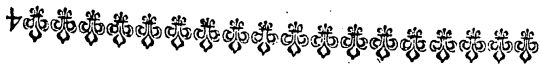




THis Apologeticall Narration of our Reverend and deare Brethren the learned Authors of it, 'tis so full of peaceablenesse, modesty, and candour; and withall, at this time so seasonably needfull, as well towards the vindication of the Protestant party in generall, from the aspersions of Incommunicablenesse within it selfe, and Incompatiblenesse with Magistracy; as of themselves in particular, both against misreportings from without, & some possible mistakings from within too: That however for mine own part I have appeared on, and doe still encline to the Presbyteriall way of Church Government, yet doe I think it every way fit for the Presse.

Charles Herle.



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Apologeticall Narration,
HUMBLY SUBMITTED
TO THE
HONOURABLE HOUSES
OF
PARLIAMENT.

BY

K Tho: Goodwin,
Philip Nye,
Sidrach Simpson,
fer: Burroughes,
William Bridge:-

an Author.
and Printers.



LONDON,
Printed for ROBERT DAWLMAN.
January 5 M. DC. XLIII.

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A P O L O G E T I C A L L N A R R A T I O N
O F S O M E
M I N I S T E R S,
Formerly in Exile:
N O W
Members of the Assembly of Divines.



U R eares have been of late so filled with a sudden and unexpected noyse of confused exclamations, (though not so expressly directed against us in particular, yet in the interpretation of the most, reflecting on us) that awakened thereby, we are enforced

to anticipate a little that discovery of our selves which otherwise we resolved to have left to *Time* and *Experience* of our wayes and spirits, the truest Discoverers and surest Judges of all men and their actions.

And now we shall begin to make some appearance into publique light, unto whose view and judgements should we (that have hitherto laine under so dark a cloud of manifold mis apprehensions) at first present our selves, but the Supream Judicatory of this Kingdome, which is and hath been in all times the most just and severe Tribunall

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for guiltinesse to appeare before, much more to dare to appeale unto; and yet withall the most sacred refuge and *Afylum* for mistaken and mis-judged innocence.

The most, if not all of us, had ten years since (some more, some lesse) severall settled Stations in the Ministry, in places of publique use in the Church, not unknown to many of your selves; but the sinful evill of those corruptions in the publique worship and government of this Church, which all doe now so generally acknowledge and decry, took hold upon our consciences long before some others of our brethren; And then how impossible it was to continue in those times our service and standings, all mens apprehensions will readily acquit us.

Neither at the first did we see or look further then the *dark part*, the evill of those superstitions adjoynd to the worship of God, which have been the common stumbling block and offence of many thousand tender consciences, both in our own and our neighbour Churches, ever since the first Reformation of Religion: which yet was enough to deprive us of the publique exercise of our Ministeries, and together therewith (as the watchfulness of those times grew) of our personall participation in some ordinances; and further exposed us either to personall violence and persecution, or an exile to avoid it: Which latter we did the rather choose, that so the use and exercise of our Ministeries (for which we were borne and live) might not be wholly lost, nor our selves remain
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debarred from the enjoyment of the Ordinances of Christ, which we account our birth-right, and best portion in this life.

This being our condition, we were cast upon a farther necessity of enquiring into and viewing the *light part*, the positive part of *Church-worship* and Government; And to that end to search out what were the first Apostolique directions, pattern and examples of those Primitive Churches recorded in the New Testament, as that sacred pillar of fire to guide us. And in this enquire, we lookt upon the word of Christ as impartially, and unprejudicedly, as men made of flesh and blood are like to doe in any juncture of time that may fall out; the places we went to, the condition we were in, the company we went forth with, affording no temptation to byas us any way, but leaving us as freely to be guided by that light and touch Gods Spirit should by the Word vouchsafe our consciences, as the Needle toucht with the Load-stone is in the Compass: And we had (of all men) the greatest reason to be true to our own consciences in what we should embrace, seeing it was for our consciences that we were deprived at once of what ever was dear to us. We had no new Common-wealths to rear, to frame Church-government unto, whereof any one piece might stand in the others light, to cause the least variation by us from the Primitive pattern; We had no State-ends or Politicall interests to comply with; No Kingdoms in our eye to subdue unto our mould; (which yet will be coexistent with the peace of any form of Civil Govern-

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ment on earth) No preferment or worldly respects to shape our opinions for: We had nothing else to doe but simply and singly to consider how to worship God acceptably, and so most according to his word.

We were not engaged by Education or otherwise to any other of the Reformed Churches; And although we consulted with reverence what they hold forth both in their writings and practice, yet we could not but suppose that they might not see into all things about worship and government, their intentions being most spent (as also of our first Reformers in *England*) upon the Reformation in Doctrine, in which they had a most happy hand: And we had with many others observed, that although the exercise of that Government had been accompanied with more peace, yet the Practicall part, *the power of godlinesse* and the profession thereof, with difference from carnall and formall Christians, had not been advanced and held forth among them, as in this our owne Island, as themselves have generally acknowledged. We had the advantage of all that light which the conflicts of our owne Divines (the good old Non-conformists) had struck forth in their times; And the draughts of Discipline which they had drawn; which we found not in all things the very same with the practices of the Reformed Churches; And what they had written came much more commended to us, not onely because they were our own, but because sealed with their manifold and bitter sufferings. We had likewise the fatall miscarriages and shipwracks

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wracks of the *Separation* (whom ye call *Brownists*) as Land-marks to fore-warn us of those rocks and shelves they ran upon; which also did put us upon an enquiry into the principles that might be the causes of their divisions. Last of all, we had the recent and later example of the wayes and practices (and those improved to a better Edition and greater refinement, by all the fore-mentioned helps) of those multitudes of godly men of our own Nation, almost to the number of another Nation, and among them some as holy and judicious Divines as this Kingdome hath bred; whose sincerity in their way hath been testified before all the world, and wil be unto all generations to come, by the greatest undertaking (but that of our father *Abraham* out of his own countrey, and his seed after him) a transplanting themselves many thousand miles distance, and that by sea, into a Wildernes, meerly to worship God more purely, whither to allure them there could be no other invitement. And yet we still stood as unengaged spectators, free to examine and consider what truth is to be found in and amongst all these, (all which we look upon as Reformed Churches) and this nakedly according to the word; We resolved not to take up our Religion by or from any partie, and yet to approve and hold fast whatsoever is good in any, though never so much differing from us, yea opposite unto us.

And for our own congregations, we meane of *England* (in which thorough the grace of Christ we were converted, and exercised our Ministeries

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long, to the conversion of many others) We have this sincere profession to make before God and all the world, that all *that* conscience of the defilements we conceived to cleave to the true worship of God in them, or of the unwarranted power in Church Governours exercised therein, did never work in any of us any other thought, much lesse opinion, but that multitudes of the assemblies and parochiall congregations thereof, were *the true Churches and Body of Christ, and the Ministry thereof a true Ministry*: Much lesse did it ever enter into our hearts to judge them *Antichristian*; we saw and cannot but see that by the same reason the Churches abroad in *Scotland, Holland, &c.* (though more reformed) yet for their mixture must be in like manner judged no Churches also, which to imagine or conceive, is and hath ever been an horreur to our thoughts. Yea we alwayes have professed, & that in these times when the Churches of *England* were the most, either actually overspread with defilements, or in the greatest danger thereof, and when our selves had least, yea no hopes of ever so much as visiting our own land again in peace and safety to our persons; that we both did and would hold a *communion* with them as the Churches of Christ. And besides this profession, as a reall testimony thereof, some of us after we, actually, were in this way of communion, baptized our children in Parishionall congregations, and (as we had occasion) did offer to receive into the communion of the Lords Supper with us, some (whom we knew godly that come to visit us when we were
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in our exile) upon that relation, fellowship, and commembership they held in their parish Churches in *England*, they professing themselves to be members thereof, and belonging thereunto. What we have since our returne publicly and avowedly made declaration of to this purpose, many hundreds can witness, and some of our brethren in their printed bookes candidly do testify for us.

Mr. Cheynett.
Rise & growth
of Socinian-
isme.

And as we alwayes held this respect unto our own Churches in this Kingdome, so we received and were entertained with the like from those reformed Churches abroad, among whom we were cast to live, we both mutually gave and received the right hand of fellowship, which they on their parts abundantly manifested by the very same characters and testimonies of difference which are proper to their own Orthodoxe Churches, and whereby they use to distinguish them from all those sects (which they tolerate, but not own) and all the assemblies of them (which yet now we are here some would needs ranke us with) granting to some of us their own Churches, or publique places for worship, to assemble in, where themselves met for the worship of God at differing houres the same day: As likewise the priviledge of ringing a publique Bell to call unto our meetings: which we mention because it is amongst them made the great signall of difference between their own allowed Churches and all other assemblies, unto whom it is strictly prohibited and forbidden, as *Guicardine* hath long since observed: And others of us found such acceptance with them, that in testimony there-
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of they allowed a full and liberall maintenance annually for our Ministers, yea and constantly also Wine for our Communion. And then we again on our parts, not onely held all brotherly correspondency with their Divines, but received also some of the members of their Churches (who desired to communicate with us) unto communion in the Sacraments and other ordinances, by virtue of their relation of membership retained in those Churches.

Now for the way & practices of our Churches, we give this briefe and generall account. Our *publique worship* was made up of no other parts then the worship of all other reformed Churches doth consist of. As, publique and solemne prayers *for Kings and all in authority, &c.* the reading the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; Exposition of them as occasion was; and constant preaching of the word; the administration of the two Sacraments, Baptisme to infants, and the Lords Supper; singing of Psalmes; collections for the poor, &c. every Lords day. For *Officers* and publique Rulers in the Church, we set up no other but the very same which the reformed Churches judge necessary and sufficient, and as instituted by Christ and his Apostles for the perpetuall government of his Church, that is, *Pastors, Teachers, Ruling Elders*, (with us not lay but Ecclesiastique persons separated to that service) and *Deacons*. And for the matter *of government and censures of the Church*, we had nor executed any other but what all ac-
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knowledge, namely, *Admonition*, and *Excommunication* upon obstinacie and impenitencie, (which we blesse God we never exercised.) This latter we judged should be put in execution, for no other kind of sins then may evidently be presumed to be perpetrated against the parties known light; as whether it be a sin in manners and conversation, such as is committed against the light of nature, or the common received practices of Christianity, professed in all the Churches of Christ; or it in opinions, then such, as are likewise contrary to the received principles of Christianity, and the power of godlinesse, professed by the party himselfe, and universally acknowledged in all the rest of the churches, and no other sins to be the subject of that dreadful sentence.

And for our directions in these or what ever else requisite to the manage of them, we had these three Principles more especially in our eye, to guide and steere our practice by.

First, the supream rule *without us*, was the Primitive patterne and example of the churches erected by the Apostles. Our consciences were possessed with that reverence and adoration of the fulnesse of the Scriptures, that there is therein a compleat sufficiencie, as to make the *man of God perfect*, so also to make the Churches of God perfect, (meere circumstances we except, or what rules the law of nature doth in common dictate) if the directions and examples therein delivered were fully known and followed. And although we cannot professe that sufficiencie of knowledge as to be
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able to lay forth all those rules therein which may meet with all cases and emergencies that may or sometimes did fall out amongst us, or that may give satisfaction unto all Queres possible to be put unto us; yet we found principles enough, not onely *fundamentall* and essentiall to the being of a Church, but *superstructory* also for the well-being of it, and those to us cleare and certaine, and such as might well serve to preserve our Churches in peace and from offence, and would comfortably guide us to heaven in a safe way: And the observation of so many of those particulars to be laid forth in the Word, became to us a more certaine evidence and cleare confirmation that there were the like rules and ruled cases for all occasions whatsoever, if we were able to discern them. And for all such cases wherein we saw not a cleare resolution from Scripture, example, or direction, wee still professedly suspended, untill God should give us further light, not daring to eeke out what was defective in our light in matters Divine with humane prudence, (the fatall error to Reformation) lest by *sowing any piece of the old garment* unto the new, we should make the *rent worse*; we having this promise of grace for our encouragement in this, which in our publique Assemblies was often for our comfort mentioned, that *in thus doing the will of God we should know more.*

A second Principle we carried along with us in all our resolutions, was, Not to make our present judgement and practice a binding law unto our selves for the future, which we in like manner made

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continuall profession of upon all occasions. We had too great an instance of our own frailty in the former way of our conformity; and therefore in a jealousy of our selves, we kept this reserve, (which we made open and constant professions of) to alter and retract (though not lightly) what ever should be discovered to be taken up out of a mis-understanding of the rule: Which Principle wee wish were (next to that most supream, namely, to be in all things guided by the perfect wil of God) enacted as the most *sacred law* of all other, in the midst of all other Laws and Canons Ecclesiastical in Christian States and Churches throughout the world.

Thirdly, we are able to hold forth this true and just Apologie unto the world, That in the matters of greatest moment and controversie, we still chose to practice safely, and so, as we had reason to judge that all sorts, or the most of all the Churches did acknowledge warrantable, although they make *addisements* thereunto.

For instance: Whereas one great controversie of these times is about the *qualification of the Members* of Churches, and the promiscuous receiving and mixture of good and bad; Therein we chose the better part, and to be sure, received in none but such as all the Churches in the world would by the balance of the Sanctuary acknowledge faithful. And yet in this we are able to make this true and just profession also, That the Rules which we gave up our judgements unto, to judge those we received in amongst us by, were of that latitude

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titude as would take in any member of Christ, the meanest, in whom there may be supposed to be the least of Christ, and indeed such and no other as all the godly in this Kingdome carry in their bosomes to judge others by. We took measure of no mans holinesse by his opinion, whether concurring with us, or adverse unto us; And Churches made up of such, we were sure no Protestant could but approve of, (as touching the members of it) to be a true Church, with which communion might be held. Againe, concerning the great ordinance of *Publique Prayer* and the *Lyturgie* of the Church, whereas there is this great controversie upon it about the lawfulnessse of set formes prescribed; we practised (without condemning others) what all sides doe allow, and themselves doe practice also, that the publique Prayers in our Assemblies should be framed by the meditations and study of our own Ministers, out of their own gifts, (the fruits of Christs Ascension) as well as their Sermons use to be. This vve were sure all allowed of, though they superadded the other. So likewise for the government and discipline in the Churches, however the practice of the Reformed Churches is in greater matters to govern each particular congregation by a combined *Presbyterie* of the *Elders* of severall congregations united in one for government; yet so, as in their judgements they allow, especially in some cases, a particular congregation, an entire and compleat power of jurisdiction to be exercised by the Elders thereof within it selfe; Yea and our own Master *Cartwright*, holy *Baynes*, and other old
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Non-conformists, place the power of Excommunication in the Eldership of each particular Church with the consent of the Church, untill they do miscarry, and then indeed they subject them to such Presbyterial and Provincial Assemblies as the proper refuge for appeales and for compounding of differences amongst Churches; which combination of Churches others of them therefore call *Ecclesie ortæ*, but particular congregations *Ecclesie primæ*, as wherein *firstly* the power and priviledg of a Church is to be exercised. And vwithall vve could not but imagine, that the first Churches planted by the Apostles, were ordinarily of no more in one city at first then might make up one entire congregation, ruled by their own Elders, that also preached to them; for that in every city where they came, the number of converts did or should arise to such a multitude as to make severall and sundry congregations, or that the Apostles should stay the setting up of any Churches at all, untill they rose to such a numerous multiplication as might make such a Presbyterial combination, we did not imagine. We found also those *Non conformists* (that wrote against the Episcopal Government) in their Answer to the Arguments used for Episcopal Government over many Churches, brought from the instances of the multitude of Beleevers at *Jerusalem*, and other places and cities, mentioned in the New Testament, to assert that it could not be infallibly proved that any of those vve read of in the *Acts* and elsewhere; were yet so numerous, as necessarily to exceed the limits of one particular congregation
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gation in those first times. We found it also granted by them all, that there should be severall Elders in every congregation, who had power over them in the Lord; and we judged that all those precepts, *obey your Elders*, and *them that are over you*, were (to be sure, and all grant it) meant of the Pastours and Teachers, and other Elders that were set over them in each particular congregation respectively, and to be as certainly the intendment of the holy Ghost, as in those like commands, *Wives obey your owne husbands*, *Servants your own governours*, to be meant of their severall Families respectively.

We could not therefore but judge it a safe and an allowed way to retaine the government of our severall congregations for matter of discipline within themselves, to be exercised by their own Elders, whereof we had (for the most part of the time we were abroad) three at least in each congregation, whom we were subject to: yet not clayming to our selves an *independent power* in every congregation, to give account or be subject to none others, but onely a full and entire power compleat within our selves, until we should be challenged to erre grossly; such as *Corporations* enjoy, who have the power and priviledge to passe sentence for life & death within themselves, and yet are accountable to the State they live in. But that it should be the institution of Christ or his Apostles, that the combination of the Elders of many Churches should be the first compleat and entire seat of Church power over each congregation so combined; or that they could challenge and assume that

that authority over those Churches they feed and teach not ordinarily by virtue of those fore-mentioned Apostolicall precepts, was to us a question, and judged to be an *additament* unto the other, which therefore rested on those that allowed us what we practised, over and above, to make evident and demonstrate (and certainly of all other the challenge of all spiritual power from Christ had need have a cleare patten to shew for it) Yea wee appeale further unto them that have read bookes, whether untill those latter wrytings of the two reverend and learned *Divines of Scotland* set forth after our return, nor much more then two yeeres since, and others of no elder date from *Holland*, and one of our *own* Divines more lately written with much learning and ingenuity; there hath been much settly and directly or with strength insisted on to prove that government, and although assert and inculcate it they do as their opinions, yet the full strength and streame of our Non-conformists wrytings and others are spent rather in arguments against, & for the overthrowing the Episcopall government, and the corruptions that cleave to our worship, and in maintayning those severall Officers in Churches which Christ hath instituted in stead thereof (in which we fully agree with them) then in the prooffe of a combined classically Presbyteriall government as it is *authoritatively* practised in the most reformed Churches.

And whereas the common prejudice and exception laid into all mens thoughts against us and our opinions is, that in such a congregational government

ment thus entire within it self, there is no allowed sufficient remedy for miscarriages, though never so grosse; no reliefe for wrongful sentences or persons injured thereby; no roome for complaints: no powerful or effectual means to reduce a Church or Churches that fall into heresie, schisme, &c. but every one is left and may take liberty without controule to do what is good in their own eyes; we have (through the good providence of God upon us) from the avowed declarations of our *judgements* among our Churches mutually during our exile, and that also confirmed by the most solemne instance of our *practice*, wherewith to vindicate our selves and way in this particular; which upon no other occasion we should ever have made thus publique.

God so ordered it that a scandall and offence fell out between those very Churches whilst living in this banishment (whereof we our selves, that write these things, were then the Ministers) one of our Churches having unhappily deposed one of their Ministers, the other judged it not onely as too sudden an act (having proceeded in a matter of so great moment without consulting their sister Churches, as was publique professsed we should have done in such cases of concernement) but also in the proceedings thereof as too severe, and not managed according to the rules laid down in the word. In this case our Churches did mutually and universally acknowledge and submit to this as a sacred and undoubted principle and supream law to be observed among all Churches, that as by

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virtue of that Apostolical command, Churches as well as particular men are bound to give no offence neither to Jew nor Gentile, nor the Churches of God they live amongst. So that in all cases of such offence or difference, by the obligation of the common law of *communion of Churches*, & for the *vindication of the glory of Christ*, which in common they hold forth, the church or churches challenged to *offend or differ*, are to submit themselves (upon the challenge of the offence or complaint of the person wronged) to the most full & open tryall & examination by other neighbour Churches offended thereat, of what ever hath given the offence: And further, that by the virtue of the same and like law of *not partaking in other mens sins*, the Churches offended may & ought upon the impenitency of those Churches, persisting in their error and miscarriage to pronounce that heavy sentence, against them, of withdrawing and renouncing all Christian communion with them until they do repent; And further to declare and protest this, with the causes thereof, to all other Churches of Christ, that they may do the like.

And what further *authority*, or proceedings purely *Ecclesiasticall*, of one, or many sister Churches towards another whole Church, or Churches offending, either the Scriptures doe hold forth, or can rationally be put in execution (without the Magistrates interposing a power of another nature, unto which we upon his particular cognifance, and examination of such causes, professse ever to submit, and also to be most willing to have recourse unto) for our parts vve savv not then, nor do yet see.

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likewise we did then suppose, and doe yet, that this principle of submission of Churches that miscarry unto other Churches offended, together with this other, that it is a command from Christ enjoined to Churches that are finally offended to denounce such a sentence of *Non-communication* and *withdrawing* from them whilst impenitent, as unworthy to hold forth the name of Christ, (*these principles being received and generally acknowledged by the Churches of Christ to be a mutuall duty, as strictly enjoined them by Christ as any other*) that these would be as effectually means (through the blessing of Christ) to awe and preserve Churches and their Elders in their duties, as that other of claime to an authoritative power Ecclesiastical to *Excommunicate* other Churches or their Elders offending; For if the one be compared with the other, in a meere Ecclesiastial notion, *That* of Excommunication pretended hath but this more in it, That it is a *delivering* of whole Churches and their Elders offending *unto Satan*, (for which we know no warrant in the Scriptures, that Churches should have such a power over other Churches) And then as for the binding obligation both of the one way & the other, it can be supposed to lye but in these 2. things; First, in a warrant and injunction given by Christ to his Churches, to put either the one or the other into execution; and 2. that mens consciences be accordingly taken therewith, so as to subject themselves whether unto the one way or the other: For suppose that other principle of an *authoritative* power in the greater part of Churches com-

combined to excommunicate other Churches, &c. to be the ordinance of God, yet unlesse it doe take hold of mens consciences, and be received amongst all Churches, the offending Churches will sleight all such *Excommunications* as much, as they may be supposed to doe our way of protestation and sentence of *Non-communication*. On the other side, let this way of ours be but as strongly entertained, as that which is the way and command of Christ, and upon all occasions be heedfully put in execution, it will awe mens consciences as much, and produce the same effects. And if the Magistrates power (to which we give as much, and (as we think) more, then the principles of the Presbiteriall government will suffer them to yeeld) doe but assist and back the sentence of other Churches denouncing this *Non-communication* against Churches miscarrying, according to the nature of the crime, as they judge meet, and as they would the sentence of Churches excommunicating other Churches in such cases, upon their own particular judgement of the cause; then, without all controversie this our way of Church proceeding will be every way as effectually as their other can be supposed to be; and we are sure, more brotherly and more suited to that liberty and equality Christ hath endowed his Churches with. But without the Magistrates interposing their authority, their way of proceeding will be as ineffectually as ours; and more lyable to contempt, by how much it is pretended to be more authoritative, and to inflict a more dreadful punishment, which carnall spirits are seldome sensible of. This for our judgements. D 2 And

And for a *reall evidence* and *demonstration* both that this was then, our judgements, as likewise for an instance of the effectuall successe of such a course held by Churches in such cases, our own practice, and the blessing of God thereon, may plead and testify for us to all the world. The manage of this transaction in brieve was this.

That Church which (with others) was most scandalized, did by letters declare their offence, requiring of the Church (supposed to be) offending, *in the name* and for the vindication of the honour of Christ, and the relieving the party wronged, to yeeld a full and publike hearing before all the Churches of our Nation, or any other whomsoever, offended, of what they could give in charge against their proceedings in that deposition of their Minister, and to subject themselves to an open tryall and review of all those forepassed carriages that concerned that particular; which they most cheerfully and readily (according to the fore-mentioned principles) submitted unto, in a *place*, and *state* where no outward violence or any other externall authority either civil or ecclesiasticall would have enforced them thereunto: And accordingly the Ministers of the Church offended with other two Gentlemen, of much worth, wisdom and piety, members thereof, were sent as *Messengers* from that Church; and at the introduction and entrance into that solempne assembly (the solemnity of which hath left as deep an impression upon our hearts of Christs dreadfull presence as ever any we have been present at,) it was openly and publiquely professed

in a speech that was the preface to that discussion, to this effect, "That it was the most to be abhorred maxime that any Religion hath ever made profession of, and therefore of all other the most contradictory and dishonourable unto that of Christianity, that a single and particular society of men professing the name of Christ, and pretending to be endowed with a power from Christ to judge them that are of the same body and society within themselves, should further arrogate unto themselves an exemption from giving account or being censurable by any other, either Christian Magistrate above them, or neighbour Churches about them. So far were our judgements from that *independent* liberty that is imputed to us, then, when we had least dependency on this kingdom, or so much as hopes ever to abide therein in peace. And for the issue and successe of this *agitation*, after there had been for many dayes as judiciary and fulla charge, tryall, and deposition of witnesses openly afore all commers of all sorts, as can be expected in any Court where Authority enjoyns it, that Church, which had offended, did as publiquely acknowledge their sinfull aberration in it, restored their *Minister* to his place again, and ordered a solempne day of fasting to humble themselves afore God and men, for their sintull carriage in it; and the party also which had been deposed did acknowledge to that Church wherein he had likewise sinned.

Thus we have rendred some smal account of those, the saddest days of our pilgrimage on earth, wherein

although we enjoyed God, yet besides many other miseries (the companions of banishment) we lost some friends and companions, our fellow labourers in the Gospel, as precious men as this earth beares any, through the distemper of the place, and our selves came hardly off that service with our healths, yea lives.

When it pleased God to bring us his poor *Exiles* back again in these revolutions of the times, as also of the condition of this kingdom, into our own land, (the pouring forth of manifold prayers and teares for the prosperity whereof, had been no small part of that publique worship we offered up to God in a strange land;) we found the judgement of many of our godly learned brethren in the Ministry (that desired a general reformation) to differ from ours in some things, wherein we do professedly judge the *Calvinian* Reformed Churches of the first reformation from out of Popery, to stand in need of a further reformation themselves, And it may without prejudice to them, or the imputation of Schisme in us from them, be thought, that they comming new out of Popery (as well as *England*) and the founders of that reformation not having *Apostolique infallibility*, might not be fully perfect the first day. Yea and it may hopefully be conceived, that God in his secret, yet wise and gracious dispensation, had left *England* more unreformed as touching the outward form, both of worship & Church government, then the neighbour Churches were, having yet powerfully continued a constant conflict and contention

reformation for a further Reformation for these fourescore yeers; during which time he had likewise instead thereof blessed them with the spiritual light (and that encreasing) of the power of Religion in the Practique part of it, shining brighter and clearer then in the neighbour Churches, as having in his infinite mercy on purpose reserved and *provided some better thing* for this Nation when it should come to be reformed, that the other Churches might not be made *perfect without it*, as the Apostle speaks.

We found also (which was as great an affliction to us as our former troubles and banishment) our opinions and wayes (wherein we might seem to differ) environed about with a cloud of mistakes and misapprehensions, and our persons with reproaches, Besides other calumnies, as of *schisme*, &c. (which yet must either relate to a differing from the former Ecclesiastical Government of this Church established, and then who is not involved in it as well as we? or to that constitution and government that is yet to come; and untill that be agreed on, established and declared, and actually exist, there can be no guilt or imputation of Schisme from it) *That* proud and insolent title of *Independencie* was affixed unto us, as our claime; the very sound of which conveys to all mens apprehensions the challenge of an exemption of all Churches from all subjection and dependance, or rather a trumpet of defiance against what ever *Power, Spirituall or Civill*, which we doe abhor and detest: Or else the odious name of *Brownisme*, together with all their opinions as they have stated and maintained

ned them, must needs be owned by us: Although upon the very first declaring our judgements in the chief and fundamental point of all *Church discipline*, and likewise since, it hath been acknowledged that we differ much from them. And wee did then, and doe here publicly professe, we beleeve the truth to lye and consist in a *middle way* betwixt that which is falsely charged on us, *Brownisme*; and that which is the contention of these times, the *authoritative Presbyteriall Government* in all the subordinations and proceedings of it.

And had we been led in our former wayes, and our removall out of this Kingdome by any such *spirit of faction* and division, or of *pride* and *singularity*, (which are the usual grounds of all Schisme) we had since our returns again during this intermisticall season, tentations, yea provocations enough to have drawn forth such a spirit; having manifold advantages to make and encrease a partie, which we have not in the least attempted. We found the spirits of the people of this Kingdome that professe or pretend to the power of godlinesse (they finding themselves to be so much at liberty, and new come out of bondage) ready to take any impressions, and to be cast into any mould that hath but the appearance of a stricter way. And we found that many of those mists that had gathered about us, or were rather cast upon our persons in our absence, began by our presence againe, and the blessing of God upon us, in a great measure to scatter and vanish, without speaking a word for our selves or Cause.

But

But through the grace of Christ, our spirits are and have been so remote from such dispositions & aymes, that on the contrary we call God and men to witness our constant forbearance, either to publish our opinions by preaching (although we had the Pulpits free) or to print any thing of our owne or others for the vindication of our selves (although the Presses were more free then the Pulpits) or to act for our selves or way, although we have been from the first provoked unto all these all sorts of wayes, both by the common mis-understandings and mis-representations of our opinions and practises, together with incitements to this State not to allow us the peaceable practises of our *Consciences*, which the Reformed Churches abroad allowed us, and these edged with calumnies and reproaches cast upon our persons in print; and all these heightned with this further prejudice and provocation, that this our silence was interpreted, that we were either ashamed of our opinions, or able to say little for them; when as on the other side (besides all other advantages) Books have been written by men of much worth, learning, and authority, with moderation and strength, to prepossesse the peoples minds against what are supposed our Tenets. But we knew and considered that it was the *second blow that makes the quarrell*, and that the *beginning of strife* would have been as the *breaking in of waters*; and the sad and conscientious apprehension of the danger of rending and dividing the godly Protestant party in this Kingdome that were desirous of Reformation, and of making fe-

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verall interests among them in a time when there was an absolute necessity of their neereſt union and conjunction, and all little enough to effect that Reformation intended, and ſo long contended for, againſt a common adverſary that had both preſent poſſeſſion to plead for it ſelfe, power to ſupport it, and had enjoyed a long continued ſettlement which had rooted it in the hearts of men; And this ſeconded by the inſtant and continuall advices and conjurements of many *Honourable*, wiſe, and godly *Perſonages* of both *Houſes* of *Parliament*, to forbear what might any way be like to occaſion or augment this unhappy difference; They having alſo by their Declarations to His Majeſty profeſſed their endeavour and deſire to unite the Proteſtant partie in this Kingdome, that agree in Fundamentall Truths againſt Popery and other Hereſies, and to have that reſpect to tender conſciences as might prevent oppreſſions and inconveniences which had formerly been; Together with that ſtrict engagement willingly entred into by us for theſe common ends, with the reſt of our brethren of the Miniſtery, (which though made to continue but *ad placitum*, yet hath been ſacred to us.) And above all, the due reſpect we have had to the peaceable and orderly Reformation of this Church and State; the hopefull expectation we have been entertained with of an happy *latitude* and agreement by means of this *Assembly*, and the wiſdome of this *Parliament*: The conſcience and conſideration of all theſe, and the weight of each, have hitherto had more power with us to this deepe ſilence and forbearance, then
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all our own interests have any way prevailed with us to occaſion the leaſt diſturbance amongſt the people. We have and are yet reſolved to beare all this with a quiet and a ſtrong patience, (in the ſtrength of which we now ſpeak, or rather ſigh forth this litle) referring the vindication of our perſons to God, and a further experience of us by men; and the declaration of our judgements, and what we conceive to be his truth therein, to the due and orderly agitation of this *Assembly* whereof both *Houſes* were pleaſed to make us *Members*.

And whereas our ſilence upon all the forementioned grounds (for which we know we can never loſe eſteeme with good and wiſe men) hath been by the ill interpretation of ſome, imputed either to our conſciouſneſſe of the badneſſe and weakneſſe of our *Cauſe*, or to our inability to maintain what we aſſert in difference from others, or answer what hath been written by others, wee ſhall (with all modeſty) onely preſent this to all mens apprehenſions in confutation of it. That what ever the truth and juſtneſſe of our *Cauſe* may prove to be, or how ſlender our abilities to defend it, yet wee pretend at leaſt to ſo much wiſdome, that wee would never have reſerved our ſelves for, but rather by all wayes have declined *this Theatre*, of all other, the moſt judicious and ſevere, an *Assembly* of ſo many able, learned, and grave *Divines*, where much of the piety, wiſdome, and learning of two Kingdomes are met in one, honoured and aſſiſted with the preſence of the *Worthies* of both *Houſes* at all debates (as often as they pleaſe to vouchſafe
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their presence) as the Stage whereon first wee would bring forth into publique view our Tenets (it false and counterfet) together with our own folly and weaknesse: We would much rather have chosen to have been venting them to the multitude, apt to be seduced, (which we have had these three yeers opportunity to have done.) But in a conscientious regard had to the orderly and peaceable way of searching out truths, and reforming the Churches of Christ, we have adventured our selves upon this way of God, wisely assumed by the prudence of the State; And therein also upon all sorts of disadvantages (which we could not but foresee) both of *number, abilities* of learning, *Authority*, the streame of *publique interest*; Trusting God both with our selves and his own truth, as he shall be pleased to manage it by us.

Moreover, if in all matters of *Doctrine*, we were not as *Orthodoxe* in our judgements as our brethren themselves, we would never have exposed our selves to this tryall and hazard of discovery in this Assembly, the mixture of whose spirits, the quick-fightednes of whose judgements (intent enough upon us) and variety of debates about all sorts of controversies afoot in these times of contradiction, are such, as would be sure soon to find us out if we nourished any monsters or Serpents of opinions lurking in our bosomes. And if we had carryed it so, as that hitherto such errors were not

forehand open to the view and judgement of all, yet

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fitting here (unlesse we would be silent, which we have not been) *we could not long be hid*. But it is sufficiently known that in all *points of doctrine* (which hitherto in the review and examination of the *Articles* of our Church, or upon other occasions have been gone thorough) our judgements have still concurred with the greatest part of our brethren, neither do we know wherein we have dissented. And in matters of *Discipline* we are so farre from holding up the differences that occur, or making the breaches greater or wider, that we endeavour upon all such occasions to grant and yeeld (as all may see and cannot but testifie for us) to the utmost latitude of our light and consciences; professing it to be as high a point of Religion and conscience readily to own, yea fall down before whatsoever is *truth* in the hands of those that differ, yea though they should be enemies unto us, as much as earnestly to contend for & hold fast those truths wherein we should be found dissenting from them; and this as in relation to peace, so also as a just due to truth and goodnes, even to approve it & acknowledge it to the utmost graine of it, though mingled with what is opposite unto us. And further when matters by discussion are brought to the smallest dissent that may be, we have hitherto been found to be no *backward* urgers unto a temper (not onely in things that have concerned our own consciences, but when of others also) such as may suit and tend to union as well as searching out of truth; judging this to be as great and usefull an end of *Synods*

and *Assemblies*, as a curious and exact discussion of all sorts of lesser differences with binding *Determinations* of truth one way.

And thus we have nakedly and with all simplicity rendred a cleare and true account of our wayes and spirits hitherto; Which we made choice of now at first to make our selves known by, rather then by a more exact and *Scholastique* relation of our judgements in the points of difference about *Church government*; reserving that unto the more proper season and opportunity of this *Assembly*, and that liberty given by both Honourable Houses in matters of dissent; or as necessity shall after require, to a more publique way of stating and asserting of them. In the meane time from this brieve historickall relation of our practices, there may a true estimate be taken of our opinions in difference, which being instanced in, and set out by practices, is the most reall and least collusive way, and carries its own evidence with it. All which we have taken the boldnes together with our selves humbly to lay at the feet of *your wisdom and piety*; Beseeching you to look upon us under no other Notion, or character, then as those, who if we cannot assume to have been no way furtherers of that reformation you intend, yet who have been no way hinderers thereof, or disturbers of the publique peace; and who in our judgements about the present work of this age, the reformation of worship and discipline, do differ as little from the Reformed Churches, and our Brethren, yea far lesse, then they do from what themselves were three yeers past, or then the
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generality of this kingdom from it self of late. And withall to consider us as those, who in these former times, for many yeers suffered even to exile, for what the kingdom it self now suffers in the endeavour to cast out; and who in these present times, and since the change of them, have endured (that which to our spirits is no lesse grievous) the opposition and reproach of good men, even to the threatening of another banishment, and have been through the grace of God upon us, the same men in both, in the midst of these varieties; And finally, as those that do pursue no other interest or designe but a subsistence (be it the poorest and meanest) in our own land (where we have and may do further service, & which is our birth-right as we are men) with the enjoyment of the ordinances of Christ (which are our portion as we are Christians) with the allowance of a latitude to some lesser differences with peaceableness, as not knowing where else with safety, health, and livelyhood, to set our feet on earth.

Tho. Goodwin, } Fer: Burroughes,
Philip Nye, }
Sidrach Simpson } William Bridge.

F I N I S.