

difference among them, and the answer of the church of Rome thereunto), yet many cases may fall out among them which cannot be reconciled or determined but by present conference; such as that was recorded, Acts xv. No church, therefore, is so independent as that it can always and in all cases observe the duties it owes unto the Lord Christ and the church catholic, by all those powers which it is able to act in itself distinctly, without conjunction with others. And the church that confines its duty unto the acts of its own assemblies cuts itself off from the external communion of the church catholic; nor will it be safe for any man to commit the conduct of his soul to such a church. Wherefore,—

(3.) This *acting in synods* is an institution of Jesus Christ, not in an express command, but in the nature of the thing itself, fortified with *apostolical* example; for having erected such a church-state, and disposed all his churches into such order and mutual relation unto one another as that none of them can be complete or discharge their whole duty without mutual advice and counsel, he hath thereby ordained this way of their communion in synods, no other being possible unto that end. And thereby such conventions are interested in the promise of his presence,—namely, that “where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he will be in the midst of them;” for these assemblies being the necessary effect of his own constitution, in the nature and use of his churches, are or may be in his name, and so enjoy his presence.

(4.) The *end* of all particular churches is the edification of the *church catholic*, unto the glory of God in Christ; and it is evident that in many instances this cannot be attained, yea, that it must be sinfully neglected, unless this way for the preservation and carrying of it on be attended unto. Truth, peace, and love, may be lost among churches, and so the union of the catholic church in them be dissolved, unless this means for their preservation and reparation be made use of. And that particular church which extends not its duty beyond its own assemblies and members is fallen off from the principal end of its institution; and every principle, opinion, or persuasion, that inclines any church to confine its care and duty unto its own edification only, yea, or of those only which agree with it in some peculiar practice, making it neglective of all due means of the edification of the church catholic, is schismatical.

(5.) There is direction hereunto included in the *order and method* of church proceedings in case of offence, prescribed unto it by Christ himself. The beginning and rise of it is between two individual persons; thence is it carried unto the cognizance and judgment of two or three others before unconcerned; from them it is to be brought unto the church; and there is no doubt but the church hath power to determine concerning it, as unto its own communion, to continue