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A

Friendly Epistle
TO THE
Bishops and Ministers
OF THE
Church of England
FOR ⁷¹⁰
Plain Truth and sound Peace
BETWEEN
The Pious Protestants of the
Church of ENGLAND,
AND
Those of the *Baptised Believers.*

sent me by the Author.

Written with the Advice of divers Pastors and
Brethren of the *Baptised Congregations,*

By *THO. GRANTHAM.*

*Follow Peace with all Men, and Holiness, without
which no Man shall see the Lord. Heb. 12. 14.*

London, Printed in the Year, 1680.



THE
P R E F A C E
TO THE
R E A D E R.

THe Complaint is both great and just, that Christians are so divided amongst themselves, that it's hard for an impartial Christian to find where to fix for his own comfortable Society. And this Calamity is much aggravated by the backwardness of each Party to offer any thing to accommodate these Differences, each expecting rather that their Opposites should wholly conform to their Sentiments, and relinquish their own.

And what may be thought (in that case) of this present Overture we can-

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not certainly *divine*, nor will be too confident that there is nothing of that nature in it. But of this we will be confident, that the things here desired, do carry much of their reasonableness in the very nature of them, and have their approbation both from the sacred Word, and the Works of those to whom they now address themselves for a Christian Compliance.

But it will be said, *What are the Men that make this Overture?*

Our Answer is, We are the Servants of the Living God; or, We are Christians; and having seen the Discords and Ruines which have befallen the Christian Nations, do heartily desire those Breaches may be made up. And as it is not, so 'tis hoped it will not be deemed, any Transgression of the Law of God or man for any Christians to seek

for Peace one with another in the * *Truth*, notwithstanding their differing Circumstances in respect of world-

* By Truth in this place we intend chiefly what is needful to a true Church-state, and an holy Life.

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ly Honours, or the disparity of their Education; seeing they ought all to be *cloathed with humility*; the strong to bear the *infirmity of the weak*, and not to please themselves. The *Brother of high degree to rejoyce in that he is made low*, and the *Chief to become Servant to the rest*.

When Paul heard of the Divisions which happened in the Church at *Corinth*, how does he blame them for their Carnality as the cause, and bestir himself to recover their Unity, in the truth which at first they had received? *1 Cor.*

1. 10. Now I beseech you Brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no Divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joyned together, in the same mind, and in the same Judgment. Referring them to the Foundation, and Rule of all Christian Unity; that only Christ was Crucified for them; that Christ is not to be divided; and that they were baptized in the Name of Christ, and that therefore they should not follow any Man; but as he follows Christ.

But, it seems this great Apostle did not live to see an end of their *Divisions*, as appears not only from the close of his last Epistle to them, *2 Cor. 12. 20, 21.* but also from the Epistle of *Clement* (who survived him) which he wrote upon the occasion of that *ungodly Sedition* (so he calls it) which had kindled among them *through pride and self-love*, which he vehemently laboured to extinguish by many Arguments, but specially by reducing them to the blessed Example of Christ their Leader, and the practise of such as lived after a godly sort. His words are these:

“ Christ Jesus our Lord the Scepter
 “ of the Majesty of God, came not in
 “ vain boasting of Arrogance and Pride,
 “ although he could do all things, but
 “ in humility of mind, according as the
 “ Holy Spirit had spoken concerning
 “ him. — See, beloved Friends, what
 “ an Example is given unto us: for if
 “ the Lord was so humble, what shall
 “ we do, who are come under the yoke
 “ of his Grace? — let us stick to these
 therefore

“ therefore who live godly and peace-
 “ ably, and not to them who hypocri-
 “ tically only seem to desire Peace: for
 “ somewhere he saith, they blessed with
 “ their Mouth, but with their Heart
 “ they cursed; — for their Heart was
 “ not right with Him, neither were
 “ they stedfast in his Covenant.

Now if the Points in Controversie among the Christians at *Corinth*, were of as great moment as ours (as that may be made evident *);

then 'tis as rational for us to seek for concord each with other, as it was for *Paul* and *Clement* to seek to u-

* *1 Cor 3. 3, 4. & 11. 18, 19, 20, 21. & 15. 12, 29. 2 Cor. 12, 20, 21.* see also *Clem. Ep.* at large and it will fully appear.

nite them. And hence we are the more desirous to make this present Overture for Christian Amity with the pious Protestants in the Church of *England*, for divers Causes: And first;

As it is very evident there hath bin a great departure from the simplicity of the Gospel (both in the Form and Power of it) since the plantation of it

in the World by Christ and his Apostles; so also it is certain that many good Men in Ages past, as well as in this present Age, have still bin labouring (and that often-times under great tryals) for the Restoration of the Truth to its Purity, some in one point, and some in another more especially.

And here the *English* Protestant hath bin as active as others, some in reforming divers things in Doctrine and Practice; others in keeping the ground they have gained, against the opposers of Reformation.

Now this Work (as it is of God,) ought to be carried on in the Nations of the World to its perfection. Namely, till the Truths of the Gospel be delivered from all humane Innovations which have incumbred it, to the disturbance of the peace of *Christians* in all ages since they found opportunity to croud themselves into the Service of God.

But the great obstruction of this work of Reformation, has bin the falling

ling out of the Reformers among themselves. And this is the case of the sober Protestant, and the Baptised Believer, in this Age and Nation: the latter not so honouring the first as he ought, with respect to what God hath done by him; and the former despising the latter, by whom God is pleased (notwithstanding) to bring to light some antient Truths which the former overslip'd, or took not due notice of. And by this impatience and disrespect in each towards other, they prove inimical to the very Work, which in the main they both design to promote.

It is the way of ingenuous Men in reviving decayed Arts, to honour their Predecessors, though inferior to themselves, and to encourage those that succeed to attempt things more excellent. Why are not Christians as ingenuous in their endeavours to restore decayed Religion? There is nothing in the Authour of our Profession, or the Profession it self, but candor and ingenuity. Wherefore if we intend the further-

furtherance of the Work of Reformation, hitherto carried on through manifold Afflictions, let us timely consider our common Interest, which is to make one Shoulder to defend what our Ancestors have worthily atcheived ; as also to joyn our industry for the restoration of every Truth which they omitted.

2. Our second Motive shall respect the 39 Articles of the Church of *England*, in which if a few things (which are not of the substance of the Christian Religion) were explained or amended, it were a very easie thing for the Church of *England*, and the Baptised Believers in this Nation, to compose their differences in point of Doctrine and Faith, as touching the *Basis*, or foundation of the Christian Religion. And to the intent that Unity may be herein attained between us, we shall humbly beg leave with plainness to shew (when we offer our Proposals) the Particulars whereof we are doubtful in some of the said Articles.

Our

Our third Motive to seek for Concord with the pious Protestant, is the contents of that remarkable * Letter, long since sent to Mr. *J. Tombes* B. D. (upon occasion of his learned Disputations concerning the Restoration of holy Baptism to its primitive use) and written by that Reverend Man *Dr. Barlow*, now Lord Bishop of *Lincoln*, which *verbatim* is as followeth :

— *I am a friend to your person (whom I have known (though unknown to you) this 31 years) and to your opinion too (as to the main of it); for I believe and know, that there is neither Precept nor Practice in Scripture for Pædobaptism, nor any just Evidence for it, for about two hundred years after Christ. The first who bears witness to Infant Baptism practised in the Church, is Tertullian, but so, as he expressly dislikes and condemns it as an*

* This Letter has been printed about 24 years, and never yet contradicted by *Dr. Barlow*. See Mr. *Tombes* his Preface to the Reader in the third part of his full Review of the Dispute concerning Infant Baptism, p. 8, 9.

unwar-

unwarrantable and irrational Custome. And Nazianzen a good while after him (in his Oration εις ἀγίων Βάπτισμα, dislikes it too, and would not have Infants brought to Baptism till they were of some age, and able to answer for themselves. Sure I am that in the primitive times they were first to be Catechumeni, and then φωτισθέντες, Illuminati, or Baptizati, and this not only Children of Pagans, or Pagans converted, but Children of Christian Parents, Nazianzen (though a Bishop's Son) being not baptized till he was about 30 years of age, as appears in his life; and the like is evident of some others. The Truth is, Infant Baptism did (how or by whom I know not) come in, in the second Century, and in the 3d and 4th began to be practised, though not generally, and defended as lawful from that Text (grossly misunderstood) Joh. 3. 5. Upon the like gross mistake of Joh. 6. 53. they did for many Centuries (both in the Greek and Latin Church) communicate Infants, and give them the Lord's Supper, and I confess they might do both as well as either: but altho

tho they baptized some Infants, and thought it lawful so to do, yet Austin was the first that ever said it was necessary inde durus pater Infantum. I have seen what my learned and worthy Friend Dr. Hammond, Mr. Baxter and others say in defence of it, and I confess I wonder not a little that men of such great parts should say so much to so little purpose, for I have not yet seen any thing like an Argument for it.

And not only this Letter, but many other Testimonies which are found in the Writings of learned Protestants* to the same purpose (as hath bin shewn by diverse hands in our Books now extant) do greatly perswade us to hope, that the Controversies about Baptism draws towards an end, and were this point well agreed, many other things would be therewith so moderated, as that we should (by
Gods

* Mr. Baxter tells us, many both Papists and Prelatists, have maintain'd that Infant Baptism is not determin'd in Scripture, but depends on the Tradition of the Church. *Def. Princ. of Love, p. 7.* And Dr. Fer. Taylor tells us, there is no prime Tradition for Infant Baptism. See his *Discursus*, from Popery.

Gods help) approach that Blessing, to have one Heart and one Way.

4. Our fourth Motive is taken from that great dread which seems to be at present upon this Land, of *the encroachment of Popery* : but what is in this God knoweth, nor shall we concern our selves with secrets. And seeing it is rational to believe, that nothing shall sooner bring such Fears and heavy Judgments upon us, than our own Dissentions and Divisions (in which there is too much dissenting from the Truth) therefore do we the more earnestly desire to dispose our minds to unite in Truth and Charity, with all such as love God and their Neighbour, and walk according to the general rules of Christianity: resolving to bear what (with a good Conscience) may be born for Peace sake in the Truth, in which we shall (upon a friendly and free Debate) be agreed.

Our last and principal Motive, is, That hereby God shall be glorified, in the furtherance of a Faithful and Impartial Reformation of Life and Religion,

gion, when we who have had so great a share in contending one against another, shall after a Christian and Manly sort, cease our conflicts each with other, by stooping to what of sincere Truth hath appeared in our Disputes : and not leave our Divisions Hereditary to our Posterity, but rather a pious Example of our Charity to be by them pursued.

For seeing it is a rational presumption, that there hath bin said what well can be said, on both sides ; what then remains but that we bend our minds to cease our strife by such a Christian Compliance, as may justly render us willing to be overcome by Truth on both parts, where the matter shall require it.

And herein let none so much consult his own glory as the good of Christians in general ; as it is written, *Let no Man seek his own, but every Man anothers wealth.* And again, let every one of us please his Neighbour for his good to Edification. And let that Christian speech of Cle-

ment come to mind and conclude this Preface :

Is there any one then (saith he) that is bravely spirited among you? Is there any one that hath compassion? Doth any one abound with Charity? Let him say, If this Contention (Sedition or Schism) be for me, or by my means, I will depart, I will go my ways whithersoever you please; I will do what the rest commands. Only let the Sheepfold of Christ enjoy peace with

** the Elders which God hath placed over it. He that shall do this, shall purchase to himself great Glory in the Lord; and every place shall receive him.*

* Note, that the Division at Corinth was occasioned by laying aside the primitive Institution of Christ concerning the Ministry, the ancient Bishops or Elders being thrust out, &c. And our Divisions are occasioned by either the laying aside, or the not duly observing Christ's Ordinances touching the Constitution and Government of his Church according to the primitive pattern.



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Prayer to God for his Blessing upon this present endeavour for Concord amongst Dissenting Christians.

O Most Mighty, most Holy, and most Gracious God! What are we that we should speak unto Thee, the God of Heaven and Earth? We beseech thee pardon our unworthiness, and for the sake of Christ our Saviour, hear this Prayer, which in his Name we do with our whole Heart pour out before thy Majesty.

O Lord, in thy Fatherly Compassion behold the sad Divisions which have befallen the Christian People throughout the whole World. And seeing nothing is too hard for Thee, Graciously be pleased to move upon the Hearts of all sober and Heavenly-minded Christians (however differing in

some Points concerning the Christian Profession) and so work by thy Spirit of Power, Love and Wisdom, that they may be so united in Brotherly Affection, as speedily to consider one another in Love: And to have compassion one of another under their unhappy differences in Opinion. O destroy the Spirit of Pride and BLOOD-THIRSTINESS from amongst the Christian People. And let all that are called by that Name be ashamed that ever such wrath hath bin found amongst them, and let them be humbled before thy Majesty in the remembrance of it, O Lord, we beseech thee.

Most Gracious God, we confess unto Thee, we are not worthy to undertake any thing in behalf of the Peace and Unity of divided Christians: But thou (O God) that despisest not the base and weak things of this World, be intreated to bless our present Enterprize, as it is consistent with thy pleasure, to the good of thy People universally; That they may be one in Truth and Peace, according to thy Word, which is Truth.

We

We beseech thee to bow the Heart of the Mighty, the Wise and Honorable in the Christian Nations, to study Truth and Peace, to condescend to any thing for thy Glory, and thy Peoples Happiness: and we pray, that none who are called by thy Name, may any longer be puffed up, for one, and against another. O teach those that love Thee, to strive together with one mind for the Truth and Power of Religion according to the Gospel.

Good Lord, be intreated for thy Names sake, in behalf of all those that are of pious meaning, in these Nations especially, that their Hearts being intirely knit together in the great and more necessary parts of thy Worship, they may Glorifie thy Name with one consent, by a charitable forbearance, in things which are not sinful in thy sight.

We intreat Thee (our God) make us thy Servants ever to be ready on our parts, to evidence by act, what here we propose in words, and grant thy Spirit to enable us herein to serve Thee, and all such as fear Thee, and love thy Testimonies.

And grant that none of thy People may uncharitably censure this our undertaking for Concord amongst thy Servants. Grant them Patience to consider what is here offered, and where we may seem deficient herein, lead others to supply what is wanting, that through thy Blessing upon our united Endeavours, the Good here intended may be prosperously promoted, to thy Praise, O Lord, to the great increase of Charity, and therewith to the true comfort of thy People throughout the whole World. Even so, Lord God Almighty; Even, so, Amen.

A



A
 Friendly Epistle
 TO
 All the Bishops & Ministers
 OF THE
 Church of *England*.

Reverend Sirs,

May it please you in the meekness and gentleness of Christ, to lay aside (a little) those exterior Honours which are conferred upon you, and to condescend to Men of low degree, and in that Condescension seriously to ponder, what is herein with Humility and Sincerity submitted to your Consideration.

We do seriously account it a part of our Infelicity, to see the Distractions and Divisions, which are in our Land, about things

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relating

relating to the Worship of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; and therewithal it is too evident that the Power of Godliness is much neglected, and the Ways of Christianity greatly depraved, whereupon many that love the Lord Jesus, are so estranged among themselves, as to become Adversaries to their own Peace, and the Comfort of each other.

May it then please God, to lead us all to the Consideration of these ill Effects, and to remove the Causes of them. And seeing we may perhaps be under worse Apprehensions concerning one another, than there is real cause for, let it be calmly considered on both parts, that our greatest differences are about *Ceremonies*; And those also of *Humane device* (as we conceive) the best of which are not worth the loss of one Soul, and therefore in no wise fit to adventure the breach of our Peace and Christian Concord, for their sake, which may be the cause of perishing to many.

May it therefore seem well pleasing to you, the Bishops of the Church of England, with your Brethren of the Ministry, to admit of some friendly and free Debate with the Bishops and Teachers of the Baptized Churches in this Nation; to try if by any means a way may be found to bring us to Christi-

Christian Concord in the Gospel of God.

To effect this, is either impossible, or difficult only. Not the first, since our differences lie not in the doctrinal part of any Foundation-Article of the Christian Religion, so much as in the application or practick part of them.

For, to touch a little the grand points about which we differ, viz. *Sacred Baptism*, and the *Discipline of the Church*, of these we spake the same thing; for thus you teach, That in *Baptism* there is an *inward and spiritual Grace*, and an *outward and visible Sign*; And that *Repentance*, whereby we forsake Sin, And *Faith*, whereby we stedfastly believe the Promises of God made to us in that Sacrament, are the things required of all Persons that are to be baptized. And hereunto we do most heartily subscribe.

See your Church
Catechism.

And touching holy Discipline, your Doctrine is, That the manner of proceeding in *Excommunication*, is first by gentle *Admonition*, and that once or twice given with the Spirit of meekness, if the fault be not notoriously known: and next by open reprehension, afterwards by publick sentence of the Church to put him from the company of the faithful, to deliver him to Satan, to denounce him an Heathen and a Pagan, if no Admonitions will serve, and the

crimes be very offensive. To this Doctrine likewise we do give our full consent.

Nevertheless it must be granted a very great difficulty (as things now stand) to reform what is really amiss on your part in the practice relating to those two points of the Christian Religion; especially seeing that the worldly Interest of so many carnal-minded men, seems to depend upon the continuation of the Errors which have befallen you in the practice of these holy Institutes.

Howbeit this Difficulty is not greater than it was to reform, what was as really amiss in that great Ordinance, the Lord's Table, whether we consider their Error who for many Centuries gave the Communion to Infants; or theirs, who by their *Transubstantiation* destroy the very nature of the Sacrament.

Nor shall we here forget, but thankfully remember the great Travel and Sufferings of your Martyrs, and the pious Zeal which appeared in many of them, when called to reduce that holy Ordinance of the *Lord's Supper* from many corruptions, by which it had been prophaned.

But yet we must needs condole their shortness, in not looking with like diligence into the pristine purity of the other Sacrament. By which oversight, we which survive them, are exposed the more to our present

sent Difficulties. And hence we may borrow that passage in 1 Chron. 15. 13. *Because ye did it not at the first, therefore the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.* And here we ought to learn, that seeing God would not indulge his Servant *David* in such an oversight (when yet his intention was very pious) will have his own Methods duly observed in things pertaining to his Service.

Your Wisdoms know very well who hath said, *A little Leaven leaveneth the whole lump;* and that *every Plant which the heavenly Father hath not planted, must be rooted up;* and how vain the *Worship* (even of the true God) is esteemed by *Christ*, which is taught by the Precepts of Men? All which cries aloud that Religion be restored to its primitive Purity, that so Men may give unto God the things that are God's, and cease to serve him with their own inventions.

What we shall here propose to these holy Ends, is no more than what at present we conceive to be very needful; Howbeit, we may not prescribe to you, but only offer an occasion to your Wisdoms to consider us as Christians, not as Enemies. For it is evident that those Coercive ways which some encline to, and under which we have bin, and still are exercised, are not like to effect
Christian

Christian Amity and Unity, but rather to make the Breach much wider.

That then it may please God (even the God of Peace) to direct your Wisdoms to those wholesome Methods, which may be natural to procure and continue a lasting Peace between us in the Truth of the Gospel, shall be our Prayer to him for you, and in whose fear we humbly make these following Proposals. And first.

I. Concerning the 39 Articles, &c.

As we have already hinted, that (in our judgment) some things in the 39 Articles of the Church do admit of some amendment, We shall therefore humbly propose our Doubts in that case, that the Fundamentals being secur'd, other things may the more easily be reconciled.

1. Our first scruple concerns the third Article, where it requires, Belief that Christ went down into Hell, besides his being in the state of the Dead, and buried in the Sepulchre. Now this Passage is so dubious, as that even *Mr. Rogers*, who wrote a Book in defence of the 39 Articles, doth confess, that the native and undoubted Sence of this Article is not known, so that we conceive it ought not to be required as an Article necessa-

necessary to the Christian * Faith.

2. In the 8th Article all things contain'd in the three Creeds, are required [thoroughly to be believed,] in some of which, is the said clause, of *Christ's Descent into Hell*, (the meaning whereof is doubtful.) And some

terms in the Creed of *Athanasius*, are so hard to be understood, that we think they ought not to be imposed as necessary: We humbly conceive the Modesty of *Hillary*, more safe than some of the Zealous Speeches of *Athanasius*, who tells us "That whatsoever is used more, than the *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*,

" is beyond the compass
" of Speech, the reach of
" of Sence, and the capa-
" city of Understanding.

And though he had used the Words [*Three Hypostasis*]

yet he confesses "This is to do things unlawful, to speak that which ought not to be spoken, to attempt things not licensed, to put things in peril of the Speech of Men, which ought to be kept in the Religiousness of minds. And *Austin* confesses

* And it is granted by learned Protestants, that this clause of *Christ's Descent into Hell* was not always in the 4th Article of the Creed, as the *Nicen Creed*, and divers others do witness. See *Mr. Ross's Abridgment of Divinity*, pag. 115.

See *Mr. Calvin Instit.* L. 1. Chap. 13. Sect. 5. out of whom this Quotation is taken.

esses that it ought not to be spoken, [How] the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are three. A Holy Trinity there is, but [how] it subsisteth God only knoweth.

And here both the Modesty and Caution of Mr. Calvin also is worth our Consideration, who speaking of the Titles, or Expressions, viz. *A Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead*, saith,

If the Names have not been without cause invented, we ought to take heed that in rejecting them we be not justly blamed of proud Presumptuousness. I would to God (saith he) they were buried indeed, so that THIS FAITH WERE AGREED OF ALL MEN, That the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are ONE GOD, and yet that the Father is not the Son, nor the Holy Ghost the Son, but distinct by certain Properties. Instit. l. 1. c. 1. Sect. 5.

3. The 13th Article would have it believed, that no Works done without Faith in Jesus Christ are pleasant to God, &c. Which we think is doubtful, considering how it is said that the Prayers and Alms of Cornelius were come up for a Memorial before God. Act. 10. 1, 2, 3. yet 'tis certain he did not then know Jesus Christ.

4. The 18th Article seems doubtful, where it teacheth, that none can be saved who diligently frame their life according to the Light or Law

Law of Nature, &c. Whereas if God have given them no other Law or Light to walk by, we conceive it more safe for us to leave them to the Lord (who will not gather where he hath not strewed) than thus to censure them.

5. The second Paragraph of the 27th Article may well be omitted, seeing it is granted by learned Protestants, that there is no plain Scripture for Infant Baptism. Instead of which Paragraph it may safely be inserted, that the Infants of Christians should be devoted to God by Prayer and Blessing, which may be justified by the Law of Nature, and specially by the Words of Christ, *Mat. 19. 6.*

6. The 36 Article not necessary to be imposed as an Article of the Christian Faith, seeing that *Book of Consecration of Archbishops, Bishops, ordering of Priests and Deacons*, is not of Divine Authority; and it must needs be more safe to refer the business of Consecrating, or ordaining Christ's Ministers (of what rank soever) to the Rules given in the holy Scripture.

And hence we do further conceive, it is very needful that those severe Sentences of Excommunication contain'd in the *Book of Canons and Constitutions Ecclesiastical* (specially these two, contain'd in *Can. 5. & 9.*) be recalled. For seeing they themselves (that composed

composed the 39 Articles) were but Men, (though pious Men) and therefore (as themselves teach, *Art. 21.*) might possibly err, even in things pertaining to God. Therefore (as they further say) things ordained by them, have neither Strength nor Authority, unless it may be declared, that they be taken out of the Word of God. Nor ought the Church to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation, which is either against or besides the Word of God, as they also teach, *Article 20.* Thus much of the 39 Articles.

II. Concerning the visible Church of Christ.

1. As it is rightly acknowledged by Christians generally, and particularly by the Church of England, *Article 19.* That the Church of Christ is a Congregation of faithful Men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's Ordinance, in all those things, which of necessity are requisite to the same; So it may be as truly observed that none be admitted Members of this Visible Church, or Mystical Body of Christ; till they give evidence that they are faithful, at least by their personal Profession of the Faith of Christ, and Willingness to walk in newness of Life, according to the Principles or general Rules of the Christi-

Christian Religion, contain'd in the holy Scriptures, the Rule of Faith.

2. And seeing it is the Work of God through which Man with the Heart believeth unto Righteousness, from which Faith only can proceed that Confession with the Mouth which is to Salvation; That therefore it may be firmly agreed, that humane force or violence is not the means ordain'd of God to propagate the Church of Christ. But that preaching the Gospel, and walking holily in Charity towards all Men, are the true and proper means to encrease the Church, according to the Will and Commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all Nations in that behalf.

III. Concerning Regeneration, and Baptism.

1. That as Conversion or Regeneration is necessary to the Christian-state of every Sinner, so it may be joyntly held and professed that the Baptism of Repentance, for Remission of Sins, is an Ordinance of Christ, and necessary to the Admission of all Men to the Priviledges of his Church: and that the things required of all that are to be baptized, are Repentance, whereby they forsake Sin, and Faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the Promises of God, made to them in that Sacrament.

2. That

2. That as it is granted on all hands, that *Immersion in Water* agrees best with the Word *baptize*, and was the *primitive way of baptizing*; so this Ordinance may therein be restored to its purity according to its primitive Institution; And that to this end, there may be *Baptisterions, or fit Places to baptize in*, appointed for the Solemn Performance of this Ordinance.

IV. Concerning Infants, or Little-Children.

1. That all Infants of Christians be solemnly devoted to Christ by Prayer and Blessing, and that the Ministers of Christ be assistant in this Work, not forbidding them this Blessing, *Mat. 19. 13, 14.*

2. That every Minister of Christ residing in any Country-Village be obliged, in Consideration of convenient maintenance, to teach all the Children in his precincts to read the Holy Scriptures, and to instruct them in the Principles of the Christian Religion (*Heb. 6. 1, 2.*) and that they may be baptized, when they shall profess Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. And that the like care be used in Cities, and great Towns, in such manner as may be most convenient.

5. Con-

g. Concerning laying on of Hands.

1. That the fourth Principle of Christ's Doctrine (called *Laying on of Hands*;) be restored to its due use and purity in the Church; namely, that when any Converts are Baptized; then Prayer with the *Laying on of Hands*, be speedily made to God for them, that they may receive the Promise of the Spirit by Faith, and that it may retain its ancient Titles, given it by the Holy Ghost, (*viz. Laying on of Hands, or a Principle of the Doctrine of Christ.*)

2. To the end this service of God be not neglected, that it may be allowed, that all faithful Overseers of particular Congregations, may perform this Service upon the newly Baptized; specially in the absence of such a Minister as has a more general charge; be he called the Angel, or Messenger of the Churches. And that care be taken that the Christians who have not known this Principle of Christ's Doctrine, be deliberately instructed concerning it, before they be made conformable to it.

6. Concerning publick Prayers, and the manner of singing the Praises of God in the Churches. And of the removal of such Ceremonies as serve not to Edification:

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i. Seeing

1. Seeing the Prayers contain'd in holy Scripture (and especially the Lords Prayer) are sufficient to direct the Man of God in that duty of Prayer in the Church, that therefore the Book of Common Prayer be not imposed, and that it may be in the liberty of the Minister to pray in the Church according to the ability which God hath given him, that so the Spirit of Prayer, as well as the Order of it, may be preserved.

2. That it be joyntly agreed that singing the Praises of God in Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, is a holy Ordinance of God, and that the order and Spirit of that Duty be restored (God assisting) according to 1 Cor. 14. and other Rules contain'd in the Holy Scripture. And that Musical Instruments, bowing to the Altar, the sign of the Cross, the Surplice, or any other, unnecessary Ceremony, be prudently removed out of the Service of God in all Churches.

7. Concerning Church-Discipline.

1. That the Exercise of Discipline be restored in all Churches according to the Scriptures, and the Doctrine of the Church of England, forecited in this Epistle.

2. To the intent that no Sinner be indulged in his Iniquity for Money, that it may not be permitted that any Officer concern'd in the Execution

tion of Discipline, take any manner of Fees of the Offenders, or any other Person for their And that such Ministers be entrusted with the Exercise of Discipline, as are Men of know Integrity, Holiness and self-Denial. And that the holy Discipline be executed in or near the place where the Offences are committed, according to the Order of the primitive Churches.

8. Concerning Ordination, and Preaching the Word.

1. That the Election and Ordination of Ministers, of what Rank soever, be restored (when in it shall appear to have been neglected) in the most solemn manner that may be, according to the Scriptures: And that such Ministers among the Baptized Believers, as shall be found to have been so elected and ordained, be allowed to preach the Gospel, to edifie the People, and to dispense the holy Ordinances.

2. That the primitive liberty of prophesying to Edification, Exhortation, and Comfort, be restored to the Church, *i. e.* as it shall please God to give Men the Gift of Teaching, Exhortation, &c. they may be permitted with Prudence to edifie the People by the modest Exercise of their Gifts in the Churches.

9. Concerning the Maintenance of Christ's Ministers, and the Relief of poor Christians.

I. That it be agreed, that the Relief of the Poor, and that those who preach the Gospel should be of the Gospel, are God's Ordinances, and to be performed with all Faithfulness by all Christians according to their Ability. But that the Methods for performance of them, are left to the Discretion of the Magistrate, and not to be altered by the People, or by the Magistrate, only *jure humano*, and that therefore the same Power Magistratical which gave being to these Methods, may lawfully alter the same to the better when they please.

2. And that therefore it be further agreed and declared, that the way assign'd in holy Scripture for the support of Christ's Ministers, and the Relief of Poor Christians, is by a free Contribution, to be constantly upheld in the Churches, according to every ones Ability; and the Money so collected to be entrusted in the Hands of the Deacons of the Church, and by them to be faithfully distributed as occasion requires. And that therefore such as will stand to Christ's Promise, and for his Name-sake minister the Gospel freely to the Gentiles, may be still had in Reputation; and sent forth by the Church to restore Christianity where it is corrupted; and to plant the Gospel where it is not known.

10. Concerning Separation.

1. It's here propounded, as greatly necessary to a true Christian State, that some effectual Course be resolv'd upon, to keep (as far as may be consistent with Truth and Charity) a holy and just Distinction, between those who lead wicked and Scandalous Lives, and them that live holily, according to the general Rules of Christianity, without respect of Persons.

2. That this Care be taken more especially concerning the Ministry; otherwise we shall still have Multitudes of prophane and debauched Men set up as Leaders. And we see by Experience the People are too ready to follow their ill Examples, and the consequence must needs be lamentable; as it is written, *They eat up the Sins of my People; and set their Heart on their Iniquities, and there shall be like People like Priest; And will punish them for their Wayes, and reward them for their Doings.* Jer. 15. 18.

II. Concerning the means to effect the Unity desired.

1. That it would please you, the Bishops of the Church of England, to petition the King's Majesty, that it may be made lawful by an Act of Parliament, or by his Royall Permission, for a competent Number of Representatives of such Dissenters, as have a mind to unite with the Church of England, to meet in Christian Counsel with your selves, and to agree (upon mature Deliberation) on such Articles as may (if God see it good) put a Period to our present Animosities and Divisions.

2. That if these Proposals do not hold Agreement with the good old way of Christianity, then we desire they may be rejected, and that you would be pleas'd to propose things which may be more effectual to procure the Unity desired. For our Record is on high, and we

ave also the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Sim-
licity, and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by
the Grace of God, we desire to have our Conversation
in the Gospel with you, and with all that love Christ
in our Nation. Trusting in the Lord, that the u-
tiling of such in the Truth in general, may effectually
move many to Jealousie with themselves; who are now
entangled in Error, or involved in Prophaneity, that
they may be converted from the Evil of their Ways, and
consequently our Nation to abound with all Blessings,
especially the Blessing of the Gospel of Peace. For
Fidelity hath the Promise of the Life that now is,
and of that which is to come.

Finally, if these Endeavours for Christian Concord
with all that fear God, and work Righteousness in this
Nation, be rejected, yet herein shall we have some
Peace and Comfort, that we have made the best Essay
we could for Brotherly Concord with them: Being also
seriously desirous utterly to forget all the hard things
which in time past we have suffered from our Country-
Men. Hoping that the sober Protestant-hath had good
Occasion by this time to observe, that God Almighty
hath pleaded the Innocency of our Principles and Pur-
pose, from the Evils too frequently, and most unjustly
suggested against them; and that therefore we may now
with the greater freedom of Speech, express our selves
as in the Premises, and conclude with the modest Speech
of Augustine.

*This then is our Desire, which we do alludge by these Let-
ters unto your Reverence, First,
Aug. Ep. 58. ad if it may be that you would
Jan. & Donat. confer with our Bishops peaceably
and quietly, to the End that
Error be taken away from those in whom it shall be
found, and not that Men be taken away, nor punish-
ed, but gently corrected.*

But before we shut up this Epistle it will be need-
ful to answer two Objections which may seem to be of
Obj.

Obj. 1. It will be objected, That we ask or desire
many things, and grant but few.

Ans. 1. That we hope we have desired nothing but
what is rational, according to the sound Principles of
Christianity; and which will be profitable to the Church
of God, when granted.

2. We stand ready to hear what our Friends of the
Church of England, will require of us; to answer those
Kindnesses which we desire of them, and hope we shall
deny them nothing which we may lawfully grant.

2. Obj. That the Alteration which we propose in the
case of Baptism, amounts to a Renunciation of the
Christianity, and to begin anew to become Christians.

Ans. The Church of England does not only retain
the Substance of what Truth she hath received concerning
Baptism, by altering to the better; but will indeed the
be consistant with the Truth of her own Doctrine in the first
paragraph of her 27th Article, and her vulgar Catechism
which she hath rather made void hitherto by the Custom
of Pædobaptism.

2. If we take the Text *Act. 19. 5.* according to the
Exposition of the Ancients, and divers Modern Writers
(as that is indeed the native and clear Sence of the
place) It will then be a good president to the Church
of England to alter the Subject and Manner of her Bap-
tism; for here we see, these Ephesians being not rightly
instructed concerning the grounds of Baptism, when they
were baptized unto John's Baptism, are therefore bap-
tized again, upon more perfect Instruction; Yet did
they not renounce the least part of Christianity, nor
any Truth which they had received concerning Baptism.
But did rather perfect that Infirm Baptism which they
had received. And it is a just Presumption that the
first Baptism was more valid then Pædobaptism, if
Infants know nothing at all, either what they do,
what is done to them, but oppose it what is them

th; whereas these at *Ephesus* were Disciples *ver* 1; such as did know unto what they had been baptized, *ver* 3; and yet are baptized again, because not duly informed before concerning the grounds of Baptism; and this is written for our Learning; when our case is like theirs.

POSTSCRIPT.

THe Reader may be confident, we are not without foresight, that our hearty desire and endeavour for Truth and Peace, will be little regarded by many; some will censure us, others contemn us, and what we have here proposed.

But be it so, yet we also hope some will consider what we have offered; and may it but give some Light to a better understanding of the Case depending, or move any whose Circumstances may render them more servicable to promote Truth and Peace amongst Dissenting Christians, We shall be content to labour, and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God.

Since the precedent Epistle was written, some of us have given a Sermon lately preached by Dr. Stillingfleet, on Phil. 16. wherein he also endeavours for Peace amongst Dissenting Christians; but there is one thing necessary (which he does not much muddle with) and that is to shew, That the Church he would have us to communicate with, is such for Constitution and Government as was that at *Philippi*. When he shall do this, he may be confident small faults will not keep us from her Communion: And that she may be such, is the unfeigned desire and endeavour of the Authors of the precedent Epistle.

FINIS.