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[ Pike, Samuel ], 1717?-1773.

A Plain and Full Account of the Christian Practices.

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PLAIN AND FULL  
ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
CHRISTIAN PRACTICES

OBSERVED BY THE  
CHURCH in *St. Martin's-le-grand*, LONDON;  
And other CHURCHES (commonly called SANDEMANIAN)  
in FELLOWSHIP with THEM.

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

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ACTS xxviii. 22.

“ We desire to hear of the what thou thinkest : for as  
“ concerning this Sect, we know that every where it is  
“ spoken against.”

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(By Samuel Pils)

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1766



A

P L A I N   A N D   F U L L  
A C C O U N T, &c.

S I R,



S you have signified your Desire that I should give you a distinct Account of the *practical* Tenets of the Religious Society to which I belong, I may presume you have sufficient Knowledge of the *Doctrines* they contend for. But if you are unacquainted with their Principles, they would direct you to the whole Word of God, taken in its most obvious and consistent Meaning ; for they have no formal Creed or Confession of Faith to refer you to. However, you may see what they have to say from the Scriptures for the Doctrines in which they differ from other religious Societies, in the Works of Mr. *John Glas*, and the *Letters on Theron and Aspasio*.

My present Task is only to give you an Account of their *Practices* about Gospel Fellowship

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and Worship, Discipline and Duty, and that chiefly in those Particulars wherein they differ from others. In doing this, you may assure yourself, that I will omit no one of their Practices, public or private ; but you shall know all that I know, so far as Words can inform you. This I shall do the more explicitly, as I find you have heard many strange and evil Reports about us.

THAT you may know distinctly the general Principles we go upon in our religious Practices, you may keep in Mind the following Premises.

1. WE think ourselves obliged to regard all the Words of Christ and his Apostles in their plain, obvious, and original Meaning ; looking upon every Precept in the New-Testament (except such as may relate to what is properly miraculous) to be binding upon us now, as much as upon the first Churches.

2. WE think ourselves bound to follow the Practices of the primitive Disciples and Churches as far as we can learn from the New-Testament how they walked, while the Apostles were with them, beholding their Order and Stedfastness in the Faith.

3. WE think ourselves also bound carefully to avoid all the Things for which they were re-proved, by our Lord or his Apostles.

THESE Premises are founded upon the general Faith of the Gospel ; that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God*, and as such, the only *Prophet, Priest and King* of God's Church : so that, all the divine Knowledge we can possibly acquire is contained in his revealed Word, as he is the *Prophet*.; all our Hope of Salvation is derived from the compleat Atonement he has made, and the perfect Righteousness he has wrought out for Sinners, as he is the *Priest* ; and we are therefore bound to do whatsoever he hath commanded us, as he is the *King and Head* of the Church.

ON these Principles several Churches have been formed, first in *Scotland*, after that in *England*, and more lately in *America* ; who are all professedly of one Heart and Soul, both in the *Faith* and in the *Obedience* of the Gospel. That in *London* now consists of above an hundred Souls. To this Society I have belonged for some Time, and am now able to give you the following Account of our Worship and Order.

WE constantly meet together on the *first Day of the Week*, and keep it as the Christian Sabbath, in Commemoration of Christ's Resurrection : not only to pray and hear the Word, but *particularly* to break Bread, or communicate together in the *Lord's Supper* ; finding that the Churches which were under the immediate Eye and Care of the Apostles did so *every Sabbath* : so that there is

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the same Reason and Authority for the Breaking of Bread, as for meeting together on that Day \*. We therefore think it unscriptural and superstitious, to make such a Difference between the one and the other, as to celebrate the Lord's Supper *yearly, quarterly or monthly*; while the Christian Sabbath is kept *weekly*. We look upon the Christian Sabbath as designed for the Celebration of divine Ordinances; which are summarily comprised, Acts ii. 42. in continuing steadfastly in the Apostles *Doctrine and Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayers.*

It being the unquestionable Duty of a Church to continue instant in *Prayer*, Rom. xii. 12, &c. not only the Elders or Pastors of the Church are engaged in this Duty; but likewise the Brethren are called upon by Name, three or four, and sometimes more, one after another, to engage in it. This is done in the Church, in the Morning of the Lord's Day. And as we are exhorted to pray for Kings and for all in Authority, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. we therefore take Opportunity every Sabbath to supplicate Blessings upon our Sovereign King GEORGE, &c.

AT the Conclusion of every Prayer, whether pronounced by the Elders or the Brethren, the  
whole

\* Acts xx. 7. Upon the *first Day* of the Week, when the Discip'les came together to break Bread, Paul preached unto them.

whole Church say *Amen*, with an audible Voice; according to what is intimated 1 Cor. xiv. 16 \*. The *Lord's Prayer* is used by us at the Beginning and at the Close of public Worship.

To Prayer is annexed the Ordinance of *Singing* which is generally performed by us between the Prayers; and we make Use of the Psalms of *David*, in a metrical Translation, that is nearest to the Original.

WE have, both in the Morning and Afternoon Service, not only the Preaching and Expounding; but *especially*, the Reading of the Word: No less than four or five Chapters being read in the Morning Service, and as many in the Afternoon; so conducted, that in a Course of Time, no Part of the sacred Word is omitted.

IN the Interval between the Morning and the Afternoon Service, we have our *Love-Feasts*: of which every Member partakes: by dining at the Houses of such of the Brethren who live sufficiently near, and whose Habitations are convenient for that Purpose. The Design of these Feasts is to cultivate mutual Knowledge & Friendship, to testify that we are all Brethren of the same Family; that the Poor and Rich may par-

\* 1 Cor. xiv. 16. Else when thou shalt bless with the Spirit, how shall he that occupieth the Room of the unlearned, say *Amen*, at thy giving of Thanks, &c.

take together as upon a Level in the Fellowship ; and that the Poor may have a comfortable Meal at the Expence of the more Wealthy. Our Warrant for this is the same that we have for keeping the first Day Sabbath ; namely, the Practice of the Apostolic Churches ; intimated to us in 1 Cor. xi. 20, 21. 2 Pet. ii. 13. Jude 12 \*. And herein we follow the Example of our Lord, who did frequently eat and drink with his Disciples, both before and after his Resurrection.

WE cannot allow any Member to be absent from the Feast, either through Indifference or mere Inconvenience ; for we consider all the Church as one Family ; and are sensible that this Duty is as clearly signified to us as that of keeping the first Day Sabbath. We do not indeed pretend to have any express Direction or Rule for the precise Day, or Time of the Day, in which these Feasts should be observed ; any more than we, or other Societies have for the precise Hour of Beginning and Ending divine Worship in the Morning or Afternoon of the Lord's Day : yet we have chosen the Time above specified as the most proper ; when the whole Church are together ; no other Day or Time of the Day

\* 1 Cor. xi. 20, 21. This is not to eat the *Lord's Supper* ; for in eating every one taketh before other his *own Supper*. 2 Pet. ii. 13. Sporting themselves with their own Deceivings, while *they feast with you*. Jude 12. These are Spots in your *Feasts of Charity*, when they *feast with you*.



being found, wherein the Feast can be conducted with equal Conveniency. At these Feasts one Brother is called upon to ask a Blessing, and another to return Thanks, after which we sing a spiritual Song.

THIS and other Opportunities we take for the *Kiss of Charity*, or the saluting each other with an holy Kiss. A Duty most expressly exhorted to no less than *five* Times in the New-Testament, Rom. xvi. 16. 1 Cor. xvi. 20. 2 Cor. xiii. 12. 1 Thes. v. 26. 1 Pet. v. 14. We are very certain, that this Exhortation was meant, understood & practiced *literally*: we therefore account all Objections against it, and all Attempts to set it aside, by substituting any other Form of Salutation in its room, to proceed from a Disregard to the Authority of New-Testament Precepts, and to be the laying aside one divinely appointed Mean for promoting that mutual Love which is essential in true Christianity.

WE use it not only at the Love Feast (when each Member salutes the Person that sits next him on each Side) but at the Admission of a Member, and at other Times occasionally, when it seems natural to give a Token of Love to each other.

IN the Evening, before the Lord's Supper, we make a *Collection* every Lord's Day for the Sup-

port of the Poor, and defraying other Expences. We take the Rule for it from 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2 \*. And from the Connection between the Fellowship and Breaking of Bread, intimated Acts ii. 42. This scriptural Method we prefer to any annual Subscriptions, which are of mere modern Contrivance.

WHEN this Collection is made, one of the Elders proceeds to administer the *Lord's Supper*, which is done in the most simple Form, according to the Scripture.

THIS being finished, we proceed at last to another Christian Duty expressly required of the Churches, viz. *Exhortation*, Heb. iii. 18. 1 Thes. iv. 18. Heb. x. 24, 25 †. called *Prophefying*, probably meaning, the explaining of the Old-Testament Prophecies. See and read 1 Cor. xiv. 3, 24--33. Accordingly, after Prayer, the Brethren are called upon to exhort one another; or to propose a Question for Edification, on some Portion of Scripture.

\* 1. Cor. xvi. 1. 2. Now concerning the *Collection* for the Saints; as I have given Order to the Churches of Galatia, so do ye: Upon the *first Day of the Week* let every one of you lay by him in Store as God hath prospered him, &c.

† Heb. iii. 13. *Exhort one another* daily. 1 Thes. iv. 18. Wherefore comfort or *exhort one another* with these Words. Heb. x. 24, 25. Let us consider one another to *provoke unto Love, and good Works*, not forsaking the *assembling of ourselves together*, as the Manner of some is, but *exhorting one another*, &c.

BUT this being the Time usually appropriated to hear such as would speak to the Church for Admission, the Exhortation is sometimes omitted ; but then the same is attended to at our Church-Meetings on Tuesday and Friday Evenings at Six o'clock ; as we are desirous to take frequent Opportunities for putting each other in Mind of the manifold Grace of God, and to provoke one another unto Love and good Works.

WE practice the *Baptism of Children*, because of such (as our Lord avers) is the Kingdom of Heaven ; and therefore they are of the one Body to which the one Baptism belongs--Because the Ground of *his* Faith, who in adult Age believes and is baptized, is the PROMISE which is to him and his Children ; and so is as good a Reason for their Baptism as for his own--Because the current Address of the Gospel is : " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and *thy House*," Acts xvi. 31. And the current Practice consequent upon it was, that whole Households were baptized, the Person that believed, and *all his* straightway.--And because we are assured that if but one of the Parents believe, the Children are not unclean but *holy*, 1 Cor. vii. 14. Yea, we cannot but apprehend that the Denial of it, and the Objections against it, intimate a Disbelief and Denial of the Sovereignty and Freedom of divine Grace : as if there must be something in an Adult Person, to be a Ground of Hope towards God, which cannot be in an Infant.

THE Power of divine Grace and Authority has of late appeared very remarkable, in bringing such Numbers to give up their Objections, and to own before the Church that their Opposition to it proceeded from the worst of Principles; even the Denial of and an Opposition to that Grace which alone can save, and give Hope to the guilty and helpless.

WE all agree in the Unlawfulness of *eating Blood, & Things strangled, i. e.* Creatures choaked and suffocated in their Blood, or, as it is called, Gen. ix. 4. *Flesh with its Blood.* For this is solemnly forbidden to the Gentile Converts, Acts xv. 20, 28, 29. xxi. 25 ||. And their abstaining from these Things is there insisted on as a necessary Term of their Communion in the Privileges of the Christian Church: we likewise find this very Edict referred to, and declared to be binding upon the Disciples of Christ, to his second coming; Rev. ii. 24, 25 †.

SINCE our Lord tells his Disciples that they ought to *wash one another's Feet*, according to the Example he gave them, John xiii. 14. 15 \*. we think this also incumbent upon us, whenever it can be an Act of Kindness to a Brother, so to do.

|| Acts xv. 28, 29. It seemed good to the holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no other Burden than these necessary Things; that ye abstain from, &c.

† Rev. ii. 24, 25. I will put upon you none other Burden, but that which ye have already; hold fast till I come.

\* John xiii. 14, 15. If I then, your Lord & Master, have washed your Feet, ye ought also to wash one another's Feet: For I have given you an Example that ye should do as I have done to you.

WE reckon it unlawful to *lay up Treasures on Earth*, by setting them apart for any distant, future, uncertain Use: But think it incumbent on us to lay up Treasure in Heaven, by *giving Alms*, Matt. vi. 19 20. compared with Luke xii. 33. readily doing good to all Men, especially to the Household of Faith, Gal. vi. 10. Every one therefore is to look upon all that he has in his Possession and Power, as open to the Calls of the Poor and Church, to contribute according to his Ability, as every one has Need. A Reluctance to this, we esteem one plain Effect and Evidence of *Covetousness*. And as all the several Churches in Connection with us have one Cause at Heart, aiming to maintain a cordial Friendship and open Fellowship with each other as much as possible, so they all think themselves bound to contribute liberally for their mutual Assistance and Support, as Occasion may require. See 2 Cor. 8th and 9th Chapters.

WE think every Christian must be a *loyal Subject*, submitting himself in civil Concerns to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake, punctually regarding the Rules laid down Rom xiii. 1--7. 1 Pet. ii. 13--17. This was required of the Disciples and Churches, when they were under a tyrannical and persecuting Government; and it cannot be less a Duty, under the present mild and peaceable one.

THOUGH we do not find any express Precept or Precedent in Scripture for *family Prayer*; yet

we esteem it the Duty of Masters and Parents, as it seems necessary for maintaining the Fear of God in a Family. But while we observe this Particular strenuously insisted on by many, who can in other Instances evade some of the plainest and clearest Precepts and Precedents in the Word ; it gives us Reason to suspect, that they are influenced to their religious Practices, not by the Fear of God, the Authority of Christ, or the Spirit of Truth ; but by the Fashion of the Times, the Rules of Decency and Conveniency, a Regard for their worldly Reputation, or by some self-righteous or superstitious Motives. The same Judgment we are obliged to form of those, who make Conscience of keeping the first Day Sabbath ; but can neglect and even object to the weekly Communion, and the brotherly Exhortations ; can even ridicule the Feasts of Charity and the holy Kifs, and argue against Abstinence from Blood ; Things as expressly mentioned in the Word, and even more frequently intimated and enjoined, than what they contend for.

We judge it absolutely necessary to avoid the Spirit and Practice of the ancient Pharisees, in making more Sins or Duties than the Scripture has made ; and in making void the divine Precepts by human Traditious or logical Evasions. We dare not make Laws where Christ has made none ; nor dispense with any he has given us.

Therefore, as we cannot find where *Diversi-*  
*on*, public or private, is forbidden ; we account

any Amusement lawful, that is not connected with Circumstances really sinful. Yet as we esteem a *Lot* to be a *sacred* Thing, Prov. xvi. 33. \* we judge the using it in Diversion to be unlawful, and are therefore against playing at *Cards* or *Dice*, &c. even as we should be against taking the Name of the Lord in vain.

WE have a *Plurality of Elders*, Pastors or Bishops, in each of our Churches; as it is certain the primitive Churches had ||; Acts xx. 17. Phil. i. 1, &c. The Apostles were particularly concerned that every Church should be thus furnished; Acts xiv. 23 †. And Titus was ordered by Paul to ordain *Elders in every City*, Tit. i. 5. We therefore think it necessary that there should be two Elders, at least, present in every Act of Discipline, and at the Administration of the Lord's Supper.

In order to know who should be *chosen and ordained* to the *Elder's Office*, we look attentively into 1 Tim. iii. 1--7. Titus i. 6--9. where their Qualifications are professedly laid down. We esteem it our Duty to chuse such to the Office, who appear to answer the *scriptural Quali-*

\* Prov. xvi. 33. The *Lot* is cast into the Lap; but the *whole Disposing* thereof is of the Lord.

|| Acts xx. 17. He sent to Ephesus and called the *Elders of the Church*. Phil. i. 1. To all the Saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the *Bishops and Deacons*.

† Acts xiv. 23. And when they had ordained them *Elders in every Church*.

fications, not objecting to any for want of human Learning, or any such Acquirements as are commonly thought necessary, that they might make a decent, reputable Appearance in the World; such Things not being at all mentioned by the Apostle among the necessary Qualifications. Neither do we think it any Hindrance to their Election, that they be such as are engaged in Trade and Merchandise, or any lawful Employment in Life; knowing that there were such among the primitive Elders, who obtained their Subsistence by their own Labor, as is plainly hinted Acts xx. 34, 35\*. At the same Time we would reject from the Office all such who had not these Scriptural Qualifications, however learned, valuable or reputable they may otherwise be. We aim to keep exact and close to the Scripture, neither insisting upon any more Qualifications, nor being satisfied with any other or fewer, than what we find expressly pointed out to us in the Word.

As to that Phrase, *The Husband of one Wife*; in the Greek, *A Man of one Woman*, 1 Tim. iii. 2, 12. Tit. i. 6. we do not conceive that it stands absolutely opposed to a Person in single Life, because we find some of the Officers in the primitive Church, even Apostles and Evangelists, were unmarried Persons: neither can we think it stands opposed to the having two Wives at a

\* *These Hands have ministered to my Necessities, &c.* I have shewed you all things, how that *so labouring ye* (Elders or Bishops) ought to support the weak, &c.



Time, as this would be inconsistent with his being so much as a Member ; and therefore must be opposed to his having married a second Wife. This Interpretation is suggested and confirmed by the similar Phrase, of the Widow's having been the *Wife of one Man*, 1 Tim. v. 9. If one that is an Elder, being a Widower, should chuse to marry a second Wife, he is not restrained from it ; only in that Case, he is to lay down his Office, and become a private Member.

WHEN any one (or more) of the Brethren is found to answer the Descriptions of a Bishop or Elder, he is chosen, and called by the Church to the Office, and *ordained* by Prayer and Fasting, and the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery or Eldership ; who likewise on this Occasion give him the right Hand of Fellowship, Gal. ii. 9. And instead of giving him any Charge of merely human Composition, the Charge which we find in 1 Tim. vi. 10 to 16. or some other suitable Part of that Epistle, is read distinctly to him by one of the Elders ; in which the whole Church signify their Concurrence by saying *Amen*.

THE Choice and Ordination of a *Deacon* (whose Qualifications are described 1 Tim. iii. 8 to 13.) is done in much the same Way, only without Fasting & the right Hand of Fellowship.

WE are willing to *receive into our Communion*, even the poorest and vilest of Mankind, who by

their Profession appear to understand and believe the TRUTH ; who profess Repentance from dead Works, whether Pharisaical or Profane, and discover a Readiness to do whatever Christ has commanded. This Profession is made before the whole Church ; when the Elders first, and afterwards the other Members, ask such Questions as they find necessary, until the whole Church are satisfied.

ON these Occasions, Opportunity is frequently taken to enquire and exhort concerning a conscientious Regard to *Closet Prayer, Family Religion, and Relative DUTIES.*

WHEN the Church are all agreed to receive any into their Fellowship, Prayer is offered up, attended with the Imposition of Hands upon the Person received, as a scriptural Token of Blessing in the Name of the Lord.

AFTERWARDS, the Elders and Members salute him with the holy Kiss, to testify personally and singly that they heartily welcome him into the Fellowship, and love him for the Sake of the Truth he has professed.

IN Matters of *Offence*, or in any Cases wherein the Scriptures require *Admonition and Censure*, we aim to follow, with the utmost Exactness, the Rules that are given us in Matt. xviii. 15 to 17. 1 Cor. v. 6 to 13. 2 Thes. iii. 11 to 15. and in other Places.

WE judge it our Duty to admonish and censure a Brother or Sister for any *Breach of Brotherly Love*, & for any *Act of Profaneness or Immorality*.

WE dare not continue in our Fellowship any Railers, Drunkards, Extortioners, Unjust, Fornicators, or unclean Persons; any Sabbath-Breakers, profane Swearers, or Perjurers; any Children disobedient to their Parents, Servants disobedient to their Masters, Subjects disaffected to their King or Government, any Smugglers, or such as refuse to give to all their Dues; any covetous Persons, or such as are discontented with their Lot in Providence, &c. &c. In a Word, we are for cutting off, or turning away from, all such as are of any of the Characters mentioned 1 Cor. v. 11. 2 Tim. iii. 2 to 7. and if there be any other Thing that is contrary to sound Doctrine, 1 Tim. i. 9, 10.

WHEN any particular Act, discovering such Characters, is found to be committed by a Member; he is to be rebuked and censured for it, and treated as we are directed Matt. xviii. 15, 16 \*. If after these previous Steps are taken, the Person justifies his Practice, or persists in it, he must be brought before the Church, and if he will not hear the Church, he must be cut off. If it appears that the Person be only overtaken in a

\* Matt. xviii. 15. 16. If thy Brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault, between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy Brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, &c.

Fault, we are to restore him in the Spirit of Meekness, on his appearing to repent, Gal. vi. 1. But if what he is justly charged with be a scandalous Crime, or found to have been his habitual Practice, an immediate Excommunication is required, according to 1 Cor. v. 5, 13.

WHEN a Person is excommunicated, it is done in the Presence of the whole Church ; his Crime or Crimes are specified, are attested with clear satisfactory Evidence, and are proved by the divine Word to be contrary to the Will of God, and the Gospel of Christ. And when the Church are agreed that this solemn Act should pass ; suitable Supplication is offered up, one of the Elders praying, as the Mouth of the Church, that the Transaction may be blessed to him for the Destruction of the Flesh, that the Spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. y. 5.

A Person thus excommunicated is to be treated by us, not merely as we would one who never made the Christian Profession ; but we are to be shy of his Company, as the Jews were of an Heathen Man and a Publican, Matt. xviii. 17. For there is a Familiarity allowed us towards Fornicators, &c. of this World, which we are forbidden to use towards Persons of the same Characters, who have made the Christian Profession : for with such we are commanded not to eat ; *i. e.* in any such Manner as would inti-

imate a familiar Friendship, 1 Cor. v. 9, 10, 11. We are obliged to look upon such an one in the Light of an Apostate from the Faith, or from the Obedience of it, and his Condition to be more dangerous and deplorable, than that of one who never professed the Faith, 2 Pet. ii. 20 to 22 \*.

We find it indeed lawful to receive such an one a second Time; but not without the fullest Evidence of Repentance that can be given, even to that of his being in danger of being swallowed up with overmuch sorrow, 2 Cor. ii. 7, 8. But if this Person should incur the Censure of the Church after this second Reception, and be cast out; we dare not receive him again: partly because we have no scriptural Instance of a third Reception of the same Person; and partly because it is impossible we should obtain a fuller Evidence of Repentance than that which he had given before, and which has in fact been proved to be hypocritical. Such is the solemn Check which the appointed Church-Discipline puts upon all Disobedience to the Will and Gospel of Christ!

BUT after all, we have no Scripture Warrant to inflict upon any excommunicated Person any Penalty. We detest the Thought of attempting

\* 2 Pet. ii. 20---22. If after they have escaped the Pollutions of the World, through the Knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, & overcome; the latter End is worse with them than the Beginning.

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to deprive him of any of his civil Liberties and Privileges ; on the contrary, we are as careful as we can be, that he should sustain no Injury in his worldly Reputation or Interest by it ; that so *Nothing but* the Authority of Christ in his Word may strike his Conscience to bring him to Repentance.

Thus far we have learned from Scripture, the Course of our Duty relating to *ordinary Cases* ; but we are far from thinking ourselves either infallible or perfect in the Knowledge of Scripture-Truth or Duty. As we proceed in our Christian Fellowship, Circumstances may, doubtless, occur, which may be a Means of correcting Mistakes, or obtaining further Knowledge ; but so far as we have attained, it is certainly our Duty to walk by the same Rule, and mind the same Thing, without being intimidated or slackened therein by the Frowns or Smiles of those around. Many Cases may *occasionally* occur, which will demand the conscientious Attention of the Church, and a joint diligent Search to know what the Will of the Lord is. But we are not for perplexing ourselves with supposed Cases ; such as never have happened and never may : thinking ourselves under no Necessity to come to any explicit Agreement upon any merely supposed Case ; until it actually arises in the Church, and we are called to consider it.

In every Church Transaction, whether it be receiving, censuring, or expelling Members,

chusing Officers, or the like ; we esteem *Unanimity* to be absolutely necessary. Nothing is decided by the Vote of a Majority, but by the most explicit Agreement of every Member present. For this Purpose, whenever any Thing is to be determined, the Name of every Member is called over in Order, and each one distinctly has Opportunity and Liberty to inquire or object, as his own Judgment and Conscience may dictate ; and nothing is ordinarily effected, till the whole Church present have expressed their Agreement to and Satisfaction with what is proposed. In some Cases indeed there are dissenting Voices. The Reasons of the Dissent are thereupon proposed and considered. If they are Scriptural, the whole Church has Cause to change its Opinion : if not, and the Person persists in his Opposition to the Word of God, the Church is bound to reject him.

Such an Unanimity as this we think not only possible and practicable ; but actually required in a Church, and necessary to their cordial, conscientious, and comfortable Fellowship. It is *promised*, Jer. xxxii. 39 \*. It was *prayed for* by him whom the Father heareth always, John xvii. 21 to 23 ||. It is exemplified Acts iv. 32 †. It

\* Jer. xxxii. 39. I will give them *one Heart*, and *one Way* that they may fear me, &c.

|| John xvii. 21---23. That they *all may be one* as they may be one even as we are one : I in them, and thou in me : that they may be made perfect in one, &c.

† Acts iv. 32. And the multitude of them that believed were of *one Heart* and of *one Soul*

is *illustrated* by the Similitude of a natural Body and its various Members, 1 Cor. xii. 12 to 27. It is *exhorted* to and required 1 Cor. i. 10. and Phil. ii. 2 \*. And the *Ground of it* is clearly explained, Eph. iv. 4 to 6 †. And wherever it does really exist, we count it an Effect of the same supernatural Power, which brings Persons to be united in the Faith.

WE dare not esteem any of the Precepts or Duties of the Gospel *trivial* or *punctilious*; nor admit of such a Distinction between great and little, moral and positive, substantial and circumstantial, more or less weighty; as shall give way to the omitting any Thing that is required, or the committing any Thing that is forbidden: Knowing that Man fell at first and ruined all his Posterity, by the Breach, not of a moral, but of a positive Precept; even such an one as our Reason would be apt to judge punctilious, trivial and circumstantial. We remember likewise what our Lord says. He that breaketh one of these *least Commandments*, and shall teach Men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. In a Word, we conceive *every* divine Precept to be *sacred* and *indispensible*.

\* 1 Cor. i. 10. That ye be *perfectly joined together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment*. Phil. ii. 2. Fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be *like minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind*.

† Eph. iv. 4. There is *one Body and one Spirit*, even as ye are called in *one Holy Spirit of your Calling: one Lord, one Faith, &c.*



HOWEVER, what we account the grand central Duty of Christians, and the great Evidence of true Christianity, is *Brotherly Love* for the Truth's Sake, exercising and discovering itself in the various Ways which the Scripture directs : which, viewed in its full Extent, is the fulfilling of the Law. For no Breach of the divine Law, and no Disaffection to the Gospel, can appear upon any in the Fellowship, but this Brotherly Love teaches to check it, reprove it, censure it, and, if necessary, to cast the Delinquent out of the Church, for the Destruction of the Flesh, &c. while the same Love teaches to cherish and encourage what appears agreeable to Gospel Truth and Duty ; and excites to succour the Tempted, relieve the Distressed, support the Weak, supply the Poor and Necessitous ; and in a Word, " to bear one another's Burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ, " Gal. vi. 2.

No *Forbearance* dare we allow, besides a Forbearance with Persons different natural Tempers, and Capacities, and the like : or forbearing with them for a Time, while the scriptural Methods are taking to convince them of and recover them from the Error of their Ways. We can, and ought thus far, forbear one another in *Love*, Eph. iv. 2. More than this, would be the *bating* our Brother in our Hearts, by suffering Sin upon him. The mutual Forbearance required in Rom. 14th, we apprehend extends only to the *Jewish* Distinctions about Meats and Days, manifestly spoken of there ; which was allowed

and required while the old Covenant was vanishing away : but we cannot suppose, the Apostle intended in that Discourse to render any one *christian* Precept or Appointment indifferent.

UPON the above Principles, we are obliged to *seperate* from the Communion and Worship of all such religious Societies, as appear to us to be not professing the simple Truth for their only Ground of Hope, or not walking in Obedience to it : which we are directed and encouraged to do in 2 Cor. vi. 14 to 18. vii. 1. And we judge, we have a natural Right from the Principle of Liberty of Conscience, to make and maintain such Separation ; while we allow to others the same Liberty, without Grudging or Limitation.

BUT though we cannot extend our Christian Charity beyond these Limits ; yet we are ready to do good to all Men as we have Opportunity and Ability.

WE think it our Duty as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all Men ; to be obedient to Magistrates, and to avoid and discountenance every Thing that may disturb the Peace of the State or Neighbourhood.

WE are utterly against aiming to promote the Cause we contend for, either by creeping into private Houses, or by causing our Voice to be heard in the Streets or in the Fields, or by offi-

ciously obtruding our Opinions upon others in Conversation. We only hold forth our Doctrine by public reading and preaching the Word, standing fast together in the Faith of the Gospel, and practising what our Lord hath commanded us ; and are ready to give an Answer to every one that asketh the Reason of our Hope and Practice ; and to do it with Meekness towards Men, and without Reserve, in the Fear of God, 1 Pet. iii. 15.

If then we are reproached and hated, because we confine our Christian Charity within such seemingly narrow Limits, or for our following the Practices of the primitive Christians ; we are willing to suffer it for Conscience Sake ; without resisting Evil, but aiming to overcome Evil with Good ; knowing it to be our Duty, “ to love our Enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do Good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us : ” Remembering the momentous Import of those Words, 2 Tim. ii. 12. “ If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him : if we deny him, he also will deny us : ” This reconciles us to Shame and Contempt, in Hope that our Reproach will be rolled away, when “ Christ shall come to take Vengeance upon them that know not God and obey not his Gospel ; and shall come to be glorified in his Saints and to be admired in all them that believe. ”

THUS, Sir, I have given you as clear and distinct a View of our Discipline, Order, &c. as I can in Words : but nothing can afford so familiar an Idea of these Things as the being interested in them, or Spectators of them. Were you a frequent Spectator, I will not venture to say what Effect it would have upon your Mind : perhaps what you might observe, would appear strange, and on that Account disgustful ; being so very different from the usual Method of Worship and Fellowship : but I must be of Opinion, that it would be very striking to the Mind of one who has nothing but the divine Word for his Rule ; because the Things he will observe will be found so exactly scriptural. Whether or no you will chuse to take Lot with us, and enjoy the Comfort of Love, by an Union with such as are for doing whatever Christ has commanded, I leave to your own Judgement ; having no better wish for my dearest Friend, than that he should not be ashamed of the Testimony of our Lord ; but be Partaker of the Afflictions, and therewith, of the Consolations of the Gospel, according to the Power of God.

I remain

Yours, &c.