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VINDICATION

OF

The Brethren who were unjustly and illegally cast out of the Synod of *Philadelphia*, by a Number of the Members,

FROM

Maintaining Principles of *Anarchy* in the Church, and denying the due scriptural Authority of Church Judicatures:

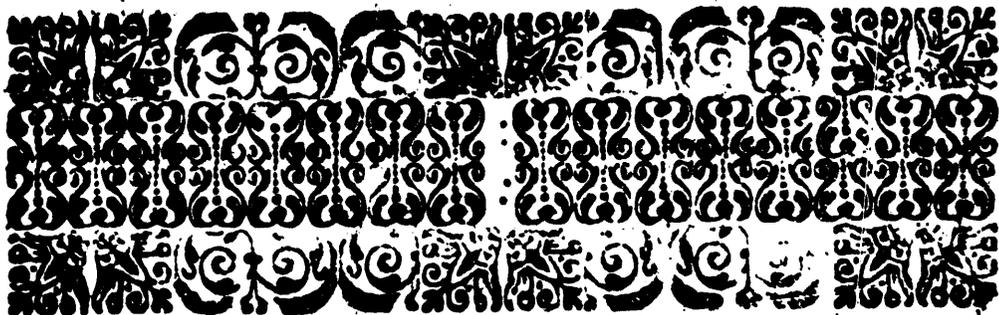
AGAINST

The Charges of the Rev. Mr. *John Thompson*, in his Piece entitled, *The Government of the Church of Christ, &c.*

By SAMUEL BLAIR, Minister of the Gospel of Christ at *New-Londonderry* in *Pennsylvania*.

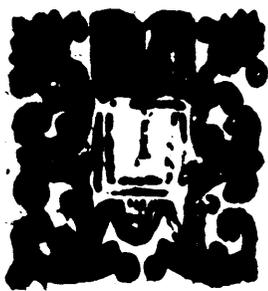
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T H E

Excluded BRETHREN vin-
dicated from Principles of
Anarchy.



T is no new or unheard-of Thing, that in a degenerate decayed State of the visible Church, when the Power and Life of true Religion is far gone, those who faithfully and diligently bestir themselves for the Restoring and Promoting it, shou'd meet with Oppositions and hard Usage from their professed Brethren, so as to be much interrupted and hindered in their main Work,
by

4 *The excluded Brethren vindicated*
by a necessary Defence of themselves
against the Misrepresentations and in-
vidious Charges of such Brethren.
The great King of the Church has
given us such plentiful Notice and War-
ning of this in his Word, that we
need not be exceedingly surprized
when we find it come to pass, as if
some strange Thing had happened un-
to us ; as you may see in *Cant.* 1. 6.
and 5. 7. *Isaiab* 66. 5. *Luke* 12. 51,
52. with many other Places. The
first Passage of Scripture I have here
refer'd to, as well as the rest, is ex-
ceeding applicable unto, and expressive
of the present State of Things among
us ; in which the Church is repre-
sented complaining of a Number of
Fellow-Professors in such Strains as
these, *my Mother's Children were angry*
with me, they made me the Keeper of the
Vineyards ; and so my own Vineyard I
have not kept. For my own Part I
had much rather be left free to attend
to the great and most important
Business

from the Principles of Anarchy. §

Business belonging to my sacred Calling, than be called off to debate with angry Brethren; and it is always with Reluctance that I am this Way engaged; But yet, from sundry Considerations I am constrained to it, notwithstanding the little Time or Will I have for it.

As, no doubt, some Account of the Transactions and extraordinary Events of this Day will descend down to Posterity, and especially the glorious Power that has attended the Gospel of Christ far and wide in our Day; so, the Memory of this great Work of Divine Grace wou'd be transmitted down to the coming Generations under very great Disadvantages, unless the Prejudices laid against it by such as have unhappily opposed it, were taken out of the Way: Therefore, to remove the Grounds and Foundations of these Prejudices, that they may not lie against this Display of God's Power and Grace, to the Hindring of the
Use

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Use and Advantage of it to after Ages, is, I think, incumbent on those who are true Friends to Christ's Interest among Men. They are call'd, in Duty to God, and Love to their Children, thus to vindicate and defend his Work, and so to come and declare unto a People that shall be born, that he hath done this; Psal. 22. 31. and the same Argument holds in respect of distant Parts of the World in our own time; and in respect of those nearer the Scene of this Work of Grace, who yet may be imposed on by labour'd Misrepresentations, wrong Principles, and unreasonable Objections.

Several have very sufficiently answer'd the Objections rais'd against the Work itself: As Mr. *Edwards* in *New-England*, Mr. *Dickinson* in *New-Jersey*, Mr. *Finley* in *Pensylvania*, Mr. *Robe*, and Mr. *Webster* in *Scotland*, and Mr. *Kennedy* in *Holland*, in his Preface to the Narrative, with Attstations from *Scotland*, by him translated
into

From the Principles of Anarchy. 7
into the *Dutch* Tongue, with many others; but then, there is moreover another Set of Objections, which, tho' not directly and immediately made against the Work itself, yet they do prevail to the Prejudicing of many against it; and bring them to wholly disesteem and reject it. And these are, Objections raised against some that are Instruments and Promoters of it. Thro' the great Goodness of God, the hearty Promoters of it are many, in different and very distant Parts of the World; and doubtless there will be a Plenty of Aspersions cast upon them all, by such as do not fall in with the Work which they are endeavouring to carry on: But what I am only called to, and, in any tolerable Degree, capable of in this Case, is the Vindication of the Brethren here, who were by some of their Brethren both unjustly and illegally cast out of Communion of the Synod, from the Charges unjustly laid against them.
And

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And what is especially incumbent on me this Way, is to free them from what is laid to their Charge in Relation to external Government and Order in the Church. We have been represented by our Opposites in sundry Parts of their Writings, and especially by Mr. *Thompson* in his Piece entitled *The Government of the Church of Christ*, as very mischievous Instruments in the Church, maintaining Principles of mere Anarchy, Confusion and Disorder in all ecclesiastical Affairs. But I hope it will appear ere all be done, that there is a proper Medium between Tyranny and Anarchy; between unjust Oppression and lawless Confusion: And that we have only rejected the one without inferring the other of these Extreams. Altho' the general Title of Mr. *Thompson's* Performance is, *The Government of the Church*, yet he first proceeds upon other Matters, and that for above the third Part of his Book, endeavouring

deavouring to confute two Papers that were brought into the Synod, the one by Mr. *Gilbert Tennent*, and the other by me, in the Year 1740, from which Papers Mr. T-----n endeavours to convict us of the most wicked and horrid rash judging of our Brethren; He begins first with Mr. *Tennent's* Paper, tho' it was given in last; and when he has dismiss'd both these, then, on the Subject of Church Government, he proceeds to speak to the Apology, which was given into the Synod by the Presbytery of *New-Brunswick*, the Year before the two Papers (viz. 1739.) so that Mr. T-----n's method is entirely Retrograde. However, as he was at Liberty to choose his own Method, so am I to choose Mine.

I shall then, according to the due order of Things in the first Place, consider what he lays to our Charge on the Head of Church Government, and the Authority of Ecclesiastical Judicatures;

B

and

to *The excluded Brethren vindicated*
and then offer what is needful in Re-
lation to the two Papers above-men-
tion'd: But I would have it observed
here, that I think it no Way necessary
to enter into a particuler Examination
of this whole Piece of Mr. T-----n's;
to consider what is right and what is
wrong in every Part, of it. This I
believe, wou'd be neither worth the
Reader's Pains or mine. What I
chiefly design is to clear my self and
Brethren from Mr. T-----n's Misre-
presentations of us, and unjust Charges
againſt us. If this be done, I have my
proximate End in this Undertaking.

To proceed then as propos'd: let
it be ſeen what it is that Mr. T-----n,
charges us with in the Matter of Go-
vernment: Why it is the utter deny-
ing and rejecting entirely any Au-
thority in Church Judicatures what-
ſoever. He charges us over and over
again, with holding that the Judi-
catures of the Church, having no man-
ner of governing Authority leſs or more,
and

from Principles of Anarchy. 11

and he pretends to find this in the fore-mentioned Apology. O amazing! This would be to make the visible Church and Family of Christ on Earth, a strange sort of a lawless Crowd indeed; destitute of all Government and Authority as a Church for their Regulation; so that every one might do just what he pleased without Controul. Such a Company as this would be more like a confused Mob than the Church and Kingdom of our glorious Mediator; and yet, of such a monstrous Principle does Mr. T-----n plainly accuse us, as necessarily infers all this, when he asserts we deny all Authority of Government to Church Judicatures: For he does not seem once to charge us with holding the congregational Plan, or that Government is to be exercised by the Church any other Way than in her Representative Judicatures; and therefore if we deny all Authority of Government to these, we manifestly deny it to the Church altogether.

12 *The excluded Brethren vindicated*

That Mr. T-----n, charges this upon us, none can be ignorant of that read his Book ; in *Pag. 5.* he says, *it is plain and evident, that, in our Judgment, Presbyteries and Synods when regularly constituted, have no Authority at all, either over their Members or People.* In *Pag. 51.* (where he begins to proceed on the Subject of Government, which he says is the second Ground of Difference between them and us) he says, that *our Judgment or Principles in Relation to Church Government, are quite different, and opposite unto the Principles of Church Government contained in our Directory.* *Pag. 55.* he says, *it is certainly our Judgment, that there is no Authority, but only Advice belonging to a Presbytery.* *Pag. 56, 57,* says he, “ But “ the plain and genuine Design of all “ these Assertions, as in all this Apology, is to overthrow all Authority, “ and cast out all Order and Government out of the Church. “ These “ are

“ are the Men, says he, who profess
“ so much Zeal for Christ’s Kingdom,
“ and yet are, by one bold Stroke, at-
“ tempting to strike the Crown from
“ his Head, by divesting his Officers
“ and Courts of all governing Au-
“ thority.” In many other Places he
asserts the same thing ; but it may
suffice to refer to these.

Now, I think Mr. T-----n, or any
Man else, may easily find a pretty deal
of governing Authority allowed to
the Officers and Courts of Jesus Christ
in the Apology. Does it not plainly
enough assert a Government appointed
by Christ in his Church, and particular
Officers for the Execution of it ? see
Apol. Pag. 50, 51. as now published,
where the Words are, “ according to
“ the Presbyterian Constitution, we
“ conceive that all the Ministers of
“ the Gospel are equal one with an-
“ other in all the Parts of the Pastoral
“ Office, so that none have any pecu-
“ liar Powers or Privileges beyond
“ others :

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“ others : And that particular Pres-
“ byteries, consisting of such a
“ number of Ministers, more or less,
“ with the Elders of their several
“ Congregations, as can conveniently
“ meet together so often as Occasion
“ may require, have full and compleat
“ Power for ordering all the Affairs
“ of the Church within their Bounds.
“ In a Word, they have *Power* to
“ *execute* all the Parts of *Government*
“ which Christ has *appointed* in his
“ Church, (which by the Way, is not
“ inconsistent with their Liableness to
“ be brought to Account by Synods,
“ or larger Assemblies consisting of
“ Presbyteries, either for Errors in
“ Doctrine or wrong Conduct in Prac-
“ tice) and consequently, they have
“ the whole Management of the Ad-
“ mission of Persons to the Preaching
“ of the Gospel.” Indeed, a great Part
of the Apology goes on this very
Ground, as a Postulatum, viz. That
Christ has appointed, a Government;
and

from Principles of Anarchy. 15

and Officers for the Administration of it in his Church; the Apology was only designed to oppose the Exorbitancy of Church Power, or Church Officers claiming and exercising farther and higher Authority than the great King and Law-giver Jesus Christ allowed them.

And in particular, does not the Apology say, that Presbyteries have Power from Christ to ordain Men to the Office and Charge of the Gospel Ministry, *Pag. 48?* and is that no Authority? or belongs it not to the Government of the Church? does not the Apology say, 'that the Lord has
' authorized the Stewards of his House
' to censure the Violators of his
' Laws? that the Lord Jesus has given
' Power and Authority to the Guides
' of his Church to deny Church Com-
' munion unto, and to cast out of Com-
' munion such as by plain Scripture
' Directions are disqualified for it?
' and, to inflict such Censures upon
irregular

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‘ irregular Church Members as he in
‘ his Word makes due to such Of-
‘ fences as they are guilty of? and,
‘ that God in his Word has given par-
‘ ticular obvious Direction in fundry
‘ Cases that may come under the Cog-
‘ nizance of Church Judicatures, which
‘ divine Direction they are exactly to
‘ follow, and resolutely to adhere
‘ to? *i. e.* comply or dissent who will.’

Pag. 66, 67. And is all this no Autho-
thority? or is it no Part of Church
Government? It is truly amazing how
Men can so grossly out-face plain
Truth, and assert palpable Falshoods!
Is it not, after all this, astonishing, that
Mr. T----- should lay his Charge so
high.

And now I shall proceed to shew
the Weakness of the Grounds of his
Charge, by giving a just View of
those Passages of the Apology which
he grounds it upon; and to this Purpose
it will be necessary to see and consider,
what that Strain of Authority in Church
Judicatures

Judicaturesis, which the Brethren who presented that Apology do reject, and reason against in it. And this is laid down about the middle of the Apology, in Page 53. (as the Pages are numbred, alias Page 15) The preceding Part of it is taken up in laying down our Reasons against two Acts of the Synod, made the Year before; which we dissented from. This Part of the Apology Mr. T----- meddles not with: And as we judged that those Acts were both without any Foundation in, and contrary to Scripture; so, we apprehended that our Brethren were, notwithstanding, imposing them on us, and requiring our absolute Obedience to them, from their own sole Authority. Whence we judged that they were claiming a proper Legislative, or *Law-Making* Authority; not only an Authority to execute the Laws of Christ, or to explain and apply them to particular occurring Cases; but, properly to
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make Laws of their own, in Addition to the Laws of Christ, which might also sometimes happen to be contrary to his Laws, as it was with some of the Constitutions of the *Jews* when they took the same Work in Hand, *Math.* 15, 3, 4, 5, 6. Hence then we judged it proper and needful to oppose, and argue against such an extravagant Claim of Power; and this only is the Authority which we have disclaimed and denied to belong to Church Judicatures, and it is laid down and stated in the Page last above-mentioned, thus: “ We humbly conceive that the aforesaid Acts in their present Form, are founded upon a false Hypothesis or Supposition, *namely*, that a Majority of Synods, or other Church Judicatures, have a Power committed to them from Christ, to make new Rules, Acts, or Canons about religious Matters, on this Ground or Foundation, *viz.* That they judge them either to be not
against

“ against, or agreeable to the general
“ Directions of the Word of God, and
“ serviceable to Religion ; which shall
“ be binding upon those that consci-
“ entiously dissent therefrom, under
“ certain Penalties which are to be
“ inflicted even upon those who
“ judge the Acts they enforce to be
“ contrary to the Mind of Christ,
“ and prejudicial to the Interests of his
“ Kingdom. This is, in brief, a le-
“ gislative or Law-making Power in
“ religious Matters ; and this we do
“ utterly disclaim and renounce.”

And then farther down in the same Page, we shew what we understand by *new Rules, Acts, or Canons about religious Matters, viz.* such as God has not appointed in his Word, either as to their Matter, or Penalty, that is, when either any thing is required or forbidden, which God has not required nor forbidden, or, when any new Penalty or Censure is annexed to his Laws which he has not annexed. Here

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then you see the true State of the Case, Here is stated and laid down that particular kind or degree of Church Authority which only is opposed in the Apology. And consequently, in all Right and Justice, the whole of it is to be understood according to this State of the Matter. That which the Apology opposes then, you see is just this, *viz.* A Power or Authority in Church Judicatures to make Rules, Acts, or Canons which they can only pretend, at most, are not contrary to or forbidden in any Place of Scripture; but are agreeable to its general Directions, and good Expedients for the securing, or promoting some good Purposes in the Church; and to impose them as obligatory Laws on such of their Members or Communion as judge them to be sinful, contrary to Scripture, and prejudicial to the true Interest of the Church, so as that they cannot observe them with a safe Conscience. And now, what is there in this that need be
so

from Principles of Anarchy. 21

so very displeasing to sober Church Rulers, that are contented with their due Sphere of Stewards and Servants in God's House; and not setting up for Lords or Masters, for arbitrary despotick Government, upon the absurd tyrannical Maxim of, *sic volo, sic jubeo, stet pro Ratione voluntas?* Is this to deny all Government and Authority in the Church? Is it to take the Crown off Christ's Head, and divest his Officers and Courts of all governing Authority? O strange! Is there no Authority besides absolute and unlimited? or that which is very near it?

Or, is it to deny all Authority in Church Judicatures that shall be obliging or binding on their dissenting Members, or such as are Negatives in their Votes in any Cases? This Mr. T-----n very often charges us with, but very unjustly. Are there no other Cases in which there may be Dissentients, or Negatives, but the Case above described? There are two general
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22 *The excluded Brethren vindicated*

ral Cases especially, wherein, we freely grant, Church Judicatures must require, and insist upon Submission and Obedience from all their Members; whether they Assent or Dissent; whether they be Negatives, or Approbatives, or Non-liquets, in the making of the Acts or Rules; on Pain of such Censures as appear from Scripture to be due to their Disobedience, according to the various Instances of it, or Cases wherein it may be: First, when the Judicature does judge, that that very Particular which they determine, appoint, or forbid, is itself particularly declared, appointed, or forbidden by God in Holy Scripture; whether the Point be determin'd in Scripture in so many express Words, or by plain Consequence, it is the same Thing; if the Judicature be persuaded that it is, in particular, there reveal'd and determin'd, they are to adhere to it, and enjoyn it; whether it be a Point of Doctrine or Practice.

As

As for Instance, if a Church Judicature do determine from the Light of God's Word, as they (rightly) judge, that there is not an infallible certain Connexion between the best Endeavours of Natural Men, and their obtaining of the Saving Grace of God: Or, if they order in the same Manner, that the Sabbath Day be observed, in abstaining from all unnecessary worldly Labour: Or, that every Family shall jointly worship God together every Day: These things they are inviolably to adhere to; and duly to censure the Contraveners; seeing they are persuaded they have the Authority of God for them in particular, in his Word: yea, even tho' the Contraveners shou'd oppose them out of Conscience; because, not their Conscience, but God's Word is to be a Rule to the Judicature. Upon this Ground it is, that Churches require Subscriptions, or Declarations to Articles of Faith; and agree upon Tests of
Orthodoxy

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Orthodoxy, as Terms of Church Communion, Christian, or Ministerial. All this is, not only nothing against the Principle before laid down from the Apology, but, plainly enough contain'd and affirmed in that Paper. As, when it says, that Church Judicatures have Authority to inflict Censures upon irregular Church-members, the Violators of Christ's Laws; to keep, and cast out of Communion, such as, by the Directions of Scripture, are disqualify'd for it; and, to use farther Authority than only Counsel or Advice, in such Cases wherein God has given particular obvious Direction in his Word. The other general Case wherein Submission and Obedience is necessary to be given to Church-Judicatures, and requir'd by them, even of Dissentients and Negatives, is when in Matters of Human Prudence and Expediency, they can submit without Conscience of Sin in so doing. When the Majority
of

of a Judicature judge a particular Thing, or Rule, to be a good prudential Expedient, in present Circumstances, to answer the Design of some general Direction or Injunction of God's Word; tho' the Minority, or lesser Number, judge it not so; yet, they are in Duty and Conscience bound to submit and obey, unless they judge the Thing or Rule, to be contrary to God's Word, and so, that it is sinful for them to obey it. There may be numbers of things which the Members of a Judicature may differ in their Sentiments about, a major Part may judge them expedient, and a minor Part may judge them inexpedient, and yet not judge it to be positively sinful for them, in those Circumstances, to submit to them. And that Man wou'd be very unworthy of the Communion and Privileges of a Religious Society, who wou'd refuse Submission to its judicial Agreements on any other Score than that of Con-

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science;

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science; who wou'd not submit, merely out of Humour, because he had not his own Will. So long as Men are in this imperfect fallible State, subject to such Diversity of Judgments, I do not see how the Peace and Order of Churches can subsist, unless the minor Part be subject to the judicial Determinations of the Major in all Cases wherein they can be subject without Sin. It is undoubtedly the Duty of the Judicatures of Christ, to use their Prudence and Direction in judging what may be most for the Good of the Church according to God's Word, in all occurring Cases and Circumstances: And it is a necessary part of our Ordination-Vows, to be subject to our Brethren in the Lord; that is, so far as we can without Sin. And so we heartily agree with our Confession of Faith Chap. 3 1. Sect. 3. That "It belongeth
" to Synods and Councils to set down
" Rules and Directions for the better
ordering

“ ordering of the Publick Worship
“ of God, and Government of his
“ Church, to receive Complaints in
“ Cases of Mal-Administration, and
“ authoritatively to determine the same:
“ Which Decrees and Determinati-
“ ons, if consonant to the Word of
“ God, are to be receiv'd with Re-
“ verence and Submission; not only
“ for their Agreement with the
“ Word, but also for the Power
“ whereby they are made, as being an
“ Ordinance of God, appointed
“ thereunto in his Word,” All this
then we freely allow, and there is no-
thing in the Apology, so far as I can
discern, that can be produced, accord-
ing to the fair Rules of Interpretati-
on, contrary hereto: For, observe a-
gain, the Point deny'd is this, *viz.*
that Church Judicatures have a Law-
ful Power of oppressing the Consci-
ences of their Members, by imposing
any thing upon them on Pain of Cen-
sure and Non-Communion, which
D 21 they

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they judge sinful, and cannot in Conscience comply with; when the Majority in the mean Time, are not in Conscience bound, by the Authority of God declaring or ordaining that very Thing in his Word. And sure this is very different from the foregoing general Case. Such a Power as this, is, I think, properly a Legislative Power in Religious Matters: For, the things enjoin'd are not pretended to be particularly enjoin'd by God in the Scripture; but only devis'd as good and useful Expedients for the Time, supposed to be agreeable, or not contrary to Scripture; certainly then, the Imposing of such things as these in such a Manner, as absolutely necessary to be obey'd by all our Members, as an absolutely necessary Term of their Membership and Communion with us, when their Consciences will not suffer them to obey, and enjoy Membership on such Terms, is a making of Laws in the Church to a Degree. To censure, punish

punish and cast Persons out of the Communion and Privileges of the Church by any other Laws than those of Jesus Christ, is not this to assume his proper Prerogative and alone Power of giving Laws to his Church? If this is not Legislation, or Law-Making in the Church of God, I do desire to be informed what it can be. For, will ever any own, that the Acts which they make of this Tenour, are contrary to the Will of God? And I can't possibly see that they are the more really Laws for being enforced with temporal Penalties. The Constitutions of Christ in his Church are confessedly Laws, in a most proper Sense, and yet their Penalties are not of a temporal and civil, but of a spiritual and ecclesiastical Nature. Now, Mr. T-----n acknowledges (Page 64. of his Book, and elsewhere) that the Arguments in the Apology are valid and conclusive against a truly Legislative Power in the Church, and professes to disclaim it, as well as we.

And

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And since those Arguments were only advanced against a truly Legislative Power, which was first particularly stated and described, as we have seen; by what Authority then does he apply them otherwise? as if level'd against all Church Authority? Is this Fair-Dealing, Friends? But I'm sorry I can't find Mr. T-----n so clear of this Legislative Claim as he wou'd appear to be: For, if I rightly take him up, he maintains that Church Judicatures have a Right and Authority to enjoin whatsoever they think proper and expedient, on all their Members, to be obeyed on pain of Exclusion. This Principle, in this universal Latitude, I can't but look upon to be both a Tyrannical and a Church-dividing Principle. That Mr. T-----n holds it appears to me from several Places of his Book, Page 63. 64. He says, "If
" any Members of the Judicatory do
" think that the Judicatory is mista-
" ken

“ ken in their Judgment, yet it’s
“ their Duty in that Case to submit to
“ such Determinations or Rules, if
“ what is enjoin’d be not sinful in it-
“ self, or by virtue of some divine
“ Command antecedent to such De-
“ termination ; only, such dissenting
“ Party may and ought, in a decent
“ and becoming Manner, to remon-
“ strate their Grievance, and en-
“ deavour to convince the Judicature
“ of their Mistake, in order to get it
“ rectify’d, and the Grievance re-
“ mov’d ; which, if they can do, it’s
“ well ; but if not, yet they ought
“ to submit, if they may without
“ sinning against Light and Consci-
“ ence.” In all this I heartily agree
with Mr. T----n : But then he adds,
“ or else a Separation must of course
“ ensue.” Now if by this he means,
that a Separation must of course ensue,
if all the Members of a Church Judi-
cature cannot without Sinning against
Light and Conscience, submit to
whatsoever

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whatsoever the Majority in all Cases
may judge fit and expedient, then it
infers the very Legislative Principle
above described. And that this is his
Meaning and Principle appears far-
ther from what he next adds, viz.
“ But if the Matter be unlawful, its
“ better to obey God than Man; i. e.
“ its better to separate than sin.”
In these Words, considering them in
their Connexion with what went be-
fore, he seems plainly to signify, that
Church Judicatures may take upon
them Authority to enjoin whatsoever
things they think Lawful and Useful,
upon such of their Members as even
rightly think them unlawful, on pain
of Separation, and being cast out of
Communion. For, altho’ Mr. T-----
expresses the Matter softly and ten-
derly, that the whole Force of it may
not be readily observ’d, as, that the
Part who can’t in Conscience comply
had better separate; yet it’s plain,
that, if they don’t see Cause
them-

themselves to withdraw and separate, according to this Principle, it comes to this at last, that they must be authoritatively cast out. And it's plainly enough imply'd in the Words, that in such a Case they shall not be allowed the Privilege of Communion unless they Sin for it; *i. e.* go contrary to their Conscience, even in a Matter enjoin'd which is sinful by the Command of God. Surely the Allowing such a high Strain of Authority and Power to fallible imperfect Creatures, lays an awful Foundation for the most dreadful Corrupting of the Church. According to this Doctrine, we must either all have always the same Judgment about the Lawfulness and Unlawfulness of things, or we must have very pliable Consciences, and tamely suffer the Church to be corrupted with our Eyes open, or else the Church must be rent and torn into no Body knows how many Crumbs and Pieces. 'Tis very true indeed,

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it's better to separate than sin ; But pray, what necessity is there for either? I'm satisfy'd Christ has not made this Necessity, by any of his Constitutions in his Church, tho' Church Judicatures may easily do it, by going beyond their due Sphere, and assuming upon his Prerogative. In Page 72 Mr. T-----n calls Non-communication, with all that follows upon it, without any Restriction, the unavoidable inconvenient Consequences of a Person's differing in Judgment from others ; this is express and home to the Point. As the Reader has seen already, we allow Church Judicatures are to agree upon, and determine such Things as they judge God has particularly determin'd in his Word, according as they judge he has there determin'd them ; and to enjoin these Determinations on all their Members, under such Censures and Penalties as they judge to be due by God's Word to the Breach of them : Which in
many

many Cafes that might be instanced in, can be no less than Exclusion from their Communion; and, in sundry Cafes, might be authoritative Excommunication from the Christian Church. And moreover, there are Multitudes of occurring Cafes wherein particular Scripture-decision can't be pretended, wherein notwithstanding, the Minority who dissent must submit to the Determination of the Majority. As, if the Majority of a Presbytery judge of a Candidate on Trials, that he is not suitably qualify'd for the Ministry, and a Minority judge that he is; or, if the Majority judge he is, and the Minority that he is not. Or, if in a Case of Scandal, the Majority think such a particular Degree of Censure and Satisfaction necessary, and the Minority think less to be sufficient, or more to be necessary. Such as these are Cafes that must be decided one Way or other; and when all the
Members

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Members of the Judicature can't agree in the same Judgment, then in all Reason, the Judgment of the greater Number must be decisive; otherwise the Case cannot be decided. Without the Submission of the dissenting Minority in such Cases, the Affairs of the Church cou'd not be carry'd on. And, as to publick prudential Rules, agreed to by the Majority, they are to be submitted to, if consonant to the Word of God; if they are not contrary to Scripture. And the minor Part are, surely, to judge for themselves whether they are so or not. Thus far, I suppose, there is no Debate between us: But then, that universal unlimited Authority which Mr. T-----n seems to contend for, is, I think, an extravagant Claim, under the Pretext of lawful, consonant and agreeable to Scripture, and very useful; unlawful and sinful Things may readily be introduced and enacted. All this has been said for

Image

Image Worship, Sign of the Cross in Baptism, stated Liturgies, &c. by the Imposers of them. For Church Judicatures to claim, and exercise a Power of enjoinning whatsoever Things they may judge useful and expedient, not contrary to Scripture, upon such Members as judge them to be sinful and very prejudicial to Religion, so as that they must either comply, or be suspended, deposed, or cast out of Communion and Membership, to me appears an unwarrantably high Strain of Authority, such as I cannot think the Lord Jesus ever put into the Hands of fallible imperfect Creatures who are liable to so many Mistakes and Prejudices. If it be said in Defence of this Power, that it is no more than the common Right of all Societys, every Society join'd together in a moral political Union, having a Right to agree upon what they judge most conducive to their Advantage, and to require their Agreements and Constitutions

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ons to be comply'd with by all their Members, on pain of forfeiting the Privileges of Membership with them. I answer, that there is a great Difference between the Church of Christ and merely civil secular Societies; as to the Extent and Right of such a Power, Civil Societies and Corporations, as such, are only concerned about their temporal Interests and Advantages; and voluntarily incorporate themselves only for those Purposes; and so may make whatsoever Constitutions and Agreements for themselves they please in these Matters, not contradicting the Laws of God, or Publick Laws of the State: And they may make all these Agreements Terms of Union and Membership; for there is no superior Law to the contrary; and their Orders and Agreements don't affect the Consciences of their Members; nor is it matter of Conscience with them whether to continue Members or not; but

but any one may be Member or not as he pleases : And, if he had rather be none of the Society than be a Member on their Terms, it is because he apprehends it most for his temporal Interest or Conveniency : But the Judicatures of the Church are solely Religious Societies; their Concern and Business is only about the spiritual Interests of Men, all their Affairs relate to matters of Religion and Conscience ; and the Renting and Breaking the Union of the Church is in itself a weighty Matter of Conscience, wherein Conscience is deeply concerned, and of very sad Consequences to the highest Interest in all the World ; wo to him by whom that Offence cometh. And therefore, on all these Accounts, the Lord Jesus, who is King and Head of the Church, does not allow such an arbitrary Liberty to the Judicatures thereof, to make Terms and Conditions of Union and Membership, as other Societies have.

The

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The confess'd approv'd Right of secular Societies to exclude from their Membership such as do not comply with what they agree upon, and constitute as a necessary Term of Membership, may, I grant, be advanced as a just Defence of Church Judicatures excluding Persons from their Membership and Communion upon the Laws and Constitutions of Jesus Christ: But can never justify their fixing as necessary Terms, whatsoever they may judge serviceable and expedient, when some of their Members believe them to be sinful, and can't comply with them. It may, perhaps, be farther urged in Defence of this high Strain of Authority, that the major Part of a Judicature are Conscience-bound to enact as Terms of Communion, and to adhere to whatsoever they judge useful and expedient, as well as the minor Part may be Conscience bound not to submit to them. To this it is sufficient

at

at present just to answer in brief, that there is just as much Reason why the minor Part shou'd be always bound in Conscience not to submit to any Thing they judge inexpedient, as why the major Part shou'd be always bound in Conscience to enjoyn what they judge to be expedient: So that if the Argument here be just, then it will follow, that Church Judicatures must split and separate so often as ever they differ in Judgment about any Thing; which wou'd be a Church-distracting and renting Principle indeed with a Witness. It's granted, Conscience will bind them to enjoyn whatsoever they find, in any Case, to be enjoyn'd by God in his Word; And, it will also bind to enjoyn whatsoever else they judge, in any particular Circumstances, to be most for the Interest of Religion, agreeable to the Word; except when they find that their other Members

have a quite different Judgment of

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what

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what they judge so useful and agreeable to Scripture, judging it to be against Scripture, and hurtful to Religion, so as they can't submit to it; then, in such a Case, Conscience ought not to bind to the enjoining of it, tho' otherwise it might; and that, because Christ has not given so large Authority to Church Judicatures in such Matters, to impose on the Consciences of their Brethren, and force to a Separation and Rent in the Church.

Can it be pretended with any Face of Reason, that out denying such an Authority as this to belong to Church Judicatures, renders us incapable to be Members of them? as Mr. T-----n, and his Brethren wou'd suggest we are, because of our Principles about Church Government. Why more incapable than themselves, when we grant Submission due in all Cases wherein it can be given without sinning against Light & Conscience? will any of themselves say that

that they wou'd yield Submission any farther?

I have now given a just View of the Scope and Design of the Apology, and shewn what Authority in Ecclesiastical Judicatures that is which it opposes, which sufficiently shews the Injustice of Mr. T---n's Charge against us, in accusing us of denying all Authority of Government in the Church; and will easily discover the Weakness of his Grounds for such an Allegation. For the Grounds of it he tak s some Passages in Page 67. of the Apology, where, concerning Preibyteries it is said,

“ they have likewise Liberty to agree,
“ and conclude among themselves
“ upon such things as appear to them
“ to have a good Tendency to the Ad-
“ vancing of Religion, and are founded
“ upon, or agr able to the Word of
“ God, and so engage themselves vo-
“ luntarily to the Observance of these
“ things, provided that they do not
“ encroach upon the just Liberties of

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“ the People under their Charge, nor
“ pretend to bind their dissenting
“ Members to observe their Agree-
“ ments, who may have a different
“ View and Apprehension of them.”
To encroach upon the just Liberties of
the Christian People, is to enjoin upon
them Rules and Agreements of our own
making and devising, as necessary
Laws, which they must either comply
with, tho’ they may not be able to do
it with a safe Conscience towards
God, or else be deny’d the Enjoyment
of the Ordinances and Privileges of
God’s House with us ; and sure, ’tis
needful to provide against such an
Encroachment : And, the different
Apprehension of dissenting Members
of Presbyteries, concerning Things
which the other Members judge pru-
dential and expedient, which is here
mentioned, is to be understood accor-
ding to the Foregoing State of the Case,
of an Apprehension so different as is
directly contrary *i. e.* of an Appre-
hension

hension of those Things, as sinful, and contrary to God's Word, which their other Brethren apprehend to be agreeable thereto, and useful. It is farther said in the same Page, that Synods are to take into Consideration Matters that are brought before them by Way of Appeal or Reference from particular Presbyteries, and should give their best Advice in those Cases ; but should not proceed to any farther Authority, except in such Cases wherein God has given particular obvious Direction in his Word, which is to be exactly followed. This Passage is, I think, so far from discarding all Authority of Government, that it plainly enough asserts it ; declaring that Synods are exactly to follow the particular obvious Direction of God in his Word, in all Cases wherein he has given it : And I'm of the Mind, that in most Cases which come to Synods by Appeal or Reference, there may be found obvious Direction in God's Word particularly
enough

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enough relating to them ; *i. e.* either to the very Cases themselves, or Cases of the same general Nature : And whereas it's said, that in other Cases wherein there is no such plain Scripture Direction, Synods are only to give their best Advice without proceeding to any farther Authority, this in all Right and Justice, according to the fair Rules of understanding and interpreting any Writing, is to be understood according to the previous State of the Matter, as it was at first laid down, to signify that Synods shou'd not authoritatively enjoin their Decisions in such Cases against others Consciences ; so as they must either comply against Light and Conscience, and submit to that which they believe to be a Sin to submit to, or be debar'd from the Privileges of Christ's Church, for their Non-compliance in such Cases and Circumstances ; for this Strain of Authority in Matters of human Prudence, is the very Authority opposed, first, particularly

larly stated, and then still argued against thro' the Apology.

And now, I have, I think, fully vindicated and clear'd the Brethren who were in such an arbitrary illegal manner thrust out of the Synod, from maintaining Principles of Anarchy and denying all governing Authority in the Church; which Mr. T----- has laid to their Charge. And I persuade myself, every understanding impartial Reader must be convinced of the Injustice of the Charge. And yet, he and eleven more of his Brethren have as good as sworn it very solemnly against us, in their Protestation, whereby without any previous regular Trial they excluded us. This Protest is entered with the greatest Solemnity possible. They say, they humbly and solemnly protest in the Presence of the Great and Eternal God, and his Elect Angels, &c. Page 6. and in Page 9. they say, and give it as the first Reason of their protesting against

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against our being allow'd to sit as
Members of the Synod, that in the
Apology we expressly deny, that Pres-
byteries have Authority to oblige
their dissenting Members; and, that
Synods shou'd go any farther in judg-
ing of Appeals or References, &c.
than to give their best Advice. I af-
fect not hard Words, but Truth
and necessary Self-defence oblige me
to say, that what they say here, as
thus indefinitely and without any
Limitation express'd, is palpably
false, as I have already made appear;
and yet (most amazing) they have so
solemnly protested by way of Appeal
to God, that both this, and several o-
ther false Things are in fact true.
For thus they say, Page 11. " For
" these and many other Reasons, we
" protest before the Eternal God, his
" Holy Angels, and to you, Rev.
" Brethren, and before all here pre-
" sent, that these Brethren have no
" Right to be acknowledged as Mem-
" bers

bers of this Judicatory of Christ." I wou'd just farther observe on this Occasion, that all who adhere to them, both Ministers and People, (which perhaps they are not all aware of) do really by their Adherence to them, swear to all the same Things; for they have told them that they have sworn them all in all their Names. Page 6. say they, " We
" hereby humbly and solemnly Pro-
" test in the Presence of the Great and
" Eternal God, and his elect Angels,
" in our own Names, and in the
" Names of all, both Ministers and
" People who shall adhere to us, as
" follows." Whence 'tis manifest, that all who adhere to them, do, by that Adherence, make that Protest their own Protest and solemn Oath, in all the Parts of it without Exception: For the Protestors have plainly enough told them that they have so protested in the Names of all who shall adhere to them; and therefore, when-
G soever

50 *The excluded Brethren vindicated*

soever any do join with them, or while they continue to adhere to them, they do hereby openly declare (whether they intend it so or not) that they consent to have all those Things protested for them in their Names, and to be accounted of, as if they had actually protested them in all their own Persons, before God, Angels, and Men. And it might be well for such seriously to consider, whether they cou'd possibly protest these Things in such a Manner with a clear and peaceful Conscience; And to consider, that they are really look'd upon in the Eye of God as actual Protestors, while they keep that Course. Surely, the Consciences of many cou'd not but boggle at this, if they duly consider'd it.

But, I have no farther Concern with the Protest here, than so far as it concerns the Subject I have been upon: And, I having done what is sufficient on that Subject, according to
my

my proposed Design, which was to vindicate the excluded Brethren from the Charge of Principles of Anarchy, and denying Church Government. I come in the next Place, to offer something concerning the two Papers that were given in to the Synod Anno 1740. at which Mr. *T-----n* and Brethren are so exceedingly offended. And here it wou'd be quite a mispent of Time, for which I have much better Use, to follow Mr. *Thurston* thro' all that he takes Occasion to say from the Contents of those Papers. What is sufficient to my Purpose, is, to clear the Authors from the Reflections which Mr. *Thurston* casts upon them for bringing in such Papers, and in such a Manner, to the Synod. He Charges Mr. *G. Tennent* and me, who brought them in, with an Attempt and Design to expose, without Distinction, the general Part of the Synod to publick Prejudice and Re- proach; with wicked, rash Judging of our

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Brethren; and, with an Intimation of
a Design to enter upon their Congre-
gations, in order to get them rooted
out of them. These, I think, are
the main Objections and Accusations
on this Head; and, whether just or
not, must be seen. The Papers con-
tained an Account of many Things
which we found great fault with in
several Members of the Synod;
And, I can truly say, for my own
Part, that what I aim'd at, was the
faithful Discharge of Duty, and a con-
scientious Testimony against those
Evils, for the Good of the Brethren
guilty of them, and the Good of the
Church, and to shew the Reasonable-
ness of Encouraging rather than Hin-
dring of Ministers to preach Christ's
Gospel as they had Opportunity thro'
the Land; because I saw there was
evidently too much Remisness among
Ministers up and down, and with
some, much worse than bare Remis-
ness too. But Mr. T----- and o-
thers

thers of his Brethren make a great Cry against us for Reading such Papers so publickly in the Synod, before all the Congregation that were present. It is really wonderful to me how they can charge this as a Crime upon us, when it was themselves were in the Fault of it. The Paper which I had was first propos'd, (indeed I knew nothing of Mr. Tennent's having a Paper, which, after mine was read, he desir'd to read, because it was much to the same Purpose) and I particularly mov'd, and desir'd that it might be read privately, at an Interloquitur of the Synod; But it was concluded to hear it then publickly, and they wou'd not comply with my Desire. Where then was the Ground for reproaching us with such a Crime, and evil Design, for the publick reading of the Papers? But it's said, we ought to have enter'd a regular Trial against the particular Members whom we had any such Charges to lay

54 *The excluded Brethren vindicated*
lay against, before their proper Presbyteries, and not have bro't in such general Complaints to the Synod, without particularizing the Persons complain'd of, in any or all of these Instances of Complaint. How little of these Measures was taken with us the following Year, before either Presbyteries or Synod, when we were in the very first Instance, protested and sworn out, is well enough known. However, I know Recrimination, tho' with Advantage, is no Vindication. I say then, that for what I can yet see, the Method we took, provided the thing had been allow'd to have been done privately, before the Members of Synod only, was the most proper, and likely to be useful: For, at the Synod the Ministers from all Parts were generally met, such as we believed to be guilty of the Evils complain'd of as well as others; and we knew not but some others might be as guilty as they, without our knowledge; so that
then

from Principles of Anarchy. 53

then we had an Opportunity of doing such an Act of really Christian Charity to such Brethren all at once :. and we knew not what good Effect a Representation of those Evils, and Recommendation of the contrary Duties by the Synod might have ; it might be a Means of the Amendment of their Members, so as to prevent, or remove the Necessity of any farther Process. And I distinctly remember likewise, I told the Synod, that if they tho't it proper, and requir'd that I shou'd Process the Persons against whom I had such matter of Complaint, I was willing to do it ; only, desir'd that a competent Time might be allow'd for the doing of it : But this Proposal was declin'd, and a solemn Admonition given by the Synod to all their Members, in these Terms, *viz.* " There being two Representations bro't into the Synod, " by Mr. *Blair*, and Mr. *G. Tennent*, " representing many Defects in our " Ministry

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“ Ministry, that are Matter of greatest
“ Lamentation if chargeable upon
“ our Members; the Synod do
“ therefore solemnly admonish all
“ the Ministers within our Bounds,
“ seriously to consider the Weight of
“ their Charge, and, as they will
“ answer it at the great Day of Christ,
“ to take care to approve themselves
“ to God in the Instances complain’d
“ of: And the Synod do recommend
“ it to their severall Presbyteries, to
“ take care of their severall Ministers
“ in these particulars.” And now,
what hurt was there in obtaining, in
the Way that was propos’d, such a
Synodical Admonition and Charge to
all our Ministers, when there was re-
ally so much need of it, and more?
must our Mouths be muzzed from
telling our Brethren of the Faults we
find among them? And we desir’d to
tell them only to themselves.

As to the other Charge of rash cen-
sorious Judging: I readily grant, that
rash

hasty judging is very sinful, and, in its Consequences, may be very pernicious; and therefore, ought to be very carefully refrain'd: But, I think, I might safely leave it to the Judgment of any one rightly acquainted with the Principles of Christianity, whether there be not sufficient rational scriptural Ground, strongly to suspect the true Sincerity and good State of a Minister who is deeply guilty of the Things complain'd of in those Papers. *By their Fruits ye shall know them, says our Lord; do Men gather Grapes off Thorns? or Figs off Thistles?*

The other Thing which Mr. T--- accuses us of, from our Papers, viz. A Design of dissolving the Pastoral Relation between them and their People, by preaching in their Congregations against their Wills, upon the Invitation of any of their People, is very unjust. The Synod had, for a Year or two before, laid, as we apprehend, an unreasonable Restraint

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upon

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upon Ministers. Preaching out of the
Bounds of their own Presbyteries;
and we in those Papers signify'd, that
the Necessity of our Preaching abroad
was great and urgent, from the Soul-
Exercises and strong Desires of the
People, God succeeding his Word in
an uncommon Degree, and from the
manifest Unfaithfulness of sundry
Ministers, and their great Opposition
against the Revival of Religion. It
was a Grief of Heart to us that we
were under any such necessity on the
last mention'd Account. Our Design,
I hope, was to attempt to propagate
the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus, and
save the Souls of Men; tho' we were
obliged indeed frequently, to take
occasion to vindicate the Work of
God's Spirit from such Ministers and
others Objections and Cavils; and to
shew the Necessity of Ministers Deal-
ing searchingly and solemnly with
their People. But they cou'd never
charge either of us, that I know of,
with

with any Irruptions, as they call them, into their proper Congregations, that they cou'd judicially censure; tho' I must observe by the Way, that had they been as friendly to a Work and Revival of Religion as they ought to have been, they and we both wou'd have mutually rejoiced to have had one another to preach in our several Congregations. 'Tis a vain shift for any of them, in order to clear themselves from the Charge of having made an Opposition to the late Revival of Religion, to say, that they have only oppos'd Things that were evil and irregular, which ought to be oppos'd. We have not been wanting our selves to be very careful this Way, as many Hundreds can witness: But there is a vast Difference between opposing what is evil, delusive, and irregular, for the more successful carrying on of a Work of divine Grace; and the improving of such Things by way of Reproach upon ~~it~~, and Pre-

60 *The excluded Brethren vindicated*
judice against it. This is a real Opposition to it, and this they are chargeable with; yea more, they lash against all high Degrees of Soul-distress and Terror in convinced Persons, as proceeding from the Temptations of the Devil. And do lash and reproach in unlimited Terms, as the mere Effects of irrational Frights, or delusive Joys, all Cryings-out, and Bodily-Faintings; when such Things may be, and in Numbers have been, the Effects of the rational, spiritual, strong Exercises of the Soul, from the Laws of the Union between the Soul and Body; and can only, at most, be ascribed to Human firmity, which is such in this present State, that no Man can see God and live. Yea, several of them have openly and plainly enough deny'd that any good Work more than usual has been going on, but quite on the contrary: Altho' Mr. ~~W~~ is obliged, inconsistently enough with himself, to make a kind of an
extorted

extorted Acknowledgement of it. And it is impossible for the Authors and Approvers of that bold scandalous Lampoon, call'd *The History of a Wandering Spirit*, ever to clear themselves from having ascribed a Divine Work to the Devil; as I could easily make appear, from Remarks lying by me that were never published.

Many Things which Mr. T----- takes occasion from the fore-mention'd Papers to say, are highly deserving of Remarks; But, I think, all the Use of Remarking upon them wou'd not countervail the Expence of Time and Pains. I have more important as well as more delightful Work to be employ'd in. Tho' I can hardly omit taking notice of his unjust Reflection, in saying, Page 44. That
" there is a Manner of Diction or
" Phraseology become exceeding com-
" mon and much in vogue among us,
" which is a downright Disgrace to
" the sacred Function of the Gospel-
" Mini-

62: The excluded Brethren vindicated

“Ministry;” and asserting that such Instances of Diction as he there gives, are exceeding common and much in vogue with us. I will not give Mr. T-----n such uncivil and unchristian Language as he has given to me, in calling this, “a Devilith Slander;” but, a real Slander, and a Falshood I am sure it is, I defy Mr. T-----n to point out any two of our Brethren that ever used the most of the Expressions he mentions, or any such; And I am confident, that if such unbecoming, or presumptuous Expressions of any of our Members shou’d seasonably come to our Knowledge, they wou’d be condemned and censur’d as they deserve.

We have now seen, in many Instances, what a Latitude Mr. T-----n takes in his Representations of things: And in many more, it cou’d be shown. I have endeavour’d, I hope, with the Words of Truth and Soberness, to vindicate my self and Brethren from
unjust

from Principles of Anarchy. 63

unjust Representations and Reproaches to which I seem'd to be necessarily call'd and obliged: And I now leave what I have done herein to the divine Blessing, and the sober Perusal and Judgment of serious Readers: Wishing and praying, that he who rules in *Zion* may restore among us, a Spirit of Peace, Truth, and a sound Mind.

F I N I S.
