a true tho' a schismatical Church, they no doubt have Authority to add to their own Number by Ordination; but neither they nor their new Members can lay Claim to Membership with the forsaken Church, but upon Terms of Reconciliation.

As to the third Proposition, it's also just and sound, if rightly understood and limited; for it should be remembered, that if such a Presbytery be a Part of a greater Body or a Synod, both it and such Candidates must consider themselves as subject to the Regulations of that greater Body, as being a Part of that whole, for the Regulation whereof such Rules are made

and devised : So that in that Case, neither the Candidate nor the Presbytery have Right and Authority, as Part of that Body, to act but according to the Regulations of it. Such a Candidate cannot regularly offer himself to an inferior or subordinate Judicatory or Presbytery, nor can such a Presbytery receive him, otherwise than according to the Regulations of the whole.

It's not my present Intent to examine how far these Positions do or do not answer the Intent of the Protesting Brethren in laying them down, *viz.* to impugn the Synod's Act about Examination of Candidates, and therefore I shall not stay longer upon them, only by the by ; I apprehend, that, as the Nature of the Thing requires that these Positions be understood according to the Qualifications which I have added, so they, being thus understood, will rather establish than overthrow the Synod's Act.

I proceed to consider the Assertions contained in the other Quotation And as to the

First, Let us suppose a Presbytery to be divided in their Judgment about a Candidate's Qualifications for the Ministry, five against four, and four against five, the Majority judgeth him fit, but the Minority is in the Negative ; if the Majority proceed, either the Minority must refuse ministerial Communion with the new ordained Minister, according to their own Judgment, or admit him contrary to it ; if the former, there is a Schism ; if the latter, the Minority or Dissenting Brethren are obliged to comply contrary to their Sentiments, and contrary to Assertion IV ; for this Case is equivalent to a Rule agreed to by a Majority, who conclude that they will for the future allow ministerial Communion to such a Person, and the Minority are obliged either to comply, or there must be a Schism, either materially or formally in that Presbytery : And if the Majority be in the Negative, then the Minority must either submit, and so be deprived of that Persons Communion whom they judge qualified, or proceed to ordain him themselves, in a schismatical Way ; and then the Majority must either yield unto the Minority, and approve the Ordination, or again there is a Schism.

As to the second Assertion, I will also suppose that the Presbytery is not unanimous about the Person to be admitted or debarred from Privileges, as before four against five, and five against

against four : In this Case, whether shall the Judgment of the Majority or Minority take Place ? for one of them must ; if the Majority, then the Minority is obliged to observe the Agreement of the Majority, tho' they have a different View of Matters, contrary to Assertion IV ; or if the Minorities Judgment take Place, then the Majority is obliged to observe the Agreement of the Minority, contrary to their own Judgment, the natural Order of Things, and Assertion IV ; or there must unavoidably be an open Schism.

As to Assertion III, and may not a Presbytery be divided in their Judgments about congregational or personal Affairs coming before them ? either they must take the Majorities Counsel and Act according to their Judgment, and then the Minority must submit ; or they have a Right to reject it if they please, and so there is no Authority, but only Advice, which is implied in the Assertion, and is certainly these Brethren's Judgment : For it seems the People ruled are the ultimate Judges of their own Liberties, tho' ruled by their own Representatives ; and so farewell all Government in the Church ; the Presbytery may give their best Advice, and so might as many Magistrates or Mechanics, but are invested with no Authority to rule, nor is their Judgment of any Authority further than its apparent Reasonableness persuades the Parties concerned ; which is most evidently absurd, contrary to the Word, to Reason, to the Nature of Government in general, and the Presbyterian Government in particular.

In the Close of the fourth Assertion it's said that Dissenting Members are not obliged to observe such Agreements as are by the Majority thought agreeable to the Word of God ; but is any of the Majority who first concurred in making the said Agreements, obliged to observe them longer than he changeth his Mind ? if yes, why should he who now dissents, upon new Light received, be hampered more than they who dissented before him ? if not, then none are obliged by that Engagement longer than they please, and then to what Purpose is the Agreement made ? Surely the very plain and obvious Meaning and Scope of this Assertion is to overthrow not only all Authority and Government in the Presbyterian Church, but also all social Government whatsoever. For what do we, or what do all Mankind understand by Authority and Government ? is it not a Power invested in one Person or Party, to command, oblig :

oblige and require another to do such a Thing, tho' it be contrary to his own Will, Judgment or Inclination, and what he would not do, were he at his own Command? Now doth not this one Assertion cast all Authority out of Christ's Church, strips him of his regal Power and Dignity, in his Ministers, over his visible Church, and makes it a mere anarchical Croud, contrary to many express Scriptures, which require to be subject to her Rules, particularly Heb. xiii. 7. *Remember them that have the Rule over you; &c.* with many others which for Brevity's sake I omit.

We have the same anarchical Doctrine in Assertion I. What ridiculous Nonsense is it to suppose any as injured by an Advice or Counsel, which they are nowise bound to submit to, to appeal from that Counsel to the Counsel of a greater Number of Counsellors? the very Nature of an Appeal supposeth the Appellant to be bound by the Authority of the injurious Sentence, until a superior Judicatory take it off: And these Brethren also say here, that the Synods can only give their best Advice, but cannot proceed with any further Authority; but what need I seek a more numerous Advice to free me from Obligation to obey an Advice, which, as I don't approve of it, so I'm not obliged to comply with it: but our Brethren qualify this, by adding these Words, *Except in Cases wherein God hath given plain obvious Directions in his Word* But surely all the Directions of God's Word are general, so as to take in all Cases of a like Nature, so that in this Sense there can be no Direction in the whole Word of God that is particular. But what, if a Presbytery or a Synod should differ about the Application of a Scripture or Direction to a particular Case, tho' the Direction is plain, as to its general Meaning? One Party thinks the Direction so plain and obvious, that there is no room to doubt, but the other Party sees not so clearly the Applicableness of the Direction to the Matter in Hand, and so the one Party think they may go further than Advice, viz. use Authority; but the other thinks not: What shall be done in this Case? whether is the Party concerned obliged to submit to the authoritative Judgment of that Part of the Synod, which, think they, have plain obvious Scripture-Directions on their Side? or the bare Advice of others who cannot see Scripture-Authority so clearly? But the plain and genuine Design of all these Assertions, as in all this Apology, is to overthrow all Au-

thority, and cast out all Order and Government out of the Church. These are the Men who profess so much Zeal for Christ's Kingdom, and yet are, by one bold Stroke, attempting to strike the Crown from his Head, by divesting his Officers and Courts of all governing Authority: These are the Men who would seem to be so jealous of the Presbyteries Right, and in the mean time rob them of their Authority over their Members and People governed. And I can see no other End and View they can have, but to make Way for them to rule the poor amused and willingly inflaved Populace without Controul; and then they may preach what Doctrine they please. May the Lord, who is King in *Zion* and to the Ends of the Earth, put a Stop to the dreadful threatening Career of such bold Attempts, and recover his poor Church here into her right Wits again. What strong Bewitching is this! that many, who not many Months ago, one would have thought, would have been ready to die for the Constitution of the Church of *Scotland*, or Presbytery, are now so deluded with new Doctrines and Modes, that neither Confession, Catechisms, nor Directory, are regarded when brought in Competition with the Sayings of Mr. *Whitefield* and our *Protesting Brethren*; yea, the very Covenant of Grace is called in Question by many and rejected by some, merely on Mr. *Whitefield's* Authority, supported and underpropt by his Admirers.

Now that I may yet further contribute to the setting of this whole Matter in a clear Light, I will endeavour first to make it appear, that the Church of Christ is invested with Authority to govern her Members of all Ranks, and Degrees; 2ly, A little explain the Nature of this Authority and Government; and 3ly, Consider the Strength of the Arguments brought by our *Protesting Brethren* against this Authority: Which if by divine Assistance we may happily effect, I think we need not be very anxious about our synodical Acts which have been so much debated; If our now questioned Authority prove to be solid and on a good Foundation, I question not but our disputed Acts, as to their Substance and Intent, may be very easily justified and maintained.

First then it will be evident to a Demonstration, that the Church is invested with Authority to govern her own Members, and oblige them to Obedience, by these two Arguments; the first is, because the Church is a Society regularly united  
and



and incorporated by a moral political Union among her Members. Now if all such Societies in the World have a Right and Authority to rule and govern their own Members, surely the Church hath the same, as to her Members. This Argument is so plain and self-evident, that I need not insist upon it. How ridiculous would it be to say, that a Corporation of Weavers and Taylors can oblige all belonging unto them, to be subject to their Rules or Orders, or else relinquish their Privileges as Members; and in the mean time hold that Christ's little Flock, which is described *to be terrible like an Army with Banners*, which is remarkable for strict Government and Order, hath not the same Authority with respect to her Members? But I proceed to Argument II. drawn from Scripture Matth. xv. 19. where the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, *i. e.* Authority of Administration of the Affairs of the Church are given to *Peter* in the Name of all the Apostles, and in them to the Officers of the Church, to all succeeding Ages; and Acts xx. 28. where the Ministers of the Church of *Ephesus* are called Bishops, and are commanded *to feed*, in the Greek *poimánein*, which Word imports all the Authority of a Shepherd over his Flock, which is certainly more than merely consultative, or by Way of Advice; And 1. Tim. ii. 5. *For if a Man know not how to rule his own House, how shall he take Care of the Church of God?* Heb. xiii. 7. *Remember them that have the Rule over you; Verse 17. Obey them that have the Rule over you;* which Scriptures are so plain that they need no Comment, nor are scarcely capable to be wrested so as not to signify Authority and Government.

But possibly it may be excepted against these Scriptures, that they mention no Authority over Ministers, tho' of Ministers over People they do.

*Ans. I.* Either Ministers united in Government have a governing Power over each Member, or there can be no Order, nor can the People possibly know which of differing Ministers to obey, both which are absurd; if they be equal, and rule in Concert, then the Majority must sway or determine the Minority, or no Union can subsist, as it is in all social Governments. But what I shall lay down under the second Head, will farther enervate this Exception; which take as followeth,



*Second Head:* Here I will not be at Pains to prove the Presbyterian Plan of Church-Government, against Prelates, Independents, or *Erastians*; because I have to do only with such as profess themselves to be Presbyterians: In this Apology they in Effect renounce Presbytery in the true Notion of it. However, I will proceed to explain our Presbyterian Government, by laying down the following Propositions:

*Propos. I.* That the Keys of Government as well as Doctrine were given by our Lord to a Parity or Equality of ordinary Officers in the Church.

*Propos. II.* That the Government of the Church is to be managed by a Plurality of Officers, acting in Concert with one another, and not by one single Person separately: Thus *Timothy* was ordained by a Presbytery, and the incestuous Person cast out by the Church representative when gathered together. 1. Cor. v. 4. 5.

*Propos. III.* When there are more particular Congregations than one united together in the Exercise of Government over the Whole, the Government of that Body so united, is to be managed by a due Subordination of inferior or smaller Judicatories to greater or superior, from a Session or congregational Consistory to an œcumenical Council, if such a Thing were feasible or possible.

*Propos. IV.* That in this Subordination of Judicatories, as the Persons of the Officers, so the Authority of the lesser or inferior is included in the greater or superior: Whatever a Session can do, that also can a Synod or an Assembly do; and consequently if a Session can make Rules or Orders binding all their Members or People, so may a Synod: And if it were not so, there could be no Subordination.

*Propos. V.* These several Judicatories are made up, and do consist of preaching Presbyters and ruling Elders chosen from among the People, to join with the Ministers of the Gospel in the Exercise of Government; the Number whereof in each Congregation is to be according to the Necessity and Circumstances of the Congregation, one whereof is to be chosen and delegated to join with the Minister of his own Congregation in attending upon Presbyteries and Synods, as a Member thereof.

*Propos. VI.* As the Method of Proceeding must be by Debating or Reasoning, and Voting, so the Majority must of Necessity oblige and determine the Minority, or else break up their

their Union with the Body ; which the Majority is always supposed to be in that Case, the Minority being swallowed up therein : If it were not so, nothing could ever be concluded or agreed without a universal Unanimity, which can rarely be expected in debatable Cases, in this imperfect State.

*Propos. VII.* That congregational Sessions or Consistories, Synod, Assemblies and Councils, have all as good, yea the very same Authority and Foundation in the Word of God as Presbyteries have ; this Foundation consisting chiefly in Example and Precedent, rather than express Precept or Institution ; only some general Rules committing the Keys to Officers in general, and as it were *in Cumulo*, and prohibiting Domination or Disparity of Officers : The Truth of this Proposition is evident, because all Examples and Precedents as such do necessarily imply a Precept for Imitation.

*Propos. VIII.* That when we use the Word or Term of Presbytery, which is but once to be found in Scripture, that I know of, it's equally applicable to any ecclesiastical Judicatory, from a Session to an œcumenical Council ; the Word properly signifies a Convention of Elders or Presbyters sitting in Judicatory, whether inferior or superior : Who can prove whether it was a Presbytery or Synod (as we now commonly speak) who ordained *Timothy* ? And its being restricted to our lowest Judicatories, consisting of a Plurality of preaching Presbyters, is only owing to ecclesiastical Use or Custom ; in other Countries they are called Classes, as particularly in *Holland*. The Power of the Keys is given to Presbyters, to each at his Ordination, as *Pares* or Equals ; they are to act in Concert or Parity ; and whenever they meet and constitute, they are a Presbytery, in a Scripture-Sense, of whatever Degree or Form the Meeting or Convention be.

*Propos. IX.* The Lord Jesus Christ hath invested his Church with Authority to make Orders, Acts, or diatactic Rules, for the regulating of Circumstances of ecclesiastical Matters, which are not, nor possibly could be all condescended upon in Scripture, for preventing Disorders and Confusion ; only these Rules must be conform to and bear a Subordination to the general Rules of the Word. This Authority of the Church is only declarative, subordinate and executive, but not legislative, supreme or dictating : The Meaning whereof is this, the Lord Jesus Christ is Head and King of his Church ; his Church is his

his Kingdom; his Word contains a compleat System of Doctrines and Laws for his Church, to believe and obey, but he hath also appointed Officers and Rulers in his Kingdom, who are authorised both to teach and rule, according to these Doctrines and Laws; and accordingly they have Authority to explain these Doctrines, and to agree about the Meaning of the Scriptures as to Doctrinals, and by Consequence to compose Creeds or Confessions of Faith; they have also Authority to interpret or explain the Rules or Precepts of the Word, and to apply these Laws or Rules to particular Cases, and to agree about such Explications and Applications of these Rules to their proper Cases: As for Instance, it's a general Rule of the Word, that they who sin should be rebuked before all; now inasmuch as this general Rule doth not expressly determine what Sins should have this public Rebuke, nor what different Degrees of Rebuke or Censure should be inflicted upon the several Degrees of scandalous Sins; and seeing common Sense and the Light of Nature teach that it's neither practicable, nor to Edification, to give public Rebukes to all Degrees of Sin, but only to such as by their Nature and Circumstances arise to such a Degree of Scandal; Nature and Reason also teach that all scandalous Sins are not alike heinous and scandalous, and therefore are not to be censured with an equal Degree of Rebuke; therefore it's left to the Discretion of the Officers of the Church to consider and determine what Sins should have a public Rebuke, and what Degrees of Rebuke are fit to be given to the several Degrees of scandalous Sins, such as Fornication, Adultery, Incest, &c. and accordingly it's the Business of the Officers or Rulers of the Church to agree among themselves, concerning these Things, in order to answer the Intent of our Lord in the foregoing Rule, by proportioning the Censure to the Sin, and so to make a Rule concerning this Matter, which is to be observed and submitted unto by all who are Members or Subjects of the united Body; and when they make such a Rule, they only, as it were, virtually say, that as faithful Ministers of the Gospel of Christ, we, by the Authority received from him, declare, that, according to our best Judgment and Understanding of this general Rule, it is his Mind and Will therein, that Fornication be censured so and so, and that Adultery be censured thus and thus, with a higher Degree of Rebuke: So that

such ecclesiastical Rules are only a ministerial authoritative Declaration of the Lord's Intent in the general Rule, as applied to the Cases under Consideration ; and so of all the other general Rules of the Word : In Compliance with, and in Subordination to them, ecclesiastical Rules may be made, in order to obtain an edifying Uniformity of Proceeding, and to prevent both real and apparent Remissness or Partiality, or any other Mal-feasance in putting the general Rules of the Word in Practice. Now these Rules being concluded by debating and voting, of Course the minor dissenting Party must be determined by the Majority, or else, as above, all Union and Authority in that Body or Society, with respect to its Members, is overthrown.

These Rules, Acts or Orders of the Church, cannot, in any Propriety of Speech, be termed religious Laws, because they contain no new Matter, but what is supposed to be contained in the divine Law, or general Rule of the Word. as applied to such and such Cases : Nor is there any Penalty, properly speaking, inflicted by the Authority of such a Judicatory, but only what naturally and necessarily results from the very Nature of all social Governments in the World, *viz.* a Forfeiture of the Privileges of Members of that Society, to the Person who refuseth to be subject to its Rules and Constitution, which the Society judgeth to be founded upon the general Rules of the Word.

To object here, that the dissenting Party are obliged to dissent in Conscience of Duty, and therefore it's unjust to censure or exclude them for obeying their Conscience ; I say to object thus will be found to be but of very little Weight, if we consider

1. First, That the Majority who agree about the Rule, have as much room to plead Conscience as the Minority.

2ly, It's better, or a less Evil, to be debarred from a Privilege than to enjoy it with a bad Conscience ; Conscience and Conveniency are not to be compared together, but, as before, the Majority have a Conscience to look to as well as the Minority.

3ly, Seeing Conscience is pleaded on both Sides, a Union cannot be continued with Safety to the Conscience of both Parties.

4ly, The Majority suffers and is weakened by the Withdrawing

drawing of the Minority, as well as the Minority by being separated from the Majority : the Inconveniency on both Sides is the same in Kind, tho' differing in Degree, in Proportion to the Inequality of the Number, and the smaller or greater Disadvantage of being deprived of a smaller or greater Degree of united Strength. But however that be, the Inconveniency is unavoidable, while Conscience is pleaded on both Sides ; neither is there any real Penalty inflicted, but only an Inconveniency, which both Parties in their Measure undergo : And therefore it's most unreasonable in our Brethren to talk of the Penalty of Non-Communion, seeing this is chosen to avoid sinning against Conscience, and so the Loss of their Company, it's like, may be chosen by the Majority, in like Manner for the sake of a good Conscience.

I say again, when a Church-Judicatory comes to any judicial Conclusion or Determination about any religious Matter, whether the Subject-Matter of the said Conclusion be a Rule to be observed for the future, or a Judgment upon a Person, or Fact that's past, or whatever it be, such a judicial Conclusion designs nothing that's new, either as to the Judgment or Penalty, but only contains a judicial Explication of the general Rule of the Word, together with an Application of it to the Case in hand ; as if the Judicatory should say. it is our Judgment that such or such a Rule of the Word requires that in the present Case we should act so and so : So that all the Arguings of our Brethren about new religious Laws, which are new as to their Matter or Penalty, fall flat to the Ground. Hence it follows,

*Propos. X.* That all such Conclusions, Determinations, Orders, or Rules, *in Materia licita*, in a Matter in itself lawful, ought to be submitted unto, and conscientiously observed, by all Members of that Body, because they are the Conclusions of a just Representative of that Body ; and consequently are virtually the Conclusions of the Whole ; and also, because they are, by Chr<sup>t</sup>'s Institution, invested with Authority to make such Conclusions, that is, to declare that such or such a general Rule of the Word requires and intends so and so in the present Case.

*Propos. XI.* If any Part of the Body, or Members of the Judicatory, do think that the *Clavis*, i. e. the Key, doth err, that the Judicatory is mistaken in their Judgment, yet inas-  
much

much as it is in some Cases lawful for the Subject to obey, even when the Ruler errs or sins in commanding ; as for Instance, when the Magistrate imposeth an unnecessary Burden on the Subject of Tax or Service, I say, it's the Duty in that Case, of all Parts or Members to submit to such Determinations or Rules, if what is enjoined be not sinful in itself, or by Virtue of some divine Command antecedent to such Determination ; only such dissenting Party may and ought, in a decent and becoming Manner to remonstrate their Grievance, and endeavour to convince the Judicatory of their Mistake, in order to get it rectified, and the Grievance removed ; which if they can do, it's well, but if not, yet they ought to submit, if they may without sinning against Light and Conscience ; or else a Separation must of Course ensue : But if the Matter be unlawful, it's better to obey God than Man ; *i. e.* it's better to separate than sin. The Truth and Reasonableness of this Proposition is evident ; for the Judicatory are the first rightful Judges of their own Conclusions and judicial Determinations, and are under a Necessity of acting according to their own Light and Conscience ; and the Nature of Order and Government says, that all Parties are obliged to submit to the Determinations of the authoritative representative Body, or else relinquish their Communion, Membership and Privileges.

*Propos. XI.* The Subordination of Judicatories requires that every inferior Judicatory be subject to and regulated by the Determinations of the superior, being a Part thereof ; first, because such Determinations of a superior Judicatory are concurred with by every inferior in making and forming such Determinations, even tho' they are Negatives in the Vote ; inasmuch as they had the Privilege of their free Vote or Suffrage, and voluntarily submitted the Matter in Debate to be determined by Vote : And so when they give their Consent that the Thing should be voted, they virtually say, we are willing to be determined by the Majority of Votes, whether we be Negatives or Affirmatives, of the major or the minor Party : Secondly, Because every Part of such a Body, personal or social, is or ought to be subject to the Whole, or there can be no Government nor Authority ; for, as before observed, there is no Authority unless there be a Power to oblige a Subject, tho' unwilling, to obey : A Neighbour or a Friend may advise, but a Parent may command his Child to obey, even  
against



against his Will ; and in this consists all his Authority. So that I cannot see a Possibility of the Continuance of Union, or Preservation of the just Authority of a superior Judicatory over its inferior, without the Inferior's being obliged either to submit or separate : If they think the Matter unlawful and their Compliance sinful, let them separate, they are not in Bondage in such a Case ; but to allow more to the inferior Judicatory would be to exalt them above the superior, *viz.* to oblige the Superior, against Order, Judgment and Conscience, to submit to the Inferior, either by relinquishing their own Determination, or by keeping Communion with the Inferior at the Expences of the Overthrow of the very fundamental Laws of Society and Government, *viz.* in allowing the Privileges of Membership to such who refuse to submit themselves to the Government of the Body.

I now proceed to the *third Thing* proposed, *viz.* to consider the Arguments of our Protesting Brethren, against the Authority of Synods, to make any Rules about religious Matters, which they brand with the odious Names of religious Laws, the more effectually to prejudice the Minds of Men, and especially the Populace, against them ; which is only at best but an artful clothing of an innocent Lamb or Sheep with a Wolf's-Skin, and then to hunt the Dogs upon it ; or to cry out, *A mad Dog*, and then be sure he must and will be killed.

In *Page 13.* of their Apology they introduce their Arguments against this synodical Power by the following Words :  
 “ Thus we have in as brief a Manner as we could, offered  
 “ some Reasons against the Matter of the two late Acts of  
 “ this Synod. We now proceed to offer our Sentiment about  
 “ the Power from which they spring, with the principal Rea-  
 “ sons thereof ; seeing it is to little Purpose to labour to take  
 “ away bad Branches while the bitter Root remains untouched,  
 “ for so long as it continues, it will be apt, upon all Occasions,  
 “ to produce as bad or worse again : We will therefore ven-  
 “ ture a Blow at the Root. ” From which Words it's clear  
 as the Sun, that these Brethren are against all ecclesiastical Rules, yea, all Authority to make ecclesiastical Rules for managing Church-Matters, which are not expressly contained in the Scriptures ; and so at one Blow to knock our whole Directory for Worship and Government on the Head, yea all Rules  
 of

of all Churches on Earth : For here's a Blow designed, whether by divine or diabolical Assistance, let the Matter determine, and the World judge ; I say, here's a Blow designed at the Root, *viz.* all ecclesiastical Government and Authority whatsoever, and only a bare Privilege left to give the best Advice ; which a Peasant may do to a Prince : However, we will find by and by, that it's not a single Blow, but a complex or collective one, consisting of nine or ten very threatening and awful Strokes, each of which is also made up of a Plurality, so that, unless the Tree be too hard for the Edge, down it must come. But where was our Brethren's Skill and Frugality of their Labour or Pains ? and where was their Cautiousness in manner of Proceeding ? While they first run the hazard to climb the Tree in order to lop off its Branches, while their main Design was, not only to cut down the Tree, but also to pluck it up by the Roots ; would it not have been easier and safer first to have fallen it by the Root, and then, without Danger of a Fall to have stood on *Terra firma*, sure Ground, when lopping off the Branches ; yea, all that Pains might have been wholly saved, for the Root being once effectually destroyed, the Tree and all its Branches must perish of Course. However, we have the elaborate Piece of Workmanship filling up 12 Pages in *Quarto*, bestowed in snagging of the Branches of a standing Tree, which the next Hour is designed to be felled down, or rather pluck'd up by the Roots ; but hereby our Champions have had an Opportunity of manifesting both their Strength and Skill in the Use of this Kind of Edge-tools. But let us take a Look of this Tree whether it is fallen to the Ground, or yet standing in its full Strength, as if no Attempt had been made upon it, which I think will be found to be the Case, when impartially inquired into. Our Brethren proceed in their Introduction to the following Arguments thus :

“ We humbly conceive that the aforesaid Acts in their present Form, are founded upon a false Hypothesis or Supposition, namely that a Majority of Synods or other Church-Judicatories have a Power committed to them from Christ, to make new Rules, Acts or Cannons about religious Matters, on this Ground or Foundation, that they judge them to be not against or agreeable to the Word of God and serviceable to Religion, which shall be binding upon those who con-

“ conscienciously dissent therefrom, under certain Penalties which  
 “ are to be inflicted even upon those who judge the Acts  
 “ which they enforce to be contrary to the Mind of Christ  
 “ and prejudicial to the Interest of his Kingdom : This is in  
 “ brief a legislative or law-making Power in religious Mat-  
 “ ters, and this we wholly disclaim and renounce, for the  
 “ Reasons we shall anon mention, and are pleased that we  
 “ have the Synod’s Concurrence therein in a printed Declara-  
 “ tion which was sent to *Ireland* some Years ago ; that De-  
 “ claration which we apprehend worthy of a Protestant Body,  
 “ we purpose to maintain inviolably in our Practice as well as  
 “ Profession.

I have, I think, sufficiently prov’d that Church-Judicatories  
 have Authority invested in them by Christ, to determine con-  
 cerning the Circumstances of Religion, which could not possibly  
 be provided for expressly in the Scriptures : And it’s a very  
 unfair Representation of the Matter, to say that the Majority  
 hath Power or makes Rules ; it’s the whole Synod or Judi-  
 catory that is invested with this Authority, and usually makes  
 Rules ; even the Negatives or Dissentients have an active  
 Hand in them, while they give their Votes, as well as the  
 rest, and thereby signify that they are content the Matter be  
 determined by a Majority of Votes, and consequently by join-  
 ing in the Vote do, at least virtually, promise to be bound by  
 the Determination of that Majority, on whatsoever Side it falls.  
 The Nature of the Thing and very Design of Voting in all  
 Cases whatsoever, clearly implies this : So that if a Synod have  
 Authority to determine any thing by Vote, the Suffrage of the  
 Majority must of Course bind the Minority, if they continue  
 Members ; and for Penalties, there are properly none so called,  
 as I have shewed, only what is necessarily consequent on all  
 social Government, *viz.* that the Minority must submit to the  
 Majority, or relinquish their Union and Membership ; either  
 of which is at their Choice, so that their Conscience need never  
 be straitned, if they can but discover what is Duty ; neither  
 is it a law-making Power, but only a ministerial, executive  
 and declarative Power, by which the general Rule of the  
 Word is authoritatively explained and applied to the Business  
 in Hand. Did the *Westminster* Assembly assume a legislative  
 Power in composing our Confession, Catechisms and Directory,  
 and in obliging all their Members to submit ? for I question

not but that there were Negatives and Minorities in passing many of the Votes, when these Things were adoining; yet our Brethren in these Words do, by Consequence, nullify the Authority of that venerable Assembly, and the excellent Composition made by them: So that we may plainly see what they would be at. Were not the Minority or Negatives obliged to observe the Rules or Directions for Worship, Ordination and Government, if they meant or intended to enjoy Membership with the Presbyterian Church which was then established by these Forms of Doctrine and Directory for Worship and Government? And could Mr. *Gilbert Tennent* have expected or desired to have continued in Membership with the Synod? if he had not complied with the adopting Act made in the Year 1729; and I suppose that what our Brethren value the printed Declaration, which they mention, most for, is the too great Latitude expressed in it, which Fault was amended in the following Year, when that Latitude was taken away as dangerous. But they proceed to say,

“ Now we conceive that a religious Law may be said to  
 “ be new in two Respects, *viz.* in respect of the Matter in-  
 “ serted in it, or the Penalty annexed to it, *i. e.* when any  
 “ thing is required or forbidden by it which is not required or  
 “ forbidden by God in his Word, the Law is new: Again, a  
 “ Law may be said to be new (as we conceive) when, altho’ the  
 “ Substance thereof be according to or contained in the Word,  
 “ a Penalty is inflicted for the Breach of it, which is not  
 “ prescribed by the King of the Church.

*Ans.* All this I freely allow of, provided all be owned to be contained in the Word, which by just Consequence is deducible from it; but not otherwise: And we pretend no Authority to make any Laws or Rules, the Matter and Penalty whereof are not comprehended in the Word, tho’ not particularly expressed therein; As for Instance, when the *Westminster* Assembly gave Directions to inquire into the Character and Qualifications of Candidates for the Ministry, they judged that the general Rules in the Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus* did require to form and observe these very Directions which they then and there laid down for that Purpose, *viz.* to require Certificates, to inquire into their Skill in the several Parts of Learning, &c. because all these Particulars are comprehended in the general Rules of the Word: And the Assembly, by  
 giving

giving these Directions, did only bring down and apply the general Rules unto some particular Cases comprehended under the said Rules, and for the Direction whereof these Rules were given: So that our ecclesiastical Rules have no new Matter in them; the Form only is new, *i. e.* they contain a new Application of the old infallible standing Rule of the Word to new Cases and Emergencies intended by it, and comprehended under the Regulation of it.

Neither is there any new Penalty to enforce these Rules, but only the standing unavoidable Consequence of contradicting or counteracting the fundamental Laws of all social Government, as well as the divine Authority invested in the Church of Christ, *viz.* the Forfeiture of the Membership and Privileges of such a Society, or the Church: The Law of Nature and Reason says, that none should enjoy the Benefit of Membership with any social Constitution, but those who are willing to be governed by its Rules; and the divine Law says, *that we should withdraw from such as walk disorderly.* So that the Design of our Brethren in the above Quotation is wholly cut off; and it plainly appears that all their following Arguments are of Force only against a Pretence to a truly legislative Power, a Power to make Laws, which are new either as to their Matter or Penalty, according to their own Observation, which we utterly disclaim. All their Arguments are built upon a double false Hypothesis, *viz.* that Rules made by Synods or other Church-Judicatories, contain something new in respect of Matter or Penalty; 2ly, that the Power by which they are made, claims a Right to do so; both which we deny.

Having observed this in general, I need say the less upon each of their particular Arguments, seeing their Force doth not at all affect either our ecclesiastical Authority, or the Rules which we make: Yet I will take a particular View of these Arguments according to the Order in which we find them in their Apology; which appears the more needful, because our Brethren, tho' in Word they would only appear to oppose a legislative or law-making Power, yet it will appear plain that their true Design and Meaning is to sap the Foundation of all ecclesiastical Authority, and in particular the Power of making Rules for regulating the Circumstances of religious Matters, which is contrary both to Scripture and Reason, as plain from

what is already said. It's also worthy our Notice; that our Brethren seem to lay a great Stress of their Arguments upon the Choice of Words which they use in expressing them; as for Instance, when they call our Rules by the Name of religious Laws and Canons, and the Censures inflicted for breaking them by the harsh Name of Penalties, a Majority's oppressing the Minority, and the like; by which Means the Things which they would condemn, are represented as odious, as much, if not more, by the Names which they give them, than by any Force of Reason or Arguments which they use: But this I impute chiefly to Mr. *Gilbert Tennent's* particular Talent of overloading or overcharging almost all Things which he speaks or writes of, with Words of a stronger and heavier obvious Meaning than the Things which he is treating of will reasonably bear, such as his expressing his Judgment concerning the supposed Mistake of one Person's thinking or judging well of another, by their visible orderly and Christian Walk, I say his expressing his Sentiments of such a Judgment of Charity, by calling it a bloody murdering barbarous Charity, with many more Instances of the like Nature that might be given; I conceive that a just Proportion should be used, or at least endeavoured between the Significancy of the Words we use and the Things they represent, not giving strong or high Epithets to Things which are but middling in their Order and Kind; as for Instance, to call a Sin of Infirmitv by the Name of Wickedness, which is a Word of an heavy and intense Meaning, and is used to signify Sins of a more heinous Nature and Degree; so also to call a Mistake or Error by the Name of a Lie. But to return from this Digression, which perhaps may appear impertinent;

Our Brethren proceed to produce their Arguments against the Power of making Rules in the Church: And their first Argument with its Introduction is in their own Words as follows:

“ Now the principal Reasons that incline us to believe that there is no legislative Authority in the Church, are these following,

“ First, If Church-Judicatories have a Right to such a Power as this, then they have received it from Christ Jesus, this we hope will admit of no Dispute; for he is the great Head of the Church; the Government is laid on his Shoulders:

“ Again,



“ Again, if Christ hath given them such a Power, he hath  
 “ somewhere signified the Grant of it in his Word, but the  
 “ Place or Places of Scripture we cannot find wherein the  
 “ Lord Jesus Christ authorites the greater Number of a Church-  
 “ Judicature to lord it over their fewer Brethren, and the  
 “ Heritage of God under their Inspection, by making Laws  
 “ of their own over their Heads, enforced with penal Sanc-  
 “ tions, and particularly that of Non-communication among the  
 “ rest ;

“ Neither can we find in the Word of God any Passage  
 “ wherein our blessed Redeemer Jesus Christ has enjoined his  
 “ Ministers, and other Members of his Church, to submit or  
 “ yield a blind Obedience to the Laws and Ordinances of a  
 “ greater Number in a Church-Judicatory, altho’ they judge  
 “ them to be sinful and contrary to the Good of his King-  
 “ dom : When either of the aforesaid Particulars is made evi-  
 “ dent from the Scriptures of Truth, then will we readily  
 “ subject our Consciences to the Guidance of other Men, and  
 “ yield undisputed Obedience to all their Decrees, but we hope  
 “ never before.

This Argument, without abating its Force, may be briefly  
 summed up thus : Christ hath no-where in his Word given Au-  
 thority to a Majority of a Church to lord it over their fewer  
 Brethren, and God’s Heritage, by making Laws over their  
 Heads of their own devising, and by enforcing them with penal  
 Sanctions, and particularly with Non-communication ; neither are  
 Ministers nor other Members required by the Word to submit  
 to the Laws of a Majority, and yield a blind Obedience unto  
 them, when they judge them to be sinful and contrary to the  
 good of Christ’s Kingdom, and therefore they have no Au-  
 thority, nor ought they to be obeyed therein.

I have already proved that Christ hath given Authority to  
 his Ministers to rule, and that he requires his People to obey ;  
 It’s owned by all, and even by our Brethren, that the Rulers  
 are *Paris* or Equal : The Nature of the Thing, as hath been  
 observed, requires, that such equal Rulers acting in Concert,  
 must debate and vote the Matters before them ; then certainly  
 the Majority must carry the Point, if the Judicatory have a  
 Right to vote such a Matter, or are proper Judges thereof ;  
 those who make up the Minority, by submitting the Matter to  
 a Vote, do give their Consent that the Majority should carry

it, or else why did they vote at all? the Minority have an active Hand in the Determination, by voting, tho' the Determination go against them: And so if there be any lording it over them, it's with their own Consent; for whoever consents to have any thing determined by Vote, doth by so doing virtually promise to submit to such a Determination, tho' it go against him. So that such a Law or Rule which is the Result of such a Vote, is not at all made over their Heads, but with their Consent, because they consented to a Determination by Vote; neither is there any real Penalty. Non-communication, as hath been observed, is only the unavoidable Consequence of the Opposition of Judgment or Opinion of the Voters, and is mutual, both Parties suffering the Inconveniency in their Proportion. The Conclusions are not properly the Conclusions of the Majority, but of the whole Body, who all concurred by their free Vote, according to their Judgment; Nor is a blind Obedience required of any, but every one, Members and Ministers are still at their Liberty to act according to their Light; Nor can it be justly complained of that a Person must undergo the unavoidable inconvenient Consequences of his differing in Judgment from others; there is no possible Help for it, but by convincing or being convinced himself; let every one keep a good Conscience in the Sight of God. No coercive Power is pretended; only the Nature of the Constitution requires, that every one who would partake of the Benefit of Communion with the Body, must submit to the Government of it; which if he do not, he is at his Liberty to chuse, tho' the Body, as well as he, is a Loser, and the Penalty that is represented so dreadful, falls upon the Majority as well as the Minority: So that the judicious and impartial Reader may plainly see that our Brethren couch a great many Fal-lacies under the Colour of Words of a strong and intense Meaning, falsely applied to Things which they no ways belong to; How unfair is it, for Instance, to alledge that a Rule is made over the Minorities Head? when they not only had a free Vote, but also consented and concurred to determine the Matter themselves by a Vote, which they knew not which Way it would go, until the Tryal was made. But this is one principal Piece of our Brethren's and particularly Mr. *Gilbert Tennent's* Talent and Dexterity, as before observed, to overload his Matter with Words and Phrases of a more intense Signi-

Signification than the Matter treated of doth require ; and by this Means to caúe what he says to be inadvertently esteemed as most invincible, demonstrative, and momentous. But if all the Strength and Skill of his arguing consist in his chusing Words and Phrases in this Manner, I do not envy him.

*Argument II.* Our Brethren's second Argument runs thus :  
 “ The making of new religious Laws seems to us to be an  
 “ Invasion upon the kingly Office of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
 “ to whose Royalty it peculiarly belongs to give Laws to  
 “ his Church : Hence the Apostle *James* informs us, that  
 “ there is *one Lawgiver*, (i. e. one only, exclusive of all other)  
 “ *who is able to save and to destroy* ; subjoining, *who art thou*  
 “ *then, that judgest another.* James iv 12. Col. iv. 18. Christ is  
 “ the Head of the Body the Church, he is constituted the  
 “ King of *Zion* : Now if the Church of Christ has but one  
 “ Head, one King, one Lawgiver, how can any Men on Earth  
 “ make Laws, in Addition to Christ's, for the Government of  
 “ his Subjects in religious Matters, without making the Church  
 “ a monstrous Body with many Heads, without commencing  
 “ Kings in his Kingdom, or rather setting up a Kingdom of  
 “ their own in Opposition to his. If making new religious  
 “ Laws as to their Matter, or adding new Penalties to old ones,  
 “ be not Acts of kingly Power, we desire to know what  
 “ it is ?

“ We think our Saviour expressly prohibits his Ministers  
 “ from claiming a legislative Power in his Church, reserving  
 “ it entirely to himself, as his own Prerogative ; Matth xxiii.  
 “ 8. 10. *Be not ye called Rabbi, neither be ye called Masters, for*  
 “ *one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are Brethren.* To  
 “ the same Purpose is that of the Apostle *Peter* v. 3. *Neither as*  
 “ *being Lords over God's Heritage, but being Examples to the*  
 “ *Flock.*

“ Likewise the Members of Christ's Church are from this  
 “ very Argument dissuaded from yielding Submission to such  
 “ a Claim of Power : 1. Cor. vii. 23. *Ye are bought with a*  
 “ *Price, be not ye the Servants of Men.* Mark vii. 5, 6-9. *Then*  
 “ *the Scribes and Pharisees asked him, why walk not thy Disciples*  
 “ *according to the Tradition of the Elders, but eat Bread with un-*  
 “ *washen Hands ?* To whom Christ replied, *In vain do they*  
 “ *worship me teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men ;*  
 “ Here was an Act of the Jewish Synod concerning a Thing  
 “ very

“ very innocent in its Nature, and yet we see of what dan-  
 “ gerous Tendency it was in the Judgment of our Saviour.  
 “ When the false Brethren would have brought the *Galatian*  
 “ Church into the Bondage of the *Jewish* Ceremonies, the  
 “ Apostle *Paul* would not give Place by Subjection, no not for  
 “ an Hour, that the Truth of the Gospel might continue with  
 “ them. Gal. ii. 4, 5.

I will also endeavour to compendise and sum up this Ar-  
 gument in fewer Words, -but retaining the full Force of what  
 they offer: Thus to make new Laws in Matters of Religion,  
 is an Invasion of Christ's kingly Office, a commencing Kings  
 in his Kingdom, or rather to set up a Kingdom in Opposi-  
 tion to his Kingdom, which Christ forbids, Matth. xxiii. 8. 10.  
 also *Peter*, Pet. v. 3. and the Members of Christ's Church are  
 forbidden to yield Obedience to such a Claim of Power;  
 1. Cor. vii. 23. Mark vii. 5, 6-9. where our Saviour condemns  
 Subjection to the Traditions of the Elders in an innocent Mat-  
 ter; and the Apostle *Paul* opposes the *Galatian's* submitting  
 to *Jewish* Ceremonies urged by false Teachers. Gal. ii. 4, 5.

In Answer to which I need only say, that we, as well as  
 our Brethren, renounce and disclaim all Power to make any  
 Laws, which are new, either in respect of Matter or Penalty;  
 we only claim a Right, as a Judicatory of Christ, to judge  
 of the Meaning of Christ's Laws, as they are applicable to the  
 Cases before us; and, in the Exercise of our ministerial Au-  
 thority, to determine how Christ's Laws, as applied to the  
 present Case, ought to be understood and obeyed; and to oblige  
 all under our Government to obey such a Law of Christ, as  
 we understand it, as applied to such a particular Case, or else  
 they cannot continue in Communion with us; as for Instance,  
 the divine Law for censuring Delinquents, runs thus: *They that sin*  
*rebuke before all, &c.* In Pursuance to this general Rule, it's agreed  
 among the Officers of the Church, and determined by Vote, that  
 Fornication be censured by a public Rebuke before the Congrega-  
 tion; and Adultery before both the Congregation and Presbytery:  
 When this Rule, or any such like, is formed, it's implied that eve-  
 ry one belonging to that Church, who do fall obnoxious to it, shall  
 submit to it, or else be debarred from the Privileges of Mem-  
 bership or Communion; there is no more in all this but only  
 that such a Judicatory doth exercise their ministerial Authority  
 to enforce Obedience to the Laws of Christ as they understand  
 them,

them, and apply them, according to their true Meaning, to such a particular Case or Cases : Neither is there any new Penalty added but only what the Law of Nature and Government, yea and Christ himself hath annexed to the Rules which he hath given his Church to observe ; for it's self-evident, that, supposing the general Rule to be rightly explained and applied to the Case in hand, as for Instance, the Order or Rule for Censuring Delinquents, then it will follow, that the Censure inflicted, in Compliance with it, is just ; and to refuse Subjection, is rebelling against the Laws of Christ, committed to the Care and Oversight of his Officers, to see them duly obeyed and executed : so that all the Force of our Brethren's Argument, though clothed and busked up with the emphatical Phrases of invading Christ's kingly Office, commencing Kings in his Kingdom, setting up Kingdoms in Opposition to his, &c. proves to be but a Man of Straw, or a lifeless Statue ; and vanisheth into Smoke and Vapour.

I will for once put his Argument into syllogistic Form, that the Reader may clearly see where its Force, or rather its Weakness and Fallacy, lies. Thus, To claim Power and Authority to make new religious Laws in the Church of Christ, is an Invasion of his kingly Office, it's a making Christ's Church a monstrous Body with many Heads, it's to commence Kings in his Kingdom, or rather to set up a Kingdom in Opposition to his ; it's the very Sin which Christ condemns in the Scribes and Pharisees in urging Obedience to the Traditions of the Elders, even in an innocent Matter ; it's to act over again the same Sin condemned in the false Teachers, who would oblige the primitive Christians to observe the ceremonial Law ; it's contrary to a Multitude of Scriptures ; and finally, it's what Christ and his Apostles forbids to yield to.

But to claim Authority to make Rules, Orders, or Acts, for the Regulation of the Circumstantials of Religion, in Subordination and agreeable to the general Rules of the Word, such as our Synod's Act for Adopting the *Westminster* Confession, &c. or the Act of our Synod relating to the Examination of Candidates, is to claim such a Power and Authority. *Ergo*, Our Synod are guilty of all that complex Sin mentioned in the first or major Proposition.

Now we utterly deny the minor or second Proposition, and aver, as above, that the Power and Authority, by which such

Acts or Rules are made, is only a ministerial, subordinate, declarative Power or Authority, to explain and apply the Rules or Laws already made by Christ, and contained in his Word, to such particular Cases and Emergencies as in the Providence of God, do or may come to pass; which is no legislative Power at all: the Constitution of our Presbyterian Church contained in our *Westminster* Directory, is made up of such Rules, and is evidently as liable to the Force of this Argument as our Acts of Synod. I proceed to consider our Brethren's third Argument, which runs thus:

“ *Argument* III. The foresaid Power of Legislation (or Law-making) in religious Matters, seems to us to be utterly inconsistent with the Perfection of the holy Scriptures, of which the Apostle *Paul* testifies, *that it is profitable for Doctrine, Correction, Instruction in Righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfect, and thoroughly furnished to every good Work.* 2. Tim. iii. 16, 17. Whatever good Work there is in the whole Sphere of Religion, the holy Scriptures afford sufficient Laws for the Performance of it; by these the Man of God may be thoroughly furnished and perfect, and can any Man reasonably desire more than Perfection? or can there be any good Work in Religion which is not prescribed by the Author of it? if so, then Superstition is justified, contrary to many Passages of holy Writ that condemn it: If not, then where is there any room for any new religious Laws of human Invention?

“ If the King of the Church and Author of the Scriptures be Wisdom and Love itself, then certainly his omniscient Eye must pierce the Vail of Futurity, and perfectly behold all the various Difficulties which his poor Church was to grapple with through all the successive Scenes of its Duration here, and his boundless Love excite his unsearchable Wisdom to form every Law that was, is, or shall be necessary for its Direction in every of them. Now, if the Case be so, what need can there possibly be of new religious Laws made (at any time) by short-sighted fallible corrupt Creatures? And if it be not so, our Religion and Faith are vain, and we are yet in our Sins: To imagine a Necessity of new Laws in religious Matters, contains in it (in our Opinion) an ungenerous Reflection upon the divine Word, and the Wisdom, Goodness and Faithfulness of its Author.”



117

The whole Force of this Argument may be briefly summed up thus, That to suppose a Power or Authority in the Church to make such Rules, (which our Brethren still load with the massy emphatical Expression of new religious Laws) is a Reflection and Reproach upon the Scriptures as imperfect, as also upon the Wisdom, Love and Faithfulness of Christ the King and Lawgiver of his Church.

But this Argument, according to our Brethren's own Concession above, can only be of Force against Laws or Rules which are new, either as to their Matter or Penalty; but cannot affect our judicial authoritative Explication and Application of Christ's general Laws or Rules unto particular Cases, by making Rules concerning them, more than it affects our explaining the Word and applying it doctrinally by preaching: And the Perfection of the Word, as a System, doth not supersede ministerial Explication and Application of it, so neither doth the Perfection of Christ's Laws supersede the Explication and Application of them to particular Cases, by such ecclesiastical Rules, which are not new Laws, but only Explications and Applications of the old infallible ones, which Christ's Ministers by Office are obliged to explain and apply. A particular Rule of the Church for trying of Candidates, is no new Law, but only a putting the Scripture-Rule for that Purpose in Force and Execution. All our protesting Brethren have agreed and conformed to the adopting Act in all the Parts and Branches of it, in Profession at least, and thereby have acknowledged the Authority by which it was enacted; which is the very Authority we plead for, and no other.

The Wisdom, Love and Care of our Lord is abundantly manifested in giving us a perfect System of Laws, which are so general and comprehensive, as to extend and be applicable to all Cases that can fall out; and also in appointing Officers in his Church clothed with Authority to explain these Laws, and apply them to these Cases, when they fall out; and so hath made Provision sufficient for all Futurities; even as by the moral Law or ten Commandments he hath made Provision for our Direction in all moral Duties, and also made Provision for our Help to understand these Directions, and apply them to every particular Case and Emergency that can come to pass, by appointing a standing Ministry for this Purpose; whose Business it is, by comparing spiritual Things with spiritual,

K 2

ritual, one Scripture with another, to explain and apply these general moral Rules to particular Emergencies; and so be an Help to common People, who have neither Leisure nor Capacity to do so: So that the Perfection of the Scriptures, and the Love and Wisdom of our King and Lawgiver are so far from being obscured by this Authority in the Church to make Rules, that thereby they are rendered more illustrious and conspicuous, inasmuch as the Usefulness of these general Laws are left seen in their particular Application to their proper Cases. And so I pass on to consider the fourth Argument, which runs thus:

“ *Argument IV.* A Power of Law-making in religious Mat-  
 “ ters is (in our Opinion) inconsistent with Christian Liberty,  
 “ which we think contains in it a free Use or Disuse of Things  
 “ in their general Nature indifferent, according to the best  
 “ Judgment we ourselves can form of their Expediency or In-  
 “ expediency, from the general Direction of the divine Word  
 “ applied to our Circumstances.

“ Undoubtedly there are many Things, which are in their  
 “ general Nature lawful to be done or avoided, which are not  
 “ necessary by any Law of the Gospel any farther than as  
 “ varying Circumstances may render them expedient, as Helps  
 “ for the Performance of commanded Duties, or inexpedient  
 “ as Hindrances: Now if a Majority of Church-Rulers may  
 “ fix and determine all these Things for us by Laws of their  
 “ own Invention, armed with Penalties against those that con-  
 “ scientiously dissent, then we are in a poor Box indeed; if  
 “ these Things that Christ hath left free, be not left so by  
 “ Church Authority, then what shall become of the Liberty  
 “ which our dear Redeemer hath bought for us by his Blood?  
 “ 1. Cor. vii. 23. Gal. v. 1. *Being made free by so great a Price,*  
 “ *wherefore should we become the Servants of Men,* and tamely  
 “ suffer ourselves to be ensnared and enslaved by a Yoke  
 “ of their framing and imposing? Are we not commanded  
 “ to stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made  
 “ us free? It has been frequently, and, we think, justly ob-  
 “ served by the most eminent Defenders of our Persuasion,  
 “ against the exorbitant Claims of another Church, *viz.* that  
 “ it is not to be imagined that our merciful Redeemer would  
 “ die to free his People from a Yoke of ceremonial Laws of  
 “ divine Institution, and at the same time leave them exposed

“ to the Will of their Fellow-Creatures, to be oppressed with a  
 “ Multiplicity of their Inventions, which have been often as  
 “ unreasonable and cruel.

“ Every new religious Law cuts off a valuable Branch from  
 “ our Christian Liberty, and how soon they may be so multi-  
 “ plied as to bereave us entirely of that precious Privilege (in the  
 “ Sense before mentioned) we know not; but this seems evi-  
 “ dent to us, that, according to the law-making Scheme, our  
 “ Liberty lies at the Mercy of Men, who may, if we stupidly  
 “ couch under the Burden they impose, soon destroy it.” The  
 Sum of which take thus :

A law-making Power in religious Matters is inconsistent with Christian Liberty, which allows the free Use and Forbearance of indifferent Things, which by such a law-making Power may be destroyed by making these indifferent Things to become necessary; by this Argument Dissenters have justly defended themselves against the Encroachments of the Church of *England* in their Imposition of unscriptural Ceremonies; and by one religious Law after another we may come to be bereaved of our religious Liberty in all the Branches of it.

*Answer.* I. Our Brethren themselves in this Apology p. 28. say, that a Presbytery may agree and engage themselves to the Observance of such Things as appear to them to have a good Tendency, &c. and is not this an Abridgment of the Liberty they plead for? And if it be evil in others to abridge my Liberty, it must also be a Sin in myself to abridge mine own Liberty: If the Thing be evil in itself, my committing it against myself cannot legitimate it; for how do I know how soon I may change my Opinion of the Matter, after I have engaged myself: And if my engaging of myself to the Observation of these Things for the future, be of any Force at all in Justice, my mere changing my Opinion cannot free me from the Obligation. If the Thing be lawful, and the Obligation remain after that I have changed my Mind, then my Liberty is abridged to my own Discontent by such an Agreement; and therefore I ought not to have entered into it, if my entering so into it be an Abridgment of my Liberty, which Christ purchased with his Blood; so that our Brethren's Principles do evidently, by this Argument, encroach on Christian Liberty, as well as ours. But

*Ans<sup>w</sup>.* II. Is not Christian Liberty a Privilege of Societies as well as of single Persons ? and have not Societies, by Virtue of that Liberty, a Right to agree and voluntarily determine themselves about the Use of indifferent Things, when by occurring Emergencies they are moved to determine concerning the Expediency or Inexpediency of them ? This our Brethren also assert p. 28. of their Apology ; and is not such a Society in the very Exercise of that Christian Liberty, which as a Christian Society they justly claim, when they are debating about the indifferent Thing in Question ? And doth not every Member of that Society or Judicatory exercise his Liberty, when he consents that the Thing in Debate be voted ; and, as it were, declares, that he is willing that it be determined by Vote of the whole Society ? How then is his Liberty abridged by the superior Number of Votes against him ? seeing he was in the very Exercise of it, when he voluntarily consented to the Voting, and so promised to submit, or be determined by the Majority.

*Ans<sup>w</sup>.* III. How absurd is it to pretend a Burden upon the Conscience, when the very Thing debated is owned to be indifferent in its general Nature, and so may be either done or left undone, abstracting from its Expediency in the present Circumstances ?

*Ans<sup>w</sup>.* IV. It is most unfair and absurd in our Brethren to represent the Conclusions and Determinations of Judicatories as the Acts or Works of a Majority, whereas they are really and truly the Acts of the whole Body that votes in the Affair ; inasmuch as the very Negatives or Minority do all, at least virtually, promise in the Beginning of the Vote, to be determined by the Majority, on whatever Side it shall fall out : Are not all Conclusions and Determinations of Societies still ascribed to the whole, and not to the Majority ? as Acts of Parliaments, Councils, or Assemblies, &c. and it looks very unchristian and uncharitable-like to use such a cunning Way to cast an Odium upon synodical Conclusions and Determinations, to call them the Acts of a Majority, thereby insinuating that the Minority hath no Hand in such Conclusions, when it's plain that the Majority of a Synod have no more Hand in all Acts of Synods, than a Majority of any civil or ecclesiastical Society have in making Acts ; and yet it's not the Majority but the whole  
 Judi-

Judicature which makes these Acts, because all Members give their Votes.

*Anfw. V.* There is a very wide Difference between the Use that is made of this Argument by Dissenters against the Church of *England*, and the Use which our Brethren make of it here: The Votaries of the Church of *England* do own the Things, which they would impose upon us, to be indifferent in their Nature; but we reckon them sinful, because we think they have no Foundation in the Word of God, and yet are imposed as Parts, and not mere external Circumstances of religious Worship; and therefore, until we be otherwise persuaded, we cannot in Conscience comply: But our Brethren own in the Tenor of this Argument, that the Things in Debate between us and them, are indifferent in their general Nature, which may be done without Sin; which we do not with respect to religious Ceremonies of Worship. If nothing had been imposed upon Dissenters which they reckon sinful in Religion, it's like there would be very few Dissenters in the *English* Dominions.

*Anfw. VI.* When a Person joins himself as a Member of any Society, his so doing doth natively and justly imply a Promise to comply and submit to the Laws and Government of it in all Things lawful, and consequently it must imply a giving up of his Liberty in the Use of indifferent Things, so far as is needful in order to comply with the Laws of the Society; so that, when he is by the Rules of that Society restrained as to the Use of any indifferent Thing, he hath no Ground of Complaint, because at his Entrance into Membership he voluntarily engaged so to do, in order to enjoy Communion and Membership with that Society: A Subject of a civil Government hath not his civil Liberty or Right injuriously taken from him or hurt, by being under that Government; although by the Laws thereof he be limited and restrained from many Things which he would be at Liberty about, if he were under no such Government at all; civil Authority doth rather perfect and improve, than diminish or abridge civil Liberty; even so, ecclesiastical Regulations of our Conduct, as to the Use of indifferent Things, do rather improve and perfect than impair or abridge our Christian Liberty, especially while there is still an open Door for us to act according to our Consciences, though in many Cases this may occasion great Inconveniencies, which .

which are owing not to any Abridgment of our Liberty, but the unhappy Difference of Judgment about Things wherein our social Union require an Uniformity.

*Anfw.* VII. As Christian Liberty may and is capable to be exercised in Society as well as apart, so certainly a Church-Judicatory regularly constitute must be reckoned a more sure and competent Judge of such occurring changeable Circumstances as may render Things, in themselves indifferent, and cause them to be thought or judged expedient or inexpedient; and therefore if a single Christian may in the Use of his Liberty determine himself as to the Use of such Things, much more and with much more Safety may a Judicatory do so with respect to themselves and with respect to those whom they both represent and govern.

I now proceed to examine our Brethren's fifth Argument which runs thus:

“ *Argument V.* The foresaid Power of Legislation in Matters  
 “ of Religion, Prudence and Conscience, opposes and tends to  
 “ destroy (in our Opinion) the ancient Church-Discipline that  
 “ Christ has appointed, by fixing new Terms of Communion:  
 “ The Substance of that Discipline which Christ has appointed  
 “ in his Word, (as we conceive) consists principally in exclu-  
 “ ding from Communion such grossly erroneous or vicious Per-  
 “ sons in Principles or Practice, as his Word points out, and  
 “ receiving them again into it upon their shewing the Signs  
 “ of Penitence; in short, the Terms of the Discipline of Christ  
 “ are fixed and invariable, and should be inviolably observed  
 “ by all Churches, but the legislative Power aforesaid, by coin-  
 “ ing new religious Laws, makes a new Term of Commu-  
 “ nion by every one of them, in Addition to those our Saviour  
 “ had ordained; so that hereby the Discipline of Christ is gra-  
 “ dually drawn off its ancient Foundation, namely the Laws of  
 “ God, to the Lusts, Fancies, and Traditions of Men, through  
 “ which the former are sometimes made void; for by their  
 “ Traditions they are sometimes obliged to reject those whom  
 “ the Laws of Christ oblige them to receive, and those whom  
 “ they themselves were wont to receive: *E. g.* the Laws of  
 “ Christ oblige them to receive to Christian Communion all  
 “ those that were sound in the main Points of Faith and re-  
 “ gular in Life, although they err in circumstantial or lesser  
 “ Points; and to ministerial Communion all those that have  
 “ the



“ the Qualifications which the King of the Church requires  
 “ in his Word, Rom. xiv. 1, 4. *Him that is weak in the Faith*  
 “ *receive ye, but not to doubtful Disputations; who art thou*  
 “ *that judgest another Man's Servant*: Whereas the new Laws  
 “ of Churches have and do exclude such. Every Man, how  
 “ pious, peaceable, useful and eminent soever he be, in all va-  
 “ luable respects, if he scruples and opposes such Church-Can-  
 “ nons as he thinks are dishonourable and detrimental to true  
 “ Religion; though Christ receives him to Glory, and bids them  
 “ receive him, yet by these human, ecclesiastical Laws, they  
 “ will reject him, some from Christian and ministerial Com-  
 “ munion both, and some from ministerial only; thus a dread-  
 “ ful Foundation is laid for a Succession of Schisms in the  
 “ Church of God, while such a Claim of Power is pretended  
 “ to and exercised, by which the seamless Coat of Christ is  
 “ rent and torn into almost an infinite Number of Pieces: For  
 “ the Charter of law-making (in our humble Opinion) is hard  
 “ to be found in the Bible, and the Prudentials about which  
 “ they exercise it, are often difficult to be determined, good  
 “ Men are apt to have different Minds about them, and be-  
 “ ing of different Sentiments, and conscienciously inclined to act  
 “ according to the best of their Light, so long as there is Con-  
 “ science and Courage on Earth, while the aforesaid Engine is  
 “ mounted on the Wheel, a sad Scene of Debate and Division  
 “ is opened.

“ In short, if we may be suffered to speak plainly, a legis-  
 “ lative Authority makes the Terms of Communion as va-  
 “ riable as any Weather-cock, so that a Man is in continual  
 “ Danger of being cast out of Communion, where it's exer-  
 “ cised in its Rigour, unless he has a Conscience as pliable as  
 “ Wax, ready to receive every Impression, or can alter his  
 “ Sentiments out of Compliance to a Majority as fast as the  
 “ Camelion its Colours. Which leads us to the sixth Rea-  
 “ son, &c.”

The Force and Substance of this fifth Argument may be  
 more briefly and succinctly conceived thus: This legislative  
 Power opposes and tends to destroy the Discipline of Christ's  
 Church, and makes new Terms of Communion; Christ's  
 Terms and Discipline are fixed and invariable, but granting  
 this legislative Power, they are varied by every new Law  
 or Canon that's made; hereby Church-Discipline is drawn  
 L off its

off its Foundation, to the Lusts, Fancies and Traditions of Men; the Laws of God are made void, while hereby some are rejected who by God's Law should be received, and whom they themselves were wont to receive into either ministerial or Christian Communion. This opens a Door for endless Schisms and Divisions in the Church, while by such Laws some deserving Persons are excluded merely because they cannot in Conscience comply with these new Laws; the Matter of these new Laws are often disputable, and good Men differ in their Judgment about them, and in Consequence must act differently, according to their Light; so that, while this Engine is mounted, sad Divisions will follow: In short, this legislative Power makes the Terms of Communion as changeable as any Weather-cock, and its Votaries and Subjects must change Sentiments as often as the Camelion doth its Colours.

*Ans<sup>w</sup>.* This Argument, like all the foregoing, doth in Reality only militate against those who plead for Authority to make Laws or Rules which are really new, either as to their Matter or Penalty, according to our Brethren's own Observation above; and consequently not against our Synod, or its Acts, nor against the Presbyterian Plan, though it be designed against them all three. It's true, the Terms of Communion and Rules of Discipline, as to their Foundation in the Word, are fixed and invariable; but yet the innumerable Variety of Cases which these Rules are designed to regulate, and direct, doth necessarily require a suitable Variety of inadequate Explications suitable to the various Cases to which they are to be applied; I said, inadequate Explications, because when a general Rule is explained with a View to a particular Case, that Explication is not adequate to the comprehensive Meaning or Intent of the Rule, but only inadequate and restricted, as it were, to the Case to which it is applied: As for Instance, the various Texts of Scripture directing to moral Duties are only so many inadequate Explications of that Precept of the Decalogue which enjoins such Duties; thus the particular Commands or Exhortations which enjoin the relative Duties of Masters and Servants, Husbands and Wives, Magistrates and Subjects, &c. are inadequate Explications of the fifth Command, unto which all relative Duties do belong; now such inadequate, or (if I may so speak) partial Explications of  
the

the fifth Command, are far from opposing or destroying it, or altering the Terms of Communion contained therein; they only consider this Command, as it is applicable to this or that particular Rank or Order of Duties, without considering it as applicable to, or taking in other Ranks of Duties comprehended in or under it: Even so, our ecclesiastical Rules designed to regulate our Conduct in particular Cases and Emergencies, neither add nor diminish, nor yet alter the general Rules of Discipline contained in the Word; but only give or contain an inadequate Explication of them suited to such Cases for the Regulation of which such Rules are designed; so that all that our Brethren say in their Amplification upon this Argument, is entirely lost; this Arrow, tho' designed against our synodical Authority and Rules, it can hurt neither, because they are comprehended in the general Rules of the impregnable Word, and so are shielded thereby. / There are many Articles, Propositions or Doctrines in our Confession of Faith about Fundamentals, which every one will own to contain just Terms of Communion, which yet are not expressly or in Terms contained in the Word, or the Apostles Creed, and the Receiving and Owning of them are now justly made Terms of Communion; and yet, before this Confession was composed, or these Propositions were formed, and adopted as the subordinate Standard of Faith and Doctrine, Persons were duly and regularly received into both ministerial and Christian Communion without them, upon the Form of Terms then in Force and Practice; which, it's probable, were for some time contained in the Apostle's Creed in the first Ages of Christianity; and yet this is no Argument against the Assembly's Enlarging the Form of our Confession or Articles of our Faith, and Terms of Communion therein contained, according as the Case and State of the Church, in relation to the Errors to be guarded against, did require: Even so there are many Articles of Discipline and Government, which in their now Form are justly made Terms of Communion, being comprehended, as to their Matter and Design, in the general Rules of the Word; and yet before these Articles were thought of, as to their present Form, it was but just and reasonable to receive Persons into Communion, Christian or ministerial, without them; and suppose any Person otherwise deserving, to scruple these Rules conscientiously, surely in that Case it's less Danger and Damage

to Christ's Church to want the Benefit of such a Person's Labours, than to purchase it at the Expences of a Rule which for its Matter and Substance is really known to be contained in the Word, though such a Person cannot see it, to do this would be to act against Light, to transgress the divine Law, and to do Evil that Good may come of it: And besides, the Person who now scruples, may in time come to see his Mistake; and if not, the Lord is sufficient to provide another in his stead, who is not barred out by any such unreasonable Scruples. If it be alledged, that such Rules contain something besides or contrary to any divine Rule, let there be due Pains taken to make it appear; and although in some Cases it should appear to be so, yet it can be no Objection against such Rules or Orders as are indeed agreeable to the Word, nor the Authority by which they are made.

To say, that the Matter of such Rules is disputable, and that good Men may differ about them, is but of small Weight, so was the Matter of some of the Decrees of the first Council; and to say, that this Engine while mounted, will still occasion Divisions, is of as little Weight, we may say so of the Engine of a preached Gospel: But sure, some of our Brethren, according to their declared Principles, should rather like the Engine the better for this Effect of it, ~~because~~ where the Work of God is carried on, Satan and his Instruments will of Course oppose it; hence Divisions will of Course arise; so that, according to them, we should rejoice in Divisions, not in themselves considered, but because they are a Sign, that what occasions them is the Work of God.

From all this it appears, that these Rules being agreeable to and contained in the Word of God, can never necessitate any Person to change his just Sentiments at all, but rather may help to reform and improve them, when defective.

However, I think, according to what our Protesting Brethren here offer concerning these Rules, which they are pleased so often to stile by the odious Title of new religious Laws, they of late shew themselves to be much prepared, to be influenced by them; for it appears to me, partly by credible Information, partly by my own Knowledge, that they shew to the World the Weather-cock and Camelion are not unfit Similies whereby to represent them; they now publicly declaim and declare against crying out and falling down in public Worship,

ship, which not many Months ago they magnified as the mighty Work of God, and called us *Pbarifce-Preachers*, Enemies to the Work of God, because we expressed the same Sentiments which they themselves now publish for Truth; Again, They now publicly preach that a Person may be all his Days without Assurance, and yet be saved; that he may have the Spirit of God working in him, and not know it to be the Spirit of God; whereas a few Months ago, they all with one Mouth, as it were, declared, that every true Convert is and must be sensible of his own gracious State; yea, be able to tell and declare the Time and Manner of his Conversion. If this be not to alter and change Sentiments like the Camelion and Weathercock, let the Reader judge. Mr. *Blair*, when he subscrib'd this Apology, was of the Mind that all should be received into Christian Communion who are sound in the main Points of Faith, and regular in Life, tho' they err in circumstantial or lesser Points; and to ministerial Communion, all those that have the Qualifications which the King of the Church requires in his Word; and by his Practice since has excluded Mr. *Boyd*, by whom he was invited to assist at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, from Christian Communion, yea and ministerial Communion too, while he refused or declined both to communicate and administer the Sacrament on that Occasion; and yet I am persuaded Mr. *Blair* cannot prove that Mr. *Boyd* is destitute of any of the Terms of Communion laid down by himself in said Apology: I'm credibly inform'd, and his Paper of *May* last confirms the Truth of it, that however an orthodox Belief or Profession, and a regular Life, were his Terms of Christian Communion in *May* 1739, yet in *May* 1740 he has added a third to the other two, *viz.* a Declaration of Experiences; and withal condemned all his Brethren as unconverted who do not imitate his Practice in this particular; in which I think Mr. *Blair* hath given Occasion of a double Remark, first, that he requires an unscriptural Term of Communion; again, that he changes his Sentiments in these Matters, both of which he ascribes as the Consequent of claiming a Power to make ecclesiastic Rules. / I come now to consider our Brethren's sixth Argument, which in their own Words is as follows:

“ *Argument VI.* — Reason which we humbly offer against  
 “ a legislative Power in Matters purely religious, and it is  
 “ this,

“ this, *viz.* that we think it an unwarrantable Encroach-  
 “ ment upon the Rights of Conscience and private Judgment,  
 “ because it determines for us what properly falls within their  
 “ Sphere, and obligeth us to submit thereto, whether con-  
 “ vinced or not, or suffer certain Penalties, which Almighty  
 “ God hath not prescribed in his Word in such Cases.

“ That Matters of Prudence and Expediency under a re-  
 “ ligious Consideration, come within the Sphere of Conscience,  
 “ is evident from this, that by doing what is prudent and ex-  
 “ pedient, much Service accrues to Religion, and by the con-  
 “ trary much Damage; now can any Man be a true Christian,  
 “ and not have a conscientious Regard to do and avoid what  
 “ promotes and hinders the Interests of true Religion.

“ Again, we think it evident from Scripture that God has  
 “ given the only Right to every Man to judge for himself in  
 “ the Particulars aforesaid, 1 Thess. v. 21. 1. Cor. xi. 13.  
 “ Rom. xiv. 14, 22, 23. 1. Cor. vi. 12.

“ The Right of private Judgment in general is equally ap-  
 “ parent from the Principles of natural as well as revealed  
 “ Religion: If every Man must answer at last for his own  
 “ Actions, and the Misguidance of others will not clear him  
 “ from Guilt, or guard him from Punishment, in following  
 “ them, it is but equal that he should judge for himself also; the  
 “ holy Scriptures frequently enjoin this Duty of examining what  
 “ is proposed to us in religious Matters, and commend the  
 “ Performance of this in the *Beroans*: And to what Purpose  
 “ should we examine those Things, but to form a Judgment  
 “ about them, and act accordingly; if we must act contrary  
 “ to our Judgment, because of the Laws of our Fellow-Crea-  
 “ tures, then our Examination serves but to increase our Guilt  
 “ and Punishment, for *he that doubts is damn'd if he eat*; Rom.  
 “ xiv. 23. and if we must believe that to be prudential and ser-  
 “ viceable to Religion which any Set of Men make into Laws,  
 “ merely because of their supposed Authority; then certainly  
 “ Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion, then implicit Faith  
 “ and blind Obedience are sound and wholesome Doctrines;  
 “ then, in order to qualify us for thorough Subjection to  
 “ our spiritual Governours, it will be necessary to pluck out  
 “ our own Eyes, that we may see clearly through their Spec-  
 “ tacles.



“ Neither does that plausible Apology of the Patrons of a  
 “ legislative Power, *viz.* that their Acts and Cannons about  
 “ Prudentials, are grounded upon and agreeable to Scripture,  
 “ or the general Directions of it, make the unhappy Case of  
 “ those who are under such an heavy Yoke, a bit better, so  
 “ long as the minor Party are deprived of the Right of judging  
 “ for themselves, whether these Things be so, or not, and of  
 “ acting according to their Judgment, without Censure. This  
 “ leads us to another Reason, &c. ”.

This Argument or Reason may be summed up thus: This legislative Power in religious Matters is an Encroachment upon the Liberty of Conscience, and private Judgment of Discretion, inasmuch as Persons are by it obliged to submit to the Judgment of others, in Matters which belong to Conscience and private Judgment of Discretion, under certain Penalties; for Matters of Prudence and Expediency, which are the ordinary Matter of such Laws, do belong to Conscience and private Judgment: Every Man hath a Right to judge for himself; to say that we are obliged to obey Rules made by others, merely on their Authority, in Matters of Religion, is to make Ignorance the Mother of Devotion; we must then see with others Spectacles and not our own Eyes; nor does it mend the Matter to say that these Laws are founded on Scripture, while those that think otherwise, are obliged to submit to them on Pain of Censure.

This Argument is pregnant with absurd and false Reasoning: First, It's false that these Rules are enforced with any new Penalties; this Falshood is common to most of all our Brethren's Arguments, and I think I have already sufficiently manifested the Groundlessness of this Allegation, and therefore need not now insist upon it.

Secondly, I deny that the Power of making Rules, as I have explained it, makes the least Encroachment on the Conscience, or a private Judgment of Discretion; for still every one is left to himself to judge for himself, whether such Rules be just, and whether he be obliged to obey them, as in all other Cases.

Thirdly, The Rules and the Authority on which they are built, are not designed to exact or require a Submission whether Persons be convinced or no, as our Brethren say, but they require and oblige Persons first to examine the Rules and be convinced of their Reasonableness, and Agreeableness to the  
 Word,

Word, and then submit ; this Authority doth not so determine concerning Things as to supersede the Business of private Judgment, but rather affords a just Occasion for the Exercise of it, which without such a Rule they would not have had ; the Decrees of the first Council concerning some indifferent Things, did not supersede the Work of Conscience, or private Judgment of Believers at that Time, but rather gave them an Occasion to exercise both, in order to a judicious and conscientious Submission to said Decrees ; if the Rules be agreeable to the Word of God, and founded upon it, it's a Sin not to be convinced of their being so ; it's a Sin to obey against or without Light : In that Case, while a Person is not convinced of the Justness of the Rule, whether he obeys or not, he sins ; this is the unhappy Condition of all who are under the Conduct of an erroneous Conscience : The direct Duty in that Case is first to be informed aright, and then to act accordingly.

Fourthly, Our Brethren are at Pains to prove what no Protestant denies, that Matters of Prudence and Decency fall under the Cognisance of Conscience, and that every Man may judge for himself ; neither doth the Power of Synods to make Rules, in Subordination to the Scriptures, in the least deprive any Person of this Privilege : First, No Member of a Judicatory is abridged or deprived of his Privilege hereby ; for first, he hath the Privilege as a Member to debate and reason ; again, he is at his Liberty to give his Vote or to keep it ; and again 3<sup>ly</sup>, he is at his Liberty to submit and conform to the Determination of the Judicatory by Vote or not ; where then, I beseech, is the Abridgment. And as for the Penalty, I have said enough to enervate what is offered on that Score ; there is no new Penalty inflicted, but what is the unavoidable Consequence of differing Judgments among Members of a Judicature, *viz.* Submission to the Judgment of the Majority, or Separation, which with its following Inconveniency, is mutual, and affects both Parties in their Proportion : And as for the Subject or Layman, neither is his Right of Conscience or private Judgment abridged ; for first he freely chuses his own Minister to rule as well as feed him ; 2<sup>ly</sup>, he hath also a free Vote in chusing the ruling Elders, who in a special Manner are the People's Representatives in Judicatories ; and 3<sup>ly</sup>, he has a free Liberty to act according to his Conscience and private Judgment, whether to submit or separate ; he is not in

Ben-

Bondage in this Case, and the Damage of Separation affects the Society as well as him in Proportion.

Fourthly, It's not a supposed but a real Authority, though only ministerial, that we plead for, and I think, I have already sufficiently proved that we have received it from Christ in receiving the Keys; in Consequence of which, many Things indifferent in themselves, become our Duty when required; as the Command of a Parent obligeth a Child to do what otherwise he would not be obliged unto, merely by Virtue of the moral Obligation he is under, to obey his Parents in all Things lawful, even when it may be apprehended that the Parent is in a Mistake, or acts out of Humour, or in an arbitrary Way, yet still it's the Child's moral Duty to obey in every Thing wherein he may without Sin, by breaking the Commands of a superior Commander, even God himself; in like Manner the Members of a Church are, by Virtue of a moral Obligation, bound to obey their spiritual Rulers requiring Things lawful, and within the Sphere of ecclesiastical Authority, even altho' they may be suspected to mistake the Matter, or the Reasons on which they act, are not clearly seen, because the People who are ruled, are not the proper Judges of Rulers Authority, or Justness of the Commands, but only of their own Duty to obey, which still they ought to do, unless what's required be sinful, even when they think or suspect that the Key of Government or Discipline is indiscretely handled; for by Virtue of the Authority invested in the Rulers, unto which the moral Law requires Obedience, the Rulers have a Right to demand Obedience in Things lawful and within their Sphere, unless by some moral Precept forbidding Obedience in that particular, they be obliged to decline their Authority; otherwise all Authority in Church-Rulers would be overturned, and none need to obey, but when and as far as they please, if any thing but Fear of Sin might excuse Disobedience.

If it be urged, as in the former Argument, that this abridgeth Christian Liberty, I answer, Christian Liberty must not be so interpreted as to stand in Opposition to just and lawful Authority.

Again, If it be urged, that upon Supposition of the Key's erring, it will follow, that something of new Matter or a new Penalty will of Course be included in the Rule or Command whatever it be; for it cannot be conceived else how the Key

can-err, and consequently, according to the above Distinction of old and new Matter included in ecclesiastical Rules, it will follow that an erring Key is not to be obeyed.

I answer, Who shall judge here between the People and the Keyes or Rulers; the Keyes or Rulers will not condemn themselves, neither will the People; and therefore, as I said before, the Keyes or Rulers are by Virtue of their Right of Conscience and private Judgment, to judge of their Exercise of Authority, which they are invested with; and the People in like manner to judge, not of the Rulers authoritative Acts, but of the Lawfulness of their own Obedience, as in the above Simile or Instance, Children are not to dispute, but to obey their Parents Commands, unless what's required be unlawful.

Secondly, I answer, that the moral Obligation of Subjects to obey the Authority of lawful Rulers, requires Obedience in Things lawful, even upon Supposition of the Key's erring in an indifferent Matter, as in the Case of Children with respect to their Parents, as above, because no Subject is Judge of his lawful Commander's Authority further than to determine himself as to Obedience or Refusal; otherwise, as I said afore; none need obey further or longer than he pleases: If there be a superior Judicatory, that alters the Case, and Recourse may be had to it, and yet still in lawful Matters Obedience in the *interim* must be given, until a final Determination be obtained; for in that Case, to disobey would be to determine the Matter *sine Judice*, without a Judge.

Further, If the Parties ruled have a Privilege of judging for themselves, as to all the Duties of their Station, surely the Rulers also of the Church have a Liberty or Privilege to judge for themselves, as to all the Duties of their Station and Acts of Government; for Conscience and Religion are as much concerned in Acts of Government as in private Acts of Christian Conversation; and when they act in Concert, whether in passing Sentence on Persons and Facts, or in making Rules for the Promoting of Religion, they do all and every one exercise their Conscience and private Judgment in debating, in submitting the Matter in Debate unto Voting, in giving their Vote in Judgment in the Exercise of their Authority; now certainly the Result of such a solemn and judicial Exercise of the Liberty of Conscience and private Judgment in every Officer invested with lawful Authority to act in such an Affair, in Conjunction

tion with his Brethren, must be supposed to be superior to the Exercise of the same Privilege in a private Christian or particular Member under their Jurisdiction; and of Course must oblige every such private Person to obey and submit so far as he may without Sin, because he is under their Jurisdiction, and they not under his; and farther, the dissenting Member or scrupling Subject is as liable, if not more, to be in an Error of Judgment, or Mistake, or Prejudice, &c. as the Judicatory; so that this Argument taken from Liberty of Conscience and private Judgment of Discretion, when duly pondered, doth rather establish this Authority which we plead for, and enjoin Obedience to it, than overthrow it.

Our Brethren express their Sentiments of being under or subject to the ecclesiastical Authority invested in Christ's Officers, by the odious Title of an heavy Yoke: Sons of Belial, it's true, reckon every Yoke heavy, tho' never so just and rational, because it restrains or would restrain them from their unbounded Extravagancies; profane Libertins reckon the moral Law an heavy Yoke; but the good Law of God is not the less excellent, nor is true Subjection to it the less a most glorious and perfect Liberty, for their Prejudices; no more is the just and rational Authority invested by Christ in his Officers an heavy Yoke, nor is Subjection to it a Bondage, aitho' it be esteemed by our Brethren a bondageful Subjection to the slavish Schemes of Bigots, which deserves to be contemned and abhorred. As I have before observed, the Minority of a Church-Judicatory do virtually promise to be determined by the Suffrage of the Majority, every time they consent to let the Matter in Debate go to a Vote, and so give their Vote; and therefore afterwards to refuse Subjection to such a Determination, is to forfeit their Promise; they exercised their Liberty of Conscience and private Judgment in voting, and they have still Liberty of Conscience and private Judgment of Discretion to determine themselves as to their Obedience, *i. e.* if they apprehend, or come to be persuaded, that what is concluded by Vote be sinful, they are at Liberty to refuse Obedience; and that without the least Hazard of any Penalty or Censure, besides what is the unavoidable Consequence of the Difference of Judgment in such a Case, and the Authority which they themselves have approved by putting themselves under the Government of it.

Likewise also the Subjects or People who are under this Government and Authority, remain still possessed of their Liberty of Conscience and private Judgment, neither are they abridged in it by such ecclesiastical Rules as are made; for first, by the free Use of this Liberty of Conscience and private Judgment of Discretion, they join themselves to such a Church and Society, and so put themselves voluntarily under the Government and Authority of it; 2ly, in the Exercise of that same Liberty and private Judgment they give their Suffrage in choosing their own Pastors and ruling Elders; and 3ly, when such Rules are made by their Representatives, chosen by themselves, they are still in Possession of the same unalienable Liberty and private Judgment of Discretion to judge for themselves, whether it be lawful or sinful to observe said Rules: And as to the Penalty or Censure for Non-obedience, what I said above may be applied here, if any thing but Fear of Sin hinder them to obey, they are guilty of sinning by rebelling against the lawful Authority which they themselves have chosen, and promised Subjection unto it: Let every Christian be careful to see that his own Conduct be conform to the Rule which he is obliged to observe and obey, and then he is in no Danger to be put to answer for the Misguidance of others; we are not required to believe by implicit Faith any thing to be serviceable to Religion, when it doth not appear so to us, nor need we pull out our own Eyes to see with others Spectacles, as our Brethren (I think) impertinently speak; let every Person in every Station still exercise his Liberty of Conscience and private Judgment to direct and determine himself what is in Duty to be done or forborn; none of our Rules forbid this. It's not a blind but a rational Obedience that's due to lawful ecclesiastical Authority, and therefore it's the Duty of all concerned carefully to enquire whether it be his Duty to obey? *i. e.* whether what is enjoined by lawful Authority, be in itself lawful or not? if it be sinful, no ecclesiastical Rules can make it lawful; but if it be lawful, then an ecclesiastical Rule makes it to be our Duty, tho' it was only lawful and indifferent before. I come now to examine the Force of the seventh Argument, which is in our Brethren's own Words as followeth:

“ *Argument VII.* Another Reason against legislative Authority in religious Matters, which is this, namely that such a binding Power necessarily supposes one of these two Things,  
 “ *viz.*



“ viz. Either that Church-Judicatories are infallible in their  
 “ Determinations, and so cannot enjoin what is wrong; or that  
 “ they have Power to legitimate an Error, and make that  
 “ which was antecedently evil to become good and lawful  
 “ by enjoining it: A legislative Authority in the Church must  
 “ of Necessity be resolv'd into one or other of these two, as it's  
 “ first Principle; but we are perswaded that both the one and  
 “ the other will be disclaimed by us all, and consequently so  
 “ ought the Power which cannot be claimed consistently with-  
 “ out them, That there is such a Connexion in this Case,  
 “ is most manifest; for if Church-Judicatories are not infallible,  
 “ then they may err, either requiring that to be done which  
 “ ought not, or forbidding that which ought; in neither of  
 “ which Cases certainly are we bound to obey, unless their Au-  
 “ thority is also such, that it can alter the Nature of Things,  
 “ or secure us from the Punishment we deserve, for doing  
 “ what is evil, or neglecting what is good: In a Word, Le-  
 “ gislators in Religion must be either infallible or omnipotent;  
 “ this not only Reason teacheth, but also the Word of God  
 “ confirms, James iv. 12.

“ We have no Certainty but that a Church-Judicatory may  
 “ enjoin something very prejudicial to the Church of Christ,  
 “ either thro' the Short-sightedness and Misapprehensions of  
 “ well-designing Men; or it may possibly happen, that a con-  
 “ siderable Number are influenced by wrong Principles and  
 “ Motives, and if Things appear so to others, must their Hands  
 “ be bound up from doing their Duty in endeavouring to pro-  
 “ mote the Interests of Christ's Kingdom, and so subject their  
 “ Consciences and the valuable Interests of Religion to the  
 “ Commandments of Men. For Persons to impose Laws of  
 “ their own, imposing upon others without any Pretence to In-  
 “ fallibility, is (as we conceive) a very inconsistent Proceeding:  
 “ The Protestant Legislators in religious Matters, by owning  
 “ the Fallibility of their Church-Judicatories, are obliged  
 “ either to abandon their favourite Scheme, or assert the bind-  
 “ ing Power of erroneous Laws; but not being willing to do  
 “ the former, they chuse to attempt the Defence of the lat-  
 “ ter, namely, that Submission is due to erroneous Laws and  
 “ Sentences; to make this the more plausible, they acknowledge  
 “ that we ought to refuse active Obedience to unjust Sentences,  
 “ but not passive, *i. e.* (as we understand it) we must, accord-  
 “ ing

“ing to their Notion, neglect the Performance of a Duty,  
 “which God and Conscience enjoins, because Church-Author-  
 “rity forbids it; if the Case be so, then the Church has Power  
 “to oblige to Sins of Omission, but not of Commission; then  
 “we ought to obey negative sinful Commands, but not po-  
 “sitive: But we humbly conceive that this Distinction in the  
 “present Case is full nice; for if we must obey Man rather  
 “than God in the one, why not in the other also, and so  
 “make thorough Work of it? To this shocking Extremity  
 “does the legislative Scheme necessarily lead its Patrons; for  
 “if they allowed that sinful Cannons were null and void in  
 “themselves, altho’ passed by a Majority of Votes, and gave  
 “Liberty to the minor Party to judge for themselves, and to  
 “act according to their own Judgment, without Censure, their  
 “darling Structure would crumble into deserved Ruine; but  
 “while they labour to maintain the contrary exorbitant and  
 “awful Claim of Power, their Doctrine tends to destroy every  
 “Thing that is valuable in humane Nature, as well as to  
 “sap the very Foundations of the Protestant Religion, &c.”

This Argument may be summed up thus: A legislative Au-  
 thority in religious Matters supposes Church-Judicatories to be  
 either infallible, or able to alter the Nature of Things, and  
 turn Error and Evil into Truth and Goodness by their autho-  
 ritative Act; for if they be not infallible, they may err in  
 forbidding what is Duty, and requiring what is Sin, in neither  
 of which they ought to be obeyed; we say, it supposes Judi-  
 catoris to be either infallible or omnipotent.

We are not sure but a Church may enjoin Things very  
 prejudicial, either through Ignorance, or finistrous Motives, and  
 it would be unreasonable to alledge that such Injunctions should  
 bind up Men’s Hands from Duty, or oblige to sin, so that  
 to pretend Authority so make Laws, without Infallibility, is  
 very inconsistent.

The Protestant Legislators in religious Matters are obliged  
 either to renounce their legislative Power or assert the Obli-  
 gation of erroneous Laws; the latter of which they rather  
 chuse, and say that a passive but not an active Obedience is  
 due to such Laws; which is all one as to say, in Obedience to  
 such Laws we ought to neglect Duty but not commit Sin; but  
 this is absurd: To this Extremity doth the asserting of a le-  
 gislative Authority reduce its Patrons, which, if they give up,  
 the

the darling Structure would soon crumble into Ruine ; and yet to maintain it, tends to destroy every Thing that's valuable in humane Nature, and sap the Foundation of the Protestant Religion.

*Answer.* I. We are obliged to remind the Reader that we claim no legislative Power, but only a ministerial executive Power, *viz.* a Power or Authority as Officers in Christ's Church, to govern it according to the Laws which he hath already given, and consequently to explain and apply these Laws to their proper Cases, whether by making Rules or judging of Facts ; and our Brethren do but abuse their Readers while they call the Authority which we claim, a legislative Power, or our Rules by the Name of religious Laws.

Secondly, By the same Argument a Magistrate must be either infallible or omnipotent, or he is divested of all legislative Power in civil Affairs, and yet he is the Minister of God, and we are obliged to obey for Conscience sake : I cannot see the least Disparity, seeing both Authorities are of the same Original, and a like moral Obligation lies upon us to obey both. The Difference between the civil and ecclesiastical Nature of these two Governments cannot alter the Case ; so that if there were no other Arguments against it, we might, for all the Force of this, claim a truly legislative Power.

Neither the one nor the other Authority can or do bind the Conscience to Obedience to unrighteous or (as our Brethren affect to speak) erroneous Laws, *i. e.* Laws enjoining Sin or forbidding Duty ; it's only in Matter of Duty or what is lawful, that either Authority is binding, and consequently neither require Infallibility nor Omnipotency, but leave the Subject at Liberty of Conscience and private Judgment to judge of the Injunctions of either Authority, so as freely to determine himself to obey or forbear, as Conscience shall direct ; so that none is bound up from Duty nor obliged to commit Sin by either Authority, 'tho' the Abuse of either may lay Persons under temporal Hardships and Inconveniences. Our Brethren give a very odd and unheard of Interpretation to the Distinction between active and passive Obedience, as if it implied an Obligation to Sins of Omission, tho' not of Commission ; whereas the true and common Meaning of passive Obedience, which is alledged to be Duty, when active Obedience cannot be lawfully given, is this, that when in Conscience

science we cannot obey the Precept, we ought patiently to submit to the Penalty, even when we have a moral Probability of being able to resist and defend ourselves with Success: This is what is meant by passive Obedience, which is urged by Court-Flatterers to encourage an unlimited Authority in Princes to rule with arbitrary Power; so that we are brought to no Extremity at all; nor does it follow upon the Power of making Rules, which we claim, that any Person is obliged to obey any Rule or Law requiring what's unlawful or forbidding what is Duty; such a Rule is *ipso facto*, i. e. in itself null and void, in the Sight of both God and Man: But, as I said, if what is enjoined, be lawful, tho' it be thought by some unnecessary, or not the best expedient, then Obedience is Duty, being it may be given without Sin, and lawful Authority, where it is invested, gives the Party or Person so much Prerogative, because they are the proper Judges of their own judicial Actings; this Authority is so far from destroying what is valuable in humane Nature, that it tends to improve it in its most excellent Capacity, *viz.* as capable of Religion in all the Parts of it; it excludes Anarchy and Confusion, and leaves every Person possessed of all his sacred Rights, Privileges and Liberties; and consequently is a Support and Shield to the Protestant Religion, so far is it from sapping the Foundations of it as our Brethren alledge.

It's very observable, how far a darling Opinion will enslave the Understanding of its Votaries; the foregoing Argument is advanced with so much Assurance as if it carried its own Evidence instamped on its Forehead; as if it consisted of infallible Demonstration; and yet when narrowly viewed, it proves like the Log of Wood in the Fable, given by Jupiter to the Frogs as their King, which, when narrowly observed and found to be lifeless, soon lost its Authority among them. The Abuse of any lawful Authority can never be an Argument against the just Use of it.

To argue, that, because Rulers, being fallible, are liable to mistake and make unjust Laws, therefore they have no Power to make righteous ones; or to say, that, because Laws enjoining Inequity are not to be obeyed, therefore Laws enjoining what is Duty or lawful, are not to be regarded, is a Strain of Logic which I own I am not acquainted with. Our Brethren seem to flatter themselves with an imaginary Victory, while

while they triumph over their own nonsensical Gloss or Interpretation of passive Obedience, which none in the World (as I verily believe) ever so much as dreamed of before themselves. Let us next take a View of their eighth Argument, which in their own Words runs thus :

“ *Argument VIII.* And this is another Argument we beg  
 “ Leave to insist upon : The Notion of a legislative Power in  
 “ religious Matters, with the Necessity of Submission to its er-  
 “ roneous Decisions, seem to us to condemn the Reformation  
 “ from Popery, and our dissenting from the Church of *England* ;  
 “ for if it be necessary to submit to erroneous Sentences of  
 “ Churches, how then could the first Reformers oppose the  
 “ Authority, and Revolt from the Jurisdiction, of the Church of  
 “ *Rome* ? and how can the Non-Conformists, upon this Plan,  
 “ vindicate their opposing the Canons of the Church of *Eng-*  
 “ *land* (which they own to be a true Church) from the Charge  
 “ of Schism ? If any Church hath a Power of Legislation about  
 “ Prudentials, they must by Consequence have Authority to  
 “ judge and determine what are such, and to oblige to the  
 “ Observance of them, and the avoiding their Contraries, un-  
 “ der the Penalties of Non-communication. If the Presbyterians  
 “ have this Power, then certainly the Church of *England* have  
 “ it also ; and in Pursuance of this supposed Claim of Power  
 “ they have actually made a great many Canons or religious  
 “ Laws, establishing under the Penalty of Non-Communion,  
 “ their Liturgy, Hierarchy, Cross in Baptism, and many other  
 “ Usages, which they deem’d very expedient to promote Or-  
 “ der and Decency : Now how can we, according to the afore-  
 “ said Scheme, justify our not submitting to the lawful Autho-  
 “ rity of that Church ?

“ We think it very inconsistent to maintain such a Claim of  
 “ Power as would have for ever prevented the very Being of  
 “ all the Reformed Churches in general, and such as condemns  
 “ our dissenting One in particular.

“ It seems also to us inconsistent to grasp after a Power for  
 “ ourselves which we condemn in others, or to disclaim it in  
 “ Word while we practice it in Deed ; we cannot think that  
 “ any Church can need any thing for its Support, which would  
 “ overset its Foundation, or that Truth can alter its Nature in  
 “ the Succession of Time ; we suppose that what was true at  
 “ the Time of the Reformation, is so still.”

*Anfw.* What we have already said in Answer to the former Argument, may, I think, sufficiently answer this. There is no Obligation upon the Conscience to submit to such Sentences as require Persons to sin ; and this is the Case of the Reformation, and of Dissenters Separating from the Church of *England*: Neither Reformed Churches nor Dissenters ever complained of Non-communication as a severe Penalty, yea, they never, that I heard, reckoned it a Penalty at all but rather rejoiced at the Liberty when they could do it without Persecution.

If the Churches of *England* and *Rome* have stretched their Authority to establish their Hierarchy and Ceremonies which are contrary to the Word, that doth not infer that Church-Authority cannot be exercised in making Rules according to it, and founded upon it. This Authority, as we claim it, is so far from being in the Nature of it an Hindrance of the Reformation, that it strengthens and supports it.

Neither do we condemn in others what we claim to ourselves: As we are now allowed a peaceable Separation from the Church of *England*, without Persecution, we complain not of her Impositions on us, altho' we give these Impositions as the Reason of our Separation, or why we cannot in Conscience join with them in Communion. Our Claim of Authority and the Truth on which it is built, is the same, and owned to be the same by all that I know of, but new-light Men and our Protesting Brethren ; I say, they were and are the same now and at the Reformation ; Witness all the Reformed Churches agreeing about Rules of Government and Discipline, which were binding on all Members that would hold and enjoy Communion with them.

Our Brethren in this Argument talk of a Necessity of submitting to erroneous Sentences or Decisions: Now it's hard to know what they intend by these erroneous Decisions ; however I think, they must intend one of these two, *viz.* Either such Decisions as enjoin something that's sinful ; or such, as tho' what they enjoin be lawful, yet may not be expedient: If the former be intended, there can be no Necessity nor Obligation upon the Conscience of any to submit ; and, as I have said before more than once, Non-communication on that Account is in itself no Penalty nor Censure, but only the unavoidable Consequence of Difference in Judgment, which in Proportion affects both the Parties, those who separate and those who are  
sepa-



separated from : And if our Brethren intend by erroneous Decisions such as enjoin Things lawful but inexpedient, or thought to be so, in that Sense we say and plead that such Decisions ought to be submitted unto, when given by a lawful Judicatory in ecclesiastical Matters, even *Clave errante*, or supposing a Mistake in the Management of the Key, because lawful Authority should be submitted unto in all Things lawful.

We own and plead that every true Church hath Authority to make Rules about Prudentials and Expedients ; but we deny that this Power is a Power of Legislation, and say that it's only a declarative and executive Power, a Power to explain and apply the general Rules of the Word to their proper particular Cases ; and to see that these Rules be observed, according to said Explication and Application, which, in the Nature of it, is not a legislative, but only an executive Power ; even as our Courts of Justice give their Decisions according to the Law as they explain them, and yet are not said to be Legislators ; but this is only an Instance of our Brethren's Cunning, in a catachrestical or abusive manner, to give a terrible and odious Name to the Thing they would condemn.

We further own and plead, that every true Church hath Authority to judge and determine according and in Subordination to the general Dictates of the Word, what is prudential and expedient, and to oblige to the Observance of them all their Members or Subjects who would enjoy or continue in Communion with them. But again I say, Non-Communion is no Penalty properly so called, at least is no new Penalty, but only the unavoidable Consequence of Difference of Judgment in all social Government as well as the Church.

We farther own also, that the Church of *England* hath this Power, as well as Presbyterians, but we deny that their Canons, which establish their unscriptural Ceremonies of religious Worship, are justly grounded upon this Authority, because by this Authority the Church hath Power to make Rules and order Prudentials and Expedients, according to the Word, but not without or contrary, which we believe these Ceremonies to be : And I have already said, that we never complained of Non-Communion with them in these Things, as a Punishment or Penalty ; yea, the World knows that the Complaint hath always been on the other Side ; we have been complained of and persecuted because we refused and declined

Communion with them ; which I do not mention with any Design of Reflection upon that Church for what has been done in past Ages, but rather would bless God with all my Heart that more of a neighbourly charitable Disposition between the established Church and Dissenters hath in general prevailed ever since the Revolution ; so that I think our Brethren speak at random and scarcely according to Truth, when they say that those Ceremonies, &c. were enjoined under the Penalty of Non-Communion ; for the Truth is, that Non-communication with them was the Fault which was complained of and punished with several Sorts and Degrees of Punishment quite of another Nature : If we had not thought that the Things enjoined and required by that Church were sinful, we should have condemned ourselves for disobeying that lawful Authority which we freely acknowledge to be invested in them as well as in all other Churches. From all which the unbyassed Reader may easily see how groundless the Reflections are which our Brethren cast upon us, in the last two Paragraphs of this Argument ; and that the Power we claim to ourselves we allow it to belong to all other Churches, yea, all social Governments in the World ; and that this Power which we claim for ourselves, could never have hindered either the Reformation from Popery, or Dissenters to separate from the established Church. And so we shall dismiss this Argument, and pass on to consider our Brethren's ninth Argument, which is in their own Words as follows :

“ *Argument IX.* Again, ninthly, we know not how to free  
 “ all religious Laws from the Charge of Superstition and Un-  
 “ charitableness, whatsoever pious Designs the Formers of them  
 “ may have notwithstanding ; for *who hath required these*  
 “ *Things at their Hands ? and why are they righteous over-*  
 “ *much ?* Eccl. vii. 16. *Wherefore do they teach the Fear of God*  
 “ *by the Precepts of Men ?* Isai. xxix. 13. and impose their hu-  
 “ mane Commandment upon their Brethren's Consciences,  
 “ which, though they have a Shew of Wisdom, are really the  
 “ contrary, because they are Additions to the unerring Laws of  
 “ the Wisdom of the Father, and naturally tend to draw his  
 “ People from an entire Subjection to him as the only Head  
 “ of his Church. Col. ii. 21, 22. *Wherefore do they introduce*  
 “ *a System of human Commandments, when Christ has abo-*  
 “ *lished the old ceremonial Institutions which were of a divine*  
 “ *Original ? and thereby put a stumbling Block in their Brother's*  
 “ *Way,*

“ Way, contrary to the following Places of sacred Scripture,  
 “ Ephes. ii 15 Rom. xiv. 13. 14. *Let us not therefore judge one*  
 “ *another any more, but judge this rather that no Man put a stum-*  
 “ *bling Block or Occasion to fall in his Brother's Way. To him*  
 “ *that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean ; but*  
 “ *if thy Brother be grieved with thy Meat, now walkest thou not*  
 “ *charitably, destroy not him with thy Meat for whom Christ*  
 “ *died.*

The Sum of this Argument is this : Such religious Laws are both superstitious and uncharitable, because they require in Religion what the divine Law requires not ; and because they lay a stumbling Block in our Brother's Way.

*Answer* The Rules which we plead for, as I have often said, have nothing new in them but the Form, whereby the general Rules of the Word are applied to their proper Cases in particular, for the Regulation of which they were originally designed by the Lord himself, our only supreme Lawgiver ; and consequently the Matter of them is required in these general Rules upon which they are built : And therefore Christ himself hath required them, and the Observance of them at our Hand, in his own general Rules, provided such ecclesiastical Rules be really agreeable to the Rules of the Word ; but if contrary, the lawful Authority is abused and stretched beyond and contrary to its true Design ; and if the Thing enjoined be unlawful, the Rule is void in itself ; but if it be lawful, the Rule is binding, because enjoined by lawful Authority : Now surely such a Rule as is founded on the Word of God, whatever prejudiced Persons may think of it, can never lay a stumbling Block in a Brother's Way, altho' a Brother may sinfully stumble upon it, and take Offence at it, as he may at any of Christ's Institutions, and as the Jews did at himself. Our Brethren would do well to look about them, and consider whether they be not guilty of a Transgression something of kin to that of *Korah*, while they so presumptuously arraign and condemn their Brethren, the Officers of Christ's Church, for exercising that very Authority which he hath invested them withal. I have already observed, that whatever, being in itself lawful, 's enjoined by lawful Authority, acting in its own Sphere, doth by the Command of that Authority become a Duty ; otherwise there is no Authority : So in this consists the Difference between  
 a Com-

a Command and an Advice, or a Request ; that the one obligeth, but the other doth not.

The Texts alledged by our Brethren from Ephes. ii. 15. and Rom. xiv. 13, 14. are, (I think) impertinently quoted ; the first only proves, that the Mosaical Ceremonies are abolished, which we do not deny, nor doth it affect the present Controversy about ecclesiastical Authority or Rules ; and the latter relates to the Practice of Christians, in reference to the avoiding of Offence in the Use of indifferent Things, without any regard to any ecclesiastical Rules or Authority at all. What Hazard can there be of a Brother's stumbling or being offended at any thing which he judgeth Matter of Prudence or Expediency, *i. e.* indifferent in its Nature ? Must the Rulers of Christ's Church neglect or forbear to exercise their Authority wherewith they are invested for the Good of the Church, because some think that they have no Authority to exercise ? I would also here ask our Brethren, whether they did not observe themselves pointed at in the first Clause of the 14th Verse, where it is said, *Let us not therefore judge one another any more ; &c.* which contains an express Caution against the rash judging Strain which they run so much upon ; but perhaps they had forgot that such an Expression was in their Bibles, when they, *viz.* Mr. Tennent and Mr. Blair, composed their Papers of *May 1740.*

I come now to the tenth and last Argument, which is as followeth :

“ *Argument X.* Once more we beg Leave to observe that  
“ the legislative Power aforesaid is introductive of very great  
“ Evils and Mischiefs into the Church of Christ ; and in par-  
“ ticular it opens a wide Door for the introducing an intol-  
“ lerable Bondage under human Yokes, neither does it only set  
“ open a Door for this, and so make it possible, nor yet only  
“ tend to it, and so make it probable ; but it is what it has  
“ done in Fact to an high Degree, as the deplorable Experience  
“ of many Ages doth witness. We are persuaded that a Claim  
“ of Power made by the Church-Rulers, to frame Laws about  
“ Things deemed by them to be orderly, decent, prudent, ex-  
“ pedient, gave Rise to Prelacy and Popery itself, and to all  
“ the burdensome Train of unscriptural and ridiculous Ceremo-  
“ nies, which the latter of those Churches does now groan  
“ under, as well as to stated Liturgies, and other unhappy  
“ Usages

“ Usages, in which some Protestant Churches have too much  
 “ copied after the *Roman* Superstition; these Things are *Yokes*  
 “ *which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear.* If this  
 “ Power be once taken for granted, who knows where it may  
 “ stop in its Effects? We cannot see that we have any more  
 “ Security at this Day, upon this Plan in the Protestant Church  
 “ to prevent the like Bondage again, than the Church had  
 “ when the inspired Apostles first left it. It's true, it's pro-  
 “ bable we may not like the Yoke that others have made for  
 “ us and wreathed about the Necks of Christ's Subjects in  
 “ Ages past, but possibly we may be pleased with as bad or  
 “ worse, which we either do or may make ourselves.

“ Again, this supposed binding Power exposes Persons to be  
 “ persecuted for their Consciences: When any, either of our Bre-  
 “ thren in the Ministry, or of a private Station in the Church,  
 “ cannot with a clear Conscience observe or submit to Church-  
 “ Canons, then they are liable to be reproached and censured,  
 “ and who knows to what Degree; yea, that may even cause  
 “ Schisms and Separation itself, which lies at the Door of  
 “ the Imposers who forced it, and whereof they alone are the  
 “ Authors; what dismal Havock has been made in the  
 “ Churches by this terrible Engine of legislative Authority,  
 “ in anathematizing and excluding from Communion some of  
 “ the worthiest Men in our Mother-Countries and elsewhere,  
 “ is so flagrant in History, that we need not mention In-  
 “ stances.

“ When a Majority in a Church-Judicatory are supposed  
 “ to have Power to coin Laws according to their own Fancy,  
 “ whereby they may judge of a minor Party, only pretending  
 “ in the mean time some general scriptural Direction as their  
 “ Foundation, as also their Usefulness, &c. which it's easy to  
 “ do in any Case, and has been actually done in Favour of the  
 “ grossest Superstitions of the *Roman* Church; may they not  
 “ then, according to this Scheme, wreak their angry Resent-  
 “ ment upon, oppress and crush their fewer Brethren, just as  
 “ they list, whom perhaps they could not censure justly, if they  
 “ kept entirely to the good old Laws of Jesus Christ. Such  
 “ being the natural Effects of a legislative Authority in Reli-  
 “ gion, we cannot think the Cause is good that produces them,  
 “ or that our wise and good Redeemer would put an Engine  
 “ of so much Mischief and Oppression into the Hands of  
 “ Church-

“ Church-Men, thereby giving them an Occasion to worry  
 “ one another ; on the contrary, does not our Lord inform us  
 “ how he relents it when his Servants by Office begin to beat  
 “ and smite their Fellow-Servants, and exercise a tyrannical  
 “ Dominion over them, which is the common and natural Ef-  
 “ fect of Men’s adding Laws of their own to the Laws of  
 “ Christ. The Lord indeed has authorised the Stewards of his  
 “ House to censure the Violators of his own Laws, but not  
 “ to bind where he has not bound, in Consequence whereof  
 “ his faithful People may be oppressed. ”

We will sum up this Argument thus : This legislative Power  
 tends to enslave the Church under an intolerable Yoke, and  
 actually has done it ; it was this that introduced Popery and  
 all its Superstitions, *viz.* the Claim of a Power to make Laws  
 about Prudentials and Things expedient, &c. and to all the  
 unscriptural Ceremonies and unhappy Usages to be found in  
 other Churches. If this Power be granted, we know not when  
 nor where it may stop in making Laws ; neither can we see  
 any better Security for the Church now than it had when  
 the Apostles left it : If we like not a Yoke made by others,  
 yet we may make as bad for ourselves. Again, This Power  
 exposeth to Persecution, Reproach and Contempt for Conscience  
 sake, when Persons do not comply with such Canons, yea, it  
 may cause a Schism which will lie at the Imposer’s Door ;  
 what dreadful Havock hath this Engine made by anathema-  
 tising and excluding most worthy Persons in our Mother-Coun-  
 try and elsewhere : When Laws are coined by a Majority ac-  
 cording to their Fancy, whereby to judge of the Minority on  
 a bare Pretence of their Foundation in a Scripture-Rule, which  
 is easy to do in any Case, and has been done in Favour of  
 the grossest Superstition of *Rome*, how dreadful is it : A Ma-  
 jority may thus by their Laws oppress and crush the Mino-  
 rity, which otherwise they could not do, if they stuck to the  
 Laws of Christ. These are the natural Effects of this legis-  
 lative Power, which shews the Cause to be bad ; we cannot  
 think that our good and wise Redeemer would arm Church-  
 Men with such an Engine of Cruelty whereby to worry one  
 another ; yea, he forbids to smite our Fellow-Servants, and to  
 tyrannise over them, which natively accompanies the Exercise  
 of this legislative Power. Christ allows his Servants to cen-  
 sure



sure the Breach of his own Laws, but not to bind where he hath not bound ; which is Oppression.

*Ans<sup>w</sup>.* I. It's the Abuse and not the righteous Use of this Authority to make Rules, as I have explained and limited it, that produces these unhappy Effects : The Abuse of the Magistrates Power hath often produced the like sorrowful Effects, but this is no Argument for the total Disuse of it ; for it's God's Ordinance, and human Societies could not subsist without it. It would be as good Reasoning, to say, that many have in all Ages, and still do abuse their Meat and Drink to Gluttony and Drunkenness ; therefore we ought to leave off Eating and Drinking altogether. It's true, none can foretell how far either the Church or State may degenerate in the Exercise of their lawful Authority ; but what then, must Christ's Institution be laid aside, for Fear of its being abused ? Our Brethren acknowledge that the Ministry of the Gospel have Authority to exclude scandalous Sinners from Christian Communion, and to admit them again upon their Repentance ; is it not possible, yea, is it not too often Matter of Fact, that this Power is abused thro' mistaken Application of Scripture-Rules ; or even thro' Humour, Prejudice or Partiality ? will our Brethren therefore lay this Authority aside also ? The Ordinance of Preaching hath been abused to spread and propagate Error and Division, must we therefore leave it off ? It's true the Church hath no greater Security against degenerating into Tyranny and Bondage upon this Plan, than when the Apostles left it ; but can our Brethren devise any Plan at all that will render the Church more secure than when the Apostles left it ? Does not this insinuate a greater Reflection on the Love, Wisdom and Faithfulness both of Christ and his Apostles ? as if they left the Church in greater Danger than they ought, or might have done : I say, this insinuates a far greater Reproach on Christ and his Apostles than what we plead for. For my own Part, I know of no Plan that can secure the Church from degenerating either in Doctrine, Worship or Government, while we have the same Enemies both within and without. We may indeed wreath a Yoke of Bondage about our own Necks by the Abuse of lawful Authority, but not by the right Use of it.

The Reproach which follows upon the Abuse of this Authority, ought to be imputed to the Abuse, but not to the

Authority which is abused ; but and if any fall under Re-  
proach or Con.empt for Disobedience to lawful Authority in  
its just and lawful Exercise, the Person or Party may blame  
themselves for their being reproached ; neither can their Plead-  
ing Conscience excuse or mend the Matter, seeing a Sin of  
Ignorance is still a Sin, tho' never so conscienciously committed :  
And if Schism or Separation should follow, the Blame must  
still ly at the Door of the Party, who sinfully, tho' conscien-  
ciously, scruples Obedience to lawful Authority requiring Obe-  
dience in Things lawful.

It's most unjust in our Brethren to ascribe the Effects which  
followed on Male-Administration of Officers to the lawful and  
sacred Authority invested in them by Christ, and which they  
abused ; the Authority is only the innocent Occasion of these  
Effects, but not the proper Cause of them, as Christ and his  
Apostles were the innocent Occasion of all the Wars and  
Divisions in the World about the Christian Religion. Our  
Lord hath given his Officers a Power for good Purposes, which  
if they abuse to Oppression thro' Ignorance or Partiality, or any  
other unjustifiable Cause, they must answer for it. It would  
be also observed, that it's not every Degree of Abuse of lawful  
Authority that will justify Disobedience unto it, or else all Au-  
thority might be lawfully disobeyed ; for in this imperfect  
State Rulers as well as Subjects of every Species or Deno-  
mination, are still encompassed with such Infirmities as ren-  
der their Administration in some Measure imperfect : Nothing  
then can justify Disobedience to lawful Authority, but when  
it requires Obedience in Things unlawful ; in that Case it's  
better to obey God than Man.

Our Brethren, every now and then, talk of a Majority's  
making or coining Laws, and so committing great Mischief  
against the Minority. It appears that the Words MAJORITY  
and MINORITY are of exceeding great Use and Esteem with  
them in this Debate, as if they had something of a Spell or  
Charm in them invisibly to bear down all Things against  
which they are brought ; but I have, I think, already taken  
off the Enchantment or Spell, by observing that in all Mat-  
ters submitted to a regular Vote, tho' the Majority must carry  
it, yet the Minority are active in the Judgment and Determi-  
nation given, because they consented that the Matter in De-  
bate should be so determined ; otherwise it's ridiculous to vote  
at all.

at all. In all such Cases the Conclusions are the Acts of the whole Body politic, and not of the Majority, exclusive of the Minority, who virtually promised to stand to the Vote, go which Way it would; and if a Majority of any Judicatory be so moved by sinistrous Views to contrive Matters so as to oppress any Party, this is not at all to be imputed to their regular Manner of Proceeding by Vote, but to the vicious Disposition of the Voters; which Disposition may possibly be found in the Minority as readily as in the Majority.

It's very consistent with both the Wisdom and Goodness of our Redeemer, to arm Officers both of Church and State with such Authority as is capable to be abused to very bad Purposes, as it is to give us Meat and Drink, which are capable to be abused to, Drunkenness and Gluttony. Sure if the Servants of Christ have Authority to censure the Breach of his Laws, they have also Authority to judge when they are broken: And how shall a Plurality of Officers, acting in Concert and Parity, judge, when or how far these Laws are broken, but by Debating and Voting; which, in Spite of all Contradiction, will bring the Matter to be determined by the Vote of the Majority. And seeing this is the Determination of lawful Authority, which is founded on the Light both of Nature and Revelation; it cannot justly be called a Binding where Christ hath not bound, but rather a declaring judicially where he hath bound; according to our Lord's Saying, *Whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven.*

Our Brethren alledge that this Authority to make Rules, which we are for, and they against, doth put it in the Power of some to beat and strike their Fellow Servants. I acknowledge, this Authority is capable to be so abused; but may it not be justly queried if the Protesting Brethren, who are against this rule-making Power, be not more guilty of beating their Fellow-Servants within these twelve Months past, than all the other Members of our Synod have been since the first Foundation of a Presbyterian Church was laid in *Pensilvania*, by their rash judging and condemning them as the worst of Men, and by incensing the Populace against them, filling them with Prejudices.

And may it not be farther queried whether it be not very probable that one sinistrous View, which our Brethren may have in their so vigorously opposing the just Authority of

**Church-Judicatories**, may be that they may persist thus to beat their fellow-Servants, and not be accountable for such divisive uncharitable Proceedings. But

Our Brethren proceed to propose and answer an Exception against the foregoing Arguments, thus :

“ If it be opposed to the preceeding Reasonings, that, according to this Principle, it is impossible to maintain a Decorum and good Order in the Church, but all imaginable Confusions may be expected to ensue without any Possibility of Restraint ; and tho’ Authority may be abused in some particular Instances, yet even bad Government is better than Anarchy or no authoritative Government at all , and that then there is no Occasion, much less Necessity, for Synods or other ecclesiastic Judicatories to meet at all, and so the whole Constitution, which Christ hath established for ordering the Affairs of his Church, falls to the Ground. To this we answer :

“ First, That the Objection bears in its Bosom gross and grievous Reflections upon the Laws of Christ contained in the Scriptures, as well as upon the Lawgiver, namely, that that System of Laws he has given for the Government of his Church, is imperfect and insufficient to answer the End designed by it, without the After-additions of his Subjects ; and indeed the Objection bears hard upon the Honours of his Wisdom, Goodness, Faithfulness and Truth, as if he either could not or would not give his People sufficient Laws for their Direction, and had not done it, when he says he has : In the mean time we charitably hope that these Reflections are not intended by the Objectors, but they are most certainly the natural and necessary Fruits of the Objection itself.

“ 2dly. We think the aforesaid Objection against the preceeding Reasonings, is a meer Non-sequitur or false Consequence ; the Lord Jesus has given such Power and Authority to the Guides of his Church, as is sufficient to the Edification of his Body, without this Power of making Acts of their own devising, as obligatory Laws, &c.” Here follow the Assertions before quoted in page 51, 52.

*Ans.* I apprehend that I need not spend much Time or Pains, in refuting what they say, in Answer to this Exception, having already said what was needful to this Purpose before,

par-

particularly in answering their Third Argument. Its needful here to remind the Reader, that we pretend not to add new Laws to those which Christ hath already given; but only to explain and apply his Laws to the particular Cases, which they are and were, at first, designed to regulate. And I leave it to the intelligent, impartial Reader to judge, whether their Assertions in their second Answer, and quoted in Page 51, 52 of this Performance, does not divest Church Judicatures of all Authority, when they say, that a Minority is not bound, &c. and that they can only give their best Advice, but can go no further. And whether it be not Self-evident, that if the Church of Christ had not exercised more Authority than our Brethren allow of, the Church would not have been reduced into an almost Non entity, and been lost; by being divided and crumbled into an almost-infinitely greater Number of Parts: Nor could ever false Doctrine be judiciously try'd, confuted or exploded, while every one should, without control, preach what they please, without being accountable to any Judicatory, further than Advice can go. Then he would be the best Minister who could get the greatest Number of the Populace to follow him; which is evidently the present Case.

Our Brethren having declared their Judgment, in Relation to Church-Government, and Authority of Church-Judicatories, by Way of Answer to the above Exception, in five Assertions, which I have quoted in Page 51, 52, and considered in the Pages next following, to which I remit the Reader, they conclude this their Apology, in the following Words.

“ Now we conceive, that such a Method of Management in  
 “ Church Judicatories, is that which the Lord Jesus has only  
 “ appointed; and we think it is far better adapted to answer all  
 “ the valuable Ends of Church Government, than that Strain  
 “ of human Authority which we are opposing; and had the  
 “ Pastors of the Church always contented themselves with that  
 “ Power which Christ has given them, without claiming more,  
 “ its hard to conceive how the Christian World could have been  
 “ so generally corrupted and divided, as it has been for many  
 “ Ages, and is at this Day.

“ To conclude, we profess hearty Charity for those Gentle-  
 “ men, which are on the other Side of the Question in this De-  
 “ bate. Doubtless, Things appear to them in another Light.  
 “ We have only, in the Course of our Reasonings, laboured to  
 “ expose

“ expose the Absurdity of an Opinion, which we think preju-  
 “ dicial to the Interests of the Saviour’s Kingdom ; and if we  
 “ are herein mistaken, we are willing to be convinced by Scrip-  
 “ ture and Reason : But whether we get Conviction or not, by  
 “ our Brethren’s Arguments, we believe, that the Unity of  
 “ the Spirit in the Bond of Peace may be preserved, not-  
 “ withstanding of a Diversity of Sentiments about lesser Things,  
 “ if moderate Counsels be followed, and that mutual Forbear-  
 “ ance be allowed, which the Gospel of Christ requires.

“ *Philadelphia, May*  
 “ 23. 1739:

“ *Gilbert Tennent,*  
 “ *Eleazer Wales,*  
 “ *William Tennent,*  
 “ *Samuel Blair.*”

Our Brethren, in the First of these two Paragraphs, declare their Judgment concerning Church Government, as laid down in the foregoing five Assertions, that it is the only Method appointed by Christ, and better adapted to the End, than what they oppose, &c. The Reader now hath our Brethren’s Judgment, confirmed by a Decade of Arguments : He hath also our Opinion, at least my own, in Opposition thereunto, together with the Reasons thereof, in what has been offered by Way of Confutation of these Arguments. The Reader is now left to form a Judgment for himself, as to the Thing debated, whether our Brethren or we are more agreeable to the Light of Nature, the fundamental Laws of social Government, and the Rules of the Gospel ? I think its evident to a Demonstration, that nothing but Division and Confusion can prevail, where there is no Authority but mere Advice, which is all our Brethren will allow. And,

As to our Brethren’s Profession of hearty Charity, towards us who differ from them ; let the World but compare what is contained in their Papers of *May* last, and Mr. *Tennent’s* Sermon about *Unconverted Ministers*, together with their constant declaiming against Pharisee Preachers, and their unwearied Industry to alienate our People’s Esteem and Affections from us : Alas, too successfully ! I say, let these Things be compared with this Declaration of Charity, and then judge of their Consistency. I can see no Way to reconcile this Declaration of Charity with the above Particulars, but by supposing, that our Brethren have changed their charitable Thoughts of us, which they had in

*May*



*May* 1739, for Thoughts which are less charitable, or rather quite the reverse. In the Papers of *May* last, and Mr. *Tennent's* Sermon, its declared, that we are Hypocrites, Enemies to true Religion, &c. but in this Declaration they have no Doubt, but that the Things wherein we differ, appear in another Light to us, than to them. However, between the Papers of *May* last and this Apology, they mean to undo us, Root and Branch, in the Esteem of the World; for in the said Papers, our Persons, that is, our moral and religious Qualifications and Characters are struck at; and in this Apology our Principles of Church Government are violently assaulted. May the Lord direct every sincere Lover of Truth and Right, to form a just Judgment for himself!

Its what I cannot well account for, That our Brethren should so much as insinuate, that what they are fighting so strongly and earnestly for, are but lesser Things; which yet, in their Opinion, are of such vast and momentous Consequence, to the Good or Hurt of Religion. Let the Reader but consider their Ten Arguments, and then tell me, whether our Brethren are to be believed to speak according to their own Sentiments, when they term the Matters in Debate between us, lesser Things, unless they mean, that they are lesser than the Doctrine of Regeneration, or Justification by free Grace? In that Sense I acknowledge they are lesser. And how our Brethren's condemning us wholesale, by Presbyteries. and Committees, as carnal, unconverted Preachers, Enemies to the Life of Religion, &c. consists with their Profession of a Desire to maintain the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, to follow moderate Counsels, and study mutual Forbearance, I must leave to our Brethren themselves, to make appear; it being a Task too difficult for me to perform.

Thus, I have considered our Brethren's Arguments in particular, which tho' they would have their Readers believe, that they are only against a legislative Power in Church-Officers; yet, in their Intent, are levelled against all Authority, even ministerial and declarative, allowing them no Authority beyond their best Advice; which a Company of Coblers and Taylors have a Right to do, when asked or desired.

I will add one general Remark upon all our Brethren's Arguments, *viz.* that they are all borrowed from the new-light Men, or Non-subscribers in the North of *Ireland*; they are

as like them as one Crow's Egg is like another, or rather as an Horse-shoe is like a Mare's, remove the Shoe, and it changeth its Name: Every one, who is acquainted with the Writings on the new-light Controversy, may easily see and discern, that the Non-subscribers argued from the same Topicks, against the Authority of the Synod, to require or enjoin Subscription to our *Westminster Confession* and *Catechisms*.

And now I have gone through the several Particulars, which at first I intended to insist upon, in order to set the Matter of Difference, between the Synod and the protesting Brethren, in as clear a Light as I could attain. What Success this Attempt may have, I must leave to Time and Providence: Its like it will be with this as it commonly is with all Writings about controverted Matters. All that I shall or can say, is, that it is the Cause of Truth I aimed to espouse and defend. Every Reader is at his Liberty to judge for himself, whether I have hit or missed the Mark which I aimed at. One Thing, I think, is as clear as the Sun in the Firmament, That either the Church of Christ hath Authority to make Rules for the ordering the Circumstantials of religious Affairs, as before explained, which are binding upon negative Members; or all reformed Churches, and particularly that of *Scotland*, have been dreadfully mistaken. Its true, that our Brethren pretend, that it is the Presbyterian Government that they are for: But its as plain as can be, that the Government which they are for, if it deserves the Name of Government at all, as I think it does not, is not what has always been understood by that Name, by all Writers on that Subject; and therefore our Brethren are guilty of a very culpable Ambiguity of Words, while they call their new Mode of Managing of ecclesiastical Affairs, by the Name of Presbyterian Government, which was never understood so by any before them, unless perhaps their Cousin-Germans; the Non-subscribers, in the North of *Ireland*. Nay, as I have observed before, they are against all Authority and Government, in the Thing, altho' they affect to use the Name, perhaps because it would be too barefaced, and would prove too shocking to many of their Admirers, to throw away both Name and Thing at once,

I will conclude this Performance, by summing up the whole Affair, in a short Synopsis or Summary, as follows,

First,

First, Our protesting Brethren, for such Reasons as are expressed in Mr. *Tennent's* and Mr. *Blair's* Papers, have concluded all, or at least most of the Members of the Synod, to be graceless Wretches, Enemies to all spiritual Good. And consequently,

2ly, They look upon all the People under our Care, to be in a most deplorable, even in a perishing Condition, for Lack of gracious faithful Pastors. And consequently

3ly, They think it their Duty and a Piece of exalted and sublimated Charity, to itinerate all over the Country, to warn People of their Danger, rouse them out of their Security, and draw away their Esteem and Affections from their own Pastors, lest they fall into the Ditch, and perish along with their blind Guides.

4thly, They are encouraged in this Practice by their Principles of Church Government, which they have imbibed (if I may call it Government) exclusive of all Order and Authority; which overthrows pastoral Relation, and allows only Advice, but no commanding Power or Authority in Rulers.

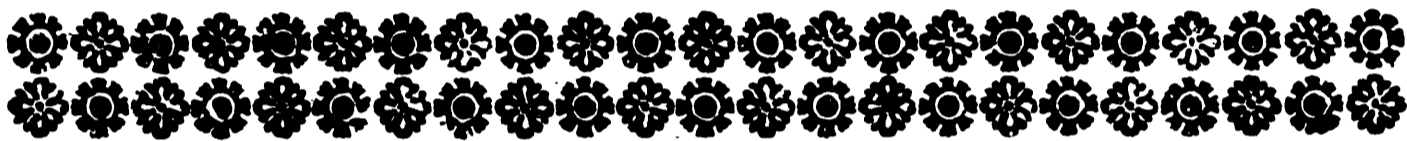
5thly, Their great Boastings of Assurance of Grace, their apparent uncommon Degree of Zeal, together with their terrible thundering Way of Preaching, gain them Credit with the Populace.

6thly, The Populace, by an implicit Faith, relying on whatever they say, as undoubted Truth, are so far alienated from their own Pastors; yea, filled with Prejudice against them, that we, their poor despised Pastors, are rendered incapable to do any good to the poor People, over whom the Holy Ghost hath made us Overseers, unless it be by praying for them.

7thly, They proceed also to license and ordain Men to the Ministry, contrary to and in Contempt of our Synod's Authority; who, when licensed and ordained, do also, in an irregular Manner, break in upon our Congregations, without our Consent or Approbation.

Surely such a Catastrophe could never befall this little infant Church, unless we had provoked our Lord thus to correct and chastise us for some notable provoking Sin or other, which is justly chargeable upon both Ministers and People; which I strongly apprehend to be the Sin of the Church of *Ephesus*: We have left our first Love. Tho' we have been tolerably careful about our Doctrine; yet we have not been so solicitous  
P about

about our own personal Interest, every one of us, in the Truths which we profess; nor careful to conform to the pure Laws of Piety and Righteousness, to which we profess Subjection, as we ought, and as our Fore-Fathers have been; and therefore our Lord, who is a jealous God, hath suffered us to fall in Pieces, and be divided about the Concerns of that holy Religion, which should at once constrain us, to love, honour and obey our God and Saviour, above all Things, and to love one another as ourselves. And would to God we may all, Ministers and People, take the Hint, and so search and try our Ways, to remember from whence we are fallen, and repent and do our first Works, lest our Candlestick be, in divine Displeasure, removed out of its Place; as was threatened to that declining Church.



## A P P E N D I X.

**W**HEN I had finished the foregoing Piece, I concluded with myself that it might be to some good Purpose to add by Way of Appendix an Extract of some Thoughts and Reflections which some Time ago I had gathered together, when meditating on these Divisions and Disorders that do so much prevail among us, with some little Variation, which take as follows:

When it pleased our Glorious and Almighty King Jesus, who hath the Hearts of the Kings of the Earth in his Hand, that, as the Rivers of Water, he can turn them whithersoever he pleaseth, to move the Hearts of our Synod, with such a remarkable Degree of Unanimity, to adopt the *Westminster* Confession and Catechisms, &c. it was Matter of very great Satisfaction to most of us, and to myself in particular, who had been, for some time before, under no small Fears and Perplexities of Mind, lest we should be corrupted with the new Schemes of Doctrine, which for some time had prevailed in the North of *Ireland*, that being the Part from whence we expected to be in great measure supplied with new Hands to fill our Vacancies in the Ministry within the Bounds of our Synod:

Synod: And I hope still that that very Step not only hath been of good Effect among us already, but also will still continue to be so while it continues in Force, in Pursuance to the End for which it was first intended.

I then hoped, that, by the divine Blessing, this tender Vine, our young growing Church, would thrive and flourish both in Principles and Practice, being so well, as I thought, fortified against the Danger of Contentions about Schemes and Principles, which, when they prevail, do seldom fail to destroy Christian Charity, to eat out and consume true Zeal for the more spiritual and practical Part of Religion,

But, alas! the Event makes it appear that we are yet in a State of Warfare, and that the Powers of Darknes are neither weary nor discouraged from contriving new Devices and making new Attempts against us. There is no State of the Church, more than of the particular Christian, so safe, on this side Heaven, as to make Watchfulness against the Enemy, on all Hands a needless Work.

It may be also observed with what wonderful Craft and hellish Cunning and Policy these Powers of Darknes manage their Stratagems, cunningly suiting their Devices, not only to their malicious Designs against the Church, but also to take Advantage of the Weaknesses and Simplicity thereof, to make the most of her Infirmities, Sins and Short-comings, both of Ministers and People.

The dreadful Disease and Plague which at present awfully threaten this poor Church, is a Spirit of Schism or Division and rash judging, first among our Ministers, and by Consequence among our People: I say, we are awfully threatned with a woful Schism on Account of the late Act of our Synod concerning the Examination of Candidates for the Ministry, against which some of our Brethren have protested, and do proceed to licence and ordain Men to the Ministry contrary to what said Act directs; so that in all Appearance these Brethren and the rest of the Synod must divide, or the Synod must pass from and rescind their own Act, which they judge rational, necessary and well grounded on the general Rule of the Word. Yea, these Brethren, in the Reasons of their Protest, renounce all Power and Authority in Synods, or Church-Judicatories, to make any Acts or Rules to bind any Members which do dissent, which is to take all Government

and Authority out of their Hands, and to make the visible Kingdom of Christ wholly anarchical, a mere Babel of Confusion: And what appears to be the very Root of all the Mischief, is the Spirit of rash Judging, which they are so much possessed with, whereby they judge and condemn their Brethren as unconverted graceless Men, Enemies to God and Religion; and because they have so much Assurance, as boldly to declare their uncharitable Sentiments, they are believed, as if they were competent Judges of other Men's Spiritual State. Thus they have gained so much upon the Esteem of the Populace, that the Synod's Hands are exceedingly weakened as to their Authority; yea, the Generality of us are so despised by these Brethren's Admirers, that we have little or no Prospect of doing any Good to their Souls.

Whatever be the Instrument or inferior Cause of this our confused divided melancholy Condition, we may be sure that the Lord who sits at the Helm of Affairs, and orders all Things wisely and justly, is pleading a Controversy with us: We certainly have offended and provoked him to Anger against us, and so to suffer a Spirit of Division and Discord to get footing among us; and what can this Controversy be? I am persuaded that it is none other than this, because we have not prized the Gospel, nor been fruitful under the Means of Grace, but have, too many of us, contented ourselves with the Externals of Religion, without the Life and Power of it. The Symptoms of this Disease are many and various: It would be tedious to descend to an Induction of Particulars: How much doth Pride, Covetousness and Sensuality abound among Professors of all Ranks? What Vice and Profanity of every Sort? Cursing and Swearing, Sabbath-breaking, Intemperance and Drunkenness? What Neglect of Family Worship, secret Prayer? And how formally and lifelessly are these gone about? We profess Zeal for the Truth of Doctrine, but which of the divine Laws are not many ways neglected and broken? Scarce any Sins but such as are scandalous, are avoided and guarded against by many. Altho' we all profess to believe the Necessity of the new Birth, yet how few are half so much concerned to obtain it, and an Evidence of it, as they are about worldly Matters? How little do we generally discover of an heavenly Mind by our Converse together? Which shews that Heaven and heavenly Things bear too little Bulk in our Hearts;



Hearts; for out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh.

Neither is it to be doubted, but that we who are in the Ministry, are, in no small Degree justly chargeable with the Guilt of these Evils, on various Accounts: By our personal Guilt of these abounding Sins; by our not bearing Testimony against them with that Zeal which the Case requires, both doctrinally and in a disciplinary Way; by our not mourning over them, and lamenting with due Sorrow of Heart before the Lord; by our too lax and untender Walk in our own private Conversation; by our being too carnal in our conversing with our People and one another, too rarely entertaining them with spiritual Things, unless in direct ministerial Performances; and many other Ways, whereby we give People too much Occasion to think that Persons are obliged to be religious and spiritual only in Time of religious Duties: I say, I'm afraid, that in these, and many other Respects, we have too great and guilty a Hand in the present general Decay of serious Godliness; and consequently in bringing on this Stroke, which in some Sort seems to be particularly aimed at ourselves, as it is accompanied with so much Disesteem of us, with so many of our People.

And further, I think it's not unlikely that God, in his infinite Wisdom, hath permitted our Brethren, who appear to be so much more zealous than we, for carrying on a Work of Conversion, to fall into this double Error of Judgment, *viz.* as to Church-Government, and rash Judging of others, especially their Brethren, and so really to think it to be their Duty to do as they do, tho' their Conduct is directly contrary both to the Law of Charity and express Rules of Government, in order to carry on Conversion-Work, which they apprehend is wholly neglected by us, as it is indeed too much, and so their Error in Judgment makes Way for their being Instruments in the Lord's Hand to chastise us for our Neglects and Shortcomings, which otherwise perhaps their Consciences would not allow them to do, were they not under this Mistake: And in the mean time also are the direct Causes of so much Faction and Division among our People, who also have deserved such a Stroke for misimproving the Gospel while they enjoyed it in Peace and Unity.

This being, as I apprehend, a true and fair, tho' perhaps an imperfect Representation of our Case: What must we, or what shall we do? Shall we sit still, and only bewail and bemoan this our sorrowful Condition, despairing of Deliverance, and not so much as enquire and consider if there be any thing to be done, in order to the Healing of this great Evil, and to prevent the unhappy and direful Consequences of it? No surely; if our Case were worse than it is, yet still we are called to some Duty in relation thereunto, in order to prevent this little silly Dove, this little sickly Church, and rescue it from utter Confusion and Ruin by these Disorders: And O that the Lord would of his infinite preventing free Grace, both direct and animate both Ministers and People among us, to lay Things to Heart, and act our Part in the present Case, as becomes those who prefer the Welfare of *Jerusalem* before their chiefest Joy.

And surely, that I may allude to the Words of *Seebaniab*, *Exra* x. 4. it becomes us of the Ministry to *arise, for this Matter belongs unto us in a special Manner*; first, to begin to be active ourselves, and also to stir up our People to do their Part: I say, this Matter belongs to us, on a double Account, first, by Virtue of our Office and Station; and again, because we have had a guilty Hand in bringing on the Evil; we should therefore vigorously strive and endeavour, to have a prime and leading Hand in healing and removing it.

In order to this, I think these Things are undoubtedly incumbent upon us.

First, That every one of us endeavour, with an impartial Severity, to examine and look back upon our past Conduct and Behaviour, as Christians and Ministers of the Gospel; calling and setting our Consciences to work, to compare our past Behaviour with the divine Law, which is holy, spiritual, just and good, weighing ourselves in the Ballance of the Sanctuary, with the same Exactness with which we expect to be weighed, by our holy and impartial Judge, that we may be convinced how far we have come short of our Duty, even of what we might have done, as Christians and Ministers, for the Glory of God, our own and others Salvation; and especially how far short we have come of that exemplary Piety, Circumspection and Tenderness of Walk, and Spiritualness of Converse with others, which, as Ministers of the Gospel of Christ, we should have.

have studied ; as also, how far we have failed in the Degree of Love, Care, Zeal, and tender Concern for the Souls of Men, traveling as it were in Birth, until Christ be formed in them, in order to prevent their eternal Ruin, and promote their Salvation. How far we have been guilty of aiming, in our ministerial Performances, more to gain Applause to ourselves, than the Conversion, Edification and Salvation of our Hearers ; how slack we have been, to water the Seed sown with Prayers and Tears, wrestling with God for his Blessing to follow and accompany it, after we have preached it, as well as for Grace, Gifts and Utterance, by Way of Preparation for the Work, before we enter upon it : For I cannot but think, that altho' we may pray, with a seeming Earnestness, for the divine Assistance, in Preaching the Word by Way of Preparation ; yet it we habitually neglect to follow it up, by Prayer for Success, it looks too like as if our own Approbation and Applause, and not the Benefit of Souls, were chiefly aimed at by us ; altho', alas ! I must acknowledge myself to be guilty hereof, Times without Number.

2dly, Another Thing incumbent upon us, is, that whatever our Consciences lay to our Charge in these Matters, we confess the same before the Lord, and bewail them with Grief and Sorrow of Heart, in deep Humiliation, earnestly praying for Pardon ; and resolving, in the Strength of divine Grace, to reform and amend all that we find wanting or amiss in these or any other Particulars, resolving still to grow in the Exercise of every Grace and Practice of Holiness, in all Manner of Conversation, by dying unto Sin and living unto Righteousness more and more : And here we should beware of cheating ourselves and others with a Pharisaical Preciseness before Men, without a truly tender and consciencious Regard to Sin and Duty, as in the Sight of God ; which would be but abominable Hypocrisy.

3dly, Another Thing incumbent, is, that we labour to be possessed with an earnest Care and Concern for the Salvation of our own Souls ; and particularly to make sure of a Work of Grace and Regeneration in our own Hearts, so as never to be at Ease and Quiet, until we obtain some comfortable Evidence of it, in the discernable Exercise of Grace in our Hearts, together with the suitable genuine Fruits of Holiness in our Lives. For unless we be concerned for our own Souls, and faithful

faithful to our Trust in Respect of them, it can never be expected that we will be faithful to our Trust, in Relation to the Souls of others; or, with a due Zeal and Diligence, endeavour to promote their eternal Salvation, unless we be feelingly sensible of the wretched Degeneracy, and unsearchable Depth of Wickedness and Deceit of our own Hearts, and, by Consequence, our absolute Need of almighty regenerating Grace, we can never be capable, with a suitable Earnestness, to recommend these Things to others. But if once we be fully convinced, and suitably affected with the apprehended Danger that our own Souls either are or have been in, O then! with what affectionate Concern will we view the dangerous Case of others on the same Account, and with what Earnestness will we endeavour to rescue them from the impending Judgment!

4thly, Let us earnestly labour to get our Affections weaned from the World, and all sublunary Things, and set them on Things above, that our Love to God and our Lord Jesus Christ, our Concern for his Glory, in the faithful Performance of Duty, and the Promoting of his Kingdom of Grace, by the Conversion and Edification of Souls, may so employ and take up our Thoughts, that all worldly Interests may appear but empty Trifles, in Comparison of these Things. Altho' it be easy to talk of so doing, yet I must confess, I find it a very hard and difficult Lesson to learn thus to be above the World, and in my Heart to keep it under, and in a due Subordination to Things of a spiritual and everlasting Nature. It is a divine Law, that Ministers, who preach the Gospel, should live by the Gospel: But there is a vast Difference, between preaching the Gospel that we may get a Living, and to desire a Living, that we may be enabled and supported in preaching the Gospel. And happy is that Minister, who is enabled cheerfully and resolutely to do the latter, and truly and effectually to avoid the former. And yet, unless this be done, we will be unavoidably influenced and byassed in our sacred Administrations, to the wounding of our Consciences, and the great Damage and Prejudice of the Souls of God's People, whose Edification and Salvation we should study above, without, yea against all Regard to our worldly Interest. May the Lord help and strengthen his Servants, and preserve them from worldly and secular Considerations, by filling their  
Hearts

Hearts with fervent Love to him, and tender Regard and Zeal for the Souls of Sinners; that worldly Concerns may have no Access to, nor Room in their Affections, otherwise than as subordinate Means to promote the Kingdom and Glory of God, in the Salvation of immortal Souls.

5thly, Another Thing to be endeavoured by us, is to strive to suit our Gospel Administrations, not so much to the Relish and Taste, as to the Necessities of our People; and in order thereunto, to endeavour, by all proper Means, to be acquainted with their spiritual State, as far as is practicable by us; that knowing their Diseases and Wants, we may know how to suit our Doctrine thereunto. I would not be so understood, as if I meant, that we should require of them a Declaration of their spiritual State, or particular Experiences; altho' this also, upon some Occasions, may be to Edification: But what I mean is this, that we should frequently and diligently inquire into their Knowledge of the Doctrines of Faith, and of practical and experimental Religion, and concerning their moral and religious Conversation; that by comparing their Profession, their Attainments, and their known Practice together, we may be able to form such a Judgment of Charity concerning them, upon known and rational Grounds, as to be able to suit Portions of spiritual Food to the probable and apparent State of their Souls. And particularly we would endeavour to bend our Forces and use our best Skill, to suit the prevalent Distemper of this carnal and secure Age, striving with all our might to rouse secure Sinners, and awaken them out of their Sleep, and drowsy Saints from their Slumber and carnal Security: For it is apparent, that not only the foolish Virgins, but also the wise, are too generally slumbering and sleeping; for this Purpose, we would not only assert and maintain the Necessity of Regeneration and converting Grace, and of a righteous and godly Walk, and of Increase and Advancement therein; but also endeavour to press the same home upon their Consciences, with all Earnestness, as if we saw them perishing, and would gladly be a Means of their Deliverance; that our Manner of Preaching may testify, not only our Love to their Souls, and our sincere Desire of their spiritual and eternal Welfare, but also our Fears and Jealousies of Sinners dangerous and perishing State; earnestly praying to God for the Out-pourings of his Spirit, for this Purpose, on us and on our People, by our Means,

wrestling with God Night and Day for these Things; that the Lord may make his Word in our Mouths quick and powerful, and sharp as a two-edged Sword, and as an Hammer to break hard and rocky Hearts; that he would give us Skill and Dexterity rightly to divide the Word of Truth, so as Sinners may neither be encouraged to presume, nor driven to Despair; that the Law may be so wisely handled by us, as to drive Sinners out of themselves, and from their presumptuous Hopes, and yet not scare them from Christ; but, as by a School-Master, lead them unto him, that they may be justified by Faith: We would also press practical Holiness and Increase therein, without which all Pretences to Grace and Regeneration are but meer self-deceiving Delusions.

6thly, It would also contribute, not a little, to promote and revive a Work of Grace, if we could effectually revive congregational Discipline, in order to convince Sinners, and make them ashamed of their scandalous Out-breakings; for I am afraid, most of us are too lax and remiss in this Matter, so that the highest Privileges of Christ's Church, I mean external Privileges, are too often given to such, whose Conversation is very unsuitable unto them.

If we would all be persuaded to put these Particulars in constant Practice, without being discouraged by what Opposition or Difficulties may be in our Way, its to be hoped, that the Lord would concur with and bless our Endeavours, and make them effectual with our People, in carrying on a Work of Grace and Conversion, and consequently a Reformation of Manners. If once many, being truly converted, would, from a Principle of true Grace, forsake Sin, and practise Righteousness and true Holiness, then Religion would be more in Request and Esteem, and graceless Sinners would be both more afraid and ashamed to sin openly, than now they are; yea, many of them might be taken in the Net of the Gospel. Its to be hoped also, that those of our People, who now look upon us as dead, lifeless Preachers, would think and esteem better of us. Professors would be healed of the woful *Corinthian* Disease, and say no more, *I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos.*

But inasmuch as such an happy Turn, in our religious Affairs, cannot be expected, unless there be a mutual Concurrence of all Parties concerned, I would also offer a Word of Caution and Exhortation to common Professors:

First,



First, To make serious, practical Religion more their main and principal Business and Study; and not to look upon it only as a secondary and by-Business, which must give Place to secular and wordly Affairs, when they interfere, or come in Competition with one another.

2dly, To study and maintain a Tenderness of Conscience as to Sin and Duty, as to these Things which they are capable to judge of, and which were Matter of daily Practice; that their circum-spect Life and Conversation may make it evident, that they are in the Fear of the Lord all the Day long, and that they have Regard to all God's Commandments.

3dly, That they would strive with all their Might to cultivate, cherish and maintain a Principle of true Christian Charity, one towards another, notwithstanding of the Difference of Sentiments about religious Matters, and their different and opposite Opinions which they have conceived of Ministers; and accordingly would forbear all hard, rash, undecent, and unbecoming Speeches, of and to one another, on Occasion of the present Divisions and Confusions; and rather pity and pray for one another, that the Lord may bring such as are gone astray into the Paths of Truth again; and that all our Breaches and Divisions may be heard.

And inasmuch as our People are visibly divided into two opposite Parties, one whereof is so much taken with Admiration of our protesting Brethren, that they despise all other Ministers on their Account: and the other do still adhere to their own Ministers, judging the protesting Brethren, and their Admirers, to be in the Wrong. I would offer a Word of Caution and Advice to each of these two Parties. And

First, To those who are fallen so much in Conceit with our protesting Brethren, I would offer a few Things by Way of Caution and Advice.

1st, I would earnestly intreat you to consider, impartially, the pernicious Nature and Tendency of that Spirit and Practice of rash judging, which, in Imitation of those Brethren whom you so much admire, you are fallen so much into. Is it not the Prerogative of the heart-searching God, to know the spiritual State of Man? Is it possible for short-sighted Mortals to judge of one another, on sure Grounds, otherwise than by our Profession and Practice compared together? Is not this Practice prohibited and condemned by the Spirit of God in his Word? See

*Matth*, vii. 1. *Rom*. xiv. 3, 4, 10, 13. *1 Cor*. iv-5. Hath not this very Practice of rash judging, and rash sentencing of one another, for graceless Persons, in a damnable State, in a dreadful Measure and Degree extinguished any Measure of christian and neighbourly Good-will and Benevolence, that formerly subsisted among the professing People of God? And hath it not rendered the solemn Doctrines and Truths of God, despised and contemned; yea, I may say, condemned, in the Mouths of Christ's Ministers? Meerly because these Ministers, who preaches them, are, by this rash-judging Spirit, sentenced as graceless and unconverted Ministers; while, on the other Hand, false Doctrines are, by an implicit Faith, believed and received for Truth; because preached and asserted by the Men who are admired?

2dly, I would intreat you, in the Fear of the Lord, to consider, into what a confused *Babel* this new-fangled Method of Religion hath already brought this infant Church, and is further like to bring it. Its true, we stand in need to be revived and quick'ned in the Exercise of Religion: But can we be so bewitched as to think, that to transgress the Laws of Christ, is the proper and approven Way to establish or strengthen his Kingdom? Is not the Discipline of the Church an appointed Mean, both of Conversion and Edification? And is not the Tendency of this new-fangle Method of Religion, to put the whole Exercise of this Discipline to a stand? while these Brethren neither can, nor do they so much as attempt to exercise it where they itinerate; and by drawing away People's Minds from their own Ministers, they put it out of our Power to do them any good, either by preaching or the Exercise of Discipline; so that Government and Discipline is made intirely to stagnate, at least as to all our Brethren's Admirers: Nay, their declared Principles are against all Authority and Government in Church-Judicatories, as I have above made appear.

3ly, *My dear Friends*, I would intreat you to consider, whether the Relation between a Minister of the Gospel and his Flock, yea and every Person belonging to it, be not a sacred and religious Tie? And whether it be not a profane and wicked Practice to violate and break this sacred Tie, or do any Thing in Contempt of it? And whether both these Brethren and their Admirers are not egregiously guilty of a profane Violation of this sacred Tie and Relation? The Brethren, by encouraging and prompting, and the People by complying

to forsake their own Ministers without sufficient Reasons given and proven before a lawful Church-Judicatory? Consider also whether your Pretence of getting more Good by going to hear these Brethren, will be of any Weight to justify or excuse your acting contrary to your sacred Relation to your own Pastors? No doubt, the itching Ears which are condemn'd in Scripture, thought they got more Good by the false Teachers which they went to hear. *My dear Friends*, you may assure yourselves of it that you are not most edified or profited when you are most pleased. False Doctrine and mere Amusements do too often please an unskilful Auditory, to their Hurt.

4ly, *My dear Friends*, I beseech you consider whether you have any rational Ground to believe that it is the Spirit of God that moves and directs these Brethren to make Choice of such hellish Words and Expressions, as they often use in their Sermons, which they borrow from the most profane, black guard Ruffians, Cursers and Swearers, rather than the Form of sound Words contained in the Scriptures? or whether such Expressions become a Pulpit? or are not a Disgrace to the sacred Function? And whether the public crying out and falling down like Persons in Convulsions, in Time of public Worship, to the marring of the Edification of the Congregation, and which these very Brethren now discourage and speak against; tho' last Spring and Summer they endeavoured so much to promote these Things, that they thought they had no Success, if they did not make their Hearers to cry out and fall down; I say, whether these Things be indeed the mighty Power and Work of God's Spirit, going along with his Word? or whether it be not rather to be ascribed to some worse, as well as meaner Cause? And whether the same Cause can revive true Piety, which extinguisheth and destroys Christian Charity and Benevolence? And lastly, whether our Forefathers, ever since the Reformation, both Ministers and People, who were altogether Strangers to these Things, and who carried on all their religious Affairs in a regular manner, according to the Rules of Presbyterian Church-Government, every Pastor having his own Flock committed to him to feed, and being also taken Care of by their respective Presbyteries at their solemn Visitations; I say, whether our Forefathers were all Strangers to true Grace and Conversion, yea and all of the present Generation, except these few Protesting Brethren, and such who admire them?

*My dear Friends*, I entreat you, consider these Things seriously and impartially, and if you find that you have been led aside from the true Paths of real Religion, being amused and enthralled by the extraordinary Shew of Zeal and Piety, which these Brethren have the Appearance of, beyond their Brethren ; I would entreat you to stand still a little, and consider, before you go any further. The farther you go astray your Danger will be the greater, and your Return the more difficult, and your Matter of penitential Sorrow will be the more encreased : Remember and believe that the Whole of true Religion doth consist in the Belief of the Truth, a sanctified Heart and an holy Practice agreeable thereunto ; which I make no Question our Forefathers attained without all this confused Stir, Noise and popular Tumult.

And *My dear Friends*, who have been so far from falling in love with these new-fangle Strains, that you rather condemn them, I would also offer a Word of Advice unto you : And first, I entreat you not to despise your Fellow-Christians who have been taken in this amusing Snare, but rather pity and pray for them.

2dly, Beware, lest, while you condemn others for seeking Grace and Conversion in a crooked Path, I say, lest you fall short of it, by a supine, indolent, stupid Neglect to seek it in the right Path and Course of proper Means ; beware, lest, while you ironically denominate your Neighbours Converts, because of their supposed self-conceited Delusion, you yourselves neglect to make your own Calling and Election sure in a Gospel Way : It will be found at last, that to fall short of Conversion and eternal Life thro' Neglect, will be as great, if not a greater Misery, than to fall short of these Things, by seeking them in a mistaken Path.

*My dear Friends*, If you and I think that our Brethren and their Admirers have mistaken the Matter, whether as to some Doctrines relating to Conversion, or as to the true Method of seeking and promoting it, either in ourselves or other ; yet we are all agreed in this, *that, except a Man be born again, he shall not, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God* : Therefore let you and I be persuaded to give Diligence to make our Calling and Election sure, by exercising Grace and practising Holiness in all the Parts and Duties of it. If we thin<sup>k</sup> that we have Ground to suspect the Religion and Piety of our Brethren and Fellow-Professors, who differ from us, because of their speaking and acting so notoriously contrary to the Laws of Christian Charity, let us be watchfully indu-

industrious in Practice and Conduct, that our Piety and Charity may go Hand in Hand, thro' the whole Course of our Lives, in Thought, Word and Deed ; if we censure them for their uncharitable rash judging and condemning of us as graceless, let us not be guilty of the same Fault, by passing hard Sentences upon them, but leave them to be judged by him who judgeth righteously ; only let us endeavour, by the Direction of the Word, to discern and judge between what is right and what is wrong in them, yea, and in ourselves also, in order to our being directed in the Paths of Truth and Holiness, which alone will conduct us to everlasting Life.

3ly, *My dear Friends*, let us all endeavour to shake off Sloth and Formality, not contenting ourselves with an orthodox and sound Judgment in Matters of Religion, while we neglect to reduce our sound Doctrines and Principles into Practice : This, I'am afraid, hath been the great Evil by which our jealous Lord hath been provoked to suffer us to fall into these Divisions and Disorders ; let us all therefore endeavour to reform and amend this provoking Evil ; which, if we all Ministers and People, would in Earnest apply ourselves unto, we should have Ground to hope, that by a divine Blessing, and the powerful determining Influences of his holy Spirit, who can turn Men's Hearts as and when he pleaseth, our Divisions and Confusions might be healed, mutual Love, Esteem and Unanimity might be again restored, the unhappy Rents in the seamless Coat of our Lord might be healed, which undoubtedly would be Matter of Joy and Rejoicing to all the true Lovers of *Zion*, and the Good of precious Souls.

I could also, with much Freedom and Cheerfulness of Heart, address my self to our Protesting Brethren, but that I'm persuaded it would be to little Purpose for me to do it here, first, because I know that I am one of those whom they look upon to be graceless and Enemies to all spiritual Good, and so according to their own Principles, cannot be an Instrument of Good either to their Souls or the Souls of others : And again, if what I have offered in the Body of this Piece, be not convincing to their Judgment, it would be altogether impertinent to offer an Advice, which can be expected to take Place only upon the Supposition that their Judgments are already convinced. And if it should please the Lord to make these weak Endeavours effectual to convince all or any of them, which would, I'm persuaded, be Matter of Joy to many more, as well as myself ; in that Case their Hearts and Consciences would readily dictate their Duty unto them, part where-

of

of would undoubtedly be to acknowledge their Error, and to be as conscientiously forward to restore their Brethren's Character, as before they were to destroy it. Altho' our Brethren's Conduct hath been so directly and eminently contrary to the Rules of Christian Charity, which is so eminent a Characteristic of true Christianity, as to give Occasion to suspect their Character as Christians; yet, I am far from passing a Judgment upon them in that Respect, for I do not pretend to judge how far remaining Corruption may prevail even upon a true Believer to act contrary to the Law of Charity, nor how far a true Christian may be deluded and led aside with false and disjointed Notions about those Things which are Matter of religious Practice, as to influence him to entertain uncharitable Sentiments, and be guilty of uncharitable Practices, even against those who are truly godly. It's said of *Luther*, whom we all esteem as an eminent Servant of Christ, that he had very uncharitable Thoughts and Expressions of *Calvin* who was as eminent for Christianity as himself. That it may please the Lord of Sabbath to pour out upon us all the Spirit of Light, of Love and of a sound Mind, that being of one Mind and one Judgment, we may be unanimous and harmonious in our Conduct; and that by a divine Blessing upon our Endeavours, this now drooping Vine may yet flourish, this little confused, distracted and despised Church may yet become fair as the Moon, clear as the Sun, and terrible as an Army with Banner! shall always be my Prayers to the God of all Grace and Consolation.

F I N I S.

