

have all done the same thing, do easily embrace the same opinion as concerning their own doings.

[8.] Besides, mark I beseech you that which Galen in matter of philosophy noteth<sup>1</sup>; for the like falleth out even in questions of higher knowledge. It fareth many times with men's opinions as with rumours and reports. "That which a credible person telleth is easily thought probable by such as are well persuaded of him. But if two, or three, or four, agree all in the same tale, they judge it then to be out of controversy, and so are many times overtaken for want of due consideration; either some common cause leading them all into error, or one man's oversight deceiving many through their too much credulity and easiness of belief." Though ten persons be brought to give testimony in any cause, yet if the knowledge they have of the thing whereunto they come as witnesses, appear to have grown from some one amongst them, and to have spread itself from hand to hand, they all are in force but as one testimony. Nor is it otherwise here where the daughter churches do speak their mother's dialect; here where so many sing one song, by reason that he is the guide of the choir<sup>2</sup>, concerning whose deserved authority amongst even the gravest divines we have already spoken at large. Will ye ask what should move those many learned to be followers of one man's judgment, no necessity of argument forcing them thereunto? Your demand is answered by yourselves. Loth ye are to think that they, whom ye judge to have attained as sound knowledge in all points of doctrine as any since the Apostles' time, should mistake in discipline<sup>3</sup>. Such is natu-

<sup>1</sup> Galen. clas. 2, lib. de cujusque Anim. Peccat. Notitia atque Medela, [t. i. p. 366. Basil. 1538. — μηδενι ψευδῶς συγκαταβέμενον εἰντὸν, ὡς περ ἐκάστης ἡμέρας ὁρῶ παμπόλλους τῶν φιλῶν, ἐνίοις μὲν ἐν τῶν εἰπόντων ὁτιοῦν πιστεύσαντας. . . . προπετῶς δὲ καὶ ὁ τρίσιν ἢ τέσσαρσιν, ἀνευ τοῦ διορίσασθαι πότερον ἐνδέχεται πάντας αὐτοὺς ἐκ μίας αἰτίας κοινῆς ἀληθεύειν, ἢ ψεύδεσθαι πάντας ἐκ μίας αἰτίας κοινῆς.]

<sup>2</sup> ["quier," ed. 1594.]

<sup>3</sup> Petition to the Queen's Majesty,

p. 14.—["It may be that they who have attained to as sound knowledge in all points of doctrine as any since the apostles' time should mistake in discipline. It may be that they whom the Spirit of truth and wisdom hath directed in expounding the Scriptures should be always forsaken of that Spirit when they come to expound or speak of a text concerning discipline. . . But . . . men not partial will still make scruples in these matters."]

rally our affection, that whom in great things we mightily admire, in them we are not persuaded willingly that any thing should be amiss. The reason whereof is, "for that as dead flies putrify the ointment of the apothecary<sup>1</sup>, so a little folly him that is in estimation for wisdom<sup>2</sup>." This in every profession hath too much authorized the judgments of a few. This with Germans hath caused Luther, and with many other Churches Calvin, to prevail in all things. Yet are we not able to define, whether the wisdom of that God, (who setteth before us in holy Scripture so many admirable patterns of virtue, and no one of them without somewhat noted wherein they were culpable, to the end that to Him alone it might always be acknowledged, "Thou only art holy, thou only art just<sup>3</sup>;" ) might not permit those worthy vessels of his glory to be in some things blemished with the stain of human frailty, even for this cause, lest we should esteem of any man above that which behoveth.

V. Notwithstanding, as though ye were able to say a great deal more than hitherto your books have revealed to the world, earnest challengers<sup>4</sup> ye are of public disputation. Wherein if the thing ye crave be no more than only leave to dispute openly about those matters that are in question, the schools in universities (for any thing I know) are open unto you. They have their yearly

Their calling for trial by disputation.

<sup>1</sup> ["apoticarie," ed. 1594.]

<sup>2</sup> Eccles. x. 1.

<sup>3</sup> [ὅτι μόνος ὁσῖος. Apoc. xv. 4. Σὺ μόνος Ἅγιος, — σὺ μόνος Κύριος. Morning Hymn in Apost. Constit. vii. 4, used by our Church in the Post-Communion.]

<sup>4</sup> ["Would to God that free conference in these matters might be had. For howsoever learned and many they seeme to be, they should and may in this realme finde inowe, to matche them, and shame them to, if they hold on as they have begun." Address "to the godly readers," prefixed to the first Admonition to the Parliament, p. 2. See also "A View of Popish Abuses," subjoined to the 1st Admonition, p. 18; and 2nd Adm. p. 36; and

Petition to the Queen's Maj. p. 3. "There is a way devised and much commended by learned men, as a notable mean to compound controversies, namely, private conferences by advised writing, not extemporal speaking, the question agreed of. The arguments, the answers, replies, and rejoinders set down, till both parties had fully said, all by-matters laid aside. In fine the whole to be published, that your Majesty, the honourable counsellors and Parliament may judge thereof." And Pref. to Dem. of Disc. "Venture your bishopricks upon a disputation, and we will venture our lives: take the challenge if you dare."]

Acts and Commencements, besides other disputations both ordinary and upon occasion, wherein the several parts of our own ecclesiastical discipline are oftentimes offered unto that kind of examination; the learnedest of you have been of late years noted seldom or never absent from thence at the time of those greater assemblies; and the favour of proposing there in convenient sort whatsoever ye can object (which thing myself have known them to grant of scholastical courtesy unto strangers) neither hath (as I think) nor ever will (I presume) be denied you.

[2.] If your suit be to have some great extraordinary confluence, in expectation whereof the laws that already are should sleep and have no power over you, till in the hearing of thousands ye all did acknowledge your error and renounce the further prosecution of your cause: haply<sup>1</sup> they whose authority is required unto the satisfying of your demand do think it both dangerous to admit such concurrence of divided minds, and unmeet that laws, which being once solemnly established are to exact obedience of all men and to constrain thereunto, should so far stoop as o hold themselves in suspense from taking any effect upon you till some disputer can persuade you to be obedient<sup>2</sup>. A law is the deed of the whole body politic, whereof if ye judge yourselves to be any part, then is the law even your deed also. And were it reason in things of this quality to give men audience, pleading for the overthrow of that which their own very deed hath ratified? Laws that have been approved may be (no man doubteth) again repealed, and to that end also disputed against, by the authors thereof themselves. But this is when the whole doth deliberate what laws each part shall observe, and not when a part refuseth the laws which the whole hath orderly agreed upon.

[3.] Notwithstanding, forasmuch as the cause we maintain is (God be thanked) such as needeth not to shun any trial, might it please them on whose approbation the matter dependeth to condescend so far unto you in this behalf, I

<sup>1</sup> ["happily," and so usually in ed. 1594.] <sup>2</sup> 240, a petition of Barrow for a conference, with Archbishop Whitgift's reasons against it.]

wish heartily that proof were made even by solemn conference in orderly and quiet sort, whether you would yourselves be satisfied, or else could by satisfying others draw them to your part. Provided always, first, inasmuch as ye go about to destroy a thing which is in force, and to draw in that which hath not as yet been received; to impose on us that which we think not ourselves bound unto, and to overthrow those things whereof we are possessed; that therefore ye are not to claim in any such conference other than the plaintiff's or opponent's part, which must consist altogether in proof and confirmation of two things: the one, that our orders by you condemned we ought to abolish; the other, that yours we are bound to accept in the stead thereof: secondly, because the questions in controversy between us are many, if once we descend unto particularities; that for the easier and more orderly proceeding therein the most general be first discussed, nor any question left off, nor in each question the prosecution of any one argument given over and another taken in hand, till the issue whereunto by replies and answers both parts are come, be collected, read, and acknowledged as well on the one side as on the other to be the plain conclusion which they are grown unto: thirdly, for avoiding of the manifold inconveniences whereunto ordinary and extemporal disputes are subject; as also because, if ye should singly dispute one by one as every man's own wit did best serve, it might be conceived by the rest that haply some other would have done more; the chiefest of you do all agree in this action, that whom ye shall then choose your speaker, by him that which is publicly brought into disputation be acknowledged by all your consents not to be his allegation but yours, such as ye all are agreed upon, and have required him to deliver in all your names; the true copy whereof being taken by a notary, that a reasonable time be allowed for return of answer unto you in the like form. Fourthly, whereas a number of conferences have been had in other causes with the less effectual success, by reason of partial and untrue reports published afterwards unto the world; that to prevent this evil, there be at the first a solemn declaration made on both parts, of their agreement to have that very book and no other set abroad, wherein their present authorized notaries do write those things fully and

only, which being written and there read, are by their own open testimony acknowledged to be their own. Other circumstances hereunto belonging, whether for the choice of time, place, and language, or for prevention of impertinent and needless speech, or to any end and purpose else—they may be thought on when occasion serveth.

In this sort to broach my private conceit for the ordering of a public action I should be loth (albeit I do it not otherwise than under correction of them whose gravity and wisdom ought in such cases to overrule,) but that so venturous boldness I see is a thing now general; and am thereby of good hope, that where all men are licensed to offend, no man will shew himself a sharp accuser.

VI. What success God may give unto any such kind of conference or disputation, we cannot tell. But of this we are right sure, that nature, Scripture<sup>1</sup>, and experience itself, have all taught the world to seek for the ending of contentions by submitting itself unto some judicial and definitive sentence, whereunto neither part that contendeth may under any pretence or colour refuse to stand. This must needs be effectual and strong. As for other means without this, they seldom prevail. I would therefore know, whether for the ending of these irksome strifes, wherein you and your followers do stand thus formally divided against the authorized guides of this church, and the rest of the people subject unto their charge; whether I say ye be content to refer your cause to any other higher judgment than your own, or else intend to persist and proceed as ye have begun, till yourselves can be persuaded to condemn yourselves. If your determination be this, we can be but sorry that ye should deserve to be reckoned with such, of whom God himself pronounceth, "The way of peace they have not known<sup>2</sup>."

[2.] Ways of peaceable conclusion there are, but these two certain: the one, a sentence of judicial decision given by authority thereto appointed within ourselves; the other, the like kind of sentence given by a more universal authority. The former of which two ways God himself in the Law

<sup>1</sup> [Hebr. vi. 16. "An oath for confirmation is to them an end of "all strife."]

<sup>2</sup> Rom. iii. 17.

prescribeth, and his Spirit it was which directed the very first Christian churches in the world to use the latter.

The ordinance of God in the Law was this. "If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea, &c. then shalt thou arise, and go up unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose; and thou shalt come unto the Priests of the Levites, and unto the Judge that shall be in those days, and ask, and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment, and thou shalt do according to that thing, which they of that place which the Lord hath chosen shew thee, and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee; according to the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, shalt thou do; thou shalt not decline from the thing which they shall shew thee to the right hand nor to the left. And that man that will do presumptuously, not hearkening unto the Priest (that standeth before the Lord thy God to minister there) or unto the Judge, that man shall die, and thou shalt take away evil from Israel."

When there grew in the Church of Christ a question, Whether the Gentiles believing might be saved, although they were not circumcised after the manner of Moses, nor did observe the rest of those legal rites and ceremonies whereunto the Jews were bound; after great dissension and disputation about it, their conclusion in the end was to have it determined by sentence at Jerusalem; which was accordingly done in a council there assembled for the same purpose<sup>2</sup>. Are ye able to allege any just and sufficient cause wherefore absolutely ye should not condescend in this controversy to have your judgments overruled by some such definitive sentence, whether it fall out to be given with or against you; that so these tedious contentions may cease?

[3.] Ye will perhaps make answer, that being persuaded already as touching the truth of your cause, ye are not to hearken unto any sentence, no not though Angels should define otherwise, as the blessed Apostle's own example teacheth<sup>3</sup>: again, that men, yea councils, may err; and that, unless the judgment given do satisfy your minds,

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xvii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xv.

<sup>3</sup> [Gal. i. 8.]

unless it be such as ye can by no further argument oppugn, in a word, unless you perceive and acknowledge it yourselves consonant with God's word; to stand unto it not allowing it were to sin against your own consciences.

But consider I beseech you first as touching the Apostle, how that wherein he was so resolute and peremptory, our Lord Jesus Christ made manifest unto him even by intuitive revelation, wherein there was no possibility of error. That which you are persuaded of, ye have it no otherwise than by your own only probable collection, and therefore such bold asseverations as in him were admirable, should in your mouths but argue rashness. God was not ignorant that the priests and judges, whose sentence in matters of controversy he ordained should stand, both might and oftentimes would be deceived in their judgment. Howbeit, better it was in the eye of His understanding, that sometime an erroneous sentence definitive should prevail, till the same authority perceiving such oversight, might afterwards correct or reverse it, than that strifes should have respite to grow, and not come speedily unto some end.

Neither wish we that men should do any thing which in their hearts they are persuaded they ought not to do, but this persuasion ought (we say) to be fully settled in their hearts; that in litigious and controverted causes of such quality, the will of God is to have them do whatsoever the sentence of judicial and final decision shall determine, yea, though it seem in their private opinion to swerve utterly from that which is right: as no doubt many times the sentence amongst the Jews did seem unto one part or other contending, and yet in this case, God did then allow them to do that which in their private judgment it seemed, yea and perhaps truly seemed, that the law did disallow. For if God be not the author of confusion but of peace, then can he not be the author of our refusal, but of our contentment, to stand unto some definitive sentence; without which almost impossible it is that either we should avoid confusion, or ever hope to attain peace. To small purpose had the Council of Jerusalem been assembled, if once their determination being set down, men might afterwards have defended their former opinions. When therefore they had given their definitive sentence, all

controversy was at an end. Things were disputed before they came to be determined; men afterwards were not to dispute any longer, but to obey. The sentence of judgment finished their strife, which their disputes before judgment could not do. This was ground sufficient for any reasonable man's conscience to build the duty of obedience upon, whatsoever his own opinion were as touching the matter before in question. So full of wilfulness and self-liking is our nature, that without some definitive sentence, which being given may stand, and a necessity of silence on both sides afterward imposed, small hope there is that strifes thus far prosecuted will in short time quietly end.

[4.] Now it were in vain to ask you, whether ye could be content that the sentence of any court already erected should be so far authorized, as that among the Jews established by God himself, for the determining of all controversies: "That man which will do presumptuously, not hearkening unto the Priest that standeth before the Lord to minister there, nor unto the Judge, let him die." Ye have given us already to understand, what your opinion is in part concerning her sacred Majesty's Court of High Commission; the nature whereof is the same with that amongst the Jews<sup>1</sup>, albeit the power be not so great. The other way haply may like you better, because Master Beza, in his last book save one<sup>2</sup> written about these matters, professeth himself to be now weary of such combats and encounters, whether by word or writing, inasmuch as he findeth that "controversies thereby are made but brawls;" and therefore wisheth "that in some common lawful assembly of churches all these strifes may at once be decided."

<sup>1</sup> [See George Cranmer's notes on B. vi.]

<sup>2</sup> Præf. Tract. de Presbyt. et Excom. ["Ab illis peto, . . . ut me jam pridem istarum concertationum pertæsum, quibus in rixas evadere potius quam mitigari, nedum extinguere controversias apparet, non inviti patiantur vel partes istas minus occupatis aliis fratribus relinquere, si fuerit opus, obeundas; vel tacitum expectare, donec aut Ecclesiæ suæ sic domi et foris vexatæ precibus hoc tribuat Do-

minus, ut lites omnes istæ communi aliquo legitimo ecclesiarum conventu decidentur; vel mihi denique septuagesimum primum jam annum in terris peregrinanti portus ille beatæ et perennis quietis, ad quem totus anhelo, per clementissimi Servatoris mei misericordiam patefiat."] [Præf. sign. A. 7. Beza's pamphlet against Erastus, dated, "Genevæ à Duce Sabauda, contra jus et fas omne circumvallatæ Kal. Mart. anno temporis ultimi 1590."] 1886.

*Preface,*  
Ch. vi. 5, 6.

[5.] Shall there be then in the meanwhile no “doings?” Yes. There are the weightier matters of the law, “judgment, and “mercy, and fidelity<sup>1</sup>.” These things we ought to do; and these things, while we contend about less, we leave undone. Happier are they whom the Lord when he cometh shall find “doing” in these things, than disputing about “Doctors, Elders, “and Deacons.” Or if there be no remedy but somewhat needs ye must do which may tend to the setting forward of your discipline; do that which wise men, who think some statute of the realm more fit to be repealed than to stand in force, are accustomed to do before they come to parliament where the place of enacting is; that is to say, spend the time in re-examining more duly your cause, and in more thoroughly considering of that which ye labour to overthrow. As for the orders which are established, sith equity and reason, the law of nature, God and man, do all favour that which is in being, till orderly judgment of decision be given against it; it is but justice to exact of you, and perverseness in you it should be to deny, thereunto your willing obedience.

[6.] Not that I judge it a thing allowable for men to observe those laws which in their hearts they are steadfastly persuaded to be against the law of God: but your persuasion in this case ye are all bound for the time to suspend; and in otherwise doing, ye offend against God by troubling his Church without any just or necessary cause. Be it that there are some reasons inducing you to think hardly of our laws. Are those reasons demonstrative, are they necessary, or but mere probabilities only? An argument necessary and demonstrative is such, as being proposed unto any man and understood, the mind cannot choose but inwardly assent. Any one such reason dischargeth, I grant, the conscience, and setteth it at full liberty. For the public approbation given by the body of this whole church unto those things which are established, doth make it but probable that they are good. And therefore unto a necessary proof that they are not good it must give place. But if the skilfullest amongst you can shew that all the books ye have hitherto written be able to afford any one argument of this nature, let

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiii. 23.

the instance be given. As for probabilities, what thing was there ever set down so agreeable with sound reason, but some probable shew against it might be made? Is it meet that when publicly things are received, and have taken place, general obedience thereunto should cease to be exacted, in case this or that private person, led with some probable conceit, should make open protestation, “I Peter or John disallow them, and pronounce them nought?” In which case your answer will be, that concerning the laws of our church, they are not only condemned in the opinion of “a private “man, but of thousands,” yea and even “of those amongst “which divers are in public charge and authority<sup>1</sup>.” As though when public consent of the whole hath established any thing, every man’s judgment being thereunto compared were not private, howsoever his calling be to some kind of public charge. So that of peace and quietness there is not any way possible, unless the probable voice of every entire<sup>2</sup> society or body poititic overrule all private of like nature in the same body. Which thing effectually proveth, that God, being author of peace and not of confusion in the church, must needs be author of those men’s peaceable resolutions, who concerning these things have determined with themselves to think and do as the church they are of decreeth, till they see necessary cause enforcing them to the contrary.

VII. Nor is mine own intent any other in these several books of discourse, than to make it appear unto you, that for the ecclesiastical laws of this land, we are led by great reason to observe them, and ye by no necessity bound to impugn them. It is no part of my secret meaning to draw you hereby into hatred, or to set upon the face of this cause any fairer glass than the naked truth doth afford; but my whole endeavour is to resolve the conscience, and to shew as near as I can what in this controversy the heart is to think, if it will follow the light of sound and sincere judgment, without either cloud of prejudice, or mist of passionate affection.

[2.] Wherefore seeing that laws and ordinances in particular, whether such as we observe, or such as yourselves would have established;—when the mind doth sift and

<sup>1</sup> T. C. lib. iii. p. 181.<sup>2</sup> [“intier;” and so vii. 7. ed. 1594.]*Preface,*  
Ch. vii. 1, 2.The matter  
contained  
in these  
eight  
Books.