

them, and make them odious, or that hurt them; the more cause have Ministers and all Christians, to set a double watch upon their love, lest, before they are aware, a flaming and consuming zeal do tell others that they "know not what manner of spirit they are of." Multitudes are overtaken with this sin; and few know so heinous a sin to be any sin at all; but all factions and parties are still justifying their love-killing ways, and reproaching those whom they have wronged; as if when they have sinfully withdrawn their love from them, it were no crime to take away next their good name, and all that they have power to take away. And shall Ministers stand by, and see men take such sin for duty, and serve God by abusing his servants; and look for a reward for dividing and pulling down his church, and never tell them what they are doing?

Though all sober Christians should learn by the keenest rebukes of their adversaries, yet passion and prejudice make it so difficult, that it usually hardeneth men more in their sin; and this is another thing which causeth me the more to abhor division, and to long for the reconciling of the minds of all Christians. Because, while they take each other for adversaries, nothing that is written or said by any is likely to do the adversaries any good. Nay, I must confess, when I see an adversary tell men of their sin, especially with furious spleen and wrath, mixing together words and swords, I am greatly afraid lest by that temptation Satan will draw the reprov'd to impenitency, and greatly harden them in their sin, and make them glory in that as a virtue which such a person doth so reprove.

But if you will neither hear of your sin, nor duty, by either adversaries or friends, you fasten the guilt upon yourselves. Remember, I pray you, that I am not kindling fires, nor drawing swords against you, nor stirring up any to do you hurt; but only persuading all to love one another, and to forbear all that is contrary to love. If such an exhortation and advice seem injurious or intolerable to you, the Lord have mercy on your souls.

I am not persuading Ministers to any unwise and unseasonable preaching against the dividing principles of the weak, when the necessities of the auditory more require other doctrine, much less to exasperating invectives, and, least of all, wrathful violence; but only with prudence, in season, and with love and gentleness, to lead men into the truth. If even with infidels and heretics "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;" how much more must the children of God's family be used with love and tenderness!

I know there is in holiness a contrariety to sin, and heaven and hell must finally show the difference for ever; and to reconcile them is as impossible as to reconcile light and darkness. It is the endeavour of every faithful Minister of Christ to make this difference plainly known; and in doctrine and in discipline to separate the precious from the vile; and make ungodly men know that they are ungodly, and give to each their proper portion, and to keep the churches clean as they can by lawful means. I know that the ruin of this purging discipline is a great part of the ruin of the churches; and that all Christians should use their utmost skill and power to recover religion to its primitive purity and splendour, and discipline to the most effectual regular exercise. In men's private converse, there must be a great care what company we converse with, and especially whom we make our familiars. To be indifferent, and to intimate a likeness of the godly and the wicked, in doctrine, communion, and familiarity, is a notable sign of an ungodly person. Upon these accounts I know that when persons are newly recovered from ungodliness themselves, they are very much inclined

to fly from the company of such as far as their safety doth require. By this inclination, and their ignorance, they are frequently tempted to go farther from them in communion than God alloweth them to do; and, instead of separating from them in their sin, to separate from them in their duty; and to separate from the churches of Christ in his true worship, because of the mixture and presence of the bad. And this they are drawn to by forgetting the Christian pattern, and state of the churches even in the purest age, and thinking only what they desire, rather than what is to be expected or done. They forget the difference between their private familiarity, where they are choosers of their company themselves, and their church communion, where the Pastors are the rulers and judges of the fitness of the members; not understanding that this use of the keys, and judging of the fitness of the members, is indeed the Pastor's office, and not theirs. And what a mercy it is that Christ hath not made the power of the Pastor or church to be arbitrary; but hath tied them up to certain terms, and prescribed to them whom to receive or reject! What confusion, otherwise, would be brought into the church, and what church-tyranny men would exercise! The difference of men's judgments, interests, temptations, and passions, would make almost as many sorts of churches as there are individual governors and churches. One would make one measure, and another another measure, of their communion.

Many cry out, "Truth must not be sold for peace," when they neither know aright which is truth or peace. By "truth" they mean their own doubtful opinion; and by "peace," their own quietness with men. We easily confess, that as peace signifieth our freedom from persecution or sufferings, or from the reproach of men; the least truth is to be preferred before it, and more tenaciously held: but if by "peace" they mean the unity and concord of believers, or of the church of God, they speak dangerously, and suppose a pernicious falsehood; that God's truth, or such peace and concord, may at any time be separated. It is no wiselier spoken, than if they had said, "A man's eye-sight or health is to be preferred before the union of his soul and body." Destroy the subject, and you destroy the accidents. Without union of parts, the church is no church. Dividing it is destroying it. A house or kingdom divided cannot stand; and when it is no church, it hath no truth, as a church, nor any thing that dividers contended for. An integral member may rather be cut off than the whole perish; but what member will separate itself from the body? Or who but a murderer will, on pretence of curing, be a divider and dissolver? Men forget how tender Christ is of the weakest of his members that are sincere: for he hath a day at hand in which he will separate the tares from the wheat, and will take out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that work iniquity.

They that know what man is indeed will not deny but that in very many there is something of that pride which some call spiritual, but is too carnal, in men's inclination to separation. He that knoweth how excellent a thing it is to be wise, holy and happy, is often tempted to be desirous that his own excellency shall appear, and not be hid by his joining with such as are taken for ignorant and common men.

It is not the name of a schismatic that I am writing against, but the thing, by whatever name it is called. It is unity, love, and peace, that I am pleading for; and it is divisions, hatred, and contentions, which I plead against. It is the hypocrisy of men which I detest, who betray unity, love, and peace, by a Judah's kiss and will not or dare not openly renounce them, but kill them with dissembling kindness: who cry them up, while they tread them down; and "follow peace" with all men who are not for their party, as