Church Discipline

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I.
Introduction

The power of the church towards its members (for it hath nothing to do with them that are without) may be referred unto three heads: 1. The *admission* of members into its society. 2. The *rule* and *edification* of them that belong unto it. 3. The *exclusion* out of its society of such as obstinately[1] refuse to live and walk according unto the laws and rules of it. These things belong essentially and inseparably unto every free society and are comprehensive of all church-power whatever.

The second of these hath been treated of in the discourse concerning church offices and rule; and all that belongs unto the first of them is fully declared in the chapters of the essential constituent parts of Gospel churches, namely, their matter and form.[2] The third must be now spoken unto, which is the power of excommunication.[3]

A. Some Use Excommunication for Unrighteous Domination.

There is nothing in Christian religion about which the contest of opinions hath been more fierce than this of excommunication, most of them proceeding evidently from false assumptions and secular interests; and no greater instance can be given of what the serpentine[4] wits of men, engaged by the desire of domination and wealth, and assisted by opportunities, may attain unto. For whereas, as we shall see immediately, there is nothing more plain, simple, and more exposed unto the common understanding of all Christians, yea of all mankind, than is this institution of Christ, both as unto its nature, form, and manner of administration; nothing more wholesome nor useful unto the souls of men; nothing more remote from giving the least disturbance or prejudice to civil society, to magistrates or rulers, unto the personal or political rights or concernments of any one individual in the world—it hath been metamorphosed[5] into a hideous monster, an engine of priestly domination and tyranny, for the deposition[6] or assassination of kings and princes, the wasting of nations with bloody wars, the terror of the souls of men, and the destruction of their lives with all their earthly concerns, unto the erection of a tyrannical empire, no less pernicious[7] unto the Christian world than those of the Saracens[8] or the Turks.[9]

He is a stranger unto all that hath passed in the world for nearly a thousand years who knows not the truth of these things. And to this very day, the greatest part of them that are called Christians are so supinely[10] ignorant and doting, or so infatuated[11] and blinded by their prejudices and corrupt interests, as to suppose or to say that if the pope of Rome do excommunicate kings or princes, they may be lawfully deposed from their rule and in some cases killed; and that other persons, being rightly excommunicated, according unto certain laws, rules, and processes that some have framed, ought to be fined, punished, imprisoned, and so destroyed! And about these things there are many disputes and contests, when, if men were awakened out of their lethargy, they would be laughed at as the most ridiculous and contemptible morons that ever appeared in the world—though they are no laughing matter at present unto them that are concerned in them.

Supposing, then, ecclesiastical excommunication (as I at present suppose and shall immediately prove it) to be an appointment of our Lord Jesus Christ, these things are plain and evident concerning it [and] not capable of any modest contradiction:

1. That there is no divine evangelical institution that is more suited unto the light of nature, the rules of common equity,[12] and principles of *unseared consciences*, as unto the nature, efficacy, and rule of it than this is.

2. That the *way* of the administration and exercise of the power and acts of it is so determined, described, and limited in the Scripture and the light of nature, as that there can be no gross error or mistake about it but what proceeds from secular interests, pride, ambition, covetousness, or other vicious[13] habits and inclinations of the minds of men.

3. That the whole *authority* of it—its sentence, power, and efficacy—are merely spiritual with respect unto the souls and consciences of men only; and that to extend it, directly or indirectly, immediately or by consequences, unto the temporal hurt, evil, or damage of any in their lives, liberties, estates, natural or legal privileges, is opposite unto and destructive of the whole government of Christ in and over His church. All these things will fully appear in the account that we shall give of it.

It is therefore evident, as was intimated, that nothing in Christian practice hath been or is more abused, corrupted, or perverted than this of excommunication hath been and is. The residence of the supreme power of it, to be exercised towards and over all Christians, rulers and subjects, in the pope of Rome, or in other single persons absolutely, over less or greater distributions of them; the administration of it by citations, processes, pleadings, and contentions in wrangling law-courts according unto arbitrary canons and constitutions, whose original is either known or unknown; the application of it unto the hurt, damage, evil, or loss of men in their temporal concerns—are utterly and openly foreign unto the Gospel and expressly contrary unto what the Lord Christ hath appointed therein. It would require a whole volume to declare the horrible abuses both in point of right and in matter of fact with the pernicious consequences that have issued thereon, which the corruption of this divine institution hath produced. But to make a declaration hereof doth not belong to my present design—besides, it hath been done in some good measure by others. In brief, it is so come to pass that it is made a mere political engine of an external, forcible government of the persons of men unto the ends of the interests of some who have a pretense of its power. [It is] administered by such ways and means as wherein the consciences of men, neither of those by whom it is administered nor of those unto whom it is applied, are any way concerned with respect unto the authority of any institution of Jesus Christ.

B. Some Deny Excommunication.

From an observation hereof and a desire to vindicate as well Christian religion from such a scandalous abuse as mankind from bondage to such a monstrous fiction as is the present power and exercise of it, some have fallen into another extreme, denying that there is any such thing as excommunication appointed or approved by the Gospel. But this neither is nor ever will be a way to reduce religion, nor any thing in it, unto its primitive order and purity. To deny the being of anything because it hath been abused, when there could have been no abuse of it but upon a supposition of its being, is not a rational way to reprove and convince that abuse. When those who have corrupted this institution find the insufficiency of the arguments produced to prove that there never was any such institution, it makes them secure in the practice of their own abuses of it. They imagine that there is nothing incumbent[14] on them to justify their present possession and exercise of the power of excommunication, but that excommunication itself is appointed in the church by Christ, whereas the true consideration of this appointment is the only means to divest them of their power and practice. For the most effectual course to discharge and disprove all corruptions in the agenda or practicals of religion—the sacraments, public worship, rule, and the like—is to propose and declare the things themselves in their original simplicity and purity as appointed by Christ and recorded in the Scriptures. A real view of

them in such a proposal will divest the minds of men, not corrupted and hardened by prejudice and interest, of those erroneous conceptions of them that from some kind of tradition they have been prepossessed withal. This I shall now attempt in this particular of excommunication.

II.
Excommunication as It Belongs to the New Testament Church

There hath been great inquiry about the nature and exercise of this ordinance under the Old Testament with the account given of it by the later Jews. The right and power of it in general belongs unto a church as such—every church, and not to that which is purely evangelical only.

This I shall not inquire into. It hath been sifted to the bran[15] already and intermixed with many rabbinical conjectures[16] and mistakes. In general, there is nothing more certain than that there was a double removal of persons by church authority from the communion of the whole congregation in divine worship—the one for a season, the other forever, whereof I have given instances elsewhere.

But I intend only the consideration of what belongs unto churches under the New Testament. And to this end we may observe,

A. Natural Equity in All Lawful Societies

That all *lawful societies,* constituted such by voluntary confederation[17] according unto peculiar laws and rules of their own choice unto especial duties and ends, have a right and power by the light of nature to receive into their society those that are willing and meet,[18] engaging themselves to observe the rules, laws, and ends of the society and to expel them out of it who willfully deviate from those rules. This is the life and form of every lawful society or community of men in the world, without which they can neither coalesce nor subsist.[19] But it is required hereunto—

(1) Natural Equity: Entered by Those Who Have the Right to Do So

Those who so enter into such a society have right and power so to do. And many things are required unto this end, as [1] That those who enter into such a society be "sui juris," [20]*have a lawful right to dispose of themselves* as unto all the duties and ends of such a society. Hence children, servants, subjects, have no power in themselves to enter into such societies without the interposition of and obligation from a power superior unto that of parents, masters, or princes—namely, that of God Himself. [2] That the rules, laws, and ends of the society be *lawful,* good, and useful unto themselves and others. For there may be a confederation in and for evil, which is a combination that gives no right nor power over one another or towards others that enter into it. [3] That it contains nothing that is *prejudicial* unto others in things divine or human. [4] Nor obliges unto the *omission* or neglect of any duty that men by virtue of any relations—natural, moral, or political—do owe unto others. [5] Nor is *hurtful* unto themselves in their lives, liberties, names, reputation, usefulness in the world, or any thing else, unto whose preservation they are obliged by the law of nature. [6] Nor can such persons be obliged to forsake *the conduct of themselves* in things divine and human by the light of their own consciences, by an engagement of blind obedience unto others, which would render every society unlawful by the law of God and light of nature. [7] Least of all have any persons right or power to oblige themselves in such societies unto things *evil, sinful, superstitious,* or *idolatrous.*

These things are plain and evident in themselves and every way sufficient to divest all the religious societies and fraternities that are erected in the church of Rome of all that right and power that belong unto lawful societies, constituted by voluntary confederation. And if anything inconsistent with these principles of natural light be pretended in churches, it divests them of all power, as to the exercise of it, by virtue of any compact or confederation whatsoever.

(2) Natural Equity: Entered by Voluntary Consent

It is required that a society by *voluntary consent* vested with the right and power mentioned do neither give nor take away any right, privilege, or advantage to or from any members of the society that belongs unto them *naturally* or *politically*. Their power is confined unto those things alone wherein men may be benefited and advantaged by the society. This is the foundation of all political societies. Men for the sake and benefit of them may and ought to forego many particular advantages, which without them they might make unto themselves. But they cannot forego any of those rights that in their several relations are inseparably annexed unto them by the law of nature, nor give power over themselves in such things unto the society. So is it with churches: the power of expulsion out of their society extends only unto the benefits and advantages that the society, as such, doth afford and communicate.

Now, these are only things spiritual, if churches be an institution of Him Whose kingdom is not of this world. The power, then, that is in churches, by virtue of their being what they are, extends not itself unto any outward concernments of men, as unto their lives, liberties, natural or political privileges, estates, or possessions—unless we shall say that men hold and possess these things by virtue of their relation unto the church, which is to overthrow all natural and human right in the world. "De facto,"[21] men are now compelled, whether they will or no, to be esteemed to be of this or that church and to be dealt withal accordingly. But if they had not been divested of their natural liberty, they know not how, without their own consent, and should be taught that by entering into a church, they must come under a new tenure[22] of their lives, liberties, and estates at the will of the lords of the society, according to the customs of their courts, there would not be so many wise men in churches as now there are thought to be.

But this is the true state of things in the church of Rome and among others also. Christians are esteemed to be of them and belong unto them, whether they will or no. Immediately hereon all the rights, liberties, privileges, and possessions that they enjoy by the Law of God and nature and by the just laws and constitutions of men in the civil governments under which they live, come to depend upon and be subject unto the especial laws and rules of the society that they are adjudged to belong unto. For upon expulsion out of that society by excommunication, according unto the laws and rules that it hath framed unto itself, all their rights, titles, liberties, and enjoyments are forfeited and exposed to ruin. Some indeed do earnestly and learnedly contend that the pope of Rome hath not power to excommunicate sovereign kings and princes, and that if he does, they make no forfeiture of life or dignity thereby. There are good reasons why they do so. But, in the meantime, they deal with other poor men after the same manner. For if a poor man be excommunicated, immediately he loseth the free tenure of his goods, liberty, and life by the law of the church and the land and is committed to the jail without bail or mainprise.[23] So that by this artifice,[24] all men hold their natural and civil rights by the rules of the church-society whereto they are supposed to belong. As this utterly overthrows the foundation of all that [right of] property according to the laws of the land, which is so much talked of and valued, so indeed it would be destructive of all order and liberty, [except] that the church is wise enough not to employ this engine unto great men and men in power, who may yet deserve excommunication as well as some of their poor neighbors, if the Gospel be thought to give the rule of it. But those that are poor, helpless, and friendless shall in the pursuit of this excommunication be driven from their houses, cast into prisons, and kept there until they

and their families starve and perish. It is apparent that we are beholden unto the greatness, authority, and wealth of many, whom the ecclesiastical courts care not to conflict withal, that the whole nation is not actually brought under this new tenure of their lives, liberties, and estates, which on this presumption they are obnoxious[25] unto.

And all this evil ariseth from the neglect and contempt of this fundamental rule of all societies, apparent unto all in the light of nature itself—namely, *That they have no power in or over anything, right, privilege, or advantage, but what men are made partakers of by virtue of such societies, their rules and laws, whereunto they are obliged.* But of this sort are not the lives, the liberties, the houses, and possessions of men with respect unto the church. They receive them not from the church, and a man would certainly think that the church could not take them away.

Yea, we live and subsist in order upon the good nature and wisdom of men who judge it best neither to exert their power nor act their principles in this matter. For whereas they esteem all the inhabitants of the land to belong unto their church, if they should in the first place excommunicate all that ought to be excommunicated by the rule and law of the Gospel, and then all that ought to be so according to their own laws and canons (both that a man would think they were obliged in point of conscience unto), and in pursuit of their sentence send out the "capias"[26] for them all—I very much question whether any of them would go to prison or no, and then in what a fine case would this government be! And if they should all go to jail, I am persuaded the king would be in an ill state to defend his realms against his enemies.

(3) Natural Equity: Not for Those Without

Every society hath this power towards those who are incorporated in it *by their own consent* and not towards others. For whence should they have such a power, or who should commit it unto them? Nor can any be cast out from those privileges that they never had an interest in or a right unto. The Apostle's rule holds in this case, especially with respect unto churches: "What have we to do to judge them that are without?" (*see* 1Co 5:12). And as unto the exercise of this power, they are all to be esteemed to be without who are not rightly incorporated into that particular church by which they may be ejected out of it. A power of excommunication at random, towards all that those who exercise it can extend force unto, hath no foundation either in the light of nature or authority of the Scripture. It would be ridiculous in any corporation to disfranchise[27] such as never belonged unto it, who were never members of it.

(4) Natural Equity: The Only Cause Is Willful Deviation

The only reason or cause for the expulsion of any person out of such a society is *a willful deviation from the rules and laws of the society,* whose observance he had engaged unto upon his entrance into it. Nothing else can be required unto the preservation of a man's interest in any right or privilege, but what he took upon himself to perform in his admittance into it. And if the great rule of every church-society be, "That men observe and do whatsoever the Lord Christ hath commanded," none can be justly ejected out of that society but upon a willful disobedience unto His commands. Therefore, the casting of men out of church-communion on light and trivial occasions or for any reasons or causes whatever but such as essentially belong unto the rules and laws whereon the church doth originally coalesce into a society is contrary unto natural light and the reason of the things themselves.

Thus far, I say, is every lawful confederate society enabled and warranted by the light of nature to remove from its communion and from a participation in its rights and privileges any of its number who will not walk according to the rules and principles of its coalescency[28] and constitution. Whereas,

therefore, the rule of the constitution of the church is, "That men walk together in holy obedience unto the commands of Christ, and in the observance of all His institutions, without giving offense unto one another or those that are without by any sinful miscarriage, and do abide in the profession of the truth," if any one shall willfully and obstinately transgress in any of these things, it is the right and duty and in the power of the church to remove him from its society.

B. Biblical Command in the New Testament Church

But this is not the entire or the next immediate ground, reason, or warranty of ecclesiastical excommunication. For this natural equity will not extend itself unto cases that are in things spiritual and supernatural, nor will the actings of the Church thereon reach unto the consciences of men for the proper ends of excommunication. Wherefore it was necessary that it should have a peculiar institution in the church by the authority of Jesus Christ. For—

(1) Power Is from the Authority of Christ.

The church is such a society as no men have right or power either to enter into themselves or to exclude others from but by *virtue of the authority of Christ.* No warranty from the light of nature or from the laws of men, or their own voluntary confederation can enable any to constitute a church-society, unless they do all things expressly in obedience unto the authority of Christ. For His church is His kingdom, His house, which none can constitute or build but Himself. Wherefore it is necessary that the power of admission into and exclusion from the church do arise from His grant and institution, nor is it in the power of any men in the world to admit into or exclude from this society but by virtue thereof.

(2) Authority Is Exercised in the Name of Christ.

Excommunication is an act of *authority*, as we shall see afterward. But no authority can be exercised in the church towards any person whatever *but by virtue of the institution of Christ*. For the authority itself, however ministerially exercised by others, is His alone. He exerts it not but in the ways of His *own* appointment. So, in particular, the Apostle directs that excommunication be exerted "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 5:4), that is, in and by His authority.

(3) The Privileges Excluded from Are Only Those Granted by Christ.

The *privileges* from which men are excluded by excommunication are not such as they have any natural or civil right unto (as hath been proved), but merely such as are granted unto the church by Jesus Christ. Men by virtue of any agreement among themselves, without a warranty from Him by His institution, cannot expel others from the privileges that are merely of His grant and donation. He alone therefore hath given and granted this power unto the church, namely, of excluding any by the rules and ways of His appointment from the privileges of His grant—which is the peculiar power of excommunication inquired after.

(4) Its Efficacy Is Due to Its Being Divinely Instituted.

There is such an *efficacy* assigned unto excommunication in binding the consciences of men, in retaining their sins, in the destruction or mortification of the flesh, in the healing and recovery of sinners,

as nothing but the authority of a divine institution can give unto it. By virtue of natural light and mutual consent, men may free themselves from the company and society of those who will not walk with them according to rules of communion agreed upon among them, but they cannot reach the minds and consciences of others with any of these effects.

(5) It Is Declared in Scripture.

That excommunication is an *express ordinance* of our Lord Jesus Christ in His churches is fully declared in the Scripture. For—

[1] *Its power is given by Christ in the keys of the Kingdom*. The power of it is contained in the authority given by Christ unto the church under the name of "The keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 16:19). For the power expressed therein is not merely doctrinal and declarative, as is the preaching of the Gospel—the consequent whereof, upon the faith or unbelief of them that hear it, is the remitting or retaining of their sins in heaven and earth—but it is disciplinary also, as it is appropriated unto the house whose keys are committed unto the stewards of it. And seeing the design of Christ was to have His church holy, unblamable, and without offense in the world that therein He might make a representation of His own holiness and the holiness of His rule; and whereas those of whom it is constituted are liable and subject unto sins scandalous and offensive, reflecting dishonor on Himself and the church, in being the occasion of sinning unto others—that design would not have been accomplished had He not given this authority unto His church to cast out and separate from itself all that do by their sins so give offense. The neglect of the exercise of this authority in a due manner was the principal means whereby the glory, honor, and usefulness of the churches in the world were at length utterly lost.

[2] *It hath a direct institution*: "If thy brother shall trespass…tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," etc. (Mat 18:15-20).

After all the learned and unlearned contests that have been about this place, the sense of it is plain and obvious unto such as whose minds are not clouded with prejudices about such churches and such excommunications as are utterly foreign unto the Scripture. But that by "trespasses" in this place, sins against God giving scandal or offense are intended, hath been proved before, as also that by "church" a particular Christian congregation is intended. This church hath the cognizance[29] of the scandalous offenses of its members committed unto it, when brought before it in the due order described. Hereon it makes a determination, designing in the first place the recovery of the person offending from his sin by his hearing of its counsel and advice. But, in case of obstinacy,[30] it is to remove him from its communion, leaving him in the outward condition of a "heathen man and a publican" (Mat 18:17). So is he to be esteemed by them that were offended with his sin, and that because of the authority of the church binding him in heaven and earth unto the punishment due unto his sin, unless he doth repent. The rejection of an offending brother out of the society of the church, leaving him as unto all the privileges of the church in the state of a heathen, declaring him liable unto the displeasure of Christ and everlasting punishment, without repentance,[31] is the excommunication we plead for. The power of it with its exercise is here plainly granted by Christ and ordained in the church.

[3] *It was the practice of the Apostles*. According unto this institution was the practice of the apostles, whereof we have several instances. I might insist on the excommunication of Simon the magician, a baptized professor, by Peter, who declared him to have "neither part nor lot" in the church upon the discovery of his wickedness (Act 8:13, 20-23). Yet because it was the single act of one apostle, and so may be esteemed extraordinary, I shall omit it. However, that fact of the Apostle is sufficiently

declarative of what is to be done in the church in like cases, which if it be not done, it cannot be preserved in its purity according unto the mind of Christ. But that which was directed by the Apostle Paul to be done towards the incestuous person in the church of Corinth is express,

1 Corinthians 5:1-7

> *1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. 2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. (1Co 5:1-7)*

Exposition of 1 Corinthians 5:1-7

1st. He declares the sin whereof the person charged was guilty with the ignominy[32] and scandal of it, verse 1.

2dly. He blames the church that they had not been affected with the guilt and scandal of it, so as to have proceeded to his removal or expulsion out of the church that he might *be "taken away" or cut off* from them, verse 2.

3dly. He declares his own judgment in the case: [the person] ought to be so taken away or removed, which yet was not actually effected by that judgment and sentence of his, verse 3.

4thly. He declares the causes of this excision:[33] (lst) The *supreme efficient cause* of it is the power or authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, instituting this ordinance in His church, giving right and power unto it for its administration in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ with His power. (2dly) The *declarative cause* of the equity of this sentence, which was the spirit of the apostle, or the authoritative declaration of his judgment in the case, "With my spirit." (3dly) The *instrumental, ministerial cause* of it, which is the church. "Do it 'in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together,' " verse 4; "and thereby 'purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump,' " verse 7, [as a consequence of which] the punishment of this sentence is said to be "inflicted by many" (2Co 2:6), that is, all those who, on his repentance, were obliged to forgive and comfort him—the whole church, verse 7.

5thly. The nature of the sentence is, the "delivering of such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1Co 5:5)—not the destruction of his body by death, but through the "mortification of the flesh." [By this,] he was shortly afterward recovered and restored unto his former condition.

Summary

The whole of what we plead for is here exemplified as

[1] The *cause* of excommunication, which is a scandalous sin unrepented of.

[2] The *preparation* for its execution, which is the church's sense of the sin and scandal with humiliation for it.

[3] The *warranty* of it, which is the institution of Christ, wherein His authority is engaged.

[4] The *manner* and form of it, by an act of authority with the consent of the whole church.

[5] The *effect* of it, in a total separation from the privileges of the church.

[6] The *end*[34] of it—1st. With respect unto the *church,* its purging and vindication. 2dly. With

respect unto the *person excommunicated,* his repentance, reformation, and salvation.

Objection: 1 Corinthians 5:1-7 Does Not Apply to the Churches.

It is usually replied hereunto, "That this was an extraordinary act of apostolical power, and so not to be drawn by us into example. For he himself both determines the case and asserteth his presence in spirit —that is, by his authority—to be necessary unto what was done. "Besides, it was a delivery of the man to Satan—that is, into his power—to be afflicted and cruciated[35] by him, to be terrified in his mind and punished in his body to the destruction of the flesh, that is, unto death. Such was the delivery of a man to Satan by the Apostle, mentioned here and 1 Timothy 1:19-20, in the judgment of many of the ancients. But there is no such power in any church at present to deliver an offender unto Satan or any appearing effects of such a pretense. Wherefore this is a matter that belongs not unto churches at present."

Answer:

I answer, **1.** What the apostles did in any church, whether present or absent, by their own authority, did not prejudice the right of the churches themselves nor their power, acted in subordination unto them and their guidance. So it is evident in this place that notwithstanding the exerting of any apostolical power intimated, the *church itself is charged with its duty* and directed to exercise its authority in the rejection of the offender.

2. There is nothing extraordinary in the case:

(1) It is not so that a member of a church should fall into a scandalous sin unto the dishonor of Christ and the church, giving offense unto persons of all sorts.

(2) It is an ordinary rule, founded in the light of nature, confirmed here and elsewhere by express divine commands, that such an one be rejected from the society and communion of the church until he give satisfaction by repentance and reformation.

(3) It is that without which the church cannot be preserved in its purity or its [existence] be continued, as both reason and experience do manifest.

(4) The judgment both of the fact and right was left unto the church itself, whence it was afterward highly commended by the Apostle for the diligent discharge of its duty herein (2Co 2:6-8). In brief, it is such a divine order that is here prescribed as, without the observance whereof, no church can long subsist.

(5) There is no difficulty in the other part of the objection, about the delivery unto Satan. For—

[1] It cannot be proved that hereon the offender was delivered so into the power of Satan to be cruciated, agitated, and at length killed, as some imagine. Nor can any instance[36] of any such thing be given in the Scripture or antiquity, though there be many of them who, upon their rejection out of the church, were enraged unto an opposition against it, as it was with Simon Magus, Marcion,[37] and others.

[2] Yea, it is evident that there was no such thing included in their delivery unto Satan as is pretended: for the design and end of it was the man's humiliation, recovery, and salvation, as is expressly affirmed in the text; and this effect it actually had, for the man was healed and restored. Wherefore this delivery unto Satan is an ordinance of Christ for the exciting of saving grace in the souls of men, adapted unto the case of falling by scandalous sins, peculiarly effectual, above any other Gospel ordinance. Now, this cannot be such a delivery unto Satan as that pretended, which can have no other end but destruction and death.

[3] This delivery unto Satan is no more but the casting of a man out of the visible kingdom of Christ, so giving him up, as unto his outward condition, into the state of heathens and publicans, which belonged

unto the kingdom of Satan; for he who, by the authority of Christ Himself, according unto His Law and institution, is not only debarred from a participation of all the privileges of the Gospel, but also visibly and regularly divested of all present right to them and interest in them, he belongs unto the visible kingdom of Satan. The gathering of men into the church by conversion is the "turning of them from the power of Satan unto God" (Act 26:18); a "delivery from the power of darkness"—that is, the kingdom of Satan—and a translation into the kingdom of Christ (Col 1:13).

Wherefore, after a man hath been translated into the kingdom of Christ by faith and his conjunction unto a visible church, his just rejection out of it is the re-delivery of him into the visible kingdom of Satan, which is all that is here intended. And this is an act suited unto the end whereunto it is designed; for a man hereby is not taken out of his own power and the conduct of his own mind, not acted or agitated by the devil, but is left unto the sedate consideration of his present state and condition. And this, if there be any spark of ingenuous[38] grace left in him, will be effectually operative by shame, grief, and fear unto his humiliation, especially understanding that the design of Christ and His church herein is only his repentance and restoration.

Summary

Here is, therefore, in this instance, an everlasting rule given unto the church in all ages, the ordinary occurrence of the like cases requiring an ordinary power for relief in them. Without [this] the church cannot be preserved.

That it is the *duty* of the church—enjoined unto it by the Lord Jesus Christ and necessary unto its glory, its own honor, and edification to reject scandalous offenders out of its communion—is evidently declared in this place. To suppose that to be the duty of the church that it hath no power and authority to discharge (seeing without them it cannot be discharged) is a wild imagination.

The *duty of the church* herein, with such other particular duties as suppose the institution hereof, are in many places directed and enjoined. It is so in that insisted on, 1 Corinthians 5. The foundation of the whole discourse and practice of the Apostle recorded there lies in this: that *churches ought to cut off from among them scandalous offenders* to the end they may preserve themselves pure. This they ought to do in the name of Christ and by virtue of His authority (1Co 5:2-5, 7). And this is the whole of that excommunication that we plead for. The manner of its administration we shall consider afterward.

2 Corinthians 2:6-8

[In] 2 Corinthians 2:6-8, the Apostle commends the church for what they had done in the excommunication of the incestuous person, calling it a punishment inflicted on him by them, verse 6. He gives also an account of the effect of this sentence against him, which was his humiliation and repentance, verse 7. Hereon he gives direction for his restoration by an act of the church forgiving him and confirming their love unto him.

Men may fancy to themselves strange notions of excommunication with reference unto its power, the residence of that power, its effects, extent, and ends. And so either, on the one hand, [men] erect it into an engine of arbitrary domination over the church and all the members of it; or on the other [hand], [men] deny that there is any such institution of Christ in force in His churches. But we can be taught nothing more plainly of the mind of Christ than that He hath given power unto His church to cast out of their communion obstinate, scandalous offenders and to restore them again upon their repentance, enjoining it unto them as their duty. It is an evidence of a woeful degeneracy in churches from their primitive institution, when the sentence is so administered as that it hath an effect by virtue of human laws or the outward concerns of men, but no influence *on their consciences* unto humiliation and repentance, which

is the principal end of its appointment.

Galatians 5:7-12

The Apostle treats of the same matter [in] Galatians 5:7-12. He speaks of those false teachers who opposed and overthrew what lay in them, the fundamental doctrine of the Gospel. These at that time were in great power and reputation in the churches of the Galatians, which they had corrupted with their false opinions, so that the Apostle doth not directly enjoin their immediate excision. Yet he declares what they did deserve and what was the duty of the church towards them when freed from their delusions: Verse 12, "I would they were even cut off that trouble you." Men have exercised their minds in curious conjectures about the sense of these words, altogether in vain and needlessly. The curiosity[39] of some of the best of the ancients, applying it unto a forcible eunuchism,[40] is extremely fond.[41]

No other excision is intended but that which was *from the church* and to be done by the church in obedience unto the truth. Neither the subject matter treated of, the nature of the crime condemned, nor the state of the church or design of the Apostle will admit of any other exposition. 2 Thessalonians 3:6, the Apostle gives command unto the brethren of the church, and that "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," to "withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly." What it is to "walk disorderly" he declares immediately—namely, to live in an open disobedience unto any of the commands of Christ and "not after the tradition which he received of us," that is, the doctrine of the Gospel that he had delivered unto them. This withdrawing is as unto church communion, which cannot be done but upon some act of the church depriving him of the right of it. For if every member of the church should be left unto his own judgment and practice herein, it would bring all things into confusion. Therefore, verse 14, he requires that a note be set on such a person by the church—that is, a sentence be denounced against him—before the duty of withdrawing from him by the brethren be incumbent on them. See to the same purpose Titus 3:10-11; 1 Timothy 5:20; Revelation 2:2, 14-15, 20-21.

It is therefore evident that this censure,[42] judgment, spiritual punishment is an institution of Christ, for whose administration He hath given authority unto His church, as that which is necessary unto its edification, with its preservation in honor, purity, and order.

III.
Order and Kinds of Excommunication

There have been many disputes about [excommunication], as unto its order and kinds. Some suppose that there are two sorts of excommunication: the one they call the "lesser" and the other the "greater"; some, three sorts, as it is supposed there were among the Jews. There is no mention in the Scripture of any more sorts but one or of any degrees herein. *Segregation from all participation in church order,* worship, and privileges is the only excommunication spoken of in the Scripture. But whereas an offending person may cause great disorder in a church and give great scandal unto the members of it before he can be regularly cut off or expelled from the society, some do judge that there should *a suspension of him from the Lord's Table at least* precede total or complete excommunication in case of impenitency.[43] And it ought in some cases so to be. But this suspension is not properly an especial institution, but only an act of prudence in church rule, to avoid offense and scandal. No men question but that this is lawful unto, yea, the *duty* of the rulers of the church to require anyone to forbear for a season from the use of his privilege in the participation of the Supper of the Lord, in case of scandal and offense that would be taken at it and ensue thereon. And if any person shall refuse a submission unto them in this act of rule, the church hath no way for its relief but to proceed unto the *total removal* of such a person from their whole communion. For the edification of the whole church must not be obstructed by the refractoriness[44] of any one among them.

A. Excommunication Is an Act of Church Authority.

This excommunication, as we have proved before, is *an act of church authority* exerted in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And if so, then it is an act of the officers of the church—namely, so far as it is authoritative—for there is no authority in the church, properly so called, but what resides in the officers of it. There is an office in the church that is merely ministerial,[45] without any formal authority, that is, the deacons. But there is no authority in exercise but what is in the elders and rulers of the church. There are two reasons that prove that the power of excommunication, as to the authoritative exercise of it, is in the elders of the church:

1. Because the Apostles, by virtue of their office-power in every church, did join in *the authoritative excommunication,* as is plain in the case insisted on, 1 Corinthians 5. And there is no office-power now remaining but what is in the elders of the church.

2. It is *an act of rule.* But all rule, properly so called, is in the hands of rulers only. We may add hereunto that the care of the preservation of the church in its purity, of the vindication of its honor, of the edification of all its members, of the correction and salvation of offenders is principally incumbent on them, or committed unto them, as we have declared. They are best able to judge when and for what the sentence ought to be denounced against any, which requires their best skill in the wisdom of spiritual rule. Therefore, the omission of the exercise of it, when it was necessary, is charged as neglect on the angels or rulers of the churches, as the due execution of it is commended in them. Therefore, unto them it doth belong with respect unto their office and is thereon an office-act or an act of authority.

B. Excommunication Is a Concern of the Whole Church.

Howbeit, it cannot be denied but that the interest, yea, the *powerof the whole church*, in the fraternity of it, is greatly to be considered herein. Indeed, wherever the Apostle treats of it, he doth not anywhere recommend it unto *the officers of the church* in a peculiar manner, but unto the whole church or the brethren therein. This is evident in the places before quoted.

Wherefore the whole church is concerned herein, in point of duty, interest, and power:

1. In *point of duty*. For by virtue of the *mutual watch* of all the members of the church over each other and of the care incumbent[46] on every one of them for the good, honor, reputation, and edification of the whole, it is their duty, jointly and severally, to endeavor purging out from among them everything that is contrary unto these ends. They who are not concerned in these things are dead and useless members of the church.

2. In *interest*. They have also a concernment therein. They are to look that no root of bitterness spring up amongst them, lest they be at length defiled thereby (Heb 12:15). It is usually said that the good are not defiled by holding communion with them that are wicked in a participation of holy ordinances. And there *is* some truth in what is said with reference unto wicked, undiscovered hypocrites, or such as are not scandalously flagitious.[47] But to promote this persuasion, so as to beget an opinion in church-members that they are no way concerned in the scandalous sins and lives of those with whom they walk in all duties of spiritual communion, openly avowing themselves members of the same body with them, is a diabolical engine,[48] invented to countenance churches in horrible security unto their ruin. Yet, besides that defilement that may be contracted in a joint participation of the same ordinances with such persons, there are almost innumerable other ways whereby their example—if passed by without animadversion[49]—may be pernicious[50] unto their faith, love, and obedience. Wherefore they are obliged in point of spiritual interest, as they take care of their own souls, to concur in the ejection out of the church of obstinate offenders.

3. In point of *power.* The execution of this sentence is committed *unto* and rests *in* the body of the church. According as they concur and practice, so it is put in execution or suspended. For it is they who must withdraw communion from them, or the sentence is of no use or validity. This punishment must be inflicted by the "many," who also are to restore him who is so rebuked. Wherefore, excommunication without the consent of the church is a mere nullity.[51]

But if anyone shall say that excommunication is not an act of authority or of office, but of power residing in the community, resulting from their common suffrage,[52] guided and directed by the officers or elders of the church, I shall again take up this inquiry immediately and speak unto it more distinctly, lest what is here spoken should not be sufficient unto the satisfaction of any.

C. Objects of Excommunication

Our next inquiry is concerning the *objects* of this church-censure, or who they are that ought to be excommunicated. And—

1. They must be *members of that church* by which the sentence is to be denounced against them. This, as we have proved before, they cannot be without their *own consent.* One church cannot excommunicate the members of another. They are unto them, as unto this matter, "without," and they have no power to judge them. The foundation of the right to proceed against any herein is in their own voluntary engagement to observe and keep the rules and laws of the society whereunto they are admitted. The offense is given unto that church in the first place, if not only; and it is an act of that church for its own edification. There is a nullity in the sentence that is ordained, decreed, or denounced by any who are

not officers of that church in particular wherein the sin is committed.

2. These church-members that may be justly excommunicated are of two sorts:[53]

(1) Such as continue *obstinate* in the practice of any *scandalous sin* after private and public admonition. The process from the first offense in admonition is so stated in ordinary cases (Mat 18:15-20) that there is no need further to declare it. The time that is to be allotted unto the several degrees of it shall be spoken unto afterward. And unto a right judgment of obstinacy in any scandalous sin, it is required—

[1] That the sin, considered in itself, be such as is *owned to be such by all,* without doubting, dispute, or hesitation. It must be some sin that is judged and condemned in the light of nature or in the express testimony of Scripture. Yea, such [a sin] as the Holy Ghost witnesseth that—continued in without repentance—is inconsistent with salvation. If the thing itself to be animadverted on[54] is dubious[55] or disputable whether it be a sin or no, especially such a sin either from the nature of the fact, the qualifications of the person offending, or from other circumstances, so that the guilty person is not self-condemned nor are others fully satisfied in their minds about the nature of it—*there is no room for excommunication in such case*. And if it be once allowed to be applied towards any sins but such as are evident to be so (as the Apostle says, "The works of the flesh are manifest") in the light of nature and express testimony of Scripture, not only will the administration of it be made difficult—a matter of dispute unfit for the determination of the body of the church—but it will leave it unto the wills of men to prostitute it unto litigious[56] brawls, quarrels, and differences, wherein interest and partiality may take place. [This] is to profane this divine institution. But confine it, as it ought to be, unto such sins as are condemned in the light of nature or by express testimony of Scripture as inconsistent with salvation by Jesus Christ, if persisted in, and all things that belong unto the administration of it will be plain and easy.

From the neglect of this rule proceeded that horrible confusion and disorder in excommunication and the administration of it, which for sundry ages prevailed in the world. For as it was mostly applied unto things holy, just, and good, or the performance of such Gospel duties as men owed to Christ and their own souls, so being exercised with respect unto irregularities that are made such merely by the arbitrary constitutions and laws of men—and that in cases frivolous, trifling, and of no importance—it was found necessary to be managed in and by such courts, such processes, such forms of law, such pleadings and intricacies of craft, such a burden of cost and charge, as it is uncertain whether it ought to be more bewailed or derided. [57]

[2] It is required hereunto that *the matter of fact* as unto the relation of the sin unto the particular offender be *confessed* or *not denied* or *clearly proved.* How far this is to extend and what ground of procedure there may be in reports or fame concurring with leading circumstances, we shall inquire afterward. Although in such cases of public fame, a good testimony from those of credit and repute in the church, given unto the supposed guilty person, is of use and sufficient in some cases, singly to oppose unto public reports—yet to require a man to purge himself by others from any feigned scandalous imputation is an unwarrantable tyranny.

[3] It is also required that the previous process, in and by private and public admonition, and that repeated, with *patient waiting* for the success of each of them, be duly premised.[58] Whether this extends itself unto all causes of excommunication shall be afterward inquired into. Ordinarily, it is so necessary unto the conviction of the mind and conscience of the offender—to leave him without either provocation from the church or excuse in himself, so suited to be expressive of the grace and patience of Christ toward sinners, so requisite unto the satisfaction of the church itself in their procedure—that the omission of it will probably render the sentence useless and ineffectual. A crying out, "I admonish a first, a second, a third time," and so [immediately to rush] to excommunication, is a very absurd observation of a divine institution.

[4] It is required that *the case* of the person to be censured, as unto his profession of repentance on the one hand or obstinacy on the other, be judged and determined by the whole church in love and compassion. There are few who are so profligately[59] wicked but that, when the sin wherewith they are charged is evidently such in the light of nature and Scripture and when it is justly proved against them, they will make some profession of sorrow and repentance. Whether this is sufficient, as in most cases it is, to suspend the present proceeding of the church or quite to lay it aside is left unto the judgment of the church itself, upon consideration of present circumstances and what is necessary unto its own edification. Only—this rule must be continually observed—that the least appearance of haste or undue precipitation[60] herein is to be avoided in all these cases as the bane[61]of church rule and order.

D. The Administration of Excommunication

Again, the *manner of its administration* according to the mind of Christ may be considered. And hereunto are required—

1. Prayer, without which it can no way be administered in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The administration of any solemn ordinance of the Gospel without prayer is a horrible profanation[62] of it. The neglect or contempt hereof, in any who take upon them to excommunicate others, is an open proclamation of the nullity of their act and sentence. The observation of the administration of it without any due reverence of God—without solemn invocation of the name of Christ thereby engaging His presence and authority in what they do—is that principally that hath set the consciences of all mankind at liberty from any concernment in this ecclesiastical censure. [And because of this] those that administer it expect no other success of what they do but what they can give it by outward force. And where this fails, excommunication is quickly laid aside—as it was when the pope threatened the cantons[63] of the Swiss. [He said] that if they complied not with some of his impositions, he would excommunicate them. [Upon this,] they sent him word, "They would not be excommunicated," which ended the matter. Wherefore, when our Lord Jesus Christ gives unto His church the power of binding and loosing, directing them in the exercise of that power, he directs them to ask assistance by prayer when they are gathered together (Mat 18:18-20). The Apostle directs the church of Corinth that they should proceed unto this sentence when they were gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1Co 5:4), which could not be without calling on His name. In brief, without prayer, neither is the ordinance itself sanctified unto the church, nor are any [fit] to administer it, nor is the authority of Christ either owned or engaged nor divine assistance obtained. Neither is what is done any more excommunication than any rash curse is—so that many [such] proceed inordinately out of the mouths of men.

The prayer required herein is of three sorts: (1) That which is previous,[64] for guidance and direction in a matter of so great weight and importance. It is no small thing to fall into mistakes when men act in the name of Christ and engage His authority in what He will not own. And the best of men, the best of churches, are liable unto such mistakes when they are not under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which is to be obtained by prayer only. (2) In or together with the administration of it, that what is done on earth may be ratified in heaven by the approbation[65] of Christ and be made effectual unto its proper end. (3) It must be followed with the prayer of the church unto the same purpose—all with respect unto the humiliation, repentance, healing, and recovery of the offender.

2. It is to be accompanied with *lamentation* or mourning. So the Apostle, reproving the church of Corinth for the omission of it when it was necessary, tells them that they had not "mourned," that the offender might be taken away from among them (1Co 5:2). It is not to be done without mourning. [Paul] himself calls the execution of this sentence, from this adjunct,[66] his bewailing of them: "I shall bewail many that have sinned already" (2Co 12:21). Compassion for the person offending with respect unto that

dangerous condition whereinto he hath cast himself—the excision of a member of the same body with whom they have had communion in the most holy mysteries of divine worship and sat down at the table of the Lord with a due sense of the dishonor of the Gospel by his fall—ought to ingenerate[67] this mourning or lamentation in the minds of them who are concerned in the execution of the sentence. Nor is it advisable for any church to proceed thereunto before they are so affected.

3. It is to be accompanied with a *due sense of the future judgment of Christ*, for we herein judge for Christ in the matters of His house and kingdom. Woe to them who dare pronounce this sentence without a persuasion, on good grounds, that it is the sentence of Christ Himself! There is also a representation of the future judgment in it, when Christ will eternally cut off and separate from Himself all hypocrites and impenitent sinners. This is well expressed by Tertullian:[68] "In the same place also exhortations are made, rebukes and sacred censures are administered. For with a great gravity is the work of judging carried on among us, as befits those who feel assured that they are in the sight of God; and you have the most notable example of judgment to come when any one has sinned so grievously as to require his severance from us in prayer, in the congregation, and in all sacred [communion]."[69] Were this duty observed, it would be a preservative against that intermixture of corrupt affections and corrupt ends, which often impose themselves on the minds of men in the exercise of this power.

Lastly, The *nature and end* of this judgment or sentence being *corrective,* not *vindictive*—for healing, not destruction—what is the duty of the church and those principally concerned in the pursuit of it to render it effectual, is plainly evident. Of what use a *"significabit"* and *"capias"*[70] may be in this case I know not; they belong not unto Christian religion—much less do fire and fagot[71] do so. Prayer for the person cut off, admonition as occasion is offered, compassion in his distressed estate (which is so much the more deplorable if he know it not), forbearance from common converse,[72] with readiness for the restoration of love in all the fruits of it, contain the principal duties of the church and all the members of it towards them that are justly excommunicated.

What further belongeth unto this head of church rule or order shall be spoken unto in the resolution of some cases or inquiries, wherein some things only mentioned already shall be more fully explained.

E. Jurisdiction: Of the Officers or of the Church?

I have made some inquiry before whether excommunication be an act of authority and jurisdiction in the *officers* of the church or an act of power in the *fraternity* of the church. But, for the sake of some by whom it is desired, I shall herein inquire after the truth a little more distinctly, though I shall alter nothing of what was before laid down. And—

1. It is certain—it hath been proved and I now take it for granted—that the Lord *Christ hath given this power unto the church.* Wherefore, in the exercise of this power, both the officers and members of the church are to act according unto their respective interests. For that exercise of power in the church towards any that is not an act of obedience unto Christ in them that exercise it is in itself null.[73] There is, therefore, no distinction or distribution of power in the church, but by the interposition[74] of especial duty.

2. The institution of Christ with respect unto a church as it is a *peculiar society,* for its *especial ends,* doth not deprive it of its natural right, as it is a society. There is in every community, by voluntary confederation, a natural right and power to expel those from its society who will not be ruled by the laws of its constitution. And if the church should, by the institution of a power new as unto the way, manner, and ends of its exercise, be deprived of its original, radical power, with respect unto the general end of its own preservation, it would not be a gainer by that institution. It may be easily understood that the Lord Christ should, in particular, appoint the way and manner of the exercise of this power, or administration

of this sentence, committing the care thereof unto the officers of the church. But it cannot be well understood that thereby He should deprive the church of its right and forbid them their duty in preserving their society entire and pure. Neither can it be committed unto any in [such] an especial manner, as that upon their neglect, whereby those who by the Law and rule of Christ ought to be cast out of the church's communion are continued in it unto its sin and defilement, the church itself should be free from guilt. Wherefore the Apostle expressly chargeth the whole church of Corinth with sin and neglect of duty, in that the incestuous person was not put away from among them. This could not be, if so be the power of it were so in the hands of a few of the officers that the church had no right to act in it; for none can incur guilt merely by the defect of others in discharge of their duty.

3. The church, *essentially* considered, is before its ordinary officers; for the apostles ordained officers in every church. But the church in that state hath power to put away from among them and their communion an obstinate offender: they have it because they are a society by voluntary confederation. Wherein this comes short of authoritative excommunication will immediately appear.

4. Where a church is complete and *organized* with its stated rulers, as the church of Corinth was, yet rules, instructions, and commands are given expressly unto the fraternity or community of the church, for their duty and acting in the administration of this sentence and the cutting off of an offender (1Co 5:1-7; 2Co 2:7-8). Yea, the *epitimia*,[75] or infliction of the sentence, is ascribed unto them, 2 Corinthians 2:6. All these things do suppose a right and duty thereon to act according to their interest in excommunication to reside in the whole church. Wherefore—

5. There are *some acts* belonging hereunto that the church itself in the body of the fraternity cannot be excluded from without destroying the nature of the sentence itself and rendering it ineffectual. Such are 1) the previous cognizance of the cause, without which they cannot be blamed for any neglect about it; 2) preparatory duties unto its execution, in prayer, mourning, and admonition, which are expressly prescribed unto them; and 3) a testification[76] of their consent unto it by their common suffrage. Without these things, excommunication is but a name with a noise; it belongs not unto the order appointed by Christ in His church.

6. Hence arise the *duties* of the church towards an excommunicated person that are consequential unto his exclusion from among them. Such are 1) praying for him, as one noted by the church and under the discipline of Christ; and 2) avoiding communion with him in public and private, that he may be ashamed, and the like—all which arise from their own voluntary actings in his exclusion, and such as without a judgment of the cause they cannot be obliged unto.

7. Yet, on the other side, unto the formal completeness of this sentence, an *authoritative act of office-power* is required: for (1) There is in it such an act of *rule* as is in the hands of the elders only. (2) The *executive* power of the keys in binding and loosing, so far as it compriseth authority to be acted in the name of Christ, is entrusted with them only.

8. Wherefore, I shall say no more in answer unto this inquiry, but that *excommunication* is an act of church-power in its officers and brethren, acting according unto their respective rights, interests, and duties, particularly prescribed unto them. The officers of the church act in it as officers with authority; the brethren, or the body of the church, with power, yet so as that the officers are no way excluded from their power, consent, and suffrage in the acting of the church, but have the same interest therein with all the other members of the church. But the community of the church have no interest in those authoritative actings of the officers that are peculiar unto them [the officers]. Where either of these is wanting, the whole duty is vitiated[77] and the sense of the sentence rendered ineffectual.

IV.
Important Inquiries about Excommunication Answered

A. It may be inquired,Whether excommunication, justly deserved, may and ought to be omitted in case of trouble or danger that may ensue unto the church thereon?

Three aspects in which the danger may occur

It is usually granted that so it may and ought to be; which seems in general to have been the judgment of Austin.[78] The troubles and dangers intended are threefold: 1) from the *thing* itself, 2) from the *persons* to be excommunicated, and 3) from the *church.*

1. "Trouble may arise from the *thing* itself; for there being an exercise of authority or jurisdiction in it over the persons of men not granted from the civil magistrate by the law of the land, those that execute it may be liable unto penalties ordained in such cases.

2. "The *persons* to be excommunicated may be great, and of great interest in the world, so as that if they receive a provocation hereby, they may occasion or stir up persecution against the church, as it hath often fallen out.

3. "The *church* itself may be divided on these considerations, so as that lasting differences may be occasioned among them, which the omission of the sentence might prevent."

Suppositions[79] for the answer

For answer hereunto, some things must be premised; as 1. Here is no supposition of anything sinful or morally evil in the church, its officers, or any of its members, by refusing to omit the pronouncing of this sentence. Whether there be any sin in giving occasion unto the troubles mentioned, to be avoided by an omission of duty, is now to be inquired into.

2. We must suppose (1) That the *cause* of excommunication be clear and evident, both as unto the merit of the fact and the due application of it unto the person concerned, so as that no rational indifferent man shall be able to say that it is meet that such a one should be continued a member of such a society—as it ought to be wherever excommunication is administered. (2) That *sufficient time* and space for repentance, and for giving satisfaction unto the church (whereof afterward), hath been allowed unto the person after admonition. (3) That the church doth *really suffer in honor* and reputation by tolerating such a scandalous offender among them.

Answer:

I answer, on these suppositions, I see no just reason to countenance the omission of the execution of this sentence or to acquit the church from the guilt of sin in so doing. For—

1. The first pretense of *danger* is vain. There is not the least shadow of jurisdiction in this act of the

church. There is nothing in it that toucheth anything that is under the protection and conservation of human laws. It reacheth not the persons of men in their lives, liberties, estates, or the least secular privileges that they do enjoy. It doth not expose them to the power or censures of others, nor prejudge them as unto office or advantage of life. There is, therefore, no concernment of the law of the land herein —no more than in a parent's disinheriting a rebellious child.

2. As unto *danger of persecution* by the means of the person provoked, I say, (1) The same may be pleaded as unto all other duties of obedience unto Jesus Christ wherewith the world is provoked, and so the whole profession of the church should give place to[80] the fear of persecution. To testify against sin in the way of Christ's appointment is a case of confession.[81] (2) The apostles were not deterred by this consideration from the excommunication of Simon Magus, the seducing Jews, Hymeneus and Alexander, with others. (3) The Lord Christ commendeth or reproveth His churches, according as they were strict in the observation of this duty or neglectful of it, notwithstanding the fear of persecution thereon (Rev 2-3). And, (4) He will take that care of His church in all their obedience unto Him, as shall turn all the consequences thereof unto their advantage.

3. As unto danger of *differences in the church*, there is nothing to be said, but that if rule, order, love, and duty will not prevent such differences, there is no way appointed of Christ for that end; and if they are sufficient for it (as they are abundantly), they must bear their own blame who occasion such differences.

B. But it may be said,What if such an offender as justly deserves to be excommunicated and is under admonition in order thereunto in case of impenitency should voluntarily withdraw himself from and leave the communion of the church? Is there any necessity to proceed against him by excommunication?

Answer: **1.** Some say it is enough if it be declared in the church that such a one hath cut off himself from the church and is therefore no longer under their watch or care, but is left unto himself and the world. And this is sufficient with them who own no act of office-power or authority in excommunication, but esteem it only a noted cessation of communion—that destroys a principal branch of the power of the "keys" (Mat 16:19). Wherefore,

2. Where the offense is plain, open, scandalous, persisted in—where admonition is despised or not complied with—it is the duty of the church to denounce the sentence of excommunication against such a person notwithstanding his voluntary departure. For (1) No man is to make an *advantage* unto himself or to be freed from any disadvantage, censure, or spiritual penalty by his own sin, such as is the voluntary relinquishment of the church by a person under admonition for scandalous offenses. (2) It is necessary unto the church, both as unto the discharge of its duty and the *vindication of its honor,* as also from the benefit and edification it will receive by those duties of humiliation, mourning, and prayer that are necessary unto the execution of this sentence. (3) It is necessary for *the good and benefit of him* who so deserves to be excommunicated. For [1] The end of the institution of the ordinance is his correction, not his destruction, and may be effectual unto his repentance and recovery. [2] It is to be followed with sharp admonition and prayer, which in due time may reach the most profligate sinner. (4) It becomes not the *wisdom and order* of any society entrusted with authority for its own preservation, as the church is by Christ Himself, to suffer persons obnoxious unto censure by the fundamental rules of that society, to cast off all respect unto it, [or] to break their order and relation, without animadverting thereon, according to the authority wherewith they are entrusted. To do otherwise is to expose their order unto contempt and

proclaim a diffidence[82] in their own authority for the spiritual punishment of offenders. (5) One end of the appointment of the power and sentence of excommunication in the church is to give testimony unto *the future final judgment* of Christ against impenitent sinners, which none of them can run away from nor escape.

C. A third inquiry may be,Whether, in case of any great sin, the church may proceed unto excommunication without any previous admonition?

Answer: **1.** Persons may be *falsely accused of* and charged with great sins, the greatest of sins as well as those of a lesser degree, and that both by particular testimonies and public reports—as it was with the Lord Christ Himself, which daily experience confirms. Wherefore, all haste and precipitation, like that of David in judging the case of Mephibosheth, is carefully to be avoided, though they are pressed under the pretences of the greatness and notoriety of the sin.

2. There is no *individual actual sin* but is capable of great aggravation or alleviation[83] from its circumstances. These the church is to inquire into and to obtain a full knowledge of them that all things being duly weighed, they may be affected with the sin in a due manner or after a godly sort, which is essential unto the right administration of this ordinance.

3. This cannot be done without *personal conference* with the offender, who is to be allowed to speak for himself. This conference, in case guilt be discovered, cannot but have in it the nature of an admonition, whereon the church is to proceed—as in the case of previous solemn admonition, in the order and according to the rule that shall be immediately declared.

D. Whether, on the first knowledge of an offense or scandalous sin, if it be known unto the church that the offending party is penitent and willing to declare his humiliation and repentance for the satisfaction of the church, the church may proceed unto his excommunication in case the sin be great and notorious?

Answer: **1.** It is certain that, in an orderly progress, as unto more private sins, compliance by repentance with the first or second admonition doth put a stop unto all further ecclesiastical procedure.

2. But whereas the inquiry is made concerning sins either in their own nature or in their circumstances great and of disreputation[84] unto the church, I answer, "If repentance be evidenced unto the consciences of the rulers of the church to be sincere and proportionable unto the offense in its outward demonstration, according unto the rule of the Gospel, so as that they are obliged to judge in charity that the person sinning is pardoned and accepted with Christ, as all sincerely penitent sinners undoubtedly are, the church cannot proceed unto the excommunication of such an offender." For—

(1) It would be publicly to *reject them* whom they acknowledge that *Christ doth receive.* Nothing can warrant them to do this; yea, so to do is to set themselves against Christ, or at least to make use of His authority *against* His mind and will. Yea, such a sentence would destroy itself, for it is a declaration that Christ doth disapprove them whom He doth approve.

(2) Their so doing would make *a misrepresentation of the Gospel* and of the Lord Christ therein. For whereas the principal design of the Gospel and of the representation that is made therein of Christ Jesus is to evidence that all sincerely penitent sinners that repent according unto the rule of it are and shall be

pardoned and accepted. The rejection of such a person in the face of his sincere repentance is an open contradiction thereunto. It would especially give an *undue* sense of the heart, mind, and will of Christ towards repenting sinners, such as may be dangerous unto the faith of believers, so far as the execution of this sentence is doctrinal—for such it is, and declarative of the mind of Christ according unto the judgment of the church. The image, therefore, of this excommunication that is set up in some churches, wherein the sentence of it is denounced without any regard unto the mind of Christ as unto His acceptance or disapprobation[85] of those whom they excommunicate, is a teacher of lies.

(3) Such a procedure is *contrary unto the nature and end of this sentence*. For it is corrective and instructive, not properly punishing and vindictive. The sole end of it, with respect whereunto it hath its efficacy from divine institution, is the humiliation, repentance, and recovery of the sinner. If this be attained before, the infliction of this sentence is contrary to the nature and end of it.

Objection:

It will be said that it hath another end also, namely, the preservation of the purity of the church and the vindication of its honor and reputation, wherein it suffers by the scandalous offenses of any of its members. Whereunto I say, (1) No church is or can be made impure by them whom Christ hath purged, as He doth all those who are truly penitent; (2) It is no dishonor unto any church to have sinners in it who have evidenced sincere repentance. (3) The present offense and scandal may be provided against by an act of rectorial[86] prudence, in causing the offending person to abstain from the Lord's Table for a season.

E. It is inquired,Whether such as voluntarily, causelessly, and disorderly do leave the communion of any church whereof they are members, though not guilty of any scandalous immoralities, may and ought to be excommunicated?

Answer: **1.** Where persons are esteemed members of churches by *external causes without their own consent* or by parochial cohabitation,[87] they may remove from one church unto another by the removal of their habitation according unto their own discretion. For such cohabitation being the *only formal cause* of any relation to such a church in particular, upon the ceasing of that cause, the relation ceaseth of its own accord.

2. Where persons are members of churches by *mutual confederation* or express personal consent, causeless departure from them *is* an evil liable unto many aggravations.

3. But whereas the principal end of all particular churches is *edification,* there may be many just and sufficient reasons why a person may remove himself from *the constant communion of one church* unto that of another. Of these reasons, he himself is judge on whom it is incumbent to take care of his own edification above all other things. Nor ought the church to deny unto any such persons their liberty, desired peaceably and according unto order.

4. It was declared before that where any persons guilty of and under admonition for any *scandalous sin* do withdraw from the communion of any church, their so doing is no impediment unto a further procedure against them.

5. Whereas there are amongst us churches, or those that are so esteemed in the consciences of men, so far differing in principles and practices as that they have not entire communion with one another in all parts of divine worship, it may be inquired—

Whether, if a man leave a church of one sort to join with one of another—suppose he leave a select congregation to join in a parochial church constantly and totally—he may be justly excommunicated for so doing without the consent of the church whereunto he did belong?

Answer: It is certain, on the one hand, that if any man leaves the communion of parochial assemblies to join himself unto a select congregation, those who have power over those parishes will make no question whether they shall excommunicate him or no in their way. But—

Supposing persons so departing from particular congregations (1) to be free from *scandalous sins*; (2) that they depart quietly without attempting disorder or confusion in the church; (3) that they do *actually join themselves* unto the communion of some church, whose constitution, principles, and worship they do approve, whereby their visible profession is preserved, *the church may not justly proceed unto their excommunication*. It may suffice to declare that such persons have of their own accord forsaken the communion of the church are no more under its watch and care. Neither is the church further obliged towards them, but as unto Christian duties in general.

6. As for those whose departure is, as voluntary and causeless, so accompanied with other evils, such as are revilings, reproaches, and false accusations—as is usual in such cases—they *may* be proceeded against as obstinate offenders.

F. What time is to be given after solemn admonition before actual excommunication?

Answer: **1.** The manner of some, to run over the words, "I admonish you a first, second, and third time," [in order to] make way immediately for the sentence of excommunication, is that wherein men are greatly to be pitied for their ignorance of the nature of those things that they take on themselves to act, order, and dispose of—that we ascribe it not unto worse and more evil causes.

2. The nature of the thing itself requires a considerable season or *space of time* between solemn admonition and excommunication: for the end and design of the former is the repentance and recovery of the offender. Nor doth its efficacy thereunto depend on or consist in the actual giving of it, but it is as other moral causes, which may work gradually upon occasional advantages. Want of light, some present exasperation and temptation, may seem to frustrate a present admonition, when they do but suspend its present efficacy. It may afterward obtain on the conscience of the offender.

3. It being a *church-admonition* that is intended, it is the duty of the church to abide in prayer and waiting for the fruit of it according to the appointment of Christ. Herein the case may possibly require some long time to be spent.

4. No present *appearance of obstinacy* or impenitence under admonition (which is usually pleaded) should cause an immediate procedure unto excommunication. For (1) It is contrary unto the *distinct institution* of the one and the other, wherein the former is to be allowed its proper season for its use and efficacy. (2) It doth not represent *the patience and forbearance of Christ towards his church* and all the members of it. (3) It is not suited unto the rule of that love that "hopeth all things, beareth all things," etc. (4) All grounds of hope for the recovery of sinners by repentance are to be attended unto to defer the ultimate sentence. "There cannot be too much deliberation when the death of a man is concerned."[88]

5. If new sins of the same or any other kind are added unto former scandals while persons are under admonition, it is an indication of the necessity of a procedure.

G. It may be further inquired,Whether a man may be excommunicated for errors in matters of faith or false opinions

about them?

Answer: **1.** The case is so plainly and positively stated (Rev 2:2, 6, 14, 15, 20; 1Ti 1:19-20; Ti 3:10-11; and other places), that it needs no further determination. Wherefore,

2. If the errors intended are about or against the *fundamental truths* of the Gospel, so as that they that hold them cannot "hold the Head" (*cf.* Col 2:19), but really make "shipwreck of the faith," no pretended usefulness of such persons, no peaceableness as unto outward deportment, which men guilty of such abominations will frequently cover themselves withal, can countenance the church in forbearing to cut them off from their communion, after due admonition. The nature of the evil; the danger from it unto the whole church, as from a gangrene in any member unto the body; the indignation of Christ expressed against such pernicious doctrines; [and] the opposition of them to the building of the church on the Rock, which in most of them is opposed, do render a church altogether inexcusable who omit their duty herein.

3.*False opinions* in lesser things, when the foundation of faith and Christian practice is not immediately concerned, may be tolerated in a church. Sundry rules are given unto this end in the Scripture, as Romans 14:1-3, etc., Philippians 3:15-16. Howbeit, in that low ebb of grace, love, and prudence, which we are come unto, it is best for edification that all persons peaceably dispose themselves into those societies with which they most agree in principles and opinions, especially such as relate or lead unto practice in any duties of worship. But,

4. With respect unto such opinions, if men wilt, as is usual, *wrangle*[89]*and contend* to the disturbance of the peace of the church or hinder it in any duty with respect unto its own edification, and will neither peaceably abide in the church nor peaceably depart from it, they may and ought to be proceeded against with the censures of the church.

H. Whether persons excommunicated out of any church may be admitted unto the hearing of the Word in the assemblies of that church?

Answer: **1.** They *may be so,* as also to be present at all duties of moral worship, for so may heathens and unbelievers (1Co 14:23-24).

2. When persons are under this sentence, the church is in a state of expecting of their recovery and return, and therefore are not to prohibit them any means thereof, such as is preaching of the Word.

I. How far extends the rule of the Apostle towards persons rejected of the church, "With such an one no not to eat" (1Co 5:11); as that also, "Note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed" (2Th 3:14)?

Answer: **1.** To "eat" compriseth all *ordinary converse* in things of this life: "Give us our daily bread." To "note" is either the act of the church setting the mark of its censure and disapprobation on him or the duty of the members of the church to take notice of him as unto the end of not keeping company with him. Wherefore,

2. Herein all ordinary converse of *choice,* not made necessary by previous occasions, is forbidden. The rule, I say, forbids (1) All ordinary converse of choice, not that which is occasional; (2) Converse about earthly, secular things, not that which is spiritual, for such an one may and ought still to be

admonished whilst he will hear the word of admonition; (3) It is such converse as is not made previously necessary by men's mutual engagements in trade and the like, for that is founded on such rules of right and equity with such obligations in point of truth as excommunication cannot dissolve.

3. No *suspension* of duties antecedently[90] necessary by virtue of natural or moral relation is allowed or countenanced by this rule. Such are those of husband and wife, parents and children, magistrates and subjects, masters and servants, neighbors, relations in propinquity[91] or blood. No duties arising from or belonging unto any of these relations are released or the obligation unto them weakened by excommunication. Husbands may not hereon forsake their wives if they are excommunicated, nor wives their husbands. Magistrates may not withdraw their protection from any of their subjects because they are excommunicated, much less may subjects withhold their obedience on any pretense of the excommunication of their magistrates as such. The same is true as unto all other natural or moral relations.

4. The *ends* of this prohibition are (1) To testify our condemnation of the sin and disapprobation of the person guilty of it, who is excommunicated; (2) The preservation of ourselves from all kinds of participation in his sin; (3) To make him ashamed of himself that if he be not utterly profligate and given up unto total apostasy, it may occasion in him thoughts of returning.

J. How ought persons excommunicated to be received into the church upon their repentance?

Answer: **1.** As unto the *internal manner,* with all readiness and cheerfulness, with (1) Meekness, to take from them all discouragement and disconsolation (Gal 6:1); (2) With compassion and all means of relief and consolation (2Co 2:7); (3) With love in all the demonstrations of it (2Co 2:8); (4) With joy, to represent the heart of Christ towards repenting sinners.

2. The *outward manner* of the restoration of such a person consists in (1) His testification of his repentance unto the satisfaction of the church; (2) The express consent of the church unto his reception; (3) His renewed engagement in the covenant of the church, whereby he is re-instated or jointed again in the body in his own proper place—in all which the elders by their authority are to go before the church.

All sorts of persons do now condemn the opinions of the Novatians, in refusing the re-admission of lapsed sinners into the church upon repentance.[92] But there may be an evil observed amongst some leading that way, or unto what is worse; and this is, that they seek not afar the recovery of those that are excommunicated by prayer, admonition, exhortation, in a spirit of meekness and tenderness, but are well satisfied that they have quitted themselves of their society. It is better never to excommunicate any than to carry it towards them so, when they are excommunicated. But there is a sort of men unto whom if a man be once an offender, he shall be so forever.

K. Our last inquiry shall be,Whether excommunication may be regular and valid when the matter of right is dubious and disputable—as many such cases may fall out, especially with respect unto the occasions of life and mutual converse—orwhen the matter of fact is not duly proved by positive witnesses on the one hand and is denied on the other?

Answer: **1.** The foundation of the efficacy of excommunication, next and un-der its divine institution,

lies in the light and conviction of the consciences of them that are to be excommunicated. If these are not affected with a sense of guilt, as in dubious cases they may not be, the sentence will be of no force or efficacy.

2. A case wherein there is a difference in the judgment of *good and wise* men about it is to be esteemed such a dubious case as is exempted from this censure. Nothing is to be admitted here to take place but what is reprovable by natural light and the concurrent judgment of them that fear God.

3. If the case be about such a *right or wrong,* in pretended fraud, overreaching,[93] or the like, as is determinable by civil laws, the church is no judge in such cases unless it be by way of arbitration[94] (1Co 6).

4. If the question be about *doctrines* that are not on points fundamental, so as those who dissent from the church do carry it peaceably and orderly, there can be no procedure unto ecclesiastical censure. But if men will dote on their own opinions, wrangling, contending, and breaking the peace of the church about them, there are other rules given in that case.

5. If the *matter of fact* be to be determined and stated by *witness,* it is absolutely necessary by virtue of divine institution that there be two or three concurrent testimonies. One witness is not to be regarded. See Deuteronomy 19:15; Numbers 35:30; Matthew 18:16, etc.

Rules for excommunication when the matter is dubious

Wherefore the ensuing rules or directions are to be observed in the matter of excommunication:

1. No excommunication is to be allowed in cases *dubious* and *disputable*, wherein right and wrong are not easily determinable unto all unprejudiced persons that know the will of God in such things; nor is it to be admitted when the matter of fact stands in need of testimony and is not proved by two witnesses at the least.

2. All *prejudices,* all partiality, all provocations, all haste and precipitation are most carefully to be avoided in this administration; for the judgment is the Lord's. Wherefore,

3. We are continually, in all things that *tend unto this sentence* and eminently in the sentence itself, to charge our consciences with the mind of Christ and what He would do Himself in the case, considering His love, grace, mercy, and patience with instances of His condescension that He gave us in this world.

4. There is also required of us herein a constant remembrance that we also are in the flesh and liable to temptation, which may restrain and keep in awe that forwardness and confidence that some are apt to manifest in such cases. In all these things a watchful eye is to be kept over the methods of Satan, who by all means seeks to pervert this ordinance unto the destruction of men, which is appointed for their edification—and he too often prevails in that design. And if, by the negligence of a church in the management and pursuit of this ordinance, he get advantage to pervert it unto the ruin of any, it is the fault of that church in that they have not been careful of the honor of Christ therein. Wherefore,

(1) As excommunication by a *cursed noise and clamor,* with bell, book, and candle (such as we have instances of in some papal councils), is a horrible antichristian abomination: so,

(2) It is an undue representation of Christ and His authority, for persons openly guilty of profaneness in sinning to excommunicate them who are blameless in all Christian obedience.

(3) All excommunication is evangelically null[95] where there is wanting an evangelical frame of spirit in those by whom it is administered, and there is present an anti-evangelical order in its administration.

(4) It is sufficiently evident that, after all the contests and disputes about this excommunication that have been in the world, the noise that it hath made, the horrible abuses that it hath been put unto, the wresting of all church order and rule to give countenance unto a corrupt administration of it, with the

needless oppositions that have been made against its institution—there is nothing in it, nothing belongs unto it, nothing is required unto its administration, wherein men's outward interests are at all concerned, and which the smallest number of sincere Christians in any church-society may not perform and discharge unto the glory of Christ and their own edification.

It is the mystery of iniquity that hath traversed these things into such a state and posture as is unintelligible unto spiritual wisdom, unpracticable[96] in the obedience of faith, and ruinous unto all evangelical order and discipline.

[1]**obstinately** – stubbornly.
[2] See "The True Nature of a Gospel Church and Its Government" in *The Works of John Owen*, Vol. 16, reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust.
[3]**excommunication** – officially excluding someone from participation in the Lord's Supper and the fellowship of a Gospel church.
[4]**serpentine** – having the evil qualities of the serpent; Satanic.
[5]**metamorphosed** – changed completely; transfigured.
[6]**deposition** – removal.
[7]**pernicious** – having a harmful effect, especially in a gradual or subtle way.
[8]**Saracens** – fierce Muslim warriors who fought to control Jerusalem during the Crusades of the twelfth century.
[9]**Turks** – the Muslim people of Asia Minor who warred against Europe from the mid-fourteenth century through the nineteenth century, establishing the Ottoman Empire.
[10]**supinely** – carelessly; lazily.
[11]**infatuated** – made foolish; inspired with extravagant passion.
[12]**equity** – fairness; evenhanded dealing.
[13]**vicious** – depraved; wicked.
[14]**incumbent** – obligatory; morally binding.
[15]**sifted to the bran** – thoroughly sifted (in reference to the process of threshing wheat).
[16]**conjectures** – opinions or conclusions based on incomplete information.
[17]**confederation** – alliance; association.
[18]**meet** – qualified.
[19]**coalesce nor subsist** – grow together nor exist.
[20]***sui juris*** – *Latin*, literally "of one's own law"; capable of managing one's own affairs.
[21]**de facto** – actually; in fact; as distinguished from *by right.*
[22]**tenure** – the relations, rights, and duties of the tenant to the landlord.
[23]**mainprise** – a surety taken by a sheriff to ensure a prisoner's appearance in court.
[24]**artifice** – trickery.
[25]**obnoxious** – liable.
[26]**capias** – a legal summons to judgment.
[27]**disfranchise** – deprive of rights and privileges.
[28]**coalescency** – union of diverse things into one body or group.
[29]**cognizance** – knowledge of.
[30]**obstinacy** – stubborn hardness of heart.
[31]**repentance** – Repentance to life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sins, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does with grief and hatred of his sin turn from it to God, with full purpose to strive after new obedience.
[32]ignominy – public disgrace.
[33]excision – banishing a member of a church from the communion of believers and the privileges of the church.
[34]**end** – goal.
[35]**cruciated** – tortured; tormented.
[36]**instance** – example.
[37]**Marcion of Sinope** (*ca*. 85-160) – early Christian heretic.
[38]**ingenuous** – without deceit.
[39]**curiosity** – novelty, i.e., the strange interpretation.
[40]**forcible eunuchism** – forced emasculation.
[41]**fond** – absurd or foolish because unlikely.
[42]**censure** – an expression of formal disapproval.
[43]**impenitency** – refusing to repent.
[44]**refractoriness** – stubborn disobedience or resistance to authority.
[45]**ministerial** – an office of helping or servanthood.
[46]**incumbent** – necessary as a responsibility.
[47]**flagitious** – deeply criminal; extremely wicked.
[48]**engine** – snare.
[49]**animadversion** – harsh criticism.
[50]**pernicious** – highly destructive.
[51]**nullity** – lack of legal force or efficacy.
[52]**suffrage** – right to vote.
[53] Strangely enough, our author mentions only one sort and omits to specify the other. Perhaps he intended by the second sort members whose conduct, though not grossly and obstinately scandalous, was so contumacious [stubborn, unyielding] in resisting the authority of the

church that their continued enjoyment of church-membership would have been subversive of all peace and order.—*Editors, Banner of Truth Edition*

[54]**animadverted on** – expressly blamed.

[55]**dubious** – doubtful.

[56]**litigious** – contentious; quarrelsome.

[57]**bewailed or derided** – mourned for loudly or laughed at scornfully.

[58]**duly premised** – properly stated previously.

[59]**profligately** – unrestrainedly.

[60]**precipitation** – hurried action.

[61]**bane** – ruin.

[62]**profanation** – depriving of sacred character; treating something holy with contempt.

[63]**cantons** – the several sovereign states that form the Swiss confederation.

[64]**That which is previous** – prayer given *before* each discussion.

[65]**approbation** – approval.

[66]**adjunct** – accompanying quality.

[67]**ingenerate** – produce within.

[68]**Tertullian** (160-230) – early Christian theologian and author.

[69] Tertullian, "The Apology" in Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. III: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 46.

[70]***significabit…capias*** – the first words of certain legal writs issued to prosecute the sentences of the church and maintain its authority.

[71]**fagot** – a bundle of twigs used for burning.

[72]**converse** – conversation; familiar interchange of thoughts.

[73]**null** – of no legal or binding force; invalid.

[74]**interposition** – intervention.

[75]***epitimia*** – *Greek*, ἐπιτιμία; punishment.

[76]**testification** – act of bearing witness.

[77]**vitiated** – made ineffective or invalid.

[78]**Austin** or **Aurelius Augustine** (354-430) – Bishop of Hippo Regius in North Africa.

[79]**suppositions** – things that are assumed which become the basis of a conclusion drawn.

[80]**give place to** – give occasion for; lead to.

[81]**confession** – belief leading to obedience to what one believes.

[82]**diffidence** – mistrust.

[83]**alleviation** – lessening of severity.

[84]**disreputation** – loss of reputation; disgrace.

[85]**disapprobation** – pronouncing moral condemnation; disapproval.

[86]**rectorial** – governing.

[87]**parochial cohabitation** – the community of a church parish.

[88]**Juvenal** or **Decimus Junius Juvenalis** (*c.*60-*c.*140), Satire 6.220.

[89]**wrangle** – dispute; argue.

[90]**antecedently** – previously.

[91]**propinquity** – nearness in relation; kin.

[92]**Novatians** – a sect begun in the 3rd century, named for Novatian, Bishop of Rome, AD 251-253. Many believers renounced Christ in order to avoid persecution. When a persecution ended, the Novatians opposed their restoration, demanding absolute fidelity to Christ at all times.

[93]**overreaching** – cheat in dealing.

[94]**arbitration** – the settlement of a dispute by one to whom the conflicting parties agree to refer their claims in order to obtain a fair decision

[95]**null** – *literally*: zero; *in this context*: of no effect.

[96]**unpracticable** – not able to be used.