

A
CONFUTATION

OF TWO TRACTS,

ENTITLED

A VINDICATION of the NEW
CHURCHES;

A N D

The **CHURCHES QUARREL** espoused :

Written by the Reverend **JOHN WISE**, A. M.

In which is shewn,

That he has exposed these Churches to Reproach, in making their Brotherhoods as despotic as the Pope to the Dethroning **JESUS CHRIST**, whose kingly Power in the Church is vindicated; and the Nature and Grounds of Liberty in both Church and State are discovered, for the Benefit of People at this critical Day.

By **NATHANIEL WHITAKER**, D. D.

Pastor of the Third Church in **SALEM**, NEW-ENGLAND.

"**STAND** fast therefore in the Liberty wherewith **CHRIST** hath made you free."
PAUL.

B O S T O N :

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INTRODUCTION.

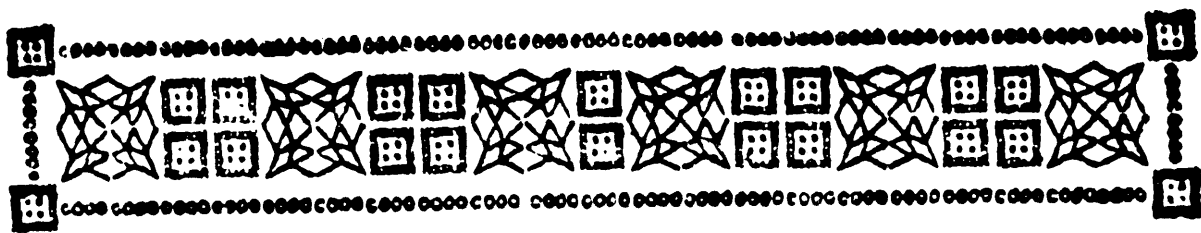
THE Rev. John Wise, pastor of a church in Ipswich, in Massachusetts-Bay, about sixty years ago, published two tracts: *The first intitled, A Vindication of the Government of the New-England Churches: The second, The* Quarrel espoused.

The first of these hath the appearance of argument and reason; and therefore seems to call for serious attention, and to be received as solid truth; or fairly confuted.

The second is professedly wrote in satire; and is full of ridicule and banter, of misrepresentation and false colouring, and calculated to inspire pride and independency, rather than to convince the conscience, and inform the judgment. I shall therefore pay little regard to it, unless where it may serve to shew more fully his, and his admirers sentiments, or hath some appearance of reason.

Mr.

Mr. Wise tells us, "The constitution of the New-England churches, as settled by their platform," (i. e. Cambridge Platform, commonly so called) "may be fairly justified from Antiquity ; the Light of Nature ; Holy Scripture ; and from the noble and excellent nature of the Constitution itself. And lastly, from the Providence of God dignifying of it." Vindication, p. 3. I shall now attend to his arguments drawn from these topicks.



A

CONFUTATION

OF TWO TRACTS, &c.



CHAPTER I.

A View of the Arguments brought by Mr. *Wise* from Antiquity, in Vindication of the *Cambridge* Platform, and of the *New-England* Churches.

SECTION I.

The Distribution of the Christian Æra into three Parts.

I. **M**R. WISE tells us, “ The first division contains the first three hundred years of christianity, which may be reckoned the most *refined* and *purest* times, both as to faith and manners—as it contained the ministry of the apostles and evangelists, and other eminent persons authorized by them, and such others who succeeded in office-trust within this space.” Vin. p. 3. On this I remark,

1. That

1. That the *purity of the church*, during this period, is the *sole* basis on which rests the whole force of evidence from this quarter.—None surely would hold up the example of corrupt churches, as a vindication of the New-England churches. But in this respect the evidence is exceeding precarious, and in no measure *demonstrative*, as Mr. *Wise* boasts. They must be grossly ignorant of the state of the primitive church, who do not find gross errors, both in doctrine and practice, crept into them, not to say two or three hundred years after CHRIST, but even in the Apostles days, and which they zealously opposed and endeavoured to reform while they lived, but without the desired effect in many cases. Even St. *Paul* feared *he had bestowed on the GALATIANS labour in vain*, Galatians iv. 11. And how does he labour to reform the scandalous disorders of the church of Corinth? But which, we have no evidence, he ever accomplished. Let any one take a serious view of the churches of *Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis* and *Laodicea*, and he must be convinced that they were not, even when the sacred epistles were *wrote* to them, a fair pattern after which we ought to copy. Their corruptions in both doctrine, discipline and manners were such as gave abundant cause for severe reproofs from the inspired apostles, as is evident from many of the epistles; and we have no evidence that they were thereby reformed; but much to the contrary, as GOD hath, in fact, executed the threatenings he, by the mouth of his apostles, denounced against some of them for their corruptions, by *removing their candlestick out of its place*.

If this was the case in the apostles days, what must have been the case two or three hundred years after? The errors, which early sprang up, gradually increased, till *Antichrist*, who began to work in Paul's time, took the seat of GOD openly.

In a word; there is no one topick of proof more uncertain than this of antiquity, however near to the apostles times it may be. But it so happens, that
Mr.

Mr. *Wife* can find no *traces* in antiquity favouring his notion of church government, earlier than about two or three hundred years after CHRIST ; by which time all the apostles and their immediate successors were in their graves. And may we not conclude, that the churches soon departed from the practice of the apostles, when they, and those acquainted with them were removed by death ? Just as Israel did, when Joshua and the generation that came with him into Canaan, were dead.—St. *Paul* plainly intimates, in his address to the elders of the church at Ephesus, that this would be the case, Acts xx. 29, 30. *For I know this, saith he, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch.* How trifling then is it for any to quote broken hints from writers who lived two or three hundred years after, to prove any form of government to be agreeable to the will of God ?—To the law and testimony. If this were in their favour, they never would fly to antiquity for arguments.

2. Mr. *Wife* owns, that “ the apostles and evangelists authorized their successors.” If so, then the brother-hoods did not. So that we have, he being judge, not antiquity barely, but apostolic examples for ordination *only* by ministers. But this is contrary to Cambridge Platform, chapter ix. section v. And if “ there is no scripture example, nor precept for *lay-ordination* of ministers,” as Dr. *Watts* acknowledges, then, beyond doubt, this is a mere human invention, and a peice of will-worship.

Mr. *Wife* owns the churches of those ages did err. Vindication page 4. If so, 'tis as likely they erred in point of order as of doctrine.

II. The second grand division of time, he says, contains the next twelve hundred years, page 4. But he should have taken at least two hundred years out of the first period into this corrupt state of the church ; and doubtless would have done so, but that
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it would have cut off all his testimonies from antiquity, and forced him back to the holy scriptures, from which he could find but little help, as will be shewn.

III. The third division of time he counts from the reformation from popery till the time he wrote ; in which he owns great light sprang up, “ and many christian heroes lifted, and with great bravery and self-denial went forward with the reformation. Yet after the endeavours of such men through several ages downward, the churches called reformed, attained to a very imperfect reformation, and the defect has not been so much in doctrines, as in worship and discipline.” And then adds, “ These churches in New-England, as to their order and discipline, have surpassed all the churches of the reformation—for that they are eminently parallel with the primitive churches in their government.” Vindication page 6, 7. So it should seem, that it is clear *demonstration* that the New-England churches exceed all the churches of the reformation, and are constituted agreeable to the mind of CHRIST, *because they are eminently parallel with the churches two or three hundred years after CHRIST*, when Antichrist had made large strides towards the seat of God. Can any thing be more conclusive ! But let us attend to some of his quotations from antiquity, which he boasts of as a *demonstration* of this parallel.

SECTION II.

Some Notes from Antiquity, adduced in Proof that the New-England Churches are rightly constituted, considered.

THE first thing in the Cambridge Platform, he attempts to *demonstrate* from antiquity is chapter 2, section 6. “ A congregational church is, by the constitution of CHRIST, a part of the militant church, consisting of a company of saints by calling, united into one body *by an holy covenant*,” &c. This article is largely explained, Platform chapter 6, where the
form

form of a church is declared to be what is here called a *holy covenant*, “without which (they say) members can have no church-power one over another.”*

As this absurd opinion lies as the corner-stone of the constitution, I will, 1st. consider the evidence he brings from antiquity to support it, (for I am sure none can be brought from the scriptures) and 2dly. offer some reasons against it.

I. Let us hear his evidence from antiquity.

Vindication, page 8, he quotes *Tertulian*, who lived near two hundred years after CHRIST, (*Apol. ad Gen.* chapter 39.) thus describing a church, *Corpus sumus de conscientia religionis, & disciplina unitate, & spei scedere*, which he turns thus : “We are a body united in the conscience of religion, or for the conscientious observance of religion, by an agreement in discipline and in a covenant of hope.” Here observe, that though there is but one preposition in the Latin passage, viz. *de*, yet out of this he has made no less than three in English, viz. *in, for, by*, which discovers either his want of skill in the language, or a perverse design to impose on his *English* reader by a wrong version. For what may not we make of any passage, if we take such liberty with words.

There are but two ways this passage can be grammatically rendered so as to make sense, (1) by making the preposition *de*, expressive of the *cause* of *their being a body*, and then the sense is easy, and every school-boy must render it thus, *We are a body* (i. e. united in a body) *by a conscience of religion, and unity of discipline, and covenant of hope.* Or, (2) as expressive of the end
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for

* By this holy covenant the Cambridge divines, Dr. Owen, Dr. Wasse, and all the independent writers mean a special covenant, framed and consented to by a number of professors of the same faith and obedience, whereby they bind themselves to the performance of certain acts towards each other : And it is this alone, they say, which forms a church, and gives members church power one over another, mutually. So that a man must not only profess the same faith and obedience ; but over and above this, he must enter into the covenant of that particular church, or he cannot be a member of it, nor admitted to the privileges of it. Such a covenant, distinct from a profession of faith and obedience, Mr. Wasse would prove necessary : But is not this to bind where Christ hath left us free, by fixing new terms of communion which he hath not appointed ?

for which they united into a body, and then it will stand thus, *We are a body* (i. e. *united into a body*) *for the conscience of religion, and for unity of discipline, and for the covenant of hope.* But even this last is uncooth, and scarce tolerable sense, because, to make *the covenant of hope*, the end of their union, as though by their union they obtained this covenant, is absurd, while it is consistent enough to consider it as the *cause* or *ground* of their union. But let the writer design which he might of these, 'tis certain that by *covenant of hope*, he did not intend a *special church covenant*, as Mr. *Wise* takes it. For it would puzzle even Mr. *Wise* to tell how such a covenant, made one with another, can be any good ground of our *hope* of eternal life; especially as there is not one syllable of such a covenant mentioned in the holy scriptures. And even Mr. *Wise* understands *Tertulian* as intending the covenant of grace, who, he says, "called it a *covenant of hope*, because the principal respect therein was had unto the things hoped for." Page 8. If the principal respect of the covenant was *to things hoped for*, it was certainly the covenant of grace, *Tertulian* intended, made by GOD with CHRIST and all his members; and not a covenant which men make one with another; which cannot be called a covenant of hope, without great absurdity. So that it does not appear that *Tertulian* had the least thought of such a special church covenant as Mr. *Wise* is defending; and if he had, who but Mr. *Wise*, would call this a demonstration, that such a covenant is necessary?

He again quotes the same author, saying, "*Corpus sumus, coimus in cœtum,*" &c. *We are a body, and meet in an assembly.* But how does this prove a special church covenant? A town is a body, and often meet in assemblies, and yet they have no such special covenant. Had Mr. *Wise* found these passages in the holy scriptures they would have been nothing to his purpose. How far from demonstration then are they, when extracted from an another who lived in times of great corruption? The evidence from this is really
against

against his special church covenant, as it shews, that their union in worship and discipline, and in the common covenant of hope, or of grace, was that which made them a body or church, and not that a special covenant one with another, distinct from the covenant of grace, made them such.—I proceed,

II. To offer some reasons against this opinion, *That a special church-covenant is the form of a church, and that alone which gives members church-power over each other.*

Here observe, That as a civil society consists of one town, or of more towns ; so an instituted church is either one particular congregation, or that which consists of divers particular congregations ; i. e. united in a presbytery or consociation, and synod, &c.

A particular church is a number of people, bound *by the appointment of God*, to assemble together statedly in one place, for the celebration of his public worship ; of this we read Acts xx. 7. 1 Cor. xiv. 23.

The *form* of this church is, *That they are bound by the APPOINTMENT of God thus to assemble for his worship.* It is *GOD's appointment*, and not any human covenants, nor the particular act of any man, or men, or churches, which forms or gathers a church ; but where there are a number of saints by calling dwelling together in a convenient vicinity, they are bound *by the appointment of God* to meet statedly, to worship him, and they are guilty of sin if they do not. The God of order hath appointed that his people who live together in a family or vicinity, should carry on his worship together. Therefore the christians at Corinth were the church at Corinth, and those at Ephesus, were the church at Ephesus, &c. If a christian live in a town where there is a church, he is *immediately* bound to join with that church (though he never covenanted with them) in the celebration of God's worship ; and they are bound to give him christian privileges and govern him : And these obligations arise, not from any special covenant entered into between them, but from the appointment of God. There needs no laboured arguments

arguments to prove this ; for GOD surely requires us to do that, which it is sinful to neglect ; but for christians, living together, to neglect assembling and worshiping GOD together, is evidently sinful.

The Cambridge Platform, (chapter 4, section 2, 3.) says, “ Particular churches cannot be distinguished one from another, but by their *forms*.—This *form* is a *visible covenant*, agreement, or consent whereby they give up themselves unto the LORD, to the observing of the ordinances of CHRIST together, in the same society, which is usually called *the church covenant*. For we see not otherwise how members can have church-power one over another mutually.—The covenant, as it was that which made the family of *Abraham* and children of *Israel* to be a church, so it makes the several societies of *Gentile* believers to be churches now.” Here I remark,

1. That there is no necessity of a *special church covenant*, in order to distinguish one church from another. Was not the church at Corinth distinct from that at Ephesus ? And yet there is not the least hint of any such covenant to distinguish them ; their difference of place, and cohabitation was sufficient for this. So the inhabitants of one town are distinguished from those of another, not by any special covenant, but by cohabitation.

2. They say, “ We see not how members can have church-power one over another mutually without such covenant.” Strange indeed ! Is it difficult to see how town inhabitants can have civil power one over another, though they have entered into no special covenant ? There is something besides such a covenant which obliges the inhabitants of a town to mutual subjection, viz. The *common laws of the empire*, which require every subject, wherever he resides, to keep the peace of the whole, and especially of the town where he lives ; and they are, by the royal authority, bound to do this, whether they consent to it or no. Yea, there is no need of an *explicit* consent or covenant ; the bare profession of allegiance to the
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King, implies subjection to the government he hath established, in whatever part of his empire they may live. So in the church ; wherever a christian lives among christians, he is, by the laws of the King of Zion, obliged to live in love with them, to reprove the disorderly according to Matthew xviii. 15—18. and to submit to such treatment from others, who are also bound to treat him as a christian brother, and govern him agreeable to the laws of CHRIST ; and if he refuses to submit, they are bound to reject him as an enemy to the laws and kingdom of CHRIST. Whoever professes christianity binds himself thereby to such behaviour, not only while he lives in one place, and with those he first joined with, but wherever his lot is cast. His profession of faith in, and subjection to CHRIST, is all the covenant, according to scriptures, necessary to give any one a *full right* to all the privileges of the church, both seals and censures. For we read of no such special covenant in the new testament, or old, we have no precept, or precedent for it ; we read of many particular churches, but there is no syllable in the word of GOD, intimating any such covenant ; and therefore it is a piece of mere *will-worship*, and has no *good*, but a very *bad*, tendency.

3. The covenant with the family of *Abraham* and *Israel* is very insufficient to prove this special church-covenant. It should be considered, that to covenant with GOD and give up ourselves to him, to obey his law, &c. as all do, who profess faith in and obedience to CHRIST, is very different from covenanting with one another. The covenant *Israel* entered into, was not of the same nature with these church covenants ; they differ both as to the *parties* and *articles* in the covenant. In that covenant the *parties* were GOD and *Israel* ; in these only the people one with another. In that, the *articles* were, *all the laws and ordinances* GOD had commanded, and the *blessings promised* ; in this, *mutually to watch over, and submit to one another*. There must be a covenant between GOD and man, before man can be in covenant with GOD ; but this
does

does not necessarily imply man's explicit or implicit consent even to ~~this~~ covenant in order to ratify and make it binding. God's proposing it, binds man to comply, and his refusal is high rebellion. This is evident from Deut. xxix. 10—29. where persons incapable of giving their consent, even *infants* and *those who were not present*, were bound under the oath of that covenant, and their consent, not *asked*, but *demande*d. This covenant therefore with Israel, was essentially different from these church-covenants, in which there must be the *free* and *personal* consent of every one, and which consent, it seems, lays the only ground of authority in the church over its members. How absurd then is it to infer from the covenant between God and Israel, the necessity and divine right of particular church covenants, *i. e.* of persons covenanting with one another, in order to constitute or form a church !

Besides there are many mischiefs arising from this opinion.

1. By *this* professors are led to think they are under no covenant obligations either to give or receive reproof, or to exercise, or submit to government, but only where they are in special covenant. So that a member of a church in *Ipswich*, now residing in *Boston*, has no right to reprove an offending brother of a church there, nor has any church there a right to govern him : They may allow him the seals, but cannot admit him to be at all concerned with the censures of the church, till he shall covenant in special with them. He may *occasionally* commune with them for seven or ten years *statedly*; by virtue of his special covenant with the church at *Ipswich*, but he must not reprove one of them, nor may they reprove or rebuke him, however he offends, till he has covenanted *in special* with them ; but must complain to the church in *Ipswich*, or even in *London*, if he came from thence, and there only can he be tried, because the church in *Boston* “ can have no power over him, but in virtue of a special covenant.” Yea, they

they may not exclude him from occasional communion, because this would be to exercise church-power over him, which they have not, by this principle. This opinion inspires the same temper and conduct which our LORD so severely condemned in the Jews, who thought none were their *neighbours and to be loved as themselves*, but those in the same covenant; the folly, absurdity and horrid wickedness of which, he illustrates and censures in his discourse with the lawyer, by the parable of the man that fell among thieves, Luke x. 25—39. But were people taught that all professing the same faith and obedience, are mutually in covenant, by virtue of their relation to CHRIST, the great head of his family, and that shifting places or persons does, in no respect, alter their church-relation or duties, it would tend to lead them to the exercise of brotherly love in the various duties of gospel-order, wherever their lot might be cast. This, at *first blush* is what CHRIST requires, and therefore the above doctrine of *special church-covenants*, as stated in Cambridge Platform, and defended by Mr. *Wise*, is highly offensive to JESUS CHRIST, as it teaches men to break, not one of the *least*, but the *greatest*, even the *new command* of our blessed Redeemer, *to love one another*. May the LORD pardon this sin and heal the error!

2. “If this particular church-covenant is that which gives form to a church,” then a church-member may continue many years without relation to any church on earth, though he lives, worships, and constantly partakes with a church. He certainly cannot be bound by covenant to perform the duties of a member to a church, from which he lives one hundred or one thousand miles; and yet by virtue of that very covenant, made with that church, he is thought to be a member of it, though he lives in the constant neglect of the duties of it, (and must do so, being far from the church he covenanted with) and also to have a right, by virtue of that broken covenant, to all church privileges, excepting that of
government

government : But why is he debarred from this, more than the seals ? Why truly because, says the Cambridge Platform, “ We see not how members can have church-power one over another, but by such a covenant, agreement or consent.” Which leads me to remark ;

3. This notion of *special church-covenants*, leads all baptized persons to consider themselves as free from the government of the church, till they renew their covenant, and promise subjection to some particular church ; yea, till they come to the LORD’s supper. For if “ members cannot have church-power over each other mutually, but by such a covenant, then none are under church-government, but such as by their own act promise subjection to some particular church ; and even then they are subject only to that church. But how contrary is this to Deut. xxix. 10—29. and to the whole tenor of GOD’s dealings with his church ? And how does this encourage young people to give a loose to their vanity, being under no restraint from the church, of which they are as truly members, and under the same bonds, as those who attend the LORD’s supper. This leads me to say ;

4. That this opinion dethrones the LORD JESUS, the only King in Zion, and sets up every man as independent of him. You may say, this is a high charge. True, and if I do not prove it, you may call it unjust.

What ?—Is JESUS CHRIST so degraded as to have no authority over his own people, but by their consent ? Do they constitute him King, and give him his authority, as the nations of the world do to their Kings ? Cannot CHRIST give his church power over all its members ? Or must he wait for the explicit consent of each individual in order to his being under the rules and orders of his family ? No head of a family feels himself so dependant on his children or servants as this makes CHRIST on the will of every one of his subjects. *Subjects*, did I say ? No,
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he must ask their leave to govern them, and cannot do it, by any power established in his kingdom, till they shall agree to it. How absurd this principle ! and how dishonouring to JESUS CHRIST ! No doctrine of popery dethrones CHRIST more evidently than this.

It may be objected, that though this covenant be not explicit, yet no church, composed of free people, can exist without such a covenant implied and practised upon. Dr. Watts says, “ Those who have been so weak as to ridicule the forms of it, yet are so wise as to practise the substance of it.” vol. 6. p. 55. This I deny. For the covenant which alone binds, or can lawfully bind christians to one another as a church, is not this church covenant, but that covenant which every believer enters into with GOD, or rather, which GOD requires all to consent to and observe, and which binds all, not barely by their own consent, but by GOD’s authority, to the observance of all the duties of religion, and church order.

If it be asked, What then can distinguish one church from another ? I answer ; the same that distinguishes one town from another, viz. convenient vicinity joined with a professed subjection to CHRIST, and agreement as to the sense and meaning of the laws, doctrines and ordinances he has appointed.

S E C T I O N III.

Mr. Wise’s Account, from Antiquity, of the peculiar Acts, or Powers of the Clergy, considered.

THIS author makes a great distinction among the clergy in the primitive church : He says, “ The Bishop was the chief officer in trust and dignity.—And though there were some distinctions as to titular dignity and degree ; yet they were really equal in order, and in the nature of their trust. The Bishop, in the sense of the primitive church, was head and chief officer of the church ; for according to Cyprian,
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there was but one Bishop, strictly so called, in a church, at a time ; and he in a peculiar manner was related to his flock as a pastor to his sheep, and a parent to his children. *Cypr. Epis. 38. section 1. page 90*, and most of his titles are reckoned up page 96, viz. bishop, pastor, president, governor, superintendent and priest, and is called the angel of the church, Rev. ii. chap. as Origin thinks, *Vind. page 9, 10.*"

How *foolish* was it in Mr. *Wise* to adduce this testimony, in vindication of the order of the New-England churches ! Since it clearly shews that there was one in each church superior to the rest of the elders. And this he acknowledges page 12, where speaking of this *single* Bishop in each church, he says, " The Bishop's duty, or the several particular operations of his honourable office, were such as these, viz. preaching the word, praying with his people, administering the sacraments, taking care of the poor, ordaining of ministers ; governing his flock, excommunicating offenders, and absolving of penitents. In a word, whatever can be comprised under those three general heads of preaching, worship and government, were parts of the Bishop's function and office." And then, with admirable sagacity and wonderful logic, he infers that the Clergy or Bishops of the New-England churches are just like those he had described ; for he adds, " And this also is very agreeable with our platform ; chapter 10. section 8. *The power which CHRIST hath committed to the elders, is to feed and rule the church of GOD, &c.* Had Mr. *Wise* considered that his quotations from the ancients, mention only one bishop in a church vested with these powers, and that the Cambridge Platform ascribes them all equally to the whole consistory of elders in a church, i. e. to both teaching and ruling elders, who are made exactly equal in the quoted section, he would not have concluded that *those* and *these* are parrallels. 'Tis true, that the Cambridge Platform makes the offices of *teaching* and *ruling* elders distinct, and allows none but the teaching elder to preach, chapter 6, section

4, 5, but in chapter 10, section 8, they ascribe the same work to all alike, all of them are to *feed*, as well as *rule* the church. Let those, who *can*, reconcile these things.

If these testimonies prove any thing, they prove either,

1. That there is an order of ministers superior to presbyters, or teaching elders, which *episcopalians* contend for ; or,

2. That in every church there was one teaching elder, called a Bishop, and considered as superior in office and dignity to the other elders who only assisted in government. And this last is very evidently the meaning of the authors. The truth seems to be this : In every church was a minister, where one could be had, and also some ruling elders ; the minister was esteemed an officer of CHRIST commissioned by him to act in his name, and therefore as being “ a superior or chief officer in trust and dignity, head, bishop, pastor, president, governor,” yea the “ angel of the church,” sent of GOD to them, as Mr. *Wise* speaks, page 10, while the ruling elders were officers of the people, chosen to represent them, among whom the bishop presided.

The object of the Bishops care, Mr. *Wise* says, “ was only one church.” Vind. p. 10. In this all reformed churches, except the *Episcopalians* agree, and never allow of pluralities of livings or churches, except in cases of evident necessity. So that the New-England churches can boast of no pre-eminence in this.

S E C T I O N IV.

Mr. Wise's Account of the Communities of the Laity in the primitive Church, and their Parrallel with the New-England Churches, considered.

T H E R E are three things by Cambridge Platform ascribed to “ the powers granted by CHRIST unto the *brotherhood*,” Chap. 10. sect. 5, 6. which Mr. *Wise* endeavours to vindicate from antiquity, viz. “ a prerogative,
“ 1. In

- “ 1. In choosing their own officers.
 “ 2. In the admission and censures of their own members.

“ 3. In case an elder offend incorrigibly, &c : As they had power to call him to office ; so they have power according to order, to dismiss him from his office.” Vin. p. 15.

1. As to the people's right to chuse their own officers, we have much better authority for this purpose, than either *Eusebius*, *Clemens* or *Cyprian* ; even the holy scriptures. And accordingly all Presbyterians, as such, reject the tyranny of imposing on any people, men they do not chuse. They say, “ When any minister is to be ordained for a particular congregation, if they shew just cause of exception against him,” (and a general dislike is ever allowed to be a just cause) “ he is not to be ordained.” *Directory*, sect. on ordination. And though there are some churches in Scotland on whom Ministers are imposed against the minds of the people ; yet this does not arise from the constitution of the church, but from the civil laws of the land, establishing *patronages*, which are a yoke of bondage on that church, and from which they groan to be delivered. The New-England churches therefore have no pre-eminence in this.

2. The same is to be observed as to the right of the brotherhood, in the admission and censure of their members. In this they do not excel the Presbyterians. The *Directory*, sect. on *Excommunication*, expressly requires, that no person be excommunicated but with the consent of the congregation of which he is a member ; and it is their constant practice not to admit any to communion in special ordinances, who before were not members, but with the consent of the congregation.

There is indeed a difference in the manner of obtaining a knowledge of the minds of the people or church. The Cambridge Platform churches call for a vote, by lifting up of hands : If more are *for* than *against*, the person is admitted, but if more are *against* than *for*, the person is excluded, though there should be but one in the majority ; and the minority may be greatly griev-
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ed, but without remedy : For they may know of scandals that ought to bar him, or a worthy person may be excluded, while the voters are not obliged to assign any reasons why they exclude him. This opens a wide door for private pique, prejudice and disaffection to operate in *secret* to the *public* admission or exclusion of persons : So that every private member has a power of censuring, and, if he can gain a majority by any means, of even excommunicating his brother publicly, without assigning any other reason for it, but the lifting up of his hand ; and he is not accountable for his conduct to any, especially if the majority are with him. They must be tame indeed that can submit to such tyranny !

But in the Presbyterian church, no man professing, or offering to profess religion, can be debarred church-privileges, or excommunicated, but in consequence of some just exceptions to his life or doctrines, concerning which, the party objecting, is not to be the judge, but others who are supposed more impartial. Yea, further, no person can be admitted, while there is only one member, *male* or *female*, who offers an objection to it, provided he will prosecute his objection to effect. So that should ninety-nine out of an hundred be for the admission, yet one's objecting bars it, till the objection be heard : So in the case of excommunication ; should the whole church, excepting one, agree to excommunicate a member, if that one will pursue his objection to trial, the process must stop for the trial ; or if the church presumes to proceed, that one member may call them to account before the Presbytery.

Need any thing more be said to shew, which of these is most agreeable to the golden rule, and law of love, *do to others as you would have others do to you* ? Is it not cruel to be exposed to exclusion from church-privileges, and our characters destroyed, by, we know not whom, and for, we know not what ? And to lie at the mercy of private caprice, prejudice or pique in affairs of such importance ? Is not this contrary to that sense of justice which every man has in his own breast, that

a majority, who may be, and often are, parties in the case, may exclude or receive a member, to the grief and wounding of near half, or even of any one, while they have no means of redress, and are debarred a hearing before impartial judges. Every one must see he cannot be safe under such a constitution, but lies exposed to be injured without a chance for relief. Yet such is the constitution Mr. *Wise* contends for, but which he has not, that I find, vindicated in this particular, even from antiquity. Yet he has a fairer shew of *such* proof for the next thing asserted in the Cambridge Platform, viz.

3. "In case an elder offend incorrigibly ; as the brotherhood had power to call him to office, so they have power, according to order, to remove him from office."

For proof of this, he directs, us to a letter wrote by Clemens Romanus, and sent from the church of Rome to the church of Corinth, Euseb. lib. 3. chap. 14, and gives us a partial and unfair recital of Dr. Owen's observation on it, viz. "The Church of Corinth, says the Doctor, was fallen into a sinful excess in deposing their elders, whom the church of Rome judged had presided laudably and unblamably among them, *and this they did by the suggestion of two or three envious, discontented persons.*" (The words in Italics, Mr. *Wise* wisely omits, as they tend to show how private *envy* and *discontent* of only two or three, may operate to influence a whole church to very vile and sinful practices, when the brotherhood hath all the power uncontrollably in them.) "But, says the Doctor, in the whole epistle, the church is no where reprov'd for assuming an authority unto themselves which did not belong to them. It seems what Cyprian afterwards affirmed was then acknowledged, viz. *That the right of chusing the worthy, and rejecting the unworthy, was in the body of the people.* But the Corinthian church was severely reprov'd for the abuse of their liberty and power." Owen's state of churches, p. 94. Mr. *Wise* also observes from this epistle, that "when two
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Spanish bishops were deposed by their churches, they sent and consulted a Synod in Africa, who approved their proceedings, and assured them—that since the people had the chief power in chusing worthy Bishops, so also of deposing the unworthy.” This testimony is really in point, and had it come from the scriptures it would have decided the controversy ; it would have proved that the people are the fountain of power in the church ; that the ministers of CHRIST may be *made* and *unmade* by them at pleasure, and that they have a right to be final judges in their own case ; and that their decisions are to be submitted to, even when they depose the most worthy ministers, though they should be excited to it by the *malicious* and *false* “ suggestions of two or three envious, discontented persons.” But had the scriptures taught such a doctrine, the Deists and enemies of Christianity would have triumphed in it, as a strong evidence against the truth of divine revelation, as it would be easy to demonstrate by the light of reason and nature, that such a constitution of the kingdom of CHRIST, implies principles, and tolerates practices utterly subversive of the law of *truth* and *righteousness*, and is in perfect opposition to the golden rule of morality taught by CHRIST, *do to others as, &c.* If this had been the law of CHRIST, it would have proved that he is not the King of righteousness or peace, as hereby parties are made final judges in their own case, and so tyranny set up in the church, making each brotherhood absolute lords over each member, and accountable to none under heaven ; and subjecting CHRIST’s own officers commissioned by himself, his ambassadors to treat with them in his name, to the meer caprice of “ two or three malicious, discontented persons” in a church, who may excite the body of the more ignorant to depose them at pleasure.

I should desire no better advantage to render any form of government odious to all men of feeling and common sense, than to find in it a power lodged with every small town or village, finally to try all causes
among

themselves, and to depose every officer at pleasure, whom their King should set over them to act in his name, without being accountable to any other towns or authority in the kingdom. This would be to make as many petty sovereignties as there are towns and villages in the empire; which brings the government back near to a state of nature, and one remove more would bring it wholly to such a state, viz. that every man should be independent and equal, but this is a state of war.

This notion of church power is so absurd, that to give a laboured confutation of it, would be an affront to the common sense of all civilized nations. All men have sense enough to see the absurdity of this plan, as soon as it is understood, and it would puzzle the wisest man on earth, to reconcile it with the rules of righteousness, justice, peace or freedom.

But what evidence have we that this absurd doctrine, so earnestly contended for by Mr. *Wise*, and others, is agreeable to the mind of God, and to be received implicitly by us? Why, *Clemens Romanus*, about two hundred and fifty years after CHRIST, wrote a letter to the church of Corinth, in which he reproves them for abusing their power in deposing their worthy Bishops, but does not blame them as usurping a power which did not belong to them.

Now allowing all this, it does not prove that the LORD JESUS ever gave any brotherhood such power. It would shew that the churches used such a power, but would prove nothing of such a grant from CHRIST. The church of Corinth was very corrupt and disorderly in the Apostles days, as appears from Paul's epistles, in which he reproves several gross abuses, which took their rise from the pride and self-conceitedness of its members, but, for aught we know without success; and probably the church of Rome, two or three hundred years after, had fallen into as great disorders, and might countenance the church of Corinth in the usurpation of this power, though they reprov'd the abuse of it.

If it be said, it is not probable that Clemens, who was also a Bishop, should side with them in such usurpation, had he not thought it the mind of CHRIST, as he was equally exposed to the like power : I answer, (1.) He might think it the mind of CHRIST, as I doubt not Mr. *Wise*, Dr. Owen and many others have done ; but this does not prove that it was so, because he was as liable to be mistaken as they. (2.) Why might not Clemens and other ministers, who perhaps were the meer creatures of that usurped power, and dependent on it, side in with it, as well as Mr. *Wise*, and many others at this day. They might have as strong motives from interest, and a desire of *popularity*, on seeing the people fond of this power, as Mr. *Wise* had when he wrote, and as others have at this day to influence them to approve his book.

This doctrine is not only contrary to the common sense of justice, implanted in every breast, but also to the whole account the scripture gives us of the nature of CHRIST's kingdom in this world.

Not to spend time to adduce evidence from scripture ; I shall content myself with reciting only what the Cambridge Platform says on this head, Chap. 10. sect. 7. " Church government, or rule, is placed by CHRIST in the officers of the church, who are therefore called rulers. The Holy Ghost frequently, yea always, where it mentioneth church rule and church government, ascribeth it to the elders ; whereas the work and duty of the people is expressed in the phrase, of obeying their elders, and submitting themselves unto them in the LORD. So that it is manifest, that an organick or compleat church is a body politic, consisting of some that are *governors* and some that are *governed*, in the LORD."

This is well said, and fully supported by a cloud of scripture witnesses which they have cited. And hence it follows, that the *rulers* are not subject to be *ruled* by their people ; nor are they required to *obey* those who are required to *obey* them. But for a people publicly to judge, censure, depose from office, yea excommunicate, those they are commanded to obey, (as this

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same section and the one preceding declare they may) is to exercise rule and authority over them, if any such thing can be. So that, though “the Holy Ghost always ascribeth church rule and church government to officers, and requires the people to obey and submit to them ;” yet the *Cambridge Platform ascribeth the highest church rule and church government unto the people, and requires the church officers and rulers to obey and submit to them.* Both these are asserted to be true, in one breath ! how marvelously absurd ! ! The only question is, which part of this *glaring* contradiction ought *we* to receive ? (for we cannot be obliged to believe both) whether we shall receive and practise upon that which those divines have proved to be taught by the *Holy Ghost* ? Or, that which, in the same breath, *they* teach in direct opposition thereto, *judge ye.* If the Holy Ghost hath placed church rule in *officers*, then he has not placed it in the *people*, nor may they exercise it without a daring usurpation of CHRIST’s throne.

GOD hath placed family rule and government in the *heads* of the family, especially in the father or master, and required all to obey. But should any plead that the wife, children and servants have a grant from GOD to rule the father, to judge of his conduct, censure, depose and turn him out of doors, *when he should offend them incorrigibly*, and withdraw all obedience from him ; would not the last contradict the first, and be a flat denial, that GOD hath placed the rule of the family in the father ?

Objection. What if the father prove a tyrant, and abuse his family as too many do, must they have no redress ?

Answer. Yes, they ought in the supposed case, to seek redress from those who are proper and impartial judges, appointed to judge the cause of the oppressed and injured, and before whom the father is orderly triable ; but they may not redress themselves by deposing or turning him out of doors, and assuming the government into their own hands. This wants no proof. But let me ask in my turn ; What if the wife, children

children and servants prove disobedient and rebellious, and because he restrains them, being desirous to keep some order in his family, call him *tyrant, proud, haughty, arrogant, violent and overbearing*, and charge him with *partiality, rank hypocrisy, and infamous prevarication*, and blaze this all round the country, while in fact, his conduct has been gentle and kind? Something like this is possible, and I believe somewhat more frequent than the former. What now must the father do? Must he relinquish the authority GOD hath given him, and yield to the storm? Can he hope that such a disordered family will rule themselves better without him than with him? And ought he, like good natured *Eli*, to let them go on in their sin and rebellion? May he not expect that GOD will rebuke him, if he does, as he did *Eli*, 1 Sam. iii. 13. *I will judge his house forever—because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

I have no desire to oppose, much less to *expose*, those great and good men who composed Cambridge Platform. But truth and consistency ought to vail to none, however good or great. I doubt not but their names will be had in everlasting remembrance with GOD, and many Saints who have been benefited by them. Yet they were men, and liable to err, and therefore not to be followed further than they followed CHRIST, and their errors and contradictions are no better than those of other men.

Yet the circumstances which attended that Synod may help us to apologize for several inconsistencies in the Platform.

I have been credibly informed, that the Synod of Cambridge in 1648, was composed chiefly of independents, or congregationalists, together with a less number of Presbyterians who endeavoured to have the Presbyterian government adopted; but being outvoted in all points, they proposed a public debate, in which all was carried by numbers. They then proposed among themselves to withdraw, and set up the Presbyterian government for themselves: This alarmed the independants, who fearing a division, conde-

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scended to them in several things. Hence several clauses were inserted which contain the very essence of Presbyterian government, particularly Chap. 15, sect. 2. chap. 10, part of sect. 7, and sect. 11. &c. This helps us to account for the double appearance of this piece. It seems to have two faces, which look two ways at once, or is like a nose of wax, *bendable* to either side of the face, as occasion requires, and hence no certainty what is designed by it. And Mr. *Wise* is full as consistent, as will immediately appear.

SECTION V.

A View of the Parallel drawn by Mr. Wise, between these Churches and those of Antiquity, as to the joint Acts of Officers and People, carrying on as an organick Body.

MR. *WISE*, Vind. p. 15, distributes the church into *officers* and *fraternity*, and says, “ministerial trust (precisely considered) was *solely* devolved on the *officers*; yet still the *fraternity* stood interested in, and possessed of a share in the juridical part of government”—— and of these two “conjunctly was made up that supreme court which was in every parish, where all church offenders were tried, and when found guilty, were sentenced and condemned.” *i. e.* Officers and brethren had an equal vote, each counting *one*.

In this, Mr. *Wise* agrees with the Platform, chap. 10. sect. 11. and alike both in sentiments and self-contradiction; but this is no proof of his agreeing with the Scriptures, or common sense. Should any man talk so absurdly about the affairs of this life, he would be thought an idiot or distracted. What, “is all ministerial trust,” *i. e.* rule and government “divolved *solely* on officers? And yet are the brethren at the same time possessed of a share in the juridical part of government?” This is a contradiction in terms; unless it can be shewn that setting as judges, and determining causes of the greatest importance, is no part of “ministerial trust” or rule. Had these expressions been at a considerable distance from each other, the contradiction might

might have been charged on a defect of memory, but being crowded into the same breath, shews the want of common sense, or that the author would say any thing to gain a point. But let us attend to his testimonies from antiquity.—He cites *Clemens, Origen* and *Cyprian*, one or other of which say, that “things are to be enjoined by the people, that delinquents should be examined before them, and matters adjusted according to the *common-council* of the people—that excommunication was to be done by the suffrages of the people.” And then he adds, “though the elders were principally concerned in preparing cases for the church’s cognizance, yet it is plain that the decisive suffrage was (in part) the prerogative of the people.” p. 16. What makes this plain? We have only his *ipse dixit*, his own assertion for it. But why does he say *in part*? Just before he says, “ministerial trust, (precisely considered) was *solely* devolved on the officers,” how then can it *in part* belong to the people. But such contradictions are necessary to support a false plan.

I cannot say but those churches acted just as these do; but if they did, it does not prove the rectitude of either. *To the law, &c.* However, these testimonies do not prove this, as the words very naturally carry different meaning in common speech. Let us view them. “Delinquents should be examined before the people, and matters adjusted according to (or by) the *common council* of the people!” Now why may we not suppose they used these phrases in a known scripture sense? Where the words church, congregation, or assembly of the people, and the like, often signify *only* the rulers of the church, as is evident to a demonstration, from Num. xxxv. 12, 24, 25. compared with Deut. i. 16. I. Chron. xiii. 1, 2, and xxviii. 1, 2, and xxix. 1, 6. Deut. xxxi. 28, 30. and xxxii. 44, 45. I. Kin. viii. 1, 2, 5. Mat. xviii. 15, 16, 17. It was then, as it is now, usual to give the name of what is represented, to that which represents it. So we say, that is done by the nation, or by the country, which is done by the parliament, or a jury. Now if *Origen, &c.* used the words

words *people, assembly, &c.* in this sense, (and who can say they did not ?) these testimonies are so far from confirming Mr. *Wise's* doctrine, that they afford all their strength, which is very little either way, in favour of the Presbyterian form of government. And the phrase, *common council of the people*, strongly suggests this sense ; the common meaning of which is, a *council* chosen by the people to manage their common affairs ; so the *common-council* of the city of London, are men chosen by each *Ward* to manage the common affairs of the city. The word used in the phrase is *council*, which intends those who are *counsellors* ; had it been *counsel*, the meaning would have been, that *matters were adjusted according to the common opinion or judgment of the people* : But it is, according to the *common council*, *i. e.* a number chosen to represent the people, as the *common-council* of the city of London are. And even Mr. *Wise* is constrained to admit this sense, though he denies it, p. 16. “ The elders were principally concerned in preparing cases for the church’s cognizance. To this purpose we have an instance in some that joined in the schism of *Novatus*, who being sensible of their fault, came into the Presbytery, and desired the church’s peace ; the Presbytery accepted their submission, and proposed it to the church, who readily embraced it,” this is perfectly *Presbyterian*. Here the application was made, not to the brotherhood, but to the *presbytery*, or *eldership* of the church ; and they without calling or consulting the brotherhood, accepted the submission, and then propounded it publicly, to see if any objected, and none objecting (for we do not find any vote was called for) it was *embraced* by all. But had only one objected, he ought to have been heard.

Hence it is evident that Mr. *Wise's* testimonies from antiquity are really against his platform, and in favour of presbytery. Yet very little regard is to be paid to the practices of any churches two or three hundred years after CHRIST, on one side or the other.

SECTION

SECTION VI.

The Parallel between the Primitive, and the New-England Churches, as to Communion with each other, considered.

VINDICATION p. 17, 18. Mr. *Wise* says, "Mr. Hooker distinguishes between independency and dependency of gospel churches, Pol. Lib. 2. chap. 3. he says, *Independency implies two things, either,*

1. *An absolute supremacy, opposed to subordination ; and so a particular church is not independent, it being accountable to civil government, &c. And also to the consociation of churches. Or,*

2. *Independency signifies a sufficiency, in its kind, for the attainment of its end. And in this sense, independency is opposed to imperfection : And if we take it thus, then a particular church may be said to be independent, it being sufficient to attain the end it was instituted for, it having compleat power, when rightly instituted to exercise all the ordinances of GOD. And thus we find the primitive churches, in this sense, were independent churches, that is, every particular church had right and power, without the concurrence and authority of any other church, to carry on the worship of GOD, and exercise discipline in their distinct society." Thus far he certainly agrees with the presbyterial plan, and with Mr. Cotton on the keys, who allows to every particular church the power of binding and loosing, while they walk in truth and unity. Yea, what follows is exactly agreeable to it ; for he proceeds thus, "And yet as they were parts of the universal church, held themselves obliged to suitable communion. And for the support of unity, love and concord amongst them, and to advise about their common circumstances and condition ; and also to regulate their ecclesiastical affairs within their general limits, for their mutual advantage ; did therefore form themselves into synodical assemblies, and were governed in common by them ; for that their synodical decrees, canons or institutions, were accounted obligatory*

gatory to all churches, who had their representatives in the synods. For indeed——it is a bold intrusion, and little better than despoiling and trampling under foot the unity, love, honour, and authority of the churches, to run counter with synodical settlements, till they are fairly repealed by the like power which made them.”

This, and more to the same purpose, Mr. *Wise* quotes from Mr. *Hooker*. One would have thought Mr. *Wise* now had declared for Presbytery, which to be sure, claims no stronger bond of union among churches, nor allows of any higher authority in synods or general assemblies, than is here allowed, and approved by him. Why then does he cry out so often against *presbyting* as tyranny, since he so fully approves of it?

He is no less *presbyterial* in his composition of a Synod which he next considers. He says, p. 18. “At a great Synod at *Antioch*, which condemned *Paulus Samosutenus*, there were present Bishops, (*i. e.* the clergy) Presbyters, Deacons, and the church of God, that is lay-men, who represented the people of their several churches.” Euseb. lib. 7. chap. 30. He also from the same author, lib. 6. chap. 16. tells us, that “there being some heats in the church of Carthage, *Cyprian*, Bishop of that church, writes from exile, that there should be convened a synod of Bishops, and of the laity.” In the very same manner are the Presbyteries, Synods, and general assemblies of the Presbyterians, composed, viz. of *Ministers* and *Ruling-Elders*, who represent the people. To what purpose then are these testimonies brought? If they prove any thing, they prove the Presbyterian government to be that which the primitive church adopted.

The Presbyterians insist, as much as the New-England churches, on “the right of the people in synodical meetings,” and allow the ruling elder as much power as the minister, though they do not allow more elders from a church than ministers, as this would destroy the balance of power.

Thus I have taken a view of Mr. *Wise's* demonstration drawn from antiquity, that the New-England churches are constituted agreeable to the mind of God. And now leave it to the reader to judge of the conclusiveness of it. I have dwelt the longer on this, as some things of importance have fallen in my way, as it were accidentally, which I could not see well where to bring in with more propriety; and which may be of service to shorten the following Chapters. I now come to his demonstration from the light of nature.



CHAPTER II.

Observations on Mr. *Wise's* pretended Demonstration from the *Light of Nature*, that the New-England Churches are rightly constituted.

SECTION I.

How far the Light of Nature is to be a Rule in settling the Form, Fashion, Laws and Government of CHRIST's Kingdom.

MR. *WISE* spends twenty seven pages with great labour to prove, from the light of nature, that the New-England churches as modelled by the Cambridge Platform, are divinely constituted. To pave the way for this, he quotes an axiom from the *London* ministers, p. 8. chap. 3. "That which is evident by, and consonant to the light of nature, or natural reason, is to be counted *jure divino*, in matters of religion," p. 22. This is undoubtedly true. The only difficulty lies in determining what is, and what is not, evident by and consonant to the light of nature or reason. It is evident, God hath poured contempt on the wisdom of the wise, in all their attempts to discover the matter and order

order of his worship and kingdom. If we look into the Heathen nations, we shall be shocked to see the grossness of their conceptions and conduct in this respect, witness *Egypt, Athens, &c.* And when those, who have been favoured with divine revelation, have ventured to leave that rule, and substitute reason in its place, in ordering the worship, order and rule of CHRIST's kingdom, they have almost as grossly erred, witness the church of Rome, &c.

In a word, there is no safety in leaving the word of GOD, to follow our own reason, in the matters of divine worship and order. The highest compliment we may pay it, is, to allow it to draw inferences from truths clearly revealed in the word; and when these are fairly drawn, they are as binding, as the truths whence they flow. So when the great pillars of GOD's house are fairly described in the word, and their connection asserted, reason may infer, from moral rules, the mode of the connection, though the mode may not be revealed, *e. g.* It is revealed as a part of GOD's worship that people shall support the ministers of the word: The mode under the gospel, of raising that support is not revealed; but from the moral rule of *equality*, and *bearing one another's burdens*, we may infer, that the way which is most just and equal is pleasing to GOD. So reason may reject whatever is evidently contrary to the moral rules revealed in the word, and to the rules of decency, order, edification and peace, and therefore may reject the constitution of the New-England churches. But it may make no new institutions, nor abolish any which GOD hath made. For though there is nothing in the worship and order of CHRIST's house contrary to right reason, yet there are many things above the reach of it, and depend solely on divine institution.

This is the case as to all the *parts* of church-government, though not as to the order and decency of them, which is not exactly revealed. The Cambridge divines are full in this, Platform, chap. 1. sect. 2, 3, 4. They say, "the scriptures are able to make the

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man of God perfect—to the well ordering of the house of God. The *parts* of church government, are all of them exactly described in the word, being parts or means of instituted worship, according to the second commandment, and therefore to continue the same to the end of the world; So that none may add, diminish or alter any thing therein. The necessary circumstances as to time, place, &c. belonging to order and decency, are circumscribed in the word with many general limitations.”

Now if this be true, as it really is, why should Mr. *Wise* spend so much labour to shew from the *light of nature*, that which is so particularly and *exactly described in the word of God*? The true answer, I suspect, is, that he was conscious he could find but a very faint portrait of the parts of the constitution of the New-England churches in the scripture, and therefore he found it necessary to have recourse to the light of nature: Where, by the induction of some maxims which regulate *civil* government, and *falsely* applying them to the kingdom of CHRIST, he had an opportunity to ridicule and asperse the Presbyterian government, and exhibit a shew of support to the constitution in Cambridge Platform.

S E C T I O N II.

That all Power under CHRIST is in the People, and the chief Principle of Natural Light, on which Mr. Wise builds this pretended Demonstration, considered.

THE chief principle of natural light on which Mr. *Wise* builds this demonstration is this, viz.

That in a state of nature, all men are equal, and that they remain so till they surrender some of their rights to others, for the sake of a civil state, and that this resignation is that alone which gives any man a right to rule over others. That this is his chief principle on which he founds his demonstration is evident from all he says, from p. 22—48.

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This holds true in the state.—The reason is, because GOD has not interposed to appoint any particular government, nor commissioned any particular set of officers to rule men in their civil affairs, nor ever did, excepting among the *Israelites*, but hath left all men to form such a mode of government, as they shall, from time to time, think most conducive to their mutual happiness, under their different circumstances. But he has not left his church thus, as is acknowledged by Cambridge Platform, chap. 1 sect. 2, 3, 4, just now quoted.

Whatever kind of officers are appointed in the *State* by the people, whether the government be *monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy*, the power vested in them is of GOD, and they may lawfully exercise it for the good of the subjects. But this is not so in the church. No, this is eminently CHRIST's kingdom; and he has precisely fixed the laws ordinances, rules, orders and officers of it, with their powers, and the duties of the people, as is fully acknowledged by the Platform which Mr. *Wise* defends, and also by himself, for though he pleads that the people have all power *naturally*, yet he endeavours to prove that it is given them by CHRIST the King of his church. Now, if the cases are so dissimilar, then arguments drawn from the civil state, cannot avail to prove the constitution of the church to be similar; yet on this egregious blunder is built the whole strength of Mr. *Wise's* second and fourth demonstrations.

It would be both tedious and useless to follow this author through the mazes of *sophistry* and *jargon* which he here calls *demonstration*. Let it suffice to attend to one passage where he collects his whole strength, and make some remarks on it.

Having very justly observed that man, in a *natural state of being*, is under GOD, the *first subject* of all civil power, and may chuse what kind of government he will be under; may make his own officers, and displace them when they break the contracts

contracts made with them, &c. he then exclaims; "And what! Is man become so unfortunate, degraded and debased, as to be without all power in settling a government over himself, relating to matters of his eternal well being? Or when he comes back to his father's house, must he fall into the capacity of a meer passive being, and be put under such tutors as can easily turn tyrants over him, and no relief left in his own hands? This is most repugnant to the light of nature, and—to the liberty and free genius of a gospel state. Nay, in a word, if the government of the churches be settled by God, in the hands of an aristocracy, and the people are no ways the subject of church-power: Nay, *if they are not, under CHRIST, the fountain of power*; then the reformation is a meer cheat, a schism, and notorious rebellion—For they (*i. e.* the reformers and reformed) stand absolutely bound to yield a passive obedience, and non-resistance, and Hell is their desert if they oppose. But how it comes about that a state of grace, when in want of a suitable government, is become such a vassal, and wise nature—adorned with more enabling prerogatives, I must leave to those learned men to solve, who plead for an aristocracy in the church." Vind. p. 45.

This wonderful paradox may be solved without much learning; common sense will tell us, that a *state of grace*, is not a *state of nature*, but privileged above it as far, yea farther, than a poor child adopted by a prince, brought into his family, put under the government of his house, and indulged with the honours and provisions of his table and presence, is above the state of one who runs at large, without restraint and destitute of provision or friends, except such as he may procure by his dissolute conduct.

CHRIST has left the world to rule and govern themselves, in civil things, as they see best, and has not commissioned any particular set of officers,
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and therefore not required us to submit to any of his appointing. But the case is quite otherwise in the church. He has called his people out of the world into his own kingdom and family, in which he has appointed officers, and given and limited their authority, and enjoined all those who return to his house, to obey them that are over them in the LORD, *i. e.* by his appointment. Is this to degrade human nature? Is it more honourable for a *poor beggarly* child to wander, like the prodigal, from place to place, without restraint or government, and to spend the little he has in riot and debauchery, till he comes to absolute penury and misery; than to be put under the officers of a royal father's family, and governed by them?

Objection. But these "may easily turn tyrants over him, and no relief be left for him in his own hands," and therefore he would be unwise to return, if he may not have liberty and "power to settle a government over himself," and not be forced to submit to such orders and rulers as may abuse and tyrannize over him.

This doubtless was the sentiment of Mr. *Wise*. Yet men need but little learning to see the folly of this. The *prodigal* was of this very opinion too; and so are many vagabond, vicious children, who imagine they can govern and provide for themselves better than their parent can; but the event usually shews their folly, as the almost total dissolution of order and government in the New-England churches, has shewn the folly of this principle in their constitution.

God once took a nation unto himself out of another nation by temptations, signs and wonders. Deut. iv. 34, and brought them into his own family and put them under tutors who might and many times, in fact, did turn tyrants over them: But will any say that this "*state of grace*" was "unfortunate, degraded and debased, repugnant to the light of nature and to the free genius of a gospel state?" This is to charge the God
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of Israel with fighting against the light of nature, and as depriving his people of their natural right and liberty. *He that reproveth God, let him answer it.*

There are two things which incline children and others to despise government, (1) *a love of vice*, which, under a good government, cannot be so freely indulged, as when they run at large. (2.) *An high conceit of their own abilities to govern and provide for themselves.* These operate to support Mr. *Wise's* scheme which is calculated to cherish both.

1. The more lax the government, and the more difficult the prosecution, the more freely will men indulge their vicious inclinations ; but popular government must ever be lax, because the prosecution is difficult.

To illustrate this ; suppose a family thus governed. Little *Tommy* tells a *lie* or *steals* ; the father or mother may not correct him till *James, John, Jack, Cato*, and the whole brotherhood, or family, are called and judge in the case. Now allowing *James, Jack, &c.* to be capable and impartial judges, yet this would be so burdensome to the parents, and so naturally tend to encourage an unruly, proud spirit in the children and servants, that nothing would likely be done in the way of correction, and so the offender suffered to go on to utter ruin. Yea, no one would complain of the wicked conduct of another to his parents because they find it so difficult to get redress ; but chuse rather to punish the offender themselves ; and hence frequent quarrels in the family. But if the father exert himself, and some of the family complain of his tyranny, and they, being now alarmed, meet and by a major vote depose him, very likely there will be a schism in the family. What a beautiful government is this !

2. Self-conceit seems to be the parent and nurse of this opinion. Mr. *Wise* was so void of modesty as to speak it out in broad terms. In order to prepare the minds of his readers to receive the evidence he intended to bring from scripture, in support of the power of the brotherhood

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or people, he prefaces the whole with a grand *panegyric* or *encomium* on the nature of man, and endeavours to lead his reader to conceive of himself as a being of a *noble* and *exalted* nature, and as worthy of an *alliance* with God himself. His words are very remarkable. He says,

“ Let us take a view of man by scripture account,—as a subject of grace, and he seems then not to have the least speck of vassalage in him ; but is represented as though Lord of himself and owner of heaven and earth both—*All are yours.*

“ And though it is certain that man has greatly debased himself by his apostacy ; yet God puts a-bundance of honour upon him in his reduction—First, God treats him as a creature of a very honourable character, as *free* and *at his own dispose*. Or, as though he were some high and mighty state placed at the top of this globe : Therefore he courts him into an alliance as though he were likely to yield great honour to the crown. *We are Ambassadors, as though God did beseech you by us ; we pray you in CHRIST’S stead, be ye reconciled to God.* This is much the tenor of God’s heralds in their addresses of capitulation. That certainly if God did not highly estimate man, as a creature exalted by his reason, liberty and nobleness of nature, he would not care for him as he does, in order to his submission ; but rather with some peevish monarch, or the bloody Mahomet, send his demands at the mouth of his cannon.—Yea, under all the compulsive means which God wisely and graciously makes use of to gain man’s consent, *he sets the will of man to turn about itself* without forcing it, that so man’s religion may be the free and candid emanations of his noble and exalted nature. But when God has thus gained man ; may we rationally imagine that in erecting his trophies, he will assign and make him over to some petty and arbitrary potentates, (*i. e.* to church-rulers) in matters of religion ? Or, settle him under a despotic government, as though he was the spoils of a spiteful war ? No certainly ;

certainly ; but man must now be considered as some *high ally*, invested with more power than ever." Vind. p. 49, 50.

The sentiments which this passage breathes, are doubtless necessary to inspire the minds of men, naturally too prone to pride and independency, to receive and cherish the form of church-government Mr. *Wise* attempts to vindicate, which gives large scope for such towering and self-applauding fancies in the breast of every male member of the church. I have met with no language in our moderns who deify human nature as all-sufficient in itself for attaining its perfection, more admirably adapted to inflame and foster the pride and independency of man ; *independency*, not only on man, but on GOD himself. Is it possible for the *Pope* to speak higher of, or arrogate more to himself, than Mr. *Wise* here speaks of, and arrogates to every professor ? Did the *Pope* ever claim a greater equality with GOD ? Or with more confidence *set himself in the temple of GOD, calling himself GOD* ? Let us pause a moment, and consider the prerogatives and high honours ascribed to man—"Man has (in GOD's account) an high and honourable character—he estimates him as a creature exalted by his reason and nobleness of mind, as *free and at his own dispose* ;" and on this very account, and for this very reason, "*courts* him into an alliance and *caresses* him in order to his submission as being likely to yield great honour to the crown." Yea, were it not that GOD thus highly estimates man, he never would have treated him in such gentle methods, but like "some peevish, haughty monarch, or the bloody Mahomet," (I shudder at the blasphemy) "have sent his demands at the mouth of his cannon." Yet, since GOD has reduced man into friendship with himself, "he is to be considered as GOD's high ally, possessed of more power than ever" he had, even while in innocence—So that it seems the only ground, and reason why GOD treats with man in such kind and reasonable ways is, the *dignity and nobleness of his nature* ; his being *free and at his own dispose* ;

pose; not under the controul of GOD himself ; and the *revenue* or *profit* GOD expects from an alliance with him.

An *ally* to the *most high* GOD !! Admirable, exalted pride ! Suns and stars are dust before him, and the brightest seraphims are as nothing in his sight, and are his servants, absolutely at his command. But man, exalted man is an *ally*, not a subject, but an *ally*, and holds a sovereign right in himself to all the powers and privileges he claims. Yea, every act of religion, being the product of man's own all-sufficiency, " the free and candid emanations of his noble and exalted nature," must be considered as a *revenue* to the crown, for the sake of which it was for GOD's interest to seek this grand alliance.—The *man of sin* does not make such claims as these but is comparatively modest : He does not pretend to be an *ally* of JEHOVAH but only the *vicar*, *substitute*, and servant of CHRIST, invested with his authority and infallibility to rule his subjects in this world, and to be like a platform church accountable to CHRIST only. But if, modest as his claim is, the Holy Ghost declares it to be an usurpation of GOD's throne, and an exaltation of himself above GOD ; what must Mr. *Wise's* claim be ? Surely language cannot furnish a name for this first-born of pride and arrogance ! Every brother in the church, is hereby made, not barely a Pope, but in honour, sovereign dignity and independency, is set far above whatever he claimed.

He is henceforth to be considered, not as a subject, but AN HIGH ALLY OF JEHOVAH.

In this passage the spirit of Anti-christ, as described by the Apostle Paul, II. Thess. ii. 3, 4, is fully discovered and breathed out, if it ever can be. Hence we need not wonder that those men who drink in the spirit of this author, speak evil of dignities, and despise and rebel against all rule and government in the church.

If man is " to be considered as an ally to JEHOVAH," he must doubtless have a sovereign right, independent
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of GOD, to frame his own government, make his own laws, appoint his own officers, limit and enlarge their power, make and unmake them at pleasure, and do whatsoever seemeth good in his sight; without paying any regard to the divine law, which, as an ally of GOD he cannot be under; any more than an ally of King George can be under his laws. For whenever this is the case, the idea of a *subject*, and not of an *ally* arises in the mind. So that men need not consult the divine oracles in order to form a platform of church-government, nor pay any more regard to GOD's laws in any of their conduct, than one ally ought to pay to those of another; complaisance may call for some regard, but there is no obligation.

This appears to me to be the genuine spirit of the above passage, and of this whole system of government, which being carefully nourished will, in a soil so natural to such ill weeds as our hearts, easily induce men to be zealous advocates for Mr. *Wise's* democracy in the church. May the LORD deliver his people from this spirit.

S E C T I O N III.

Some Arguments, proving that Persons in the Church or Kingdom of CHRIST, are not in a State of Nature.

MR. WISE's demonstration rests *wholly* on this, that men, as christians, are in a state similar to that of men in a state of nature, without any government at all, and that both alike have right to form their own government, &c. But the inconclusiveness and absurdity of this principle will fully appear from the following arguments.

Argument I. Men in a state of nature are under no King or Ruler; but will any say that a christian, as such, is in this state? Does not he that professes the Christian religion, give up himself to CHRIST as his Lord and King and engage in a solemn oath to submit to his laws and government, and yield all due allegiance to him? Before he makes such a profession, he
cannot

cannot have any right to act, or be in the church or kingdom of CHRIST ; and after such a surrender of himself, and of not a part only, but all his natural rights and liberties into the hand of CHRIST as his absolute Lord, he cannot surely be thought to be in a state of nature. This one consideration is sufficient to *demonstrate* the falsity of Mr. *Wise's* principle. But add to this,

Argument II. That God did once take a people to himself from the midst of another nation, as his peculiar treasure, and by his own sovereign authority did set up and appoint a particular form of government among them, and did not leave them in a state of nature to chuse their own government, or appoint, make and unmake their officers, but ordered of what kind they should be, and considered them as acting under him and in his name. This church of Israel is continued in the christian church, which God has, by the ministry of the gospel and power of his grace, called out of the world, and has appointed over them a king, even JESUS CHRIST, whom he *hath set upon his holy hill of Zion*. Ps, ii. 6. and *given him all power in heaven and earth*, and he, in virtue of this power, has appointed and commissioned officers to be his ministers, in his name and by his authority to rule and govern his church, Mat. xxviii. 18—20. and he has required all that visibly desert the kingdom of Satan the God of this world, and become members of his visible kingdom, to yield obedience and subjection to these officers, Heb. xiii. 7, 17. And these they may not depose but in a way appointed by CHRIST, without a glaring breach of their oath of allegiance. So that here *natural right* is wholly excluded, as perfectly repugnant to a church state, and divine institution binds every subject.

Argument III. CHRIST's kingdom is not of this world. He is a king as no other king is. The kings of the earth are made by their subjects, from whom alone, under divine providence, they receive all their honour, power, riches food and raiment, more than others, and are therefore dependent on their subjects for all these

these things, which they can take away whenever they please, and which they may lawfully take away, when the King abuses these things to their hurt.

But CHRIST is King in Zion, not by the choice and appointment of the people, but of GOD ; and so is *prior* to the consent of any one of his people. He created them by his power, he has redeemed them by his blood, and they are his by purchase, and they live, both for spirituals and temporals on him, and he receives no *revenue* from them but thanks, and very little of that. It is in virtue of his kingly office, that he subdues men and makes them his *willing* subjects in *the day of his power*. From this flow the very being, order and form of his kingdom, and none can have a *being* nor enjoy any privilege or immunity in his church, but by his appointment and constitution : So that no man may assume to himself any authority in the church but such as CHRIST has evidently given him in his word. Neither ministers nor people have any *being*, much less any privilege or franchise in this corporation, but in virtue of a divine constitution. Men, I own, may form societies on Mr. *Wise's* plan of natural right ; but they will not be churches of CHRIST any further than they conform to divine institution, for CHRIST only can give being to his own family.

Will any be so bold as to affirm that the power and authority CHRIST has in his kingdom, is the result of a natural right and power men have to their own liberty, and which CHRIST has no right to, till they shall please to give away some of their freedom to him for the sake of society ?

Are men so “ free and at their own dispose,” as to be on a level with CHRIST, and may chuse him or any other they please to rule over them ? And do all stand equal candidates with him for dominion ? as is the case in a state of nature. Yet all these and many more absurdities arise from this principle, *that men have the same* right to form the government of the church, that they have of the state. How shocking are these consequences ? And yet they inevitably flow from this doctrine

doctrine. What ! must CHRIST ask his subjects, what form of government they will please to admit ? These things do not well agree with Cambridge Platform, Chap. 10. sect. 1. where it is said, that “ all supreme lordly power over all churches belongs to CHRIST.” But according to Mr. *Wise* this belongs to the people, considered as in a natural state of being, or else religion degrades and debases human nature by taking away our power of settling a government over ourselves, as men in a state of nature may do.

Argument IV. Holy men of old counted it a great privilege and honour to be taken into “ a father’s house and put under tutors, that possibly might, and many of whom did, in fact, turn tyrants over them.” Both Moses and David thought Israel were gloriously privileged above all other nations in this very thing, Deut. iv. 32—40. *Hath GOD assayed to go and take to himself a nation, from the midst of another nation, by temptations, and by signs and by wonders. &c.* II. Sam. vii. 23. *And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel whom GOD went to redeem for a people to himself—For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee forever.* And yet they were, according to Mr. *Wise*, degraded and debased by being put under tutors that might easily turn tyrants over them ; for GOD did not allow the people to be the fountain of power under him : And when their rulers turned tyrants, they had no relief left in their own hands, but such as the government established by GOD allowed them. This, and only this, whatever it was, had any right to ; and so it is now in the gospel church. GOD did then settle a government over the church in the hands of an *aristocracy*, which good men were highly pleased with. And as this has not been repealed, nor in the least discountenanced by GOD in his word, and is no more tyrannical now, than it was when GOD instituted it, it must be the form which GOD yet approves, and which it is sinful to murmur against, as Mr. *Wise* does, herein imitating *Korah* and his company, who were also for a popular government, and said to Moses
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and Aaron, *ye take too much upon you* ; or as Israel did, when they insisted to change the government to a *monarchy* in the days of Samuel. These murmurings God heard, and, in the first instance, destroyed the rebels, and in the second granted their request, and *gave them a King in his anger, and took him away in his wrath*, and made this a fearful calamity to that nation, as appears from the history of their kings, and God's threatening, 1 Sam. viii. 9—18. And God in like manner seems to have given up such murmurers *now*, to manage the government of the church their own way, till all government and rule has almost wholly vanished, and the church, instead of being *fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners*, hath her walls broken down, and the devourer is come up into the midst of her cities, and is laying them waste, by false doctrines, and a toleration of scandalous persons in her communion, contrary to the laws of **JESUS CHRIST**.

Where now is the guard once set about the church, to prevent men of erroneous principles, more mischievous to the church than foxes to the tender grapes, from entering the sacred ministry ? The power, it seems, *lies wholly in the people* ; they, and they only, have a right to call to office or depose from it. Cambridge Platform chap. 10. sect. 6, 7. This is the doctrine fatal to these churches. See what a train follows.

A particular brotherhood, at least a majority of them (for this is the mighty potentate) happen to be pleased with the eloquence and taking address of a candidate, who artfully conceals his leading sentiments, or rather preaches agreeable to what he has learnt to be the general opinion of the most leading part of the people ; they are pleased with him, and conclude to settle him, and though they have a right to ordain him themselves ; Cambridge Platform, chap. 9. sect. 4. yet, for form or custom's sake, they call a *venerable ecclesiastical council* to ordain him, who are the servants of this mighty monarch, and can act only in virtue of power conveyed or delegated to them in the *missive letter*,

ter, which is their grand commission. When thus authorized to act, not in the name of CHRIST, but of the *major part of the brotherhood*, in number perhaps *two*, (for three can make a brotherhood) or it may be *ten* or *fifteen*, they proceed to the number of perhaps twenty or thirty to ordain the man.

But may they not examine him as to his learning and acquired abilities for the sacred work ? No. They have no such clause in their *missive letter*, the only commission they have received from the brotherhood, in whom all power, under CHRIST, is vested, and who have already determined this themselves, and not committed it to the *venerable council*. But may they not examine him as to his motives for entering on the work, and his experimental acquaintance with religion, or the work of grace in his own heart ? No. They have no commission from the people, who alone have all power under CHRIST, and have prejudged this matter. Besides, this would be to tempt him to pretend to experiences which he never had, and so to practice vile hypocrisy, and might deter many promising youths, who have no other way to get their bread, from entering the ministry. — But may they not enquire into his moral character, and if they find him light, frothy or scandalous, refuse to lay hands on him ? No. They have no commission from the brotherhood who have settled this before. And though some councils have gone this length, therein they acted without authority and incroached on the rights of the brotherhood, who under CHRIST, are the fountain of all power, and with part of which only, the council is clothed. — But may they not satisfy themselves as to his soundness in the faith, and if they find him an Arminian, Socinian, Arian or Deist, refuse to ordain him ! No. The brotherhood have determined that he is orthodox, and have called the council, and invested them with some of their power, received from CHRIST, to ordain that very man, and if they refuse, they rebel against the authority of CHRIST vested in the church. —

church. But is not this a hard case, since GOD commands his ministers to *lay hands suddenly on no man*, and to commit the gospel to faithful men who may be able to teach others ? No. What danger here ? since they have their commission from the people who have all power under CHRIST, and who have tried the man, and in whose name alone the council can act. If there is any sin in the case, it lies at the people's door, and the council are no more to blame for ordaining him, though the worst of heretics, than a sword run through the heart of a man by a murderer is to blame for the murder. They are only servants of the people, and have no power to act, but in virtue of the power given by CHRIST to the people, and delegated to them. But may not the council refuse to ordain him ? No. For if the people are the fountain of power, and the council only executive officers, they must execute their commission, under pain of the displeasure of their superiors.

What a goodly appearance must such a council make, thus authorized to take care of the *church of GOD*, and as *stewards in his house*, to commit the gospel to such as may *faithfully dispense it to others* !—But should the council after all refuse, the people, having all power, may appoint some of their own members to ordain him. Cambridge Platform, chap. 9. sect. 4.

Where now is the barrier against the most vile and erroneous person's entering the vineyard of CHRIST ? Is not the hedge quite broken down by this fatal doctrine ?

Did I believe this, I would never more make my Bible the rule of my conduct or preaching, but the genius, opinions, tempers and commands of my people, just as the Romish clergy make the bulls and other mandates of the *Pope* their rule. May a gracious GOD open the eyes of his people, and recover them out of this dangerous snare. But enough has been said to shew the absurdity of this doctrine.

SECTION

SECTION IV.

Aristocracy, or Presbytery in the Church vindicated from the Charge of Tyranny, and the Charge retorted on the Cambridge Platform.

IN the afore-cited passage, Mr. *Wise* says, “ If church-government is settled by God in the hands of an aristocracy—Nay, if the people are not, under CHRIST, the fountain of power; then the reformation is a schism. For the first reformers stand absolutely bound to yield a passive obedience and non-resistance, and hell is their desert if they oppose. “ And calls this a government, arbitrary and despotic, which carries in it the plain symptoms of tyranny.” Vind. p. 44, 45. Had he made good this charge, he would have gained his point, as it would have proved *Presbytery*, to be contrary to moral rule. But this he has not done, nor can do, as appears from the following replies.

Reply I. God once did institute a church-government, and settle it in the hands of an aristocracy or presbytery, and did not allow the people under CHRIST to be the fountain of power. Let those who call for proof of this, only consult the constitution of the Jewish church, as recorded Exod. xviii. compared with Numb. xi. 16, 17, 24, 25; and Deut. xvii. 8—13. and II. Chro. xix. 5—11. and many other places. Therefore if Mr. *Wise*’s objection proves any thing, it proves too much by far, viz. that God himself instituted a tyrannical government.

Reply II. Mr. *Wise*’s democracy is much more tyrannical than the *Presbyterian Aristocracy*, and so his objection lies against his own scheme.

The word *tyranny*, usually excites in our minds an idea of cruel, unreasonable dominion and rule. Or it is a government which subjects the people to the arbitrary will and lawless power of ignorant or cruel and wicked rulers. If rulers were neither ignorant nor wicked, arbitrary sovereign rule would not be tyranny. Such is the government of God, his own sovereign.

sovereign will regulated by his own infinite wisdom and goodness, is the rule of his government. But the ignorance and wickedness of men is such as renders it unfit to trust any, even the best, with such power; but they must be restrained by laws, and some must be empowered to put those laws in execution, when necessary for the safety of the subject.

Here, I observe two plain anxiums, viz,

I. *That ignorance is the cause why good and honest rulers tyrannize over their subjects.* Good and honest men will never injure and abuse others knowingly, yet they may and often do, through ignorance.

II. *That wickedness naturally prompts rulers to oppression and tyranny; both these should be guarded against.*

Now let us take a view of the two forms of church government just mentioned, and see which hath the best guard set about it to prevent the ill effects of the ignorance or wickedness of rulers, and to restrain them from tyranny.

1. The brotherhoods of the churches, taken collectively, cannot be supposed to be so knowing, and therefore not so capable judges in many, or any, difficult cases, as a chosen number of the most knowing and judicious among them. appointed for this work, may be: Therefore they are, acting collectively, more likely to do wrong and tyrannize, through ignorance, than an *aristocracy*.

2. It is not supposable that a brotherhood collectively are so good and honest, as an eldership chosen from among them. It is ever presumed that in all free elections, the electors will to the best of their knowledge, chuse those who will best answer and execute the office they are chosen to: In this case therefore, they will naturally do as Moses required Israel, Deut. 1.

13. *Take ye wise men and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.* Those they think the best, most upright and holy, is to be presumed they will ever chuse; and therefore it is probable the *session* will be better and more religious

gious men, in proportion to their number, than the brotherhood, and consequently not be so prone to tyrannize if they could ; which, by the Presbyterian government, is put quite out of their power, as will appear by and by.

3. For the above reasons, it is more likely that a major part of a brotherhood may be influenced by party prejudice and passion, or by some undue influence of some designing persons to judge wrong, than that a choice number of the most wise and judicious should be so influenced.—It is well known that in popular assemblies, the greater part follow some of the most noted members. Now suppose the minister is in high esteem among the most of the church, if he, through mistake or wickedness, should be on the wrong side, are not the brotherhood more likely to be misled by him, than a select number of the more judicious ? This must be, if what Mr. *Wise* observes be true. Speaking of the power of the ministry he says, “Let the case be stated as accurately as may be, and it is apparent in all cases, that the ministry of this, (*i. e.* the Cambridge) constitution are held, if not in proper speaking, yet in *conscience* and *religious curtesy*, as though all power were invested in them.” *Vind.* p. 61. Hence I argue,

That *conscience*, in this case judges either *right* or *wrong* : If *conscience* judges *right*, then “in proper speaking, all power is vested in the ministry,” *i. e.* officers of the church ; and the brotherhood, as such, have no right to exercise it, but officers only ; and so the controversy is yielded. If *wrong*, then the people ought to be undeceived, and not kept under a religious awe of power, where “in proper speaking” there is none : Otherwise they are abused and awed into submission by meer priest-craft and delusion, which cannot be pleasing to God, any more than the juggleries of *Romish* priests. And in this case, are not a few of the most judicious more likely to discover the delusion, than the more undiscerning multitude, who follow without due examination ?

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This will appear the more dangerous and tyrannical, if we consider, that on the Cambridge Platform, the voice of a bare majority of the brotherhood, who may collect at a church meeting of which the minister may be one, though perhaps not one half of the whole, is finally decisive, as Mr. *Wise* asserts, *Vind.* p. 15. but more expressly *Repl.* p. 49, where he says. “ It is an essential part of the government and being of these churches, that they have and hold such jurisdiction over their own members, that the highest tribunal ecclesiastical on earth is there, and that her own delinquent private members, and public officers are triable only there, and there they must receive the definitive sentence, and abide the execution of it.”

This is plain *English*, and it is truly the design and spirit of the platform, notwithstanding the flat contradiction hereto in the third way of communion, Chap. 15.

Now, since a bare majority of even a minor part ; or though it should be of the whole brotherhood, may thus finally determine, and have a power thus to *bind* and *loose*, and no appeal allowed to any authoritative judicature but the minor part, however aggrieved, are bound down to abide their determination, I appeal to common sense, whether here is not much greater danger of cruel oppression and tyranny, than where a select number set as judges, giving to all aggrieved by their result, a liberty of appeal to a presbytery or council.

It is no impossible supposition, that people may be greatly prejudiced against their minister, and one against another ; and if a man of considerable influence happens to be engaged on the wrong side ; he may carry his scheme against his minister or brother far, by secret and false insinuations behind his back, under the shew of pity and love to his person and tenderness to his character, which nothing as he pretends, but necessity and a concern for the glory of God and good of the church, could prevail with him to overcome so as to speak of these things, and perhaps
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with all injoining secrecy, lest the good name of the man should be hurt, and the like ; by which the minds of the most may be prejudiced. But if he finds but few on his side, he may delay applying to the minister to call the church together, till he, by one art and another, has strengthened his party ; and now he urges for a church-meeting, and raises a great clamour if it be not granted him ; and when they are met thus prepared, the defendant, ignorant of the plot, only as he has gathered it from flying report, they proceed to a hearing and judgment, and condemn the innocent, who must be tied down to abide the judgment though it should be of a bare majority, and the execution, without appeal or complaint.

But suppose the best, that the whole meet, and all of them are impartial and desire to do justice, and are all agreed, yet it must be allowed,

1. That they may err through ignorance and incapacity.

2. That many of them may be afraid to act their own minds being not fully determined, but will rather follow the opinion of some they esteem more judicious, not considering the consequences of their votes.

These are so far from impossible suppositions, that it is well known these things often happen in fact in popular courts, and that the whole generally follow a few influential persons who do all. In the state therefore, human wisdom never allows such meetings to pass decisive judgments, except in the choice of officers and some trivial matters, but ever allows an appeal to some other judicature. And can we imagine that the alwise God has vested the brotherhood, who are parties in the case with such an uncontrollable power, as to bind a censure on a brother or minister, and even proceed to excommunication (which is the greatest punishment next to death) without liberty of appeal to, and trial before more impartial judges ? This is too high, too *lordly* a claim for any men to make, though the most knowing and pious ; nothing but real *infallibility*, can justify such an *absolute supremacy*, as is here claimed

claimed by the brotherhood, which is made “ the highest tribunal ecclesiastical on earth, and there all the members and officers must be tried and receive the definitive sentence and abide the execution of it,” without liberty of appeal or complaint! This is admirable. By this are erected as many absolute supremacies in these churches, as there are brotherhoods, and had they the *infallibility* the *Pope* pretends to, they might be cordially submitted to, but to claim one without the other, is very absurd, and perfectly tyrannical. The *Pope* is much more consistent.

This is not the language nor claim of Presbyterians : No, conscious of their own weakness and liability to err, through prejudice or want of light, they never allow the presbytery of any particular church to pass “ the definitive sentence, and to execute it, but allow the aggrieved liberty of appeal to the *classical presbytery*, and if still aggrieved, from that to a *synod*, and then to a general assembly, where these may be had. And even when the highest and last sentence, which can be had in this world is passed, they do not pretend to infallibility ; but allow the aggrieved after all, to enter their protest, for the unburdening their own consciences, and then quietly and peaceably to withdraw from their communion without incurring censure therefor ; though they may be under censure for what they have already done.

The sense Presbyterians have of their fallibility, leads them to take every precaution to prevent or heal every error in judgment. The congregational presbytery are not so confident that their judgment is such as *CHRIST will bind in Heaven*, as to refuse to subject it to the opinion and judgment of wiser and better men. They modestly suppose themselves liable to mistake, through ignorance or prejudices, and are willing that more unbiassed persons should examine what they have done. They do not, with Mr. *Wise's* brotherhoods, imagine that *they are the men and wisdom must die with them*, or that it is an affront offered to their infallibility, high prerogatives and sovereign dominion over
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their brethren, (arising from a major vote of perhaps only one or two) to submit their most careful conduct to the scrutiny of others ; but are willing, if in an error, to be set right, not merely by advice to alter their judgment themselves, but by the decisive judgment of other churches. Yea, they willingly allow the lowest and least esteemed member in the church to call them to account for their conduct before the classical Presbytery ; and have contrived, matters so that this may be done with the least trouble and expence to the party, possible.

This is the spirit of *Presbytery* ; while Mr. *Wise* (who speaks the very spirit of Cambridge Platform) makes the brotherhood the final judges and executioners. For whatever advice other churches may give them, they may reject it all, and determine the case themselves, or abide by their former judgment, though grievous to all the churches in the land.

This, I am sensible is contrary to Cambridge Platform, chap. 15. sect. 2. but it perfectly agrees with the spirit of the piece, if it has any spirit in it.

Against which of these, now, lies the charge of tyranny ? Surely it is easy to determine. An *aristocracy* modelled as by the Presbyterial government, cannot prove tyrants but by the consent of the churches as well as clergy : Yea, there must be a general defection of the churches, or else tyranny will soon and easily be crushed.

But where every single brotherhood is made absolute and wholly unaccountable, as these are, what security have any that they shall not be oppressed and injured through the weakness or wickedness of the judges ? Should an aristocracy be allowed as great a power, as Mr. *Wise* allows a brotherhood, yet there would be a fairer prospect of justice, by how much better the judges may be supposed to be qualified, than the brotherhood collectively are. — Yet this is by no means allowed them. — For the congregational Presbytery, though they may judge and also execute their judgment, if none object to it, yet if only one, male or female opposes,
and

and insists on a hearing before the classical Presbytery, execution must stop for a further trial : Or if they venture to execute their sentence, the dissatisfied have a right to call them to account therefor.

From this restraint of power, it is easy to see that many advantages arise, and many grievous evils are avoided which necessarily attend the despotism Mr. *Wise* pleads for. I will mention a few.

1. If no appeal be allowed, all the ferment and uneasiness occasioned by the sentence and execution of it, will be imputed to the rulers, and hence will arise alienation, contention, and every evil work : And the minister especially will be blamed, as the dissatisfied will suppose him the chief instrument in effecting the whole ;—yea, if the brotherhood are the judges, and pass a definitive sentence, allowing no appeal, a foundation is laid for a devouring fire, if only one member is dissatisfied, especially if he be a person of influence, which he may kindle and blow up to a flame, to the consuming all the peace and unity of the church, while there is none to quench it——But if an appeal be allowed, it either stops the mouths of the dissatisfied if they will not appeal, or carries the matter of uneasiness out of the church, to be issued by the Presbytery ; which certainly tends to peace.

2. To allow an appeal often prevents much backbiting and detraction, and *sowing of discord among brethren*. For where no appeal is allowed, as in these churches, artful and wicked persons are encouraged to prepossess and prejudice the brotherhood or elders in their own favour, by private conversation, and fair professions of their own sincerity, &c. and by false, but plausible representations of the conduct of others, knowing that if they can gain their point in this court, they gain it forever ; while an appeal to impartial judges to whom they cannot have such easy access, and who are farther above their influence, would cut off their hope in this way, and compel them to rest their cause on simple facts, or to accommodate matters without a trial. Therefore,

3. Great injustice is hereby often prevented. For though an artful man should prepossess the judges in a particular church where he lives, and so obtain a wrong judgment, yet it is not likely he can do this as to a Presbytery who live remote, who therefore are more likely to judge righteously:

There can be nothing more unjust and tyrannical in any government under Heaven, than to make men final judges in matters, in which they are concerned and are parties.

But this is often the case, when either the brotherhood or eldership are constituted final judges and executioners of their private members or public officers; than which, I challenge all men to find a tribunal more tyrannical in its constitution, however uprightly they may happen to act.

The charge of *tyranny* therefore lies with full force against Mr. *Wise's* *despotic brotherhood*, which he allows to be “the highest tribunal ecclesiastical on earth, and to try all its private members and public officers, to pass the definitive sentence, and execute it,” without appeal. But where is the tyranny of the Presbyterian government, which allows of an appeal to more impartial judges? After what Mr. *Wise* has said in the above passage, to hear him condemn *Presbytery* as *tyranny*, really deserves a smile.

4. By allowing an appeal in the presbyterial plan, the aggrieved have the easiest means of redress possible, without charge or trouble. But this will appear more fully in the next Section.

SECTION V.

Mr. Wise's Plea against the stated Meetings of Councils, or Presbyteries, drawn from the great Expence attending them, confuted.

MR. WISE, in several places, particularly, Rep. p. 86—89. in a stile peculiar to himself, and with a great deal of *saving* zeal, makes a fearful outcry against
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the vast expence of stated councils, or presbyteries and synods, meeting once or twice a year, as though this were impracticable without a large fund for the purpose, and as endangering people's estates. But his admirers should consider, that such language betrays either a disposition to be *niggardly* in the things of religion, which is the worst sort of covetousness, and a robbing of God; or else a consciousness of the weakness of his cause, to support which he found it necessary to appeal to the most predominant passion among men, *the love of money*, and to rouse it into a vigorous opposition to the stated meetings of church judicatories, by the cry of danger of poverty, and that they will be thereby robbed of their God. Mammon. This Mr. *Wise* knew would weigh more with men who prize their money above the interests of CHRIST's kingdom, (which is the case of the most) than a thousand demonstrations from scripture or reason. But to every lover of CHRIST and his kingdom, this artifice must appear very mean and vile. The only question should be, *Are such stated meetings for the glory of CHRIST, and the good of Zion?* If not, though we should be hired by *millions*, we ought to reject them: If they are, surely a little expence ought not to deter us from them.

But what is the vast expence which attends the meetings of a presbytery twice, and of a synod once, a year? This is constantly practised in the southern colonies, in *America*, from *New-York* to the *Carolinas*, and no complaint of expence. The churches in a convenient vicinity, meet twice a year ordinarily in a classical presbytery, at which the minister and a ruling elder from each congregation attend: And once a year, all these presbyteries, not by delegates, but individually meet in a synod, sickness, &c. excepted, so that sometimes I have known near two hundred at a synod in Philadelphia, and yet no complaint of charge, nor a word said about it.

If it be asked, how are they supported? I answer,

The presbyteries meet alternately in the several congregations within their bounds, if convenient; and there

is always hospitality enough among the people to give them a hearty welcome for two or three days and nights. They are not so niggardly as to grudge, a few meals victuals and nights lodgings to the members of the presbytery once in three or four years, which is as often as it comes to their turn. Yea, they count it a happiness to have the company and conversation of the ministers and elders of other churches for a few days, by which they gain much acquaintance with the gifts of those ministers they would otherwise know nothing of, and also with the state of the churches abroad. This surely is a sufficient compensation for the trifling expence of their hospitality : At least it is universally thought so by Presbyterians to the southward, who have not as yet, (and I pray they never may) drank in the low, sordid, inhospitable spirit Mr. *Wise's* railery and ridicule tend to inspire, which feels so much pain at the loss of a few meals of victuals, and locks of hay or grafs, as far outweighs the pleasure of hospitality and friendly acquaintance with men of letters, and with the state of the churches.

Had I Mr. *Wise's* incomparable rhetoric, I could say as many fine things to discover the odiousness of this groveling, base, mean, sordid spirit, as he has said to inspire it ; or as he, to frighten people, has spoken of his wondrous *calf*, nursed up to a *mad bull* with horns tipt with iron, &c. which he holds up as an hieroglyphic of a stated council or presbytery, Rep. p. 69, 70. But I am willing that every man, not sordidly mean, nor a slave to covetousness, should judge in this case : And I am sure he needs nothing but a simple view of the case, to fill his soul with abhorrence of this loathsome meanness.

As to *Synods*, though the number is much larger, yet as they generally meet in some populous town or city, they meet with the like hospitality, and are generally at no expence, but that which arises from the length of the journey, and this is borne by the minister and elder, themselves, unless the people are pleased to contribute freely for this purpose ; which however they constantly
as they see fit. This

This state of facts in the presbyterian churches in *America*, shews that it is no such very difficult thing to support these stated meetings without a public fund. Covetous minds indeed may cry out of *vast expence*, &c. but had they the common feelings of men, they would blush to mention any such thing, lest they should be thought to discover (as they justly might) a low, niggardly, inhospitable, sordid spirit.

If it be asked. What better end would such stated councils or presbyteries answer, if they should meet, than those occasional councils mentioned Cambridge Platform, chap. 10 and 15 ?

I answer, I. It is found, in fact, every where through New-England, that such special councils never set in any case without considerable expence, which must fall either on the church or society, or on the party who calls them. If the aggrieved cannot persuade the church and society to join, they must be at the charge themselves, or sit down where they are. This is commonly an effectual bar to obtaining the help of a council, until their passions are so inflamed as to excite them to break over this obstacle. And by this time there is little prospect of a council's doing much good, especially as they can do nothing when they meet, but advise the parties : And there are innumerable more evils arising on these accounts.

If it be asked, How can a stated council or presbytery remedy these evils ? I answer,

1. By the meeting of the presbytery once or twice a year, the aggrieved may appeal to them and have a hearing without any cost, excepting that of travelling a few miles to the place where they meet. Or, if the matter so require, the presbytery may meet on the spot the next time, and be supported as aforesaid. By this means the poorest brother or sister will have as fair an opportunity for redress as the richest. Besides, here they hope for a judgment to issue the controversy, and not bearly for advice, which often sets the parties at greater variance. Yea, when persons know that the way of redress

dress is easy, and as open for the poor as the rich, they will be careful not to injure others, as they may without much trouble, call them to account, not only before the church-session, but before the presbytery, if need be.

I know not what notions of justice and government others have, or what their feelings as to these things are ; when considered as belonging to church government. But I know my own feelings ; and it seems to me most unreasonable and oppressive to lay either rich or poor under such difficulties in order to redress, as the Cambridge Platform does. And I also know what the common sense of all men, especially of all civilized nations, is as to stated judicatories in things temporal, which ordinarily are most dear to men, and about which they agree to set the strongest guard. They generally agree,

1. That parties ought not to be judges.
2. That not the multitude, but some choice persons should be appointed to rule and judge.
3. That the people ought to have their representatives to hold a balance of power with the crown officers, and guard the rights of the people.
4. That there should be inferior judges to whom, with little expence and trouble, they may apply in case of injury, and from whose judgment there lies an appeal to an higher court.

5. That there should be several courts above these, appointed to *meet statedly*, to hear and decide such appeals, &c. and not to be called at the charge of either party. Were this the case, the course of justice would soon be stopped, and oppression and rapine fill the world, because redress would very rarely be possible.

That the above is the common sense of the English nation and of America, appears from the form of government they have adopted, and earnestly contend for. And why have they not the same sense and feelings as to church rule and order ? If it is agreeable to moral rule (which bind as much in the church as state) to fix on the easiest way of redressing injuries, and if it is sinful and oppressive to render the method hard and difficult

cult in the state, it is doubtless so in the church. I answer,

II. It is found, in fact, that where the presbyterian government prevails, divisions and animosities do not prevail, as they do in these churches; and disorders are more easily and effectually discouraged or suppressed, and a greater union and more intimate communion among the churches prevail;* and they are better guarded against the admission of unsound and immoral ministers: For the presbyteries are more careful in receiving men into the ministry, and when ordained, they keep a strict watch over their members, and frequently inquire into their conduct, and how they discharge the sacred office; and if they are found negligent, erroneous or immoral, after due reproof, they depose them, unless they repent.

III. I answer. In this way people with great ease may bring a negligent, erroneous or immoral minister to account, and have him deposed, if found guilty.

This is not the case in these churches: For though the Cambridge Platform, and also Mr. *Wise*, make the brotherhood despotic, and give them a right to depose their own ministers, yet what they give with one hand they take away with the other. Platform chap. 7. sect. 2. they say "The elders work is to call the church together, to prepare matters in private, to moderate the carriage of all matters in the church assembled, to order the times of speech and silence." And in chap. 10. sect. 8. they say, "The power committed by CHRIST to the elders, is to call the church together, —the members when called, without just excuse, may not refuse to come—nor depart before they are dismissed, nor speak in the church before they have leave from the elders; nor continue so doing when they require

* This is to be taken, not in a positive, but only in a comparative sense: For it is to be lamented, that even among Presbyterians, divisions, animosities, schisms and great irregularities too often prevail; but these things are not to be charged on the nature of the government, which has a contrary tendency; but on the ignorance and corruptions of men, which too often break through the strongest guards set to restrain them. Yet after all, there is, in fact, much greater harmony and union among Presbyterians, owing to the nature of their government, than among the platform churches.

quire silence, nor oppose the judgment of the elders without weighty cause.

Where now is the boasted power of the brotherhood? They cannot so much as meet without the elders call; and when met, they cannot speak without their leave. How then can they pass any vote without their permission, or depose their officers unless they will lead and encourage the people to depose themselves. How admirable the consistency! and how despotic the power of the rulers, which yet is said to be committed to them by CHRIST! Is it possible to make *rulers* more despotic, or *subjects* more dependant, servile, and abject? I challenge the world to shew any thing in the constitution, or publicly allowed practice of the *Presbyterian churches* in America, which is an hundredth part so tyrannical as this. And yet, with wonderful consistency, this same Platform, and in the same chapter, empowers the brotherhood to depose their own officers.

I find no other very material objections made by Mr. *Wise* to an *aristocracy* in the church; nor any other arguments in support of his *democracy*, drawn from the light of nature, besides those I have already considered. I should not have detained the reader so long with these things (since our last resort must be to the holy scriptures) were it not for that propensity, which is in many, to look on the kingdom of CHRIST as founded on the same basis with civil government, and the hideous clamour raised by Mr. *Wise* and his admirers, against *presbytery* as *tyranny*, &c. But I leave every one, after reading what has been said, to judge, which of the two “hangs farthest from a perpendicular towards *Babylon*.” Vind. p. 60.

What has been said also shews the weakness of Mr. *Wise*’s fourth demonstration, drawn from the excellent constitution of the *New-England churches*. Vind. p. 59—66, which he attempts to illustrate by three pleas.

“1. In that it best suits the great and noble designs of the gospel, and in a peculiar manner tends to promote holiness,” p. 59.—But from what has been said the reverse appears true.

“2. That

“ 2. That it has the best balance of power belonging to it, of any government in the world.” p. 60. But it is evident, it has no balance at all.

“ 3. From the affinity the constitution of the New-England churches holds with the civil government of the most flourishing common-wealths in the world,” p. 63. among which he reckons the *English constitution*, and prefers it to all the rest ; p. 64. yet it is manifest there is no affinity in the chief points, in which the security of the rights of every individual lies. The *English constitution* rejects parties from being judges ; this admits them. That allows of appeals ; this not. That fixes stated judicatories like the Presbyterians ; this allows of no judicatories at all, except the brotherhood ; and if *advice* be desired, a council must be called, *pro re nata*. That gives a balance of power between crown-officers and the people ; this allows none at all.—All this and much more is manifest from the preceeding sections. I shall make no further remarks on his fourth demonstration, it being near akin to his second ; but proceed to consider his third demonstration from the holy scriptures.



CHAPTER III.

Some Arguments brought from Scripture by Mr. *Wise*, to prove that the New-England Churches are rightly constituted ; considered and confuted.

SECTION I.

The Question stated.

I HAVE already (chap. II. sect. 2. p. 35) given the reader a hint of the introduction Mr. *Wise* makes to the evidence he is about to bring from the ho-

ly scriptures, in proof of his point, in which he represents man as “ a creature of a very noble and exalted nature, as free and at his own dispose ; as capable of rendering great honour to GOD’s crown ; as some high and mighty state, worthy of, and therefore courted into, an alliance with GOD : Hence he argues, that it is absurd to imagine, that after such great pains taken to gain men to his friendship and alliance, GOD should subject them to such petty potentates as church-officers, and require them to yield obedience to them” as rulers in his house.

These elevating sentiments are admirably adapted to prepare the minds of men to receive the slightest shadow of evidence against the doctrine which requires obedience and subjection to the rulers of CHRIST’s church. For when men are inflamed with such high notions of *independency*, even on GOD himself, they will be blind to the clearest demonstrations, from both reason and scripture, which oppose their darling scheme ; and drink in, with greediness, the most fallacious arguments in its favour. I have, therefore, very little hope of prevailing with those, who are under the influence of such a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency, to own themselves subject to the rule and order of CHRIST’s house ; as nothing can satisfy them, but a kind of government in which they may be without controul from others ; and absolute over all their fellows. But such as are willing that CHRIST should reign over them, and feel a disposition to set him on his throne in his kingdom, and that his rules and orders should be observed, will, I doubt not, be glad to see the plain truth set before them, and every fallacious gloss on the holy scriptures removed, that so the mind of CHRIST may appear : And that they will cheerfully follow the voice of the *chief and good shepherd*, even when he calls them into paths which have been unfrequented, and greatly reviled and traduced, as leading to *Babylon* ; I shall therefore take a brief view of the evidence Mr. *Wise* exhibits from scripture in support of the government of the platform churches, and
offer

offer some proof of the fallacy of his pleas from this topic, and also of the truth of the Presbyterian scheme of government.

As the holy scriptures are our *only* rule by which to settle the form, fashion, comings in and goings out, ordinances and orders of CHRIST's house, so a serious attention ought to be paid to every scrap of evidence brought from them in favour or against any opinion or practice in CHRIST's kingdom : And if we love his laws, we shall be very careful not to pervert their meaning to favour any opinion however long or warmly espoused. With a sacred regard to these rules, I would now enter on a consideration of those passages of scripture brought by Mr. *Wise* to support the democratical form of government exhibited in the *Cambridge Platform*.

The cardinal point in dispute is this,—Whether CHRIST has invested the *brotherhood* of a particular church with all power ecclesiastical on earth, and has erected them into such a tribunal, “that their own delinquent private members, and public officers are triable only there, and there must receive the definitive sentence, and abide the execution of it ; which Mr. *Wise* affirms, and I deny. And on the other hand, whether CHRIST has appointed certain officers and rulers in his house, exclusive of the brotherhood, as such who are by his order and authority, to rule his family, and judge of the conduct of its members, and use the rod of discipline ? Which I affirm, and he denies. And now *to the law and testimony*.

S E C T I O N II.

The Argument brought from Mat. xviii. 15. in Favour of the Power of the Brotherhood, confuted.

IN support of his position he first cites Mat. xviii. 15--20. *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee go and tell him his fault, &c.* From this passage, he and the Cambridge divines gather, that, not the officers of
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the church, but the brotherhood as such, have a right to set in judgment to hear and decide, by a major vote, all ecclesiastical causes, and that whatever they do is done by commission from CHRIST, and is finally decisive, since *whatever they bind on earth is bound in Heaven.*

But the whole strength of this is built on the meaning of the word *church*, tell it to the church, which they suppose to mean the *brotherhood*. Had they proved this, I would not have opened my mouth to oppose their scheme of government in this point, but yielded to the authority of CHRIST who has all power in heaven and earth, and gives it to whom he pleases, and when given, it is his power, and to be submitted to, in whatever hands he places it. But this they never have, nor can in my opinion, prove. If any can, let them bring forth their reasons, and if conclusive, I will gladly be their convert, for it is no more my interest than theirs, to be deceived and live in error. But if they cannot from this, nor any other part of scripture, prove that the word *church* intends the *brotherhood* of a Platform church, then they cannot avail themselves of this text : For a commission conveying power from CHRIST to any, must so describe the subjects of that power, as to leave no room to doubt whether they are invested with that commission or not. If there remains a doubt in this case, it is much higher presumption to exercise such power, than it would be in any man to take on him, under such a doubt, to exercise the King's authority in the state. The proof of this therefore lies on those who assert the brotherhood's commission from CHRIST to do these things : And the brotherhood which act by virtue of this uncertain commission, act very presumptuously, and must do so, till it be clearly proved, that they are designed by CHRIST as the subjects of this binding and loosing power. But that this text bids much fairer to prove my position, viz. that the officers, and not the brotherhood, are here called the *church*, and are invested with the power of binding and loosing, I shall now endeavour to shew.

Mr.

Mr. *Wife* was aware of this objection to his scheme, and therefore states it, and then says, "This sense of the text is very unscriptural—let the objection but cite one text more where church is mentioned, and officers are intended, and we will resign." Vind. p. 56. Here I join issue, and say, that if I cannot cite more than two or three texts where the word *church* means *only* the rulers of the church, I will resign. Deut. xxxi. 28. *Moses said, gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears. v. 30. And Moses spake these words in the ears of all the congregation, i. e. the church.*

Those and *only* those who are called elders and officers in the 28th verse are called the church in the 30th. I. Chro. xiii. 1, 2. *And David consulted with the captains and with every leader : And David said unto all the congregation, or church. To the same purpose, chap. xxix. 1. in which places the officers only are called the church ; yea more, they are called all the church or congregation, which form of expression seems to be, with more difficulty, adapted to the rulers alone. Yet this was the common mode of expression then, as it is now, when we say, that the whole kingdom did such a thing, when only the rulers did it.*

Full to my purpose is Numb. xxxv. 12, 24, 25. *That the man-slayer die not until he stand before the congregation, i. e. before the church, in judgment. Then the congregation, i. e. the church, shall judge between the slayer and the avenger of blood. And the congregation i. e. the church shall deliver the slayer from the avenger of blood.* Now since none had a divine right to sit as judges in Israel but officers, such as priests and elders, it was only before these any could stand to be judged ; therefore these only are here called the church, and not the multitude of the people or the brotherhood.

Thus

* Dr. OWEN. Enquiry, &c. p. 70 says "the name of a church, *Chahal* in the Hebrew, is by the 70 mostly rendered by *SYNAGOGUE* or *ECCLESIA* church ; seldom by any other word, but where they do so, it is always of the same signification.

Thus I have brought a few out of a multitude of texts where the church is mentioned, and officers only intended ; and therefore Mr. *Wise* must resign or forfeit his promise.

The church to whom the offence was to be told, Mat. xviii. had a power of binding and loosing, of receiving to, and shutting out from communion, v. 18. but it is well known that this power lay, at that time, not in the hands of the brotherhood, but of the rulers only. None can contest this without discovering gross ignorance of the order of the Jewish church, which was the church alone to which the offence was ordered to be told, as there was no other church under heaven. Nor can we think that CHRIST would order them to tell it to a church that had not the power of binding and loosing, and none had this power but the rulers of the church.*

S E C T I O N III.

The Christian Church is the Jewish Church continued.

OBJECTION. CHRIST gave this direction for the use of the Christian church which was to be erected upon the taking down of the Jewish church, and which was to be governed by the brotherhood and not by rulers as the Jewish church was.

Answer I. It is a gross error to assert that the Jewish church is abolished ; for there are, says Mr. *Stoddard*, some institutions which were in force then, which are so now ; though many even all that were typical of CHRIST, are abolished : Thus church societies, the preaching of the word, fasts, thanksgivings, prayer, &c. are to be attended still. For

I. “ They were under the same gospel and saved the same way as we ; they were under the same covenant
of

* Dr. Owen who was a thorough independent, on the epistle to the Hebrews, Vol. I. Exercita. 12. p. 147. gives us a learned account of the Sanhedrim and other inferior courts among the Jews ; and supposes those courts are intended by CHRIST, when he says, *the Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses's seat, &c.* and that they were judges in all causes, both civil and ecclesiastical.

of grace ; and so there were several things common to them and us : As the church and people of God, they had a visible union to and communion with CHRIST, he was their king as he is ours, they were under a *theocracy*, and so are we as a church, and ought not to own any other king or lawgiver, in the church, but CHRIST ; and they had signs representing CHRIST as we have."

2. " The nature of the church is the same under both testaments. A church is not one kind of thing under the old and another under the new testament : It has the same essence and definition : The matter of it and the form is the same. It then stood in the same relation to God, and enjoyed his presence and communion as now."

3. " There were several ordinances in the Jewish church that had no particular respect to times before CHRIST, or to any particular condition of that people ; and such are in force still, and need no new testament command to enforce them ; such as, having an holy convocation for public worship : So, much of the work of the Priests was to teach the people ; to bless them. So, excommunication was an ordinance among them, and these continue in the church now, and are not new testament institutions, nor any where mentioned as such, but are spoken of as duties already required : So, the administering the seal of the covenant of grace to infants is still in force, and needs no new testament command ; and hence it is that so little is said about infant baptism in the new testament. The strongest arguments in support of this practice, which has always obtained in the christian church, are founded on this, that the Christian church is only the Jewish church continued, under the gospel dispensation, and partakes of all the privileges and promises made to the fathers, with many enlargements and additional advantages."

4. The scriptures of the new testament put this beyond doubt. The Apostle most expressly assures us Eph.iii. 3, 5, 6. that the *Gentiles are called into the same body*

body, and are fellow heirs with the Jews : This he dwells on Rom. Chap. xi. where he says that the Gentile believers were grafted into the good olive tree, in the room of some of the Jews who were broken off through unbelief, and so they partake of the root and fatness of it. All expositors, I have read, agree, that the root of this olive was *Abraham*, that the Jewish church was the tree growing out of this root, and the particular members of that church were the branches, some of which were broken off, and the Gentiles grafted into the very same stock. God hath not cast away his ancient people and church, though he has broken off some withered branches, to make room, as it were, for the Gentiles, but the stock and root is the very same, for *the blessing of Abraham is come on the Gentiles through JESUS CHRIST*. Gal. iii. 14. And therefore every thing in the Jewish church, which was not typical of CHRIST, or peculiar to the circumstances of that people, remains as binding on us, as it was on them.

Therefore whatever form of church government was by God appointed in the Jewish church, must remain a divine institution still, except those particulars which were typical of CHRIST and good things to come under the gospel, or were peculiar to the state of that people. Such as were the temple, the high priest, the priests vestments, and a long et cetera of ceremonies which were the gospel to that church.*

This

* Dr. OWEN on the Heb. v. 1. p. 56. sect. 6. says, "At the coming of the Messiah, there was not one church taken away, and another set up in the room thereof, but the church continued the same—The Christian church is not another church, but the very same that was before the coming of CHRIST, having the same faith and interested in the same covenant. It is true, the former carnal privileges of Abraham and his posterity expiring,—the ordinances of worship suited thereto, did necessarily cease also." But nothing can be more evident, than that the government instituted in that church, did not belong to, and is not to be reckoned among the carnal privileges of Abraham and his posterity, (1) Because government is of perpetual use and moral obligation, and so cannot cease. (2) Because it is actually required in the gospel, and as there is no express alteration of the form of government in the new testament, but only of some of the officers, viz. ministers to succeed by ordination, in the room of Levites, who succeeded by carnal generation, so the whole government, as such must be still the same.

This conclusion therefore appears to me justly drawn from the premises, viz. What was of divine authority then, is so now, unless repealed by the same power which instituted it. But church government by officers only, viz. priests and elders, was then of divine authority, being instituted by God, and agreeable to the nature of things, and therefore is yet that government God sets in his church, and is binding on all Christians ; until a repeal can be produced. And as the objection supposes such a repeal, and a new institution empowering the brotherhood, I answer,

Answer II. That it has not yet been shewn that CHRIST ever repealed the old mode of church government, or has altered one material thing in it, except those which were typical of himself, such as the *high priest*, the *temple* where all were to appear thrice every year, and the like, which did not belong to that church as a church, since it existed as a church before these were instituted : So the Levitical priesthood is abolished, and others set by CHRIST, to be introduced in another way, not by generation, but by ordination into the church, as his ministers. But this does not shew that the government is altered, or that CHRIST has taken the right of ruling his church out of the hands of church officers, and committed it to the brotherhood : All the above alterations may take place, and yet the power remain in the hands of ministers and elders, and they may be called, in the new Testament the church, as were the priests and elders or rulers in the old.

If CHRIST or his apostles have indeed exploded this sense of the word *church*, by vesting the brotherhood with all governing authority, or divesting the officers of it ; if CHRIST hath any where given the brotherhood a commission to bind and loose ; yea, if he hath any where, in his word, given them the names or characters of rulers and judges, or ascribed this work to them ; then I will readily own the sense of the word *church* to be altered, and that by it we are

not to understand the rulers, but only the brethren of the church. But this hath not yet been done and I believe never will.

Again that the brotherhood are not intended by the church, is evident from the 20th v. *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I.* Do any pretend that only two persons make such a brotherhood as hath the power of binding and loosing? But all know that three or even two officers may judge and determine legally, may bind or loose, yet these two or three are the church to which the offence is to be told, v. 17.

From all which it is evident that these words afford no support to the claims which the brotherhood of these churches challenge, to sit in judgment, to bind and loose, &c. since by the word *church* is meant only the *rulers of the church*, in which sense this word is always taken in scripture for ought that appears, where the church is considered as performing any public or joint act of government, or as receiving advice and direction as to public affairs, from the mouth of any speaker; and in this sense the word is taken almost every where, and by all the Protestants in England, Holland, France, Geneva, Scotland and America, except the Anabaptists, Quakers, Independents, and these Cambridge Platform Churches.

S E C T I O N IV.

Several other Texts brought by Mr. Wise, in support of the Power of the Brotherhood, considered.

BUT though Mr. *Wise* depends chiefly on this text for the support of the power of the brotherhood, yet he quotes Col. iv. 17. *Say unto Archippus, take heed to the ministry, &c.* 1 Cor. v. 12. *What have I to do to judge them that are without? Do not you judge them that are within?* Rev. ii. 2, 20. *I know thy works and thy labour, &c.—Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee.*

*thee, because thou sufferest the woman Jezebel**, &c. 1 Thes. v. 14. *Now we exhort you brethren, warn them that are unruly*, &c. Gal. vi. 1. *Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one*, &c. And having quoted these he adds, "Let the reader lay all these together, which contain rules judicatory for the churches, (brotherhoods) and then let him tell me why these scriptures may not be esteemed the churches *magna charta* in matters of censure and judicature," p. 58. Here his whole strength is collected, and every text called in that has a shew of proof; but not one of them by itself, no nor all of them united, compose one clause of a charter empowering the brotherhood to sit in judgment and proceed to censure; and for this plain reason, that the brotherhood is not mentioned in any one of these texts, so plainly as in sundry texts just now quoted from the Old Testament, where, notwithstanding it is evident that, not the brotherhood but the rulers only are intended; and why then may they not be intended in these? Paul and all the Apostles had been accustomed to the use of the word church in this sense; and therefore, when they addressed the churches and exhorted them to any judicial church-acts, though they call them *brethren*, yet they might, and it is sufficiently plain, they did intend, not the brotherhood, but the rulers, who were brethren, and represented the brotherhood.

The text that bids fairest for proof of his point, is 1 Cor. v. 12. *For what have I to do to judge them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within.* From hence it is evident, (1) That Paul was writing to the church. (2) That the church had a power to judge its own members. But it does not prove that the brotherhood were the judges; for this might be done by the officers and rulers, and yet done by the church.

In

* Dr. OWEN in his *Original of Churches*, p. 42. speaking of the ordinary state of the church, says "the churches to whom the Apostle Paul wrote his epistles, were all of them under the rule of ordinary officers; *Phil.* i. 1. Rules and laws are given for their ordination in all ages; *Tit.* i. 1 *Tim.* iii. And the Lord Christ treateth from Heaven with his churches in this state and order. *Rev.* i, ii, iii, chapters. Not the brotherhood then, but the officers, were especially intended in this text.

In a word, as the advocates for the brotherhood's judicial power, have never brought one text which fairly and fully concludes in their favour ; so the presumption is, that there is no such text in the Bible ; and therefore that CHRIST hath not authorized them to this work. And if he hath not, they certainly usurp CHRIST's seat, when they venture to do it.

And I humbly submit it to those better acquainted with the scriptures, whether as much or more may not be said, and with as fair a shew of scripture evidence, in defence of an universal bishop, vested with the keys of all church power, as for this power of the brotherhood held by the Cambridge Platform and defended by Mr. *Wise*? And as this power is unsupported by scripture evidence so on the other hand, there is clear scripture evidence against it, as is acknowledged by the platform which says,

“ Church-government or rule, is placed by CHRIST in the officers of the church, who are therefore called rulers, while they rule with God, *Yet in case of mal-administration they are subject to the power of the church, as hath been said before.* The Holy Ghost frequently, yea always, where it mentioneth church rule and church government ascribeth it to elders ; whereas the work and duty of the people is expressed in the phrase of obeying their elders, and submitting themselves to them in the LORD. So as it is manifest, that an organic or compleat church is a body politic, consisting of some that are governors, and some that are governed in the LORD.” Platform chap. 10. sect. 7. This is excellently said, except the words in *Italics*, which are a flat contradiction to all the rest ; and for proof of which there is not one syllable in the scriptures ; at least the texts cited in the Platform, sect. 6. do not give a shadow of evidence : Whereas the rest of the section is supported by many texts which are clear and full to the point, viz. 1. Tim. v. 17. Heb. xiii. 7, 17. 1 Thes. v. 12. Rom. xii. 8. 1 Cor. xii. 28, 29.

Now if the scriptures always ascribe church government and rule to officers, i. e. elders or rulers only, as these

these texts and many more evidently do, as the Cambridge divines acknowledge, then these elders or rulers only have a right from CHRIST to exercise it. And if the people or brotherhood are by the Holy Ghost required to obey and submit to their elders, then they have not given them by God a power to rule them ; no nor one another." The Holy Ghost having settled this church rule in the hands of the elders, as the platform asserts," the brotherhood cannot pretend that it is put into their hands. One part therefore of this section must be false.

There is but one way to avoid this reasoning which I can invent, viz. by saying, that to sit as judges and make and execute laws is no part of church rule or government. But gross ignorance, or a wilful perversion of the common meaning of words, only can give rise to this sophism ; for all know that the power of binding and loosing, in both church and state, is a principal part of executive rule and government.

If it be said, as Mr. *Wise* talks, Vind. p. 57, 58. that the brotherhood are like the jurors in civil courts, who, though no officers, set in judgment and bind and loose in the most important cases.

I answer, Jurors, though not officers of the crown as the judges are, are officers of the state and constitution : They are therefore officers *a parte populi*, on the part of the people, and represent the whole county, and are called the country, and what they do, is esteemed as done by the whole people ; yet they are not the whole, but like elders in the church, elected from the people to represent them ; but even this election gives them no right to set as judges, but only as the laws or constitution impowers them, when thus chosen to this business. They are therefore officers, *pro tempore* for the time, not of the crown, but of the people, and authorized by the crown, to judge : And in like manner are the ruling elders of the church chosen to represent the people, and are by God allowed as officers in his church, *a parte populi*, while ministers are as crown officers, *a parte Dei*. Governments, distinct from ministers of the word, are *in the Church*. 1 Cor. xii. 28.

Thus

Thus it is evident, that the brotherhood, as such have no warrant from CHRIST, no commission in his charter, to be judges, to bind and loose in church affairs : And when they take upon them to do so, they act without any authority from CHRIST, and usurp what he never gave them.

I have now set before the reader all the scripture evidence Mr. *Wise* grounds his demonstration upon, that all church power lies in the brotherhoods ; and this he sums up, p. 59, to this purpose. “ In sum, when he (St. Paul) was concluding his discourse with respect to choice christian friends, he puts the officers in with them, and orders the brotherhood to give his salutations to them as persons unconcerned with the contents of the apostle. Heb. xiii. 24. *Salute all them that have the rule over you.*” Hence he infers, “ that such methods of divine writings must needs respect some high powers and trust vested in the churches, *i. e.* brotherhoods.” He then adds, “ The principal share of those epistles sent to the churches of *Asia*, which belonged to the officers, literally taken, is but the superscription ; the contents are immediately directed to the fraternity. Where there is any thing amiss they are reprehended ; where there is any thing worthy of credit they are commended. Or if there is any thing in point of order or discipline to be done, they are directed and commanded. All is to the churches.” Doubtless he means that the Angels of those churches were “ unconcerned with the contents of those epistles.” But this seems to wear the appearance of absurdity : For,

1. Is it supposable that the officers among the Hebrews were unconcerned in the contents of Paul's epistle to them ? The address being to the church or body, no way necessarily supposes this, any more than Moses's *speaking in the ears of all the congregation*, Deut. xxxi. 30. necessarily supposes that he spake to the whole multitude of Israel, and that the officers were unconcerned, while yet it is evident he addressed only the rulers. The doctrines and duties of religion doubtless

doubtless concerned all alike, except those which were peculiar to distinct characters ; of which sort were those duties of obedience and respect the people owed to their church officers, and herein they are distinctly addressed, and required *to obey their leaders or governors who had spoken to them the word of GOD*, and to salute them as objects of special affection and esteem *for their work's sake*.

As to the epistles to the angels or ministers of the churches of Asia, it is very plain that not only the superscription was to them, but they were especially concerned in the contents, and though the body of those churches are approved, or disapproved, yet there is no evidence from hence that the address was to the brotherhood, in the sense of Mr. *Wise*. He allows that this angel, “ was the bishop, pastor, president, governor, superintendent, or priest,” of the church ; and if so, why may not we conclude, that he with the elders of the church are here addressed as the whole ? Which is commonly the case, the representative body being often spoken *to* and *of* as the whole of those they represent. I see nothing in these epistles which militates with such a view of the matter. Dr. Owen, as was before observed, says that “ the LORD CHRIST in these epistles to the churches of Asia, treats with them as under the rule of ordinary officers,” *Orig. of Churches*, p. 42. which cannot be true, if the brotherhoods only are intended, and the officers concerned only in the superscriptions.

These general arguments therefore cannot fairly conclude in favour of his opinion, and he and all his abettors must find some other and better evidence, or confess the weakness of their cause.

But I proceed to his fifth and last demonstration.

CHAPTER

C H A P T E R I V.

In which the Proof of the divine Constitution of these New-England Churches, drawn from the Dignity the Providence of GOD hath put on them, is considered.

S E C T I O N I.

The Prosperity of the primitive Church no Evidence that these Churches are divinely constituted.

THERE are two periods to which Mr. *Wise* directs our thoughts for evidence that GOD by his providence testifies his approbation of the church government described in Cambridge Platform. 1. The first ages of the Christian churches. 2. In the last century. Vind. p. 66.

1. By the first ages of the christian church, we must understand the three hundred years next after CHRIST, which he says were the purest times, p. 3. And it must be acknowledged that in the days of the Apostles and those which followed, GOD was pleased to favour his church with peculiar manifestations of his grace and favour, and we have reason to believe that church order and discipline, as well as doctrine, were then more pure than afterwards, though from the first planting of christianity by the apostles, even in their days, the spirit of Antichrist began to work, and gradually encreased, till the man of sin openly set up himself in the house of GOD, and called himself GOD. But though this be true, it does not prove that GOD smiled on the form of church-government established in the New-England church; for this plain reason, that it does not yet appear by any thing Mr. *Wise*, Dr. *Owen*, or any independent writer which I have

have read has said, that those and these churches were materially similar in their order and government. There is no conclusive evidence from antiquity for this ; and the scripture certainly affords no certain proof : Whatever dignity, therefore, the providence of God might put on the church, in those early times, by which it was supported through ten bloody persecutions, and christianity made to triumph over all opposition through the then known world, and bring all nations into the obedience of faith, yet we cannot hence conclude that the plan of church government contained in the Cambridge Platform is pleasing to God, while we have no conclusive evidence that those churches were formed on a similar platform. Yea, could we be sure they had gone on the very same plan *verbatim*, and had been still more successful than they were, though this would have been evidence of God's great love and grace to a sinful world, yet it would not have been a ground of demonstration of the divine right of the Platform. For it is no uncommon thing for God to own and greatly to bless persons, societies and churches which hold many errors both in doctrine and practice. God, in the dispensations of his grace, is not restricted to the rectitude of the subjects. Neither love nor hatred, approbation nor disapprobation, can be fully concluded from the prosperity or adversity of the church of God in this state. His unmerited grace only is the source of the prosperity of Zion ; and when he frowns, we cannot determine that the afflictions Zion suffers are sent for a defection from any particular mode of government, any otherwise than that such or such a mode tends, in the nature and reason of things, to produce such and such evils : When any plan of government in its nature tends to particular evils, and those evils actually follow, we may fairly conclude that God frowns on it, and that it is offensive to him. And this we might have known, before we see the bad effects, were we capable of searching out the natural tendency any plan has to such evil effects : For whatever plan naturally tends to

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evil

evil effects is displeasing to God, and when such consequences follow, God designs thereby to excite us to enquire into the cause, or the tendency of the plan, and amend what is amiss.

Agreeable to this rule I am willing to bring to a fair trial both the platform Churches, and also the Presbyterians as they have appeared to be favoured or frowned on by God, in the last century, which is the second period Mr. *Wise* mentions.

S E C T I O N II.

A Parallel run between the Presbyterian and Platform Churches, as to the Dignity Divine Providence has put on them.

THE whole of Mr. *Wise's* demonstration from this ground is contained in these words, Vind p. 70.

“ In the last century God has been very admirable in the works of providence, and has therein highly dignified our constitution. And we want no other evidence under this head than the recognition of what God has done for these famous *English* colonies in *North-America* ; who have all along distinguished themselves from all the world, by their singular regard both to the faith and practice of the true religion. Now let any other constitution on earth but parallel ours in the eminent shines of providence, and in religious effects, and we will resign the whole cause.”

Though I think this topic insufficient for demonstration either one way or the other ; yet I am willing to join issue here, and risque the whole controversy upon this single point.

Let any one, free of invincible prejudice, take a calm view of the churches of Geneva, France and Holland, which for substance are presbyterian*, and consider

* Hence it is evident that the presbyterian government is not a new upstart thing. “ The most of these places (says the London minister, Vind. p. 19.) that did thrust out the popish religion and government, did receive the protestant religion and presbyterial government. The reformed churches in France Scotland, Netherlands and Geneva, and divers other places, have had comfortable experience of this government, and have enjoyed a great deal of liberty, verity, piety, unity and prosperity under it.”

consider what shocks of persecution and distress they have met with, what devastations have been made, in Holland, what errors have invaded them, and the noble stand they have made for the truth, the order and discipline of their churches, and the regularity, union and communion preserved among them, and firm attachment to the glorious doctrines of free grace, doctrines on which the reformation from Popery was built, and on which alone it can be supported, and which are preserved among them to this day, owing in a great measure under God to the happy presbyterian government in their churches; and the barrier this affords against defection from the doctrines and order of the gospel: Let any one, I say, take a view of those churches for more than two centuries and a half, and then compare them with the platform churches in New-England, and he must own that although God has graciously owned and blessed these churches in many respects, yet they have not gone beyond those just mentioned, either in purity of doctrine, good order, or singular piety. Mr. *Wise's* encomium therefore is fullsome flattery, and not true praise. Yea, let any one view the Church of Scotland, which from their first embracing Christianity, in the year 95, which was before the death of St. John the Apostle, till the coming in of *Paladius* near 400 years after, who by subtil insinuations, gained so far on the simple people, as to bring them to consent to receive *Episcopacy*, continued to be governed by *Presbyters*, and followed the rites and customs of the primitive church, as *John of Tordun's* Scots Chron. l. 3. Cap. 8. testifies; and which form of church government was restored on the reformation from Popery in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. "The great rule and pattern of reformation which our reformers observed, (says the Rev. John Willison, Secaders Test. p. 4.) was the word of God, and the practice of the apostolic churches therein recorded, into which they made very narrow and impartial inquiry, their searches being attended with earnest prayers to God for the light and teach-

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ing of the spirit, and communication of counsels with other nations. After all which travel, they agreed upon a platform of church government and discipline, in a due subordination of kirk sessions, presbyteries and synods unto general assemblies, as appears from our books of discipline."

This mode of government they ever since have retained, excepting the space of about ninety years, soon after King James the sixth came to the throne, from the year 1597 to 1628, when King William took the administration: During which, the church of Scotland was grievously harrassed by the tyranny of the Kings and Bishops, episcopacy being established in Scotland by law, and multitudes of ministers turned out for refusing submission to them and adhering to Presbytery, and the people slaughtered by lawless soldiers, without judge or jury, even for the great crime of worshipping GOD in their houses. Yet they had some light breaking in upon them for about twelve years during this time, viz. from 1638 to 1650, in which, reformation from gross corruption and tyranny seemed to revive.

But after the restoration by King William, there hath not been any considerable alteration in their church order to this day. And though there are some things in that church which are grievous to the people and justly offensive to GOD, particularly *patronages*, and which multitudes of both ministers and people groan under, but which cannot be cured without the concurrence of the King and Parliament; yet they have been and still are preserved in a great degree of peace, and purity of doctrine, by means of their excellent government. And although there are among them some ministers suspected of holding false doctrines, and many doubtless are secretly friends to error; yet they dare not poison their people by openly preaching them, lest they should expose themselves to the censures of their judicatories. By this means error is prevented even from taking root in many instances; or at least from raising its baleful head above, or by the side of truth, to public view. *The righteous see this*

this and rejoice, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth. Yea, redress being so easily obtained, immoral, unchristian and uncharitable behaviour is nipt in the bud.

I am sensible of the common objection those of Latitudinarian principles make against this, viz. That it prevents free enquiry after truth, and ties down ministers and others to preach and receive no doctrines contrary to the public standards. But this will hold as good against any restraint laid on moral conduct; for a diversity in which conscience is often pleaded, as well as in doctrines. These who would see all objections against uniformity in doctrine in the church, fairly and conclusively answered, may consult *William Dunlap's* large preface to the Westminster confession of faith.

To these instances I may with justice add the churches in *New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia* and the *Carolinas* which are under the united Synods of *New-York* and *Philadelphia*, among whom is preserved, by the blessings of God on the presbyterian discipline, a very happy union and communion; ignorant, careless, erroneous, and immoral men kept out from the ministry, or if found such, are deposed, private and more public grievances redressed, contending parties reconciled, and vicious and uncharitable conduct comparatively seldom seen, because all know how easily and effectually such conduct may, and probably will, be discountenanced and punished.

To call this tyranny, is to encourage licentiousness and oppose all rule and order which restrains the lusts of men.

If the above instances are set to view in comparison with the Platform churches, the difference must easily appear. A few particulars may illustrate this,

1. In these churches, church-meetings, i. e. meetings of the brotherhood, are almost universally found to gender strife and contention when any parties are to be tried by them. I have often heard it mentioned among themselves as a proverb, *Church meetings are church dividings*. This is avoided by having matters heard by a session.

2. In

2. In these churches, there being no subordination of judicatories, the grossest errors may, and it is to be feared actually do, prevail in some churches, and there is no proper means of reclaiming them, nor of withdrawing from their communion. By this means Calvinists, Arians, Socinians, Pelagians, Arminians, &c. are under a kind of necessity of holding communion with each other ; and if any shall dare to withdraw from errorists, they must do it on their own private opinion of them, by which they expose themselves to the censure of others for uncharitableness. Hence it is that error in doctrine so generally prevails, and many ministers, as well as churches, run into the arminian opinions which are subversive of the glorious gospel of the grace of God, on which the reformation was built. That this is the case in this government is too notorious to need any proof. And what can be done agreeable to the platform, by those who are grieved thereby, to cure this fatal disease, or stop the contagion ?

The most erroneous ministers and churches must remain in communion with the most orthodox, and no error or disorder is a sufficient disqualification. Corrupt and erroneous men may be and are admitted into the sacred ministry ; and if those that are sound in the faith reject them, it is easy to pick a council that will admit them without any examination. Hence it is no uncommon thing in these churches to hear ministers openly preach those doctrines which are utterly subversive of the common faith professed by the churches formerly, and poison their hearers with the most destructive errors, which suit the carnal hearts of men, and for which they have a vastly keener appetite, than for the soul-humbling truths of the pure gospel of CHRIST.

I know it may be said that the *third way of communion* in the platform, provides a remedy against this. This is true in part, and happy had it been for these churches if that rule had been carefully attended to : But let it be observed,

(1.) That

(1.) That this constitutes a judicature with as absolute authority as is ever claimed by Presbyterians, and therefore is as tyrannical as any thing in their government.

(2.) The process is so difficult, and the expence attending it so great, that it must *fall* of its own weight, and in fact it hath fallen, and is now, and hath been for many years wholly fallen, and been laid aside in these churches : So that it has no more effect, than if it never had been inserted in the platform.

Mr. *Wise* and others, may therefore boast as they please “ that these churches have distinguished themselves from all the world by their singular regard both to the faith and practice of religion ;” yet it is evident from stubborn facts, that this *purity* is scarce to be found, or to say the least, there is a sad defection from it, which is naturally fostered by the very government he would by this *purity*, demonstrate to be of God, as it sets no sufficient guard against such defection.

The more pure the faith and practice of these churches were in Mr. *Wise*’s time, the clearer is the evidence that his boasted form of government is not of God, since, in the short space of sixty years, a flood of errors and errorists have crept into and now openly infest the church ; and in defiance of all the boasted government, run at large, without any feasible means of driving them out ; so that nothing now remains, but to let them alone to ravage and devour the vineyard of the LORD, and to countenance them by holding communion without distinction, or else to leave the field whose walls are, not so much broken down, as they are originally insufficient to guard against these devourers, and to seek for a pasture more secure and better fenced against them.

3. Compare the presbyterian churches and these, in point of union, peace and harmony, and it is easy to see, that so far as these things are any proof in favour of a form of government, the presbyterian hath the advantage. That there are men of corrupt minds among presbyterians, and many who act disorderly and cannot
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be governed by the best constitution, is allowed, and also that many things take place among them which are wrong, divisive, and dishonouring to God. But this is owing either to ignorance or perverseness in men, whereby they deviate from the presbyterian rules, and will not be governed by them; and not to the government itself, which makes provision for the preservation of justice, peace and truth, as far as it is possible for any form of government to provide. It is to be lamented that there is so much disorder under the best forms of government, and particularly that the divisions and irregularities which have taken place among the presbyterians in New-England have given so much occasion to their enemies to reproach them: Yet the prevalence of these evils among them, more than among other presbyterians is owing to several causes.

(1.) They are surrounded by independents who are no friends to *Presbytery*, and who are disposed to prompt people to discontent, and fill their minds with prejudices against it.

(2.) Many of the *Presbyterians* have been accustomed to *independency*, and are unacquainted with the excellent rules of presbyterian government, and so are more prone to disorder; which is not to be imputed to *presbytery* but to *independency*.

(3.) But above all, the weakness of the presbyterian interest and the smallness of the numbers that espouse it, is a cause of the disorders which prevail: Hence some both ministers and people, venture to break over its excellent rules, knowing that they shall fall under the censure of but a few; while they shall be applauded by many. And as this makes use of no weapons but such as are spiritual, so it can oblige none by coercive power, to conform to its rules.

But still there is by means of this government, where it is in use, a very happy union and communion in the churches, and a great degree of purity in doctrine, and peace among the people maintained. This is a manifest fact, not only in Holland, Geneva, France and Scotland, but also in all the churches in New-York,

in New-York, and to the southward ; which are generally presbyterians. Vouchers for this I need not bring, as all acquainted with those churches know the truth of it.

But view the state of things in the platform churches. Not only do errors prevail, but dreadful divisions and breakings to pieces. It would be tedious to give a history of the ill consequences of this government, which have taken place in this province, as to divisions ; I shall only mention a recent instance.

In the town of Bolton, some of the people, by some means were disaffected with their pastor the Rev. Mr. Goss, whether on good grounds or not I cannot tell ; be that as it may, the disaffected by some means, without the consent of Mr. Goss, procured a meeting of a majority of the brethren, and behind their pastor's back, proceeded to put a vote for his dismissal, which was carried in the affirmative by a majority of one ; i. e. there were fifty-one male members in the church, though probably not all present, of these twenty-six voted his dismissal. Upon this they called another man on probation, and sometime after invited a council to settle him. The council finally refused—But some of the ministers and churches being of a different mind, the church afterwards invited them, and they proceeded to an instalment. And yet this must be allowed to be *orderly*, and there is no way in these churches to manifest any proper disapprobation of this conduct, but all must hold communion with them, or set up their private judgment to act by.

In Salem also, one of the brethren conceived an offence at his pastor ; and while he was perfectly ignorant of it, the member went about privately and assembled the brethren of the church, and there published what he conceived to be matter of offence : For this the pastor dealt with him as being guilty of the breach of the command of CHRIST, Mat. xviii. 15.—*If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone, &c.* and obtaining no satis-

faction, it was finally laid before the brotherhood, who voted that the member was not faulty for publishing a private fault, without taking the steps directed to by CHRIST, Mat. xviii. 15. And yet there is no authoratative way of redressing such errors ; and the consequence has been a general uneasiness, and contention, and such a fire kindled which is likely to burn up all harmony and peace, unless the LORD in mercy appear, in a supernatural way to extinguish it, or some more effectual measures be taken than the platform leads to.

4. As to the practice of true and pure religion, it is not only vain and assuming, but false to boast that these churches, transcend the presbyterian churches in Europe or America. Yet there is great cause for lamentation, that, even where the doctrines of the gospel, and good discipline most prevail, and are secured in the best manner, there is too little of the practice of godliness. Sound doctrine and the best discipline cannot renew men's hearts, they can only inform the judgment and regulate the outward behaviour ; and even these effects are too rare through an inattention to instruction, and the raging lusts of men, which often break over all the bounds appointed by GOD, to restrain them, though duly applied by the church.

Thus I have considered the several topics of argument which Mr. *Wise* boasts of as affording demonstration in favour of the Cambridge platform. And now it is left to the candid reader to judge of the force of his *demonstrations*. This I will be bold to say, that he that can defend the Cambridge Platform as consonant, either to the word of GOD, or to reason and the common sense and feelings of mankind ; or as consistent with itself, will perform as notable a work as *Augustus* did, and will be entitled to the uncommon character of a *reconciler of perfect enemies and palpable contradictions*.

As to Mr. *Wise's* reply in satire, it is too full of bombast and religious ribaldry, to deserve any further answer. May a merciful GOD save these churches from

from such a spirit of Koraism as that author endeavoured to inspire. Surely this must be as provoking to GOD, as the same spirit was in those who said to Moses and Aaron, *Ye take too much upon you seeing all the congregation are holy every one of them, and the Lord is among them : Wherefore then lift you up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord ?* Numb. xvi. 3. The fearful end of those men is left on sacred record as a solemn warning to all generations not to imitate them. And though under the mildness of the gospel dispensation, GOD does not punish men in this life, in so signal a manner, for their daring impieties, as he did under the legal ; yet the sin is not less, but really more aggravated, as we have greater light, and also those instances of divine vengeance set up as beacons to warn us against such practices. And have we not reason to believe that the prevalence of this spirit, which hath robbed CHRIST of his glory as King in these churches, is one among, if not the foremost of, those sins which have brought down the heavy judgments of GOD on this province, which we are now groaning under. May GOD graciously convince all of the truth on this head, and accomplish a reformation of all that is amiss.

CONCLUSION.

C O N C L U S I O N.

Representing the Presbyterial Government
in its Beauty and Excellency : Chiefly
extracted from the London Ministers
Vindication.

IGNORANCE of the nature of Presbyterian government which prevails in general through New-England, is one chief cause of the opposition it meets with. And I cannot but think that were people well acquainted with it, the most of their prejudices against it would vanish. I am sensible there are some who are enemies to all discipline and government in the church, who will of course prefer that form of government, which is most lax, and farthest from all order ; but I hope this libertine opinion is not predominant through the land : There are many I trust who are more friendly to CHRIST, and to Zion, and wish to see CHRIST set on his throne in his kingdom on earth, in the exercise of a godly discipline and close adherence to the laws and orders of his house, and many such, I doubt not, are warm friends of the platform and averse to presbyterianism, who yet may wish to see better order than is in these churches, and by a candid consideration of the nature and order of the presbyterian government, may be led to see that it is not only more agreeable to holy writ, but also to reason and common sense, and better calculated to answer all the intentions of government in the church. Let such consider the following things.

I. The presbyterian form of government hath been the fruit of many prayers and deep researches into the word of God. Thousands of the godly in England in the days of Queen *Elizabeth* and King *James* ; and in Scotland in their first reformation from popery, as
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well as in Geneva, Holland and France, were fervent in prayer for direction in the important point of settling a platform of church government. Many knowing christians and faithful ministers not only prayed much for a reformation in discipline in England, but also suffered for holding and practising the Presbyterian form of government, as appears by the writings of those times. They could not comply with a denial of the kingly power of JESUS CHRIST in his church, and therefore were sorely persecuted. *And shall we despise that which comes to us swimming in the prayers and blood of GOD's precious saints?* This argument, I confess is not fully conclusive, but it is more than a balance to one drawn from the same topic, by Mr. *Wise*, Vind. p. 74. by how much the numbers of praying and suffering saints were greater, and their suffering and constancy longer and firmer, than those who compiled the Cambridge Platform.

II. The Presbyterian government is no new thing : For,

(1.) All the churches, reformed from popery, embraced this form of government, excepting those whose reformation was modled by the power of their rulers, whose ambition, joined with a prejudice that there must be some supreme head of the church on earth, prompted them to adopt and establish some different form. This was the case in England and some other places. But wherever the reformation was not modled by the ambition of princes, there the Presbyterian government was received. And as we naturally ran from one extreme to another, so the exceeding tyranny of the Bishops in England, drove many pious and suffering saints to the extreme of independency.

(2.) It is not new *to the word of GOD* ; in which are found all the substantials of this government. For,

1. The scripture holds forth a church consisting of divers congregations, as the church at Jerusalem, Antioch, &c. in which there were many particular churches, as appears from the great number of believ-

ers there, the church at Jerusalem consisting of at least six thousand in about three months after CHRIST's ascension ; and probably of more than twenty thousand when the cause of the church of Antioch was laid before the Synod in Jerusalem. Acts xv. and yet it is called only the church at Jerusalem, which shews that many churches were united into one consociation or presbytery.

2. The scripture also mentions synods with ecclesiastical authority, Acts xv.

3. Subordination of congregations unto synods, with appeals thereto, Deut. xvii. 8—12. II. Chron. xix. 8, 10, 11. " Appeals (saith Dr. Whitaker) are of divine and natural right, and certainly very necessary in every society, because of the iniquity and ignorance of judges." And even Mr. *Wise* allows of appeals by divine appointment, Vind. p. 54. " There are several removes of the action (in the direction, Mat. xviii. 15—18.) from one hearing to another ; as though it go from an inferior to a superior sessions, and CHRIST was here in this precept, settling inferior and superior assizes in his kingdom." There is as good reason that a church should be subordinate to greater assemblies, as that a brother should be subject to the church. And he who denies the subordination of a church to a presbytery or synod and appeals thereto, virtually asserts these three things.

1. That the government of CHRIST's church under the gospel, is a government directly contrary to the light of nature, making the same men parties and final judges in their own cause.

2. That the government of the church in the old Testament was more equal and just than under the new.

3. That CHRIST hath appointed no effectual method of healing the scandals of an offending church, or at least, one more effectual for an offending brother than an offending congregation. All which are high reflections on the kingly office of CHRIST.

III. The presbyterial government challangeth no power over men's bodies or estates. It meddleth not with civil affairs ; it is *purely spiritual*, dispensing the keys of the *kingdom of Heaven*, not of earth, and therefore is not tyrannical.

IV. It is not a domineering, majesterial government, lording it over the conscience, or requiring a slavish subjection to its decrees, with implicit and blind obedience. There is no more obedience required to the decrees of Synods, than the independents claim to the decrees of a particular church.

V. It is not a government that doth rob particular congregations of their just rights or privileges, but helps and strengthens them ; it is not *extrinsic* but *intrinsic* to the church, consisting of the pastors and elders of each congregation. It allows all congregations to be equal, and all ministers equal, no one superior to another, by any divine right.

So far as it is distinct from congregational, it consisteth of divers sister churches combined by mutual consent, and governing one another in matters of mutual concernment, by the common agreement of pastors and elders, agreeable to that approved maxim, *that which belongs to all, must be managed by all*. Yet no government in the world is so just, but by abuse may prove tyrannical.

To illustrate this. The presbyterial government is like the government of a city by the *common council* wherein there are *common council men*, sent from every ward, to judge of matters that concern the good of the whole city, which certainly tends to the good of the whole. Whereas the *independent government* is just as if every ward should undertake to govern itself, by the judgment of all the voters, divided from all other wards, and not under the authority of the common-council.

VI. Add to this, The presbyterial government gives to the brotherhood and all the people of particular congregations, all that is by CHRIST left them. For,

I. It

1. It allows every congregation a particular eldership.

2. It imposes on no congregation a minister who is not the subject of their own free choice.

3. It allows the congregational eldership to judge of all matters which concern that particular church, with an appeal from their judgment to the presbytery.

4. In the great censure of excommunication, it says that it is not to be executed against the consent of that particular church, to which the party belongs. And in all other matters of importance, it hath great respect to that congregation which is particularly concerned therein. And therefore does not rob, but as a main pillar, supports and upholds congregational government, *e. g.*

1. When a congregation is destitute of a minister, the neighbouring ministers of the *classis* help what they can to supply that defect by sending supplies, and advising to proper persons for their choice.

2. When there is an insufficient eldership, the Presbytery contributes light and strength.

3. When the eldership err in doctrine or practice, the Presbytery help to convince them of their error, which the people are not ordinarily able to do ; or to remove them if incorrigible.

4. When a member is wronged by his eldership, the presbytery or synod contribute aid and relief. For

VII. This government is so far from tyranny, that it is the greatest bulwark against it ; for it is a city of refuge for all that are oppressed in their particular churches, to fly unto, and there be tried by men disinterested in the case.

What a contrast to this is the government in the platform churches ? For,

1. In these, when a brother thinks himself injured by the judgment of the major part of the church, he is shut up, and neither he, nor the minor part, have any authoritative way of relief, but the third way of communion, the difficulties and expence of which make it next to impracticable. But the presbyterial

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government is not only a *Zoar*, an ark of safety for the wronged to fly to, but is easy of access, and without expence. Give leave for this example. Suppose all corporation towns should plead a power *independent of the general court*, and challenge to be unaccountable; would not this make as many *general courts* as there are towns? And if a person should be injured by a major part of the town, must he not be without remedy. And would not such a claim prove, that such towns, as should plead for this, would be petty tyrants if they could. So it is in this case.

The Cambridge Platform, as practised upon, and as explained by Mr. *Wise*, Rep. p. 49. is a *spiritual corporation*, independent of all ecclesiastical assemblies in point of church power. The pope claims power over all *church-assemblies*; and this crieth down all *church-assemblies* with power, and pleads exemption from them: But is not this, that in the mean time they may become absolute, and make every church a petty tyrant?

There are many great defects in this government, a few of which I will mention.

1. *There is no authoritative way to relieve a brother oppressed by a major part of the church*; which makes the kingdom of Heaven under the new Testament, not only inferior, but more tyrannical than the Jewish government which had the liberty of appeals.

2. There is no way to heal a major part of a church when fallen into fundamental errors; only as before excepted: and therefore,

3. There is no way in which the orthodox and regular can orderly withdraw communion from erroneous and disorderly churches, &c.

VIII. The Presbyterial government, as it tends to the hurt of none, so it tends to the good edification and safety of all. There are three chief ends of it.

1. *To keep the churches of CHRIST in unity among themselves, and cultivate acquaintance and brotherly love,*

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To

2. *To keep them pure.* It is CHRIST's fan to blow away the chaff from his floor.

3. *To keep them in the truth.* This tends to weed out heresies and false doctrines ; and wherever it has prevailed, it has, in a great measure prevented the increase of false doctrines, and is a most effectual defence against popery.

Thus I have endeavoured to give a fair and candid answer to Mr. *Wise's* Vindication of the New-England churches : and to represent some of the advantages of the Presbyterian government, and shew also that the cry of *tyranny* is much more applicable to the former than the latter. And I flatter myself that the candid reader will see, that Mr. *Wise's* defence, as well as the thing defended, has not its foundation either in Scripture, reason, the laws and, light of nature, antiquity, or the common sense and feelings of mankind. And on the other hand, that the presbyterian government is not only agreeable to common sense, and tends to secure the liberties and privileges of all who submit to it as far as can be hoped for in this world ; but that the chief and essential parts of it are founded in the holy scriptures as well as in the eternal reason of things. If so, he must at least wish that this form of government may prevail, and that the whole land might be united, to set CHRIST on his throne in Zion, that his name might be one, and the church become *fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.*

F I N I S.