

AN EPISTOLARY DISCOURSE

by

John Dury

(Transcribed by A. Thompson)

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Wherein (amongst other particulars)
these following Questions are briefly resolved.

- I. *Whether or no the State should tolerate the Independent Government?*
- II. *If they should tolerate it, How farre, and with what Limitations*
- III. *If they should not tolerate it, what course should be taken to bring them to a conformity with the Presbyterials?*

Written by Mr. JOHN DURY
To Mr. Tho. Goodwin.
Mr. Philip Nye.
Mr. Samuel Hartlib.

Published by a Friend, for more common use.

Juli 27, 1644 Imprimatur,
Ja: Cranford.

LONDON,
Printed for *Charles Greene*, and are to be sold at his shop
in Ivie Lane. 1644

The copies of Letters to Mr. Tho. Goodwin, and
Mr. Philip Nye.

Worthy Sirs,

Although I am not yet settled here, nor can promise unto my selfe any leasure and freedome of spirit from other necessary thoughts, which my present condition does oblige me unto: and although I might imagine that there is little use, as yet, to be made amongst you, of any thing that I can propose tending to moderation in matters Ecclesiasticall, by reason of the distracted condition of the Civill State; Neverthesse, because I did promise you that I would put something to paper concerning the scope of my Negotiation, and the Arguments which I have used to perswade mens spirits unto mutuall forbearance; and because I know, that if one will observe the winde very narrowly, he shall hardly ever sow his seed, [*Eccles. 11.4*] or if he regard the clouds, reap his corne; therefore I will not delay any longer the performance of that which I undertooke: Which that I may doe in some order, I will branch out this Discourse into these particulars.

First, I will relate unto you the true state of my negotiation with the Lutherans, to bring them to moderation towards us.

Secondly, I will set down the heads of Reasons which induced me to this endeavour, an which I used to perswade others to that duty, which I have pressed upon them. /2/

Thirdly, I will let you know my opinion concerning your case, for which you desire to know these matters; that you may understand how far I take it to be agreeing or disagreeing with that which hitherto I have agitated, and what I would advise you to doe in it, for the advancement of Christs kingdome, and the publique edification of your Brethren.

The true state of my Negotiation is this, That I have endeavored to bring the Lutherans to some orderly treatie with us, and

joynt resolution among themselves, concerning the wayes of Peace and Unity in the publique and private profession of Christianitie, that the scandalous and unconscionable effects of our divisions being taken out of the way, some joynt course might be sealed to set forward the Reformation of the Protestant Churches, unto that period whereunto it may by Gods assistance be brought. To this effect, having first dealt with our own side, and gotten their consent unto this Aime, I have offered my selfe also unto the rest as a Sollicitor of the Councils of Peace, and a Servant of the Communion of Saints in this matter. In this posture I have taken the freedome to provoke all unto the duties of love and of good workse, either by proposing or asking counsel of them, or making motions tending to the composure of differences. For, having made my spirit voyd of partiality, and laid aside all private aimes, I took up universall rules which I thought appliable unto all mens understandings in Theoreticis, and to their consciences in Practicis; that by this meanes we might be brought to follow the Apostles counsel unto the Philippians, *chap.3.15.16.* which is, that so far as we are come, we should mind the same things, and walke by the same rule, as it becometh those that indeed are brethren of Jesus Christ. For I did not aime so much at a bare Toleration betwixt us and Lutherans, as at a publique profession of Brotherhood, whereupon I conceived a Toleration would follow of it selfe in matters of lesser difference, which could be no just occasion of a breach: and as for things of greater importance, wherein some did seeme to find sufficient cause of breaking of Brotherhood from us: I supposed these might be removed two wayes; first, by a fundamentall confession of faith, and of the duties requisite unto salvation, which /3/ might be common to all, and openly professed as the summe and substance of our Religion, and badge of our fraternal union. Secondly, by a common and infallible rule of interpreting the Text of holy Scripture, by which all Doubts incident in other matters, not fundamentall, may be cleered and decided: and as the fundamentall Confession should serve for all in common, so this Rule of interpretation should be a meanes to joyne the more learned sort in one

sense and meaning, lest their differences about matters of lesser moment might rent the body in pieces, notwithstanding the former tye of Union in fundamentall truths. For seeing we see daily, that amongst men of good repute otherwise for godlines in their life and conversation, and for zeale in their profession of Religion, great disputes fall out for small matters, (as for the different accep-tion of a word in a place of Scripture, or for the meaning of a sen-tence which may be diversely interpreted according to the different relations which it hath unto the matters precedent and conse-quent:) and these disputes ofttimes come to such a height betwixt them, that they not onely lose all charitable affections and amica-bleness of conversation one towards another, but also involve others, their hearers, into the same breaches of Christian love, from whence Schismes and Separations at last arise and increase in the Churches, although there be no just cause thereof in respect of the substantiall and materiall points of Faith and Practice: seeing (I say) we daily see that this doth fall out, and that this alone is able to breed many divisions among the Learned, notwithstanding all other tyes of brotherly union and friendship betwixt them; there-fore I thought it would be expedient, if not necessary, to find some remedy for this inconvenient, which at last I suppose is found, and if God would be pleased to enable me to propose it, I hope it would prove effectual towards Men that are not self-conceited, but trac-table, either by the grounds of Reason, or of Conscience led in a spirituall way, which is above, but not contrary unto Reason; for spirituall Truths are rationally delivered in the Scripture, although men that are naturally rationall, are not able to comprehend the sense thereof. In a word, I conceive the remedy to be this; That when we have agreed upon the substance of /4/ Faith and Practice, we may have also some undoubted Rules whereby to reduce all matters which are extra-substantiall, unto their owne Principles, that the doubts which arise concerning the same, may be decided according to the Analogie of that Faith which is out of all doubt, and according to the cleere sense of the worde regularly analysed: So that the Rules, first, of determining Fundamentalls in Faith and

Practice; Secondly, of reducing doubtfull matters concerning Faith and Practice unto their own Fundamentalls; and Thirdly, of analyzing the Text of Holy Scripture demonstratively, are the meanes whereby the disorderly proceedings of all our disputes may be remedied. And the whole state of my Negotiation hath properly been employed in this, to bring the Lutherans as well as our own side, to intend joyntly the right apprehension and application of these Rules, as Antidotes to cure our diseases which are infectious, and spread their distemper in the spirits of all men that walk not by the same, to order their Theorie and their Practice, to the ends of Godlines and of mutuall edification through Love. You may perceive then, that I doe not negotiate for the decision of this or of that particular Opinion, about which most men are so earnestly set, either *pro* or *contra*; for I leave all such Disputes as matters of indifferencie to me; in regard of the scope of my Negotiation (although I make them not matters of indifferencie in regard of their weight, and in regard of my private judgement concerning them) and insist only upon the Rules which all men that handle Controversies rationally or conscionably should follow as well in Theory as in Practice, to come at last unto the decision thereof. In this state my Negotiation doth stand at this time with all parties, and my aim is to meddle with you no further than to this purpose at this time. Yet I never refuse, chiefly if it be required at my hand, or if otherwise I find it fit for edification, to let my judgement be known concerning particulars of Doctrine or Practice, which may be doubtful; but I stand not upon that as a matter of consequence in my Negotiation, but rather do it in obedience to the command of *Peter*, c.3.15. and leave my opinion to be judged by others according to the rules of decision of doubts, whereupon we do agree. Nor must /5/ you imagine that I doe by this Negotiation seeke to prescribe the Rules and Methods unto others, as one that would have masterie over their understandings, and perswade them to follow my directions; but I endeavour to draw them to a Consultation about such matters, that by an amiable Conference, matters of this nature tending to regulate our thoughts and affections in the worke of Reconcilia-

tion, may be beaten out and cleered, that when we have found the rules of proceeding without disorder and confusion, we may make use of them for the publique good, and our mutuall edification: and if you doe not disallow of this undertaking, you may come in as a healer of the breaches, and a repairer of the ruines of many Generations: For all that I desire, is to engage every one who is able, to helpe to contribute assistance unto this worke of Reformation: and because you seeme desirous to draw from me some helpe unto your private Case, that others may be perswaded to use that Moderation towards you, which you thinke is just you should enjoy, therefore I am reciprocally desirous to draw from you some help towards the Publique, that all may be perswaded to use that Moderation one towards another, whiche: and if you worke effectually for this, and that according to the Rules which no man can refuse, I suppose in doing good to the Publique, you will find the benefit immediatly redound unto your selfe: For if you study to doe all things by a Rule, and can make others sensible that the Rule which you follow in your profession, is the best and most perfect way of Peace and Edification amongst all; you may be sure that you shall enjoy the liberty which your Rule yieldeth, when others shall perceive the Righteousnesse thereof. Let us then beat out the matter of Regulating our proceedings, and ordering our Theorie and Practise towards Peace, Truth, and mutuall Edification in Godlines, and we shall find in the end that our labours will not be in vaine in the Lord. For if we truly study to keep the unitie of the Spirit in the bond of Peace; and if we doe the truth which we know, in Love, no doubt others will doe in like manner to us, not only because our example will be a provocation and pattern unto them to walke as we do, but also and chiefly /6/ because they shal see that we do not walk at random or partially; but by a Rule which is universall, and will lead all men that will take it up, unto the fruition of that happiness which we aime at, which is no more but the unblameable Libertie of the Sonnes of God in the Kingdome of their Father, to serve him, and declare the praises of his goodness towards us, through Jesus Christ, in the great Congregation. This libertie of

serving God according to his will, and of speaking of his praises, and of his goodnesse, if we can shew how it should be used without partialitie and selfe-seeking, according unto cleere and infallible Rules tending to the Edification of all men; I say, if we can shew to this Generation this Libertie, what it is, and how it should be used, not to contradict and overthrow, so much as to build up, and gaine assent; we shall enjoy our share thereof without opposition: And because I am very confident hereof through Jesus Christ, I make bold to provoke you unto this Meditation with me; and will now leave you at this time to thinke upon the matter, till the next occasion of writing, wherein I purpose God willing to insist upon the second Head which I did propose unto my selfe in the beginning of this Discourse: In the meane time let us pray for one another, and for light towards all that are in errour and darknesse, from the Father of lights; To whose favour I commend you, as

Your Friend and Servant, in Christ,

JOHN DURY

24}June.}

4}July.} 1642.

HAGUE

*Grace and Peace be multiplied unto you from God the
Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

I Made a beginning on the 24. day of *June* last, to write unto you concerning the things which you desired to know of me touching my Negotiation of Peace amongst Protestants: then I did shew you first, that my Aime was not to procure a bare Toleration betwixt Us and Lutherans; but rather a Reall Profession of true Brotherhood. Secondly, that to procure this, I had laid the Foundation of my Worke upon the Apostles Rule, which is *Phil.3.15.16*. Thirdly, that to make use of this Apostolicall precept, and apply it unto the present occasion of the Churches, I had laboured to find out Three things. First, Rules whereby the Fundamentals of Faith and Practice might be determined. Secondly, Rules whereby Doubtfull Matters which are not Fundamentall, may be reduced to their own Principles of Faith and Practice, according to the Analogie whereof they should be decided. Thirdly, Rules of True and Demonstrative Scripturall Analysis, whereby the sense of the word, which is the last Judge of all Controversies, may be known. Fourthly, that to find these Rules, I did abstract my thoughts from all particular opinions in the way of my Negotiation, not endeavouring to prescribe unto any, my sense concerning these Rules, but rather to draw others to a Consultation and search with me of the Way of finding out the same: that when we should have agreed upon an Orderly way of proceeding in all doubtfull matters, to finde the decision thereof, we may at last come to some issue of the Controversies which hitherto by reason of the confused manner of agitation have been undecidable. This was the whole purpose of that Discourse. The second principall matter whereupon I was to insist towards you, was concerning the Reasons and Arguments which first have induced me to this study of Moderation, and which secondly I have used to perswade others towards the same.

First then, concerning my selfe, I do ingeniously confesse, /8/ that the mere love of Peace and Quietness, and the hope of doing good to the Church of God, did move me to embrace this endeavor, when I was called thereunto in *Prussia* by Dr. *Godeman* a Councellour of State to the late King of *Sweden*, in the yeere 1628. Since which time, as I have never intended to discontinue my purpose of solliciting the Publique Wayes of Peace, so I have had severall kinds of inducements binding my Conscience to the duty, and some encouragements which were able to support me against the manifold difficulties and impediments which have been incident to my way. The first inducement which bound my Conscience to thinke upon these Endeavours, was the Call which I had to thinke upon the same, which I could not but answer, except I should have been wanting to my duty in the Ministry of the Gospell. Therefore as I was provoked to thinke upon the Object of Peace and Truth, so I thought others would be moved in like manner to doe the same, if I did Call upon them to that effect. Hence it was that I tooke upon me to become a publique Sollicitor of these Endeavours; For I conceived that none that was Godly, wise and Learned, would refuse to concurre in so necessary a Worke, so profitable for holy Communication, and so fit for Correspondence in the Communion of Saints. Upon this ground you know that I drew a certaine Form of a Declaration to be subscribed by all such as would joyne to helpe by spirituall Councell these endeavours: To this you both did subscribe, and I did in some occasions require your advice and assistance; but what hath hindered the accomplishment of your promise, you your selves best know; perhaps God would have the fruits of your Meditations in this kinde reserved till this time, wherein they would be most seasonable. The Second inducement was the Necessitie of the times, wherein nothing could be more usefull for the Publique Good, then to heal the breaches of Protestant Churches, which we are all bound to pray for: and I in my simplicity did then, and still doe conceive, that what I am bound by prayer to sue for unto Almighty God, I ought also by my best endeavours so far as God does enable me, actually to accomplish

and promote. The Third inducement was the nature and property of the Work it selfe, as it hath Place /9/ in the Kingdome of God. This Consideration did not come at first so fully into my minde, as afterward when I had been a certaine space in action; for then upon tryall of my heart, and examination of my aimes, I found that in all the Scripture there was not any one duty so oft and so earnestly recommended, as this, which tendeth to the keeping of the unitie of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, and to the Care of the mutuall edification through love: Therefore I set my selfe with so much more zeale and diligence to dive into the properties of these virtues, whereby to discern the excellencie thereof, and what their usefulness is in the Kingdome of God: And when I perceived that all other virtues and Graces are uselesse, and unprofitable to the glory of God, and good of his Saints, except these be effectually joyned unto them; I rectified my purposes in many particulars, to make them answerable unto the nature of these duties, and settled a resolution unalterable, to pursue this aime continually, more than any other study whatsoever. I had besides these many other motives to draw me on towards these endeavours, which it is not needfull to mention; yet because some of them are of moment, and have much wrought upon me, I will name them briefly; as this, That I found the pronenesse of mans spirit to strive & to lift it selfe up against others for some particular matters of Difference very great: and then perceiving the danger of such strife, and the most pernicious effects thereof in the soules of men, and in the body of the whole Church, I was exceedingly confirmed in the love of Peaceable endeavours, as the only meanes to preserve my soul from being involved into the great inconveniences whereunto I perceived most men were wrapped unawares, for the want of a Rule to walke by in seeking Peace. Also this, that the only way to encounter with men of grosse humorus, and that are strongly led away into grosse errors, is to bring them unto the thoughts and affections of Peace and Unitie, to be intended according to just and equitable Rules with them from whom they dissent: for in convincing their understandings that they ought to walke by the

Rules of Love, which lead us to maintaine Peace, and aime at the ways of edification, they are made void of prejudices, and tractable to receive instruction. Moreover this, /10/ that all Disputes turne at last to bitternesse and vain jangling amongst all men, and become endlesse and without fruit, except the ayme of Peace and Reconciliation be intended, and a Rule of proceeding be used, which may lead us unto the same.

These are the principall heads of the Inducements which moved me to these endeavours, to which divers encouragements from time to time did concurre, whereby I have been strengthened against and oppositions which are fallen in my way to stop me in this course of Negotiation. First I had from time to time the cleere consent and full approbation of all the most Godly Divines of both sides, so long as their judgements were free and voyd of partialitie; and when they did fall off from me, I perceived that it came from groundlesse jealousies and false informations or suspicions, which did make them leave their true Principles and Rules of edification, which at first they had intended. Secondly, I had the concurrence of the chiefe States-men that were Rationall and Prudent in the wayes of true Government, who engaged themselves to give me reall assistance by their Authority. Thirdly, I found not only great hopes of proceeding, but real effects of my work, by God's blessing disposing the spirit of leading men unto the wayes of moderation. Fourthly, I saw that the very opposition of unreasonable men did turne to the greater advantage of my work, and the manifestation of the truth, so that at last it was almost indifferent unto me, whether I met with opposites or no, seeing I could turne all to my advantage. and lastly, I came to this resolution, that I made a Vow of perseverance in the Work, whether I perceived any remarkable furtherance of the Worke or no, in respect that I conceived it to be a Necessary Duty, whereof the event did depend upon God's speciall providence, to whom I was bound to referre the issue, whatsoever became of me or my endeavours. So that now I looke no more to the outward appearance of Men in this Negotiation, but unto the tenor of my Vow,

which I am sure is answerable unto the express will of God, and by this meanes I hope I am confirmed invincibly against all oppositions whatsoever.

These are briefly the Motives and Encouragements which have /11/ brought me to the Negotiation of Peace, and confirmed me therein hitherto. Now I must tell you of the summe of the Arguments which I have used to perswade others unto the same disposition towards Peace and moderation, which God has wrought in my heart.

First, the Woe which is denounced against the world by reason of Offenses, *Mat.* 18.7.8.9. is to be feared, and therefore we should take heed that we be not accessorie to the multiplying of the same. Now it is evident that many scandals are multiplied by reason of superfluous and disorderly disputes, which scandalize the little ones; and by reason of Contentions and partial proceedings, which divide the minds of the Protestants, & draw them into factions: and if we connive at these scandals, and labour not to take them out of the way when occasion is offered to us, we are accessorie thereunto, and so are liable to the woe denounced against the world, and the authors of offences. Secondly, the miserable effects of our endlesse strife and divisions is a large field of discourse to shew how the progresse of the Gospel is stopped thereby, how the Truth is darkned, how the practice of Godlines is neglected, how the Churches are consumed one by another, and made a prey unto the Common Adversaries, who lye in wait and watch for our destruction, and prevaile by nothing so much as by our inward confusions, disorders, and passionate debates among ourselves. This Argument is made plain from the present state of all the Protestant Churches in all Countries which are exposed to all manner of dangers, and laid waste in many places, by reason of the prevailing plots of the Papists and Socinians, which take effect, only because we do not intend to walke by one Rule, to be like minded in that whereunto we are come, and to Edifie one another (in that wherein we are at variance) by Common Principles, and Orderly Wayes of Prophecyng. Thirdly, the Benefits which would redound to all the Churches

from Peace and Unitie amongst themselves; and what Advantage the Gospel it selfe would receive thereby; and how by the joynt and Brotherly endeavours of Protestants, all Nations of the World, both Jewes and Gentiles, and Mahumetans, might be brought unto the sheepfold of Christ, and the Man of /12/ Sin in a short time quite overthrowne. This is a most ample and large subject to be insisted upon towards those that believe the Raising up of the Kingdome of Christ, and the Overthrow of Babylon in the latter times.

Fourthly, the expresse Commandements of God to seek peace with all men, and the manifold exhortations tending to instruct us in the wayes and meanes of love and peace, and happy condition of those that study to observe the same in the feare of God; are so many well-springs of reasons to move the consciences of men unto this duty and endeavour.

Fifthly, the example and forwardnesse of others in former times, and in these times also, with the preparatives used and made ready on all sides to entertaine the motions of agreement, and to concur in the Councils of Peace, are alleged as a Call offered from God, which all godly men are bound to entertaine with readinesse, except they will be found wanting to their duty before God in the Gospel of peace, and guilty of the Evills which follow upon strife and debate amongst Brethren.

Sixthly, the Brotherly Relation which is really by reason of the acknowledgement of the same saving Faith, betwixt us; doth binde us to make profession of Brotherhood and labour to edifie one another therein, except we will betray the Truth, and break the tye of one Faith and Hope, which obligeth us to provide and seek for one anothers Spirituall and Temporall good, as Members of one and the same Head Jesus Christ: For it being evident that the Lutherans and We are one in the substance of the same Faith and Hope; it follows that we are bound in Conscience to make this unity manifest by our Publike Profession; because we doing otherwise, suppress the chiefe fruit of that Truth whereby God is to be glorified, and Christ made knowne unto the world, as he doeth intimate, *Joh..17.21,22,23.*

Lastly, This Argument I have oft-times pressed, and found it Unanswerable; I say then, that as I finde my self bound to professe Brotherhood towards another, so I suppose every one will finde himselfe obliged unto the same duty towards me, if he will consider me as I doe him. Now I consider every one with whom I seeke Brotherhood in profession as he hath a Relation / [13] / unto God, who is my Father in Christ: If then I finde that hee hath the same interest in God which I have, and doth Call him Father upon the same grounds which I do; namely, by virtue of the same new Covenant whereby I am united unto God in Christ; then I doe conceive him to be my Brother, in respect that his soule is begotten by the same heavenly Father through the same spirituall seed, and in the wombe of the same heavenly Jerusalem, and to the same lively hope, by whom, through which Seed, in which wombe, and to which hope my soule is begotten. And if I finding him sound in the tenor of the New Covenant, must needs acknowledge him in my heart my Brother, and a sonne of the same Spirituall Father and Mother, then I ought not before Men to conceale the same acknowledgement, but am bound in Conscience (chiefly when it may tend much to his good, and to the manifestation of Gods glory) to make open profession thereof; although in some other respects there may be some differences of opinions and of customes of behaviour betwixt us: for all Brethren are not of the same stature, and clothed alike, and speake with one and the same tone, and alike readily: some are taller then others, and more comely: some more neat in their clothes, and speak more distinctly, and with more reason than others do; and yet this doth make no difference in the interest which they have all alike unto their Father, and to his inheritance, and in the Brotherly Relation which they have one to another.

If these Arguments were enlarged according to the richnesse of their subjects, they could fill up a great volume: But I suppose you desire nothing else of me but the intimation of these heads, to which some others could be added if time did permit; but I am straitned many ways and still distracted, by reason of the new

frame of life, and the unsetled condition of attendance, whereunto
I am come of late, wherein neverthelesse as I shall never forget the
Publike Good, so I shall alwayes be ready to shew my selfe,

Your faithful Brother and Servant in Christ,

JOHN DURY.

Hague,

7 July, 1642.

17

*Grace and Peace be with you from God the Father, and our Lord
Jesus Christ, Amen.*

You have received, I make no doubt, the two former letters, wherein you have seen the state of my Negotiation, with the Reasons which have moved me to undertake it, and which I proposed unto others to move them to joyne with me in the same Endeavours: I conceive that therein I have satisfied your desire, and my promise. I might therefore surcease from this subject; but because I hope it will be profitable unto you and the publique also, and I find it answerable unto my ayme of Sollicitation, to draw you unto a neerer consideration of those matters; For this cause I will proceed unto the Third point, which at first I did mention; which was to let you know my opinion concerning your Case, for which you did require these Declarations from me; for I supposed you would make use of my Reasons for your private Advantage to gaine the End for which you treat with some of your Brethren now in *England*, that namely they might be induced to beare with you, as you supposed I would have perswaded the Lutherans to have borne with Us. I doe not disallow of your purpose, nor am I unwilling to contribute assistance to it, so far as I judge it answerable unto the Rules of our holy profession, & the lawfull libertie whereunto we are called in the Kingdome of our Father: But I must truly confesse, that I would be loath to serve a particular Aime, as it is a particular, and not directly subordinate unto the universall end of Publique Edification in the Communion of Saints. For if I live not unto my selfe in particular, nor dare I aime at my own advantages in the profession of the Gospel; and if I may not seeke my own, far lesse should I seek another mans particular, as it is a particular: but as the Public Good of many is made up of several particulars, so I am bound to doe service unto every one; therefore I keep my selfe free from all, that I might be a servant unto all, in that which

is truly good; /15/ which is always common and appliable unto every one. You see then the Rule by which I walke, which doth keep me without prejudice, because I looke more unto the Spirits of men as they stand in relation towards others, to find a Way how to bring them to the same Rules of intending Mutuall Good and Edifying one another in that whereunto they are come, than unto their outward particular Actions or Designes, which I never reflect otherwise upon, but as they must be taken up and compared with the infallible grounds of Charity and Holines, wherein all the Meanes of Publique Edification are contracted. For all truths of knowledge and of Practice (for which most men so earnestly contend, in maintaining several Opinions) must end at last in these Two; or if they lead us not cleerely unto these, they are Matters of no consequence; but if they can be found directly Meanes to advance these, it is certaine that in all men's consciences they will easily be made manifest, if the Manner of proposing Evangelicall Truths Inoffensively be known and observed. Hence it is that before we propose Truths unto others (though never so important) we should always premeditate the Inoffensive Way of dealing with them, that our testimony may be received and without prejudice admitted by them. And I finde that this was the maine care of the Apostle, and such a matter wherein he doth place the chiefe character, as of the Children of God, who are fit to hold forth the word of life to a froward generation, *Phil.*2.15. so of his own divine Ministry, *2 Cor.*6.1,2,3,4. for the fulfilling of which without offense to others, he was willing to undergoe all manner of afflictions and distresses in all patience & long suffering, to shew that no inconvenience befalling to our selves, is such a hinderance unto the Gospel, as the least offence which may be given unto any to whom the Truth is to be proposed. So then although I be never so fully assured of a Truth, yet I must not propose without a Rule which may teach me to doe it without offense unto Edification. And now I am fallen upon this discourse with you, to lay a ground of Communication betwixt us, and to prevent jealousies which you might have of me, in case I should seem to dissent from you in

some things, or if perhaps I interpreted your dealings otherwise then /16/ you would have them understood: and indeed there is great danger in mistakes of this nature; therefore before I proceed, I think it would be very expedient you should briefly State your Case wherein you are in *England*, and let me know your true Aime, as I have made mine known unto you; For if I should guesse, & say that your Aime is to have the Libertie of Independencie; and if I should describe that Independencie so as others do, I suppose you would think your selfe wronged: Now I am loath to wrong those whom I desire to edifie, and by whom (I suppose, if we understand one another aright) I may be edified. Let me then have the benefit of a true Information before I proceed; and I will promise, that if your Aime and Way of proceeding approve it selfe to my judgement, that my Conscience will binde mee to assist you in it; For I have dedicated my selfe and my labours without partiality, unto all good undertakings which tend any way unto the Advancement of the Kingdome of Christ. If then you will shew me what your proper Endeavour is towards the setting up of Christs Kingdome, and by what Rules you frame your proceedings, as well in Spiritual as Temporal undertakings, as well in Ecclesiasticall as Civill Relations; I shall be obliged to shew my selfe effectually according to my light and abilitie,

Your faithful Brother and Servant in Christ,

JOHN DURY.

HAGUE

28{*July.*}1642.

7{*August.*}

A Copy of the Letter to Mr. Samuel Hartlib. Loving Friend:

The Apologeticall Narration of the Ministers who formerly were named Independents, but now refuse that title, which you have sent me, is penned with much art, circumspectly and advantageously for their end; & to me it has given some generall satisfaction in that which I did require hitherto from them, but never could obtaine, which was to know the true point of difference betwixt them & the other Reformed Churches. Seeing then you desire to know my opinion of their Way, I am willing to propose it; not to censure but to edifie you, and warne them, if my Discourse may be taken up without prejudice, which I hope both you and they will doe, because you know fully that hitherto I have not beene, and I assure you that henceforth I will not be wanting them in any duty of love which may advance the Kingdome of Christ; although in matters of Spirituall Communication with me about that subject, I never could finde any reciprocation on their part, even then when they have been entreated so to doe. But I will not make this a complaint, nor must you thinke that I am less charitable unto them for it: For I see that their aime is rather Private then Publicke, and that their whole Way is answerable to a particular Interest, to commend themselves in a distance from others, by some distinct practises wherein they suppose they come nearer to the right Way of Church government then others doe; whereof you shall know by this Discourse my Judgement. /18/

Their End in this Apologie is set downe in the close thereof to be this, *that they would perswade the Houses of Parliament to suffer them to have a subsistance in their owne land, with the enjoyment of the Ordinances of Christ peaceably, with the allowance of the latitude of some lesser differences.* The chiefe force of reason to perswade them to yeeld to this, is herein, 1. That elsewhere they cannot be in safety and health with livelihood. 2. That they have been sufferers

in the same Cause with the Kingdome in former times, even to exile, and in these present times they endure the opposition and reproach of good men, even to the threatning of another banishment; and yet that they are not changed from their resolution to walke as they doe. 3. That they differ little from the Reformed Churches in their Judgement about the present Work of Reformation of Worship and Discipline. 4. That if they have not beene furtherers of the Reformation which the Houses intend, yet they have not been hinderers thereof, nor disturbers of the Publike Peace. And to make all this appeare to be so, the Apologie is penned with a great deale of insinuation and strength towards popular capacities who looke not deeply into matters of this nature, and to whom the plea of Equality in Government, and the Liberty from being subject to Authority is very plausible; nor can the most Judicious greatly except against the thing pleaded for, if it be supposed that the particularities of their Way are truly answerable to that which the generall Narrative doth fairly insinuate; And if they be granted free from those inconveniences, which a stranger to them will hardly suspect. But some here who have been more nearly acquainted with their particular course than I am, seem to have something to say to that, yet I will not prejudge them in my thoughts, but doe beleve charitably all they say for themselves, as I would be beleved in the like case; and supposing all to be as true as may be imagined: I will discover my Judgement concerning the main Matter, which I take to be this:

I. Whether or no they should be Tolerated by the State as they doe desire?

2. And if they should be Tolerated; How far, and How long that should be; and What latitude of differences should bee /19/ permitted unto them, and What limitations laid upon them?

3. But if they should not be Tolerated, How they should be dealt withall to bring them unto that Union and Communion of Spiritual things with their Brethren, which by their owne Principles they will be bound in Conscience to maintain, and which their Brethren ought to rest satisfied withall.

Of these heads I will speake as one that looketh without partiality upon their difference, yet taking notice that they are with their Brethren joynd in consultations to advance the Kingdome of Jesus Christ by the meanes of His true Publike Worship, Government and Discipline which should be settled in *England* by the Authority of the supreme Magistrate.

To come then to the matters which I have proposed to my consideration: The first Question is, whether or no they should be Tolerated as they doe desire? To which that I may know what to say, I must consider their plea for themselves, and shew how far my judgement does finde strength therein, to evince the conclusion which they would have the State to yeeld unto.

They plead then for a Toleration in their native Country, because they cannot live out of it, because they will rather suffer all outward inconveniences then goe out of that Church Way wherein they are, because that Way is little different from that of their Brethren, and because they hitherto have not beene hinderers of the Reformation, nor disturbers of the Peace of the State by it.

The first Arguments are properly motives necessitating them to demand the favour of a Toleration; and the two last are Motives inducing the State to yeeld thereunto.

Their necessity is both Bodily and Spirituall: in respect of their body, they say, than cannot live elsewhere out of their Countrey conveniently: and in respect of their Spirit, they say, that except they have the freedome of their owne way, they cannot live in it contentedly, but will rather choose to be in exile. As for the commendableness of the Way whereupon their spirits are so strongly set to enduce the State to give it a Toleration: They say that it is but a little different from the Way of the rest of their Brethren, and so may be Tolerated without danger, and that the /20/ rather because they have hitherto given a prooffe of their peaceable disposition therein.

These pleas are made credible by a Narrative of their life and conversation in their charges, and by a declaration of their Judgements in matters of difference from their Brethren. And if any will

take notice more distinctly of the Particular Heads of the Narrative, he shall see that they insinuate.

Their Sincerity, Page I. and 2. Their Unpartiality, p.3,4,5. Their Amiable and Brotherly Correspondence with others at home and abroad, p.6.and 7. Their Way of Church Government, p.8.and 9. taken up from three Principles, p.9,10,11,12,13,14. differing from the Presbyterial, p.15,16,17. and in nothing inferior to it as they suppose, p.17,18,19,20,21. Their Innocencie from things laid to their charge, p.22.and 23. From factiousnesse although provoked to strife, p.24,25,26,27,28. Their Oorthodoxie, p.28. and 29. Their Moderation to bring matters of Discipline to a temper, p.29. declining the Scholasticall debatement thereof in Publike, p.30. The Conclusion inferring from all these premises the lawfulnessse of their desire insuing for a Toleration, in page 31.

Now how far the Conclusion is evinced from these Premises, and should be yeilded unto by the State, I will briefly declare: First, let it be supposed that all matters of Fact are true in this Narrative, and as full as they should be. Secondly, let it be granted that all these good dispositions of spirit whereby they commend themselves are fully in these Men, and will be in their Successours, which no man can promise: yet I think under correction, that except they can make it clearly appeare to the State that their Church Way of Non-Communion (for I know not what else to call it) is the only true Way of God, and that the Presbyteriall Way is not agreeable to the Word of God, in that wherein it differs from them; I say, except they be able to make these two things clearly appear, I think it would be no wisdome in the State to give them the Toleration which they do desire; and that for these Reasons.

First, because the Wisdome and the Piety of the State does intend to erect the true Ordinances of God: Except then they can shew /21/ that the true Ordinance of God is not in the Presbyteriall Way, but in their Way of Non-Communion, they have no plea for their request; For if they can enjoy the Ordinances of God, and all the Ordinances of God, and every Ordinance fully in the Presbyterial Way; they have no cause to desire the Toleration of another

Way of Church Government, nor would it be Wisdom in a State to yield it; except it be made to appeare, that in the Presbyteriall Way some of God's Ordinances in their full strength cannot be enjoyed.

Secondly, because it is no wisdom in a State to reject an approved Way of Government, which all the best Reformed Churches have received all this while, and acknowledged to be Gods Way, and by experience found to be safe and sound, and a strong hold against all manner of corruptions; and in stead of it to take up another, which is not yet known what it is, nor was ever tryed but in two or at the most three Churches, and that for the space of a few yeares, wherein a most dangerous Paroxisme of a great rent did arise amongst them, as I am credibly informed, and which may be gathered from their own Apologie.

Thirdly, it is no Wisdome to authorize two different Wayes of Church Government in a State, except it be to lay a foundation of Strife and Division therein, which may agree with some Machivilian, but with no Christian Policie. Therefore if the Toleration sued for, be not a thing done by divine right unto those that sue for it, but be craved only as a human favour (as this seemeth to be craved) it will be in no Wisdome in state to yeeld unto the suit, except it be induced thereunto by the necessity of avoiding some greater inconveniences then is the admitting of a seed of perpetuall Division within it selfe, which in my apprehension is the greatest of all others, and most opposite to the Kingdom of Christ. Now the lesse the cause of a Separation is, the greater the fault is in those that make it, and the lesse cause the State has to give Way to the making of it.

Fourthly, the Wisdome of a State might retort the Arguments of these Sutors thus: If these men that are but few in number, and if those whom they acknowledge to be their Brethren, are very many and great Churches; and if the matter of /22/ difference be very small, and such as ought not to disturb the Publique Peace, as they professe, and by their practice shew: then it follows, that these few ought not to stand by themselves at a distance from the rest of their Brethren, but they should joyne to them, not making a rent, and thereby expose themselves to the extremities of banishment

and want of livelihood in a strange Country. Now these men are but few, and their difference, as they say themselves, is but small, and ought not to disturb the Publique Peace; Therefore they ought to joyne with their Brethren, and we ought not to allow them the libertie of a separation, lest a Schisme arise from thence in the Church, and further trouble to the State.

And truly this Conclusion may be inferred from their premises, with more strength then that which they draw from it. If then they will punish themselves with exile, because they cannot have their wills, they can blame none but themselves. For in this case I should judge them persecuted by their own discontentednes.

Nor will the plea of Christian Libertie availe here; for the liberty whereunto we are called in Christ, does not give occasion to Singularitie, or permission to breake the bonds of Spirituall Unitie; which by the allowance of a publick Toleration of different Church Government, may be occasioned. Therefore to keep the Unitie of the spirit in the bond of Peace entire, and to prevent occasions which may be taken to abuse Libertie, a few should yeeld unto many, except they can fairely perswade those many to yeeld unto them: and if both sides in matters Tolerable should intend mutually to yield one to another, their Way will be, not to separate from each other, but to keepe the interest of love and Communion entire, till God open all our eyes to approve of things that are most excellent: For we that are Spirituall, or thinke our selves to be so, are commanded not to please our selves but our Brethren to edification: If then we desire to approve our selves more then others Spirituall towards God and his Church, let us strive to goe before others in all forbearance and long suffering, with meeknes bearing the weake and their burdens, to heale them, and not to open a sluice to let in strife and /23/ debates chiefly in publique, and for matters confessed to be of no great moment. Let us remember that the servants of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; and if to all men, chiefly then unto their nearest Brethren; for such we are commanded especially to consider, to exhort daily, and to provoke unto love and to good works: And as at all

times this duty is requisite, so now chiefly in this sad conjuncture of Publique Affairs, and at this occasion of Publique Deliberation whereunto the State has called them, for the advancement of a settled Reformation. Supposing therefore that this will be, and is the aime of those to whom I speake, as they are my beloved Brethren in Christ, so I desire from my heart their perfection, that I may be partaker of the Gospel with them in the greatest liberty thereof, which in my judgement can stand very well with the strictest obligations of spirituall Unitie. Only two Rocks may be avoyded in the outward cariage of matters towards Publique Edification: the one is, that under the pretense of libertie, no Licentious and Selfe-seeking Singularitie take place: the other is, that the obligation to Unitie become not a yoke to Tyranny, to bring the Spirits of Gods Children in bondage under humane Ordinances. If these that are called to give advice in Spirituall matters unpartially, can as good Pilots steere their course in this troubled and grown Sea of the State, betwixt these two hidden rocks, which are beset with dangerous quicksands on all sides; then they shall by Gods grace helpe to save the weather-beaten ship of the Church from shipwreck, and bring her to a safe harbour in the quieted state of the Kingdome. And in hope that the good hand of God may be upon them to helpe the furtherance of so good a Worke, I will suppose that the Apostolicall Rule of composing differences, *Phil.3.16.* may be practised in this case amongst those that are professedly Brethren. The Apostle saith then, *Whereunto we have attained already, let us walke by the same rule; let us be like minded, or minde the same things.* To such then as are spiritually disposed, let me speake in the words of the Apostle, as a joynt member of the body of Christ: I would entreat them to set down that whereunto they are attained, and wherein they fully agree in the profession of the Gospel: Then when this /24/ is known, let Rules be thought upon to walke by; and let these be received on all sides for the ordering of their course without offence one towards another, and for the setling of the bounds of their mutuall freedome, and of the ingagement to mutuall subjection and yielding to one

another in the Communion of Saints. These Rules being taken from the cleere precepts of the Word; the tye of the Conscience binding every one to mind the same thing, or to be like minded each towards another, should be superadded thereunto. The thing then which should be minded unanimously by all, is the duty of Mutuall Edification, by serving each other through love. This duty is to be tyed upon the Conscience by some Speciall Promise which is to be taken by all in the presence of God, as being professedly subject to his will by the tenor of the New Covenant, which he has made with us in Jesus Christ; that we being all bound over to him in Christ, may by the same tye of love be knit each to other, as members of Christs mysticall body, by our spirituall Relations. These Relations then are to be settled in the acknowledgment of the duties which one member oweth to another, as they stand jointly under the same head Christ Jesus. And verily me thinks this were no difficult matter for Men of spirituall and impartiall dispositions to doe freely among themselves; without troubling the Secular Magistrate with debates of the Formes of Spiritual Government, as matters merely Ecclesiastical, whereof he is no competent Judge. But if these Spirituall Relations cannot be settled by the Wisdome and loving Affections of Spirituall Office-bearers within the Church, amongst themselves, then it is just that they should forfeit their Spirituall Right and Libertie, which Christ has conferred upon them, and fall under the arbitrement of a Secular Power, which ought to looke unto its own Safetie, lest those that make divisions, and multiply breaches in the Church about small matters, disturbe also by that meanes the Publick Peace of the State; and then the Magistrate in his Charge over the Visible and Outward behaviours and actions of Men, as well Religious (so far as they are Publick) as Civill, in respect that they are Naturall; ought to become a *Zorobabel*, and take the plummet of just Authoritie in hand, to interpose and make Ordinances /25/ of Innocencie and harmlesse Carriage amongst those that in their strife about Spirituall Matters forget their Morall dutifulness unto the lawes of Nature and Civility.

If then these Men that pretend a freedom of Non-Communion should gather every one of their owne Churches, and get followers unto themselves, which would have the same privilege to be under no Authority resulting from the Spirituall Combination of Church officers; and if the State should find it necessary to Tolerate such Non-Communionists for a time to avoid greater Publike Evills, then I thinke that the Second Question should be taken into consideration; Namely, What latitude of difference from others should be permitted unto these in their Publike Worship? and What limitations of behaviour should be laid upon them to avoid disorder and trouble in that Church which is Principally allowed in the State? For if a Christian State should have but one only Church which it should owe as the childe whereof it is a nursing Mother; and if the owning of many Churches alike will be an inevitable cause of division within it selfe; then it followeth that all the Churches which wee Tolerated publikley besides that which it owneth, should be so Tolerated, as may be no prejudice unto that whereof it selfe is professedly the nursing Mother. And because the Substantiall Truth of Christianity is but one, the Wisdome of a State should Tolerate nothing that may darken, oppose, or eat out the Substantiall Truth. But because all those that make true profession of Christianity, doe it for conscience sake towards that which they conceive to be substantial in that Truth; and for this cause also desire to have the Liberty of their Profession, as thinking it an injury to have their Conscience restrained from serving Christ, or any thing forces upon it, which it cannot acknowledge to be Christs therefore as it is with the Conscience of every honest hearted Christian in this Case, so it ought to be with the Conscience of a State. For as no honest hearted Christian would have his conscience at perpetual uncertainties in matters of Divine Worship, nor would he have any thing which is not agreeable to the Will of God forced upon it; nor would he be obliged to give assent thereunto, before he should know it to /26/ be of God, or at least no way contrary to his undoubted Ordinance: So in like manner the Conscience of a State should not be suffered to be at perpetuall

uncertainties, nor should it suffer any thing to be forced upon it selfe, which it is not sure is of God, and subordinate unto his will; but in case to avoid a greater evill it be found absolutely necessary to admit a doubtfull profession in Publike, then a good conscience of two unavoidable evils may chuse the least, as we see *David* did, *I Sam.* 21. and *2 Sam.* 3.39. and at other times: yet it will endure that evill no longer then it needs must, but it will take it up onely as a burthen to bee laid downe again as soone as it may be without conveniencie. Thus then if the Non-Communion Way be found unavoidable, and yet not known to be Gods Ordinance, it may be admitted till it can be either laid downe or rectified, or approved to be of God; all which the Conscience of the State should declare in the Act of Toleration: Nor doe I think that the Non-Communion-ists themselves, if they will not goe from their Principles, will desire a Toleration upon other termes. And that it may be determined whether it be the Way of God or no; a course of Orderly Conference should be settled, which may not turne to any heat or breach of Brotherly Affections, but be a meanes to state the Question truly without mistakes; and to cleare the truth thereof by the evident Word of God. This manner of conference may be described in due time, if the State should encline to yeeld unto a Toleration upon the termes forenamed.

And then in the interim whiles the matter is in debate, the whole difference of their course in Publike, and the Underhand Practices which perhaps some of them might intend, should be so limited, as that the Peace of the Church and Government owned by the State should suffer nothing thereby. And to finde out these Limitations so as they themselves shall have no cause to except against the same; the state may command them to give up a Draught of the Whole Way which they intend to follow in Gathering, Framing, and Governing their Churches according to Gods Ordinances; requiring them to shew withall, what Limitations they would admit of, voluntarily in respect of others, that the latitude of difference wherein they desire to stand, may /27/ be no disturbance to the Peace of their Brethren, or occasion of Scandall to the Publike Profession of the Gospel: and

when this Draught is given up, then the state may give it to the other side to be considered, desiring them to declare if any thing more should justly be required of them to prevent scandalls, and maintaine the Publike Peace of that Religious Profession, whereby the Gospel may be most honoured and advanced, till in due time the causes of their Separation may be taken out of the way: and when these have given up their Considerations to that effect, the State may shew the same to the Non-Communionists to see what they will except against them; and if they except not against the Limitations required by the Presbyterians, then the Authority of the State may Ratifie the same; but if they do except against the foresaid Superadded Limitations, then the State is to judge and determine the matter as it shall thinke fittest for the Publike Peace and the honour of God in the Meanes of Outward Edification: Now because difficulties may be incident, and many doubtfull Cases arise in the Judgement of a State, How to determine of such Limitations, as may be disputable betwixt Parties of severall Interests; Therefore it ought not to be without some Rules whereby it may discern what is Justice, and give satisfaction unto its owne Conscience in a matter of so great concernment: It will then not be amisse to set down some Propositions tending this way, which if all sides agree unto, it may be hoped that the Limitations will not be very difficult to be found.

First, then it belongs to the Conscience of a State, to look both to the Outward Visible Worship of God in it selfe, and to the frame of Humane Societies wherein God is publikly worshipped; that neither in the Manner of Worshipping God, nor in the Society of the Worshippers, anything be admitted which may overthrow the truth of Christianity, or crosse any maxim of Civill Righteousnesse and Tranquility. By this Rule the Civill Magistrate will be bound to suffer no Idolatry and Superstition in the Forme of publike Worship, and to repress all Confused Tumultuous and Factious Meetings of the Worshippers, and the Occasions thereof. /28/

Secondly, as that which is meerly Spirituall, belongeth to the charge of Spirituall Office-bearers, wherein they are to be ruled by the Word only, within themselves: and that which is meerly Civill,

belongeth to the Charge of the Civill Magistrates, wherein they are to be guided within themselves, by the grounds of Right Reason, teaching the Fundamentalls of Humane Societie, consisting in the Principles of good Order and mutuall Innocencie to be prescribed unto their Subjects. So in things of a mixt nature, the care thereof belongeth to the Spirituall & Civill office-bearers joyntly, wherein both are to concurre to determine the matter according to their severall Interests therein. By which Rule, as the Civill Magistrate is bound not to meddle with the Spiritual, nor the Spiritual Office-bearer with the Civil Charge and Authority; so both are obliged to make their Charges usefull to the good of each other in the advancement of Gods glory. Therefore whatever may tend to make a Confused mixture of these Charges (such as is in Poperie and Papal Episcopacie) or to breake the amiable Correspondencie which should be betwixt them in their distinct charges, should be taken out of the way.

Thirdly, although the Spirituall Charges of the Kingdome of God belong not to the Civil Magistrate, yet the Conscience of the State professing Christianitie, is bound, not only to looke to the inconveniences which may hinder the progresse, or overthrow the truth of Christianitie, that they may authoritatively be taken way, but also to the conveniences advancing that Truth, that these may be furthered, so far as his sphere does reach, in the nursing care of Religion. By which Rule the Conscience of a State is bound, as I suppose, to these following duties. First, to satisfie it selfe in the knowledge of that which is the Infallible True Worship of God, and in that which is absolutely requisite in the publike Profession thereof; that it may be fully settled in the bosome of the State, and none suffered therein that will oppose the same. Secondly, to beare a hand over it, to nurse and protect it from Outward and inward Enemies, whenever the Church shall make a true discoverie of the same to the State. And thirdly, to oversee within it selfe the Outward discharge of all Duties belonging to Gods Ordinances, that for the matter, Justice, and /29/ for the manner, good Order may be observed therein: For although the Spiritual Ordinances are not

to be administred by the Civill Magistrate himselfe; yet the just and Orderly behavior of those that doe administrate the same, in the discharge of their duties, belongeth unto his Cognizance; and if he findeth that Injustice and Disorder is practised by any who is intrusted with the discharge of Spirituall duties, he ought to take Councell with the Spirituall Office-bearers of the Churches owned, and (as the case may be) also of the Churches Tolerated; how the scandall thereof may be taken away, and prevented in time to come. Fourthly, because the Right and Orderly Outward Calling and Authorizing of Ministers to a Spirituall Charge, and the appropriating of them to the Churches wherein their Charges are to be exercised, is the ground-worke and the Corner-stone of the Outward settlement of the Congregations, and consequently of the Publick Profession of Religion: therefore the Conscience of the State ought to looke narrowly upon this, that by the Congregations Tolerated, no root of confusion in any kind be planted or admitted to spring up, and trouble many in their Publick Societies: but all prudent and circumspect Limitations should be used to prevent, so far as the Sphere of the Magistrates charge in this kinde reacheth, that neither the Multitude having itching ears should be permitted to heap unto themselves Teachers after their owne lusts; nor the Teachers following their own humours, should be suffered to draw away Disciples after themselves, or to come in secretly upon the flocks as theeves, to steale their hearts from the Shepherd, or to breake in violently as grievous wolves, leaping over the pale, or breaking through the fold.

By these general Rules, and the Inferences which will cleerly follow thereupon, I suppose all, or most of all the Cases requiring a Limitation, may be determined, and that without any undue Authoritative Power, which the Non-unionists so much feare: For although they say that they yield not lesse, but more than their Presbyterial Brethren doe to the Civill Magistrate in Ecclesiasticall Affaires; yet because they dwell in Generalities, wherein it cannot be discerned what /30/ they yeeld unto the Magistrate, therefore it seemed expedient to me to propose also in a generall Way these

grounds, that if they have nothing to except against them, the Particulars may be thought on; the Toleration which therein they require may be justly limited thereby; and the troublesome uncertainty whereby all things are kept in suspense may be determined: For by reason of the doubtfull Generall way wherein they walk, and by reason of their great silence (concerning the Rules of Government, and the duties of Spirituall Communion) which is like a guard of darknesse over their proceedings; they trouble some, and give cause unto others that are no wayes partiall, to suspect, that they lye at their advantages, and love not the light; and this because their proceedings are not settled, and so cannot be brought to any tryall by the evidence of Common Principles. In the meane time they finding the applause of many that love the taste of liberty, grow strong, and thus keepe the State of the Church in Unsettlement.

And truly this suspension and uncertainty of matters Ecclesiastical leaving all the bonds of dissolved Government in loosenesse, may prove fatal both to Church and State, if God in mercie doe not prevent the danger which may ensue thereupon: Therefore I am troubled, and would faine be able to speake seriously, as unto those whom I esteeme my truly beloved Brethren in Christ, as unto those to whom I acknowledge my selfe a debter in the Gospell (for some of them have obliged me in the outward part of my Negotiation in the Lord) as unto those whose gifts I reverence, as unto those whom I love sincerely, even to be jealous of them with a godly jealousy; to them I say, I would faine speak in the freedome, meeknesse and sincerity of my love, as in the presence of Jesus Christ, to warn and to exhort them for the love of the Gospell, that they should neither give their Brethren cause to be offended at their distant walking, nor the Enemies advantage who watch for both their haltings, nor to me who have unfainedly fought to have communion with them, occasion to feare, that the frame of their Spirit and the Way in the Gospell, will be mainly, or is, to please themselves, and that the issue of it will be a Non-Communion, not only with the Presbyterians /31/ , but even with themselves, in the end the one falling from the other. All which I beseech the Lord in mercy to

prevent, that the transcendent gifts to which many of them have received, may not become either useles or hurtfull to the Communion of Saints; For hereunto as I have not been wanting to invite some of them heretofore, so now I would agaie Exhort them all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ, in whom also I would intreat them to receive this word of Admonition and Exhortation kindly; namely with that spirit wherewith they would desire me to bear with them in the like case; that is, if they should apprehend me to be in that dangerous condition wherein I may apprehend them to be, if I looke to suspicious appearances. But I love not to suspect evill, nor will I give way to sinister Reports; but hoping the best, I labour also to make the best of every thing, knowing that for the most part the mending or marring of matters, is in the right or wrong taken up of them. Let us then not judge by appearances, but let us judge a righteous judgement, as we would be judged: and if the impression which I have taken up of them is innocent and harmlesse, voyd of prejudice, and without partialitie; then I hope that they will have the same mind concerning me, and think well of these sollicitous expressions of my minde for their good. For I speake the truth, and lye not, that I am in paine, and afraid of something which may spring up from the opinion and consideration of ones selfe in the sight of more light and perfection then others have; which may be a deceit tending rather to make a show then to edifie, to seeme somewhat at a distance, rather then to be what we ought to be towards others in nearnesse. The Apostle faith, I *Cor.* 8.9. that *knowledge does puff up, but it is Charitie that edifieth*: and there he tells us also, that *if any man thinketh that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know*. It is then very dangerous to have an opinion that we know something, or that we are something in comparison and beyond others, and that we may stand by our selves: and from this danger, if I look to what is said & practised by the Brethren of the Non-Communion, I cannot judge them free: & how far they authorise by this way of distance, in private Christians (which have gotten some smattering of light in a heat /32/ of zeal) the murmuring, complaining, comparatively censorious

humour of the age; I would desire them to judge by themselves, in the unlimited libertie which is taken this way by their Members, and which is naturall to follow upon that frame of Church Government which they seeme to pitch upon. For having cast off the yoke of subjection, and absolute obedience under Episcopacie, if now they will dissolve also the bonds of brotherly Correspondencie in a Presbyterie; let them looke to it, they will find little or no Authoritie in a Consistorie; and the libertie which their members will take, and which indeed is permitted to them, to take over their Rulers, for want of an Aweband of just Authoritie, will prove contagious, and a leaven of Corruption unto all that have to doe with them. And for this cause I have laid the grounds of necessary Limitations for them, in case it be found absolutely necessary by the State to give them a Toleration, such as they desire.

Thus I have uttered my feares and jealousies, to give them warning of that which may & ought to be apprehended in their way, to prevent the worst, because I hope the best, and make no doubt of their ready willingnes, not only to take this Brotherly discovery in good part, but that they will also concurre gladly with me and others in the meanes which may remedie the same: of which now I must come to speake in the Third place.

Thus I have done with the Second; Now I come to the Third Question, wherein the Remedie of the breach betwixt them and their Brethren is to be thought upon in case the State should not yield unto the Toleration which they doe require. In this Case two things must be supposed; First, that the State will finde no such satisfaction in their Way, as to thinke indifferently of it: Secondly, that they of the Non-Communion can finde as little satisfaction in the Presbyteriall Government; For if either of these were, they would either get a Toleration, or need none. The way must be then, either to give satisfaction to their Brethren, or to receive it from them. I would advise then that they should labour to beget a good understanding betwixt them and their Brethren. For if their difference doth arise from a scruple /33/ of Conscience, the State is no competent Judge thereof: but it should be brought unto the

Tribunall of Jesus Christ, and judged by his cleere Word, amongst those that are Officers in his kingdome: and if it be no scruple of Conscience, then I see not why they should stand so much upon it; why the conscience of the State should be troubled with it; why the Church kept in so dangerous uncertainties for it. I suppose then that it is a Scrupulositie of Conscience rather than any worldly Consideration, which keeps them at a distance from their Brethren: and if it be so, the neerest way to receive satisfaction therein, is to deal with Men that make no lesse Conscience of their ways then they doe; whose Consciences are ruled by the same Principles that theirs are; who are every way alike and equall with them in the Kingdome of Christ, and who seeme to be offended at their cariage in the Gospel, as they seem to be offended at theirs: therefore they are bound mutually to take notice of, and to give satisfaction unto each other; nor should the Civill Magistrate be troubled with a Judicature of meere Spirituall Matters. Now the best Way to deal with one another for an Agreement, in my opinion is this: that either should propose to the other a faithfull Promise of mutuall love and willingnes to yield one to another, in that wherein they shal see the will of God directing them to further the means of Mutuall and of Publike Edification. This Promise being made, they should intend to declare each to other their Sense of that wherein they conceive the Meanes of Mutual and of Publike Edification to stand. Now then give me leave to lay open my thoughts unto you, that if by the Grace of God I may be able to let them see that they really agree in all those Meanes which are any way Fundamentall; and that the way of making use of the same may be intended Uniformly by both sides each toward other; then their difference may be composed, and their hearts joyned in the Lord for the advancement of his glorie, through the Unitie of the Spirit, in the bond of Peace. I am perswaded then, that they have both the same Sence of the New-Covenant of Grace, whereby the Soules of believers are joyned to God in Christ. This their Sence of this Fundamentall mysterie of Godlines may be declared from the cleare Words of Scripture which /34/ may be made a Fundamentall Confession of

Faith, as I have elsewhere in an *Epistle to the Lord Forbes* advised. And to this ground of all Fundamentalls in Christianity, all the points of necessary Doctrine, and of duties of Practice (which are no less Fundamentall in the profession of Christianity then the knowledge of Truths) wherein they also fully agree, may be referred: For it is cleare, that all which we either need to know or doe, is onely needfull for this end, to enable us to walke faithfully, and uprightly with God, according to the Tenor of his Covenant made with us in Christ.

This Declaration being agreed upon, they should acknowledge themselves therein, and thereby Brethren in Christ, and Sonnes of the same heavenly Father, Servants of the same Master, set in his House, and over his Household, to bring all men by their ministry, through the Tenour of that Covenant unto him: Here then they should take into consideration the duties of their ministry, to agree upon that which they should doe in it for Mutuall and for Publike Edification. For seeing they take themselves to be Servants of the same Master, sent forth by him in the same commission, to preach joyntly to the same people in the same Word: I conceive that it will be no hard matter, if they know their Masters will, to agree upon the Manner of doing his work: But to proceed orderly herein, the first Matter should be concerning the calling of ministers, for you know that no man may take this honour unto himselfe, but only he that is called by God unto it, as *Aaron* was, *Heb. 5.4*. Therefore they should determine from the Word and the Practice of the Churches of all Ages, What it is to be lawfully called unto the Ministry? and What it is to be lawfully called unto a Particular Congregation to exercise the Ministry therein? If they agree in this (which I hope they will doe) by looking to the Word of God, and following the Practice of the best Reformed Churches; then their next care should be to consider what Relation Fellow-servants in one and the same Worke of the Ministry should have one to another, and how they should doe to strengthen one anothers hands, and to prevent the occasion of scandalls. And if they finde that they ought as Members of the same Body to have the same /35/ care one

for another, and that to shew this care to strengthen one another in their Ministeriall duties, and to prevent scandalls, nothing is so necessary as to doe all by mutuall Councell and joynt consent; then they should agree upon the Forme of such Consultations, and upon the Authority, which their decrees ought to carry in matters of doubt: Wherein as I would have them whom I call the Non-Communionists not to maintaine anything which may seeme to exempt the Spirits of Prophets from being subject unto the Prophets, from whence confusion and trouble will inevitably arise in the Churches: So I would not have the Presbyteriall Brethren to presse upon the other any obligation to make them subject unto such decrees, further then shall be necessary to make up breaches and prevent scandalls, which otherwise will be unavoidable: And this I make no doubt they will yeeld unto; that the joynt Consent of many in a Spirituall Senate should sway the Spirit of one or of a few to submit it selfe in Circumstantiall Matters which are not precisely determined by the Word, but left unto the generall Rules of Christian discretion, because the Apostle faith, that the wisdome which is from above is peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, *Jam.3.17.* from whence it followeth that such as are endued with this wisdome, will easily be entreated, and not self conceited, but yeelding to the Common advice of their Brethren in matters only determinable by Spirituall discretion: For even as one member in the naturall body, will be swayed by the joynt inclination of the rest, so it ought to be in the Ministeriall society of Spirituall Office bearers in the Senate of Christs Kingdome: Now that they ought to be joynd in a Spirituall Senate, and Ministeriall Society amongst themselves, is cleare from the necessary end of Mutuall Edification, from the evident and constant Practice of the Primitive Church; from the precept of Christ who commandeth a Brother offended at an incorrigible Brother, after a private admonition, to tell the Church; and from the Precept commanding all endeavour to keepe the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, *Eph.4.3.* which cannot be effected without some joynt care to walke uniformly in the Publike Worship of God as it becometh the Members of the same /36/

body, whereof Christ is the head, that the world may see that they all belong unto him: For this is that which Christ prayed for unto his Father, *Joh.17.21.23. That all beleevers may be one*; and if all beleevers, then farre more all Ministers of the Word, because they are sent forth to edifie the body of the Church, *till we all come unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, Eph.4.13.* if then they are appointed to bring others unto the Unity of faith and love, it is cleare that to doe this they are obliged to maintaine the bonds of Ministeriall Communion amongst themselves, which cannot be done more effectually then by such Consultations as are used in Consistories, Presbyteries, and Synods, the true intention and nature of which, is not Coactive, but Auxiliary. And if to make up one single Congregation they require a Covenant betwixt each Beleever and his Brother, and betwixt them All and the Pastor that should watch over their Souls; I see not why they should refuse the like Covenant to be established among the Pastors of several Flocks, who are bound as Officers in the same household of Faith, to watch one over another under the direction of the Supreme head of the Family, the Shepherd of Souls, Jesus Christ. I will not say that the tie is alike strong, or the Relation equally binding between Pastors and Pastors, as it is betwixt Member and Pastor, or between Member and Member in one Congregation; I say I will not positively affirme it, but that it ought to be made as strong as a Covenant of Brotherly love and care for one another in Christ, can make it; and as the aim of strengthening one anothers hands in the work of the Lord, and of standing joyntly in a fight against the world, can require it, I doe strongly assert, and thinke those, that do not mind this aime, and the true meanes of entertaining the same, guilty of a great sinne against the Communion of Saints, because they seem to seek a Particular Interest of their owne, rather then the good of others, whom they are bound to serve for their edification, although it may be with some inconvenience to themselves by stooping to their infirmities and bearing of their burthens. But this duty is little minded on all sides, and therefore the wayes of Peace are so difficult.

If then it cannot be denied that Gods Servants in his House, /37/ and worke, should not live at a distance as strangers, but stand together as Members of the same body, in a Sociable Relation, to entertaine the Unity of the Spirit in the Communion of Saints; and if this Sociable Relation in matters belonging to their charge of Mutuall and Publike Edification, is a meanes to maintaine that Authority, towards their particular Congregation, which in matters of doubt is necessary to come to a decision thereof, and if this be the most naturall and milde way of Government, when every Church is directed by its owne Officers, through the consent of the whole; I say if these things cannot be denied, I see not what can be excepted against the Presbyteriall Way of Church Government and Discipline: and if the Authoritie of one Pastor, to whom the Charge of Soules is committed, is such, that his flock is bound by the expresse Commandement of the Word to obey and submit unto him, *Hebr.13.17.* and if the Non-Communionists will not exempt any of their flocks from this Subjection to their Pastors, though they stand by themselves alone; I cannot imagine why they should exempt those same flocks from the Authority of the same Pastors, when their Authority is strengthened by the consent of all their Brethren. For (to use their own words) *If it be a most abhorred Maxime, that any single and particular Societie of men professing the name of Christ, should arrogate unto themselves an exemption from giving account or being censurable by any other neighbour Churches about them;* then it followeth, that the Meanes as well of giving an account and inflicting of a Censure, if need be, as of preventing Scandals which may deserve Censures, ought to be used among neighbour Churches: which meanes is none other then the Conjunction of Brotherly Counsels in the Ecclesiasticall Senate of a Presbyterie or Synod. Now the Authoritative sway which such counsels and Censures should beare, is no extrinsicall matter, but a thing intrinsically inherent, and the immediate result of the combined body of the Senate, wherein all the Authority of the whole Ministrie is cast together in one: nor can it be imagined that the decrees of such a Senate can be without that Authoritie

which the Charge of every member thereof does yield unto him by Gods appointment, towards those over whom he hath a /38/ Charge. Except then it be thought, that Christ never intended that any such Senate should be convocated or established in his Church to prevent or rectifie Scandals, I am not able to conceive what can be excepted against the Authoritative sway of the Decrees thereof, supposing matters to be fairely and openly scanned. But if otherwise there should be any fault in the manner of proceeding of those that belong unto the Senate, then the cause and the effect thereof should be meekly discovered, and a way proposed to rectifie it; but the bond of Brotherly Unitie amongst themselves, and the ground of their Authority towards their Churches should not be shaken. Now the ground of their Authority is their Unity in their charges, and the bond of their Unity is the sincerity of their intentions to care and look one to another, according to the Commandements which are expressly given, *Heb.3.12,13.* and *10.24.* and *12.15.*

But here it may be said, that these Commandements belong unto all the Members of the Body, and are not peculiar unto the Pastors and Elders more then to others: I answer, that it is true, all are bound unto the same care for one another as Members of each other; But although the Principle of this duty which is their Co-membership and the Covenant in Christ be the same, yet the discharge of the duty is to be differently performed according to the distinct property of every member wherewith God has endued it, as the eye, the eare, the nose, the tongue, the hand, the feet, are all members, and as in one body, and moving by one spirit, are bound all to have the same care each for another, yet their care is in a different way according to the place and property which they have in the body: For some of these members have a more eminent place and property then others, and according to the nature of it, their care is commanded. The members then which have their property and place in the head, which in comparison of the rest of the members is Authoritative; thus the property of the eye is towards the foot and hand Authoritative;

namely, to direct it, by judging and discerning the way wherein to walke, or the matter that is to be felt: Now the property of the hand is not of this nature, yet it careth for the body, and it hath the faculty of /39/ feeling to none other end; but the propertie of the facultie is not Authoritative and directing further then it is directed by the superior Members, or the faculties of the head. By all which I intend to intimate thus much: First, that the Commandement of mutuall care doth not give to Members of an inferior faculty any power to act above that which is in the nature of their place in the body, far less to oversee or overrule the Rulers, as the custom of some is or has been. And secondly, that this same Commandement does give to the Members of a superior facultie a Charge to act lovingly, according to the nature of their place and office in the body. For the office of every Member does make the actions done therein according to the Rule, and to the end of Common good Authoritative: and as it is in the Naturall, so it is in the Spirituall and mysticall body. Therefore as in the head of the Natural body, there is a Senate of superior Senses, which in the acts of their Charges cannot be without Authoritie towards inferior Members: so in the Mysticall body of the Church, these Officers which partake of the Senses of the Head, cannot be without Authority in the Acts of their Charges, and their care which is recommended to them for the body in their charge is to be understood different herein from that which belongeth to the rest of the Members: and if the looking to, and caring thus for one another, be an expresse Commandement of God, as well to Ministers one towards another in their Charges and places, as to Members each to others; then it must be granted, that the best Meanes to performe this duty, is also commanded; and if this be found to by the Presbyteriall Conjunction of Ministers, then I must conceive that a Combination of the ministers of many Churches, is the compleat and entire feat of Church power over each Congregation so combined, which is the thing whereof they made a question. Now if this Relation of Ministeriall Authoritie and Respective Subjection for mutuall Edification, be once

settled; then all other matters tending to Publike Edification, will easily be determined in matters of Publike Worship for Uniformitie therein, according to the Rules of the Word, which to prevent scandals and divisions is absolutely necessary: and that this Uniformitie may be obtained, I conceive /40/ that these things should be taken notice of.

1. That in and about the Acts of the Publike Worship of God some things are his own immediate Ordinances; some things are not of that nature.

2. His own immediate Ordinances, as they are unalterable, so they are of necessitie to be observed, and must be done in his name.

3. All things of another nature are not necessary, but alterable, and may not be done in his name

4. The things of an Alterable nature relate to the bodily and Outward part of the Worship, as it is clothed with Outward Circumstances; For whatever is Spirituall, and relating the inward truth and substance of the Worship, is determined in the Word, and not subject to Outward Circumstances.

5. The power to determine what is Alterable, and How it is to be altered for Publike Edification, doth belong to those that have a Publike Charge in the Church.

6. Yet in some Cases which may relate the Rights of the Civill Magistrate, his power is not to be neglected, but respected joyntly with the Church Officers.

7. The limits of the joynt powers in cases of a mixt nature, are to be taken from their different Objects, Ends and Properties of Fundamentall Rights and Lawes of Government, by which they attain their End severally.

8. No particular Church loseth her Right to order within her selfe matters of Particular Edification; onely the occasions of Scandall to others must be avoyded, and may be prevented by a Brotherly Communication of Reasons why things must be so ordered in a private way.

9. Therefore the Uniformitie of Publike Worship is not to be esteemed by mere Circumstantiall, which ought not to be too pre-

cisely determined, but by the Fulnesse of Substantials agreeing, and by the consent of a Latitude under certaine Rules of Brotherly Correspondencie therein betwixt United Churches.

10. The Manner of introducing new Orders to be observed, or of altering any thing which has been observed; should not be without a due preparation of the understandings of that flock /41/ towards which the Alteration is to bee applied.

If these Positions be not denied, I suppose that most of the Scrupulosities of the Non-Communionists may be resolved thereby, in matters of Publike Order, Decencie and Government, about which they seeme to intend a Scholasticall disputation: but I would entreat every one whose ayme is Publike Edification, to beware of the disputes of that nature, which may easily breed heat and needles contradictions about matters of no great consequence: Or if they undertake them, to agree with those with whom matters are to be discussed, of the manner of debating, which ought to be limited and regulated, and free from all Personall reproaches, which lay open the nakednes of other Infirmities, or censure faults prejudicially; For except these cautions be prudently used, those that take in hand to dispute, will lose their way, and be taken off from the main work of the Ministerie, which is to declare the Testimonie of Jesus without partialitie, as it may be for the Edification of all. We know, and that experimentally, that Knowledge doth puffe up the spirit, but it is Charitie that doth edifie: Now to maintaine the affections of Charitie in the bonds of Spirituall Unitie, there is nothing so effectuall as the Way of Brotherly Consultation, by which all can be said, which in a Scholasticall or disputative way can be proposed: and with more force, by how much the ayme is more friendly and insinuating then that of a contradictory debate.

Thus I have briefly done with the last point of this Discourse, where many other things might be insisted upon, which I purposefully omit, as not being willing to descend unto Particulars which may be observed in the severall passages of the Apologeticall Narration. Hereafter, if it be found expedient, and you require

it, I may adde and Appendix to this Discourse, containing the same. Till then and ever I commend you to the Grace and love of the God of Peace; in whom I am

Your faithfull friend and servant,

JOHN DURY.

Hague,

{17{*March.*}

{7{1644.}

