

them as should make a difference between the acts of their mutual communion, so as that the acts of some should be acts of authority, and those of others acts of obedience or subjection. Wherever there is a church, whether it be at Rome or Eugubium,<sup>1</sup> in a city or a village, the communion of them all is mutual, the acts of it of the same kind, however one church may have more advantages to be useful and helpful therein than another. And the abuse of those advantages was that which wrought effectually in the beginning of that disorder which at length destroyed the catholic church, with all church-communion whatever: for some churches, especially that of Rome, having many advantages, in gifts, abilities, numbers, and reputation above many, above most churches, for usefulness in their mutual communion, the guides of it insensibly turned and perverted the addresses made unto them, the advices and assistances desired of them in way of communion, or their pretences of such addresses and desires, into a usurpation, first of a primacy of honour, then of order, then of supremacy and jurisdiction, unto the utter overthrow of all church order and communion, and at length of the whole nature of the catholic church, as stated and subsisting in particular churches; as we shall see.

All churches, on their first institution, quickly found themselves indigent and wanting, though not as unto their *being*, power, and order, yet as unto their *well-being*, with their preservation in truth and order upon extraordinary occurrences, as also with respect unto their usefulness and serviceableness unto the general end of furthering the edification of the church catholic. The care hereof, and the making provision for this defect, was committed by our Lord Jesus Christ unto the apostles during their lives, which Paul calls *Ἡ μέριμνα πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν*, 2 Cor. xi. 28, "The care of all the churches;" yet what was only a pressing care and burden unto them was afterward contended for by others as a matter of dignity and power! the pretence of it, in one especially, being turned into a cursed domination, under the style and title of "Servus servorum Dei."

But if a thousand pretences should be made of supplying churches' defects, after the decease of the apostles, by any other order, way, or means besides this of the equal communion of churches among themselves, they will be all found destitute of any countenance from the Scripture, primitive antiquity, the nature, use, and end of churches, yea, of Christian religion itself. Yet the pretence hereof is the sole foundation of all that disposal of churches into several stories of subordination, with an authority and jurisdiction over one another, which now prevails in the world. But there is no place for such imagination, until it be proved either that our Lord Jesus Christ hath not appointed the mutual communion of churches among themselves by

<sup>1</sup> See note, vol. xv. p. 300.—ED.

their own consent, or that it is not sufficient for the preservation of the union and furtherance of the edification of the church catholic, whereunto it is designed.

Wherefore, our Lord Jesus Christ, in his infinite wisdom, hath constituted his churches in such a state and order as wherein none of them are able of themselves, always and in all instances, to attain all the ends for which they are appointed, with respect unto the edification of the church catholic; and he did it for this end, that whereas the whole catholic church is animated by one spirit, which is the bond of union between all particular churches (as we shall see), every one of them may act the gifts and graces of it unto the preservation and edification of the whole.

Herein then, we acknowledge, lieth the great difference which we have with others about the state of the church of Christ in this world. We do believe that *the mutual communion of particular churches* amongst themselves, in an equality of power and order, though not of gifts and usefulness, is the only way appointed by our Lord Jesus Christ, after the death of the apostles, for the attaining the general end of all particular churches, which is the edification of the church catholic, in faith, love, and peace. Other ways and means have been found out in the world for this end, which we must speak unto immediately. Wherefore it behoveth us to use some diligence in the consideration of the causes, nature, and use, of this communion of churches.

But it must be moreover premised, that whereas this communion of churches is *radically* and *essentially* the same among all churches in the world, yet, as unto the ordinary actual exercise of the duties of it, it is confined and limited by divine providence unto such churches as the natural means of the discharge of such duties may extend unto; that is, unto those which are planted within such *lines of communication*, such precincts or boundaries of places and countries, as may not render the mutual performance of such duties insuperably difficult. Yet is not the world itself so wide but that, all places being made pervious by navigation, this communion of churches may be visibly professed, and in some instances practised, among all churches, "from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same," where the name of Christ is known among the Gentiles; wherein the true nature of the catholic church and its union doth consist, which is utterly overthrown by the most vehement pretences that are made unto it, as those in the church of Rome.

Wherefore such a communion of churches is to be inquired after as from which no true church of Christ is or can be excluded; in whose actual exercise they may and ought all to live, and whereby the general end of all churches, in the edification of the catholic church, may be attained. This is the true and only *catholicism* of