

**QUALIFICATIONS REQUISITE  
TO A COMPLETE STANDING  
AND FULL COMMUNION IN THE  
VISIBLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

**by**

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## THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

My appearing in this public manner on that side of the question, which is defended in the following sheets, will probably be surprising to many. As it is well known, that Mr. Stoddard, so great and eminent a divine, and my venerable predecessor in the pastoral office over the church in Northampton, as well as my own grandfather, publicly and strenuously appeared in opposition to the doctrine here maintained.

However, I hope it will be not taken amiss, that I think as I do, merely because I herein differ from him. Though so much my superior, and one whose name and memory I am under distinguishing obligations on every account, to treat with great respect and honour. Especially may I justly expect, that it will not be charged on me as a crime that I do not think in everything just as he did, since none more than he himself asserted this Scriptural and Protestant maxim, that we ought to "call no man on earth Master", or make the authority of the greatest and holiest of mere men the ground of our belief of any doctrine in religion. Certainly we are not obliged to think any man infallible, who himself utterly disclaims infallibility. Very justly Mr. Stoddard deserves in his *Appeal to the Learned*, p. 97. "All Protestants agree, that there is no infallibility at Rome; and I know no body else pretends to any, since the apostles' days." And he insists, in his preface to his sermon on the subject - That it argues no want of a due respect in us to our forefathers, for us to examine their opinions. Some of his words in that preface contain a good apology for me, and are worthy to be repeated on this occasion. They are as follows:

"It may possibly be a fault (says Mr. Stoddard) to depart from the ways of our fathers: but it may also be a virtue, and an eminent act of obedience, to depart from them in some things. Men are wont to make a great noise, that we are bringing in innovations, and depart from the old way. But it is beyond me, to find out wherein the iniquity does lie. We may see cause to alter some practices of our fathers, without despising them, without priding ourselves in our wisdom, without apostasy, without abusing the advantages God has given us, without a spirit of compliance with corrupt men, without inclination to superstition, without making disturbance in the church of God. And there is no reason that it should be turned as a reproach upon us. Surely it is commendable for us to examine the practices of our fathers; we have no sufficient reason to take practices upon trust from them. Let them have as high a character as belongs to them; yet we may not look upon their principles as oracles. Nathan himself missed it in his conjecture about building the house of God. He that believes principles because they affirm them, makes idols of them. And it would be no humility, but baseness of spirit, for us to judge ourselves incapable to examine the principles that have been handed down to us. If we be by any means fit to open the mysteries of the gospel, we are capable to judge of these matters. And it would ill become us, so to indulge ourselves in case, as to neglect the examination of received principles. If the practices of our fathers in any particulars were mistaken, it is fit they should be rejected. If they be not, they will bear examination. If we be forbidden to examine their practice, that will cut off all hopes of reformation."

Thus, in these very reasonable and apposite sayings, Mr. Stoddard, though dead yet speaketh: and here (to apply them to my own case) he tells me, that I am not at all blamable for not taking his principles on trust. That notwithstanding the high character

justly belonging to him, I ought not to look on his principles as oracles as though he could not miss it, as well as Nathan himself in his conjecture about building the house of God; nay, surely, that I am even to be commended for examining his practice and judging for myself. That it would ill become me to do otherwise, that this would be no manifestation of humility, but rather show a baseness of spirit. That if I be not capable to judge for myself in these matters, I am by no means fit to open the mysteries of the gospel. That if I should believe his principles because he advanced them, I should be guilty of making him an idol. Also he tells his and my flock with all others that it ill becomes them so to indulge their ease, as to neglect examining received principles and practices. And that it is fit, mistakes in any particulars be rejected: that if in some things I differ in my judgment from him, it would be very unreasonable on this account to make a great noise, as though I were bringing in innovations and departing from the old way. That I may see cause to alter some practices of my grandfather and predecessor, without despising him, without priding myself in my wisdom, without apostasy, without despising the advantages God has given me, without inclination to superstition, and without making disturbance in the church of God. In short, that it is beyond him to find out wherein the iniquity of my so doing lies; and that there is no reason why it should be turned as a reproach upon me. Thus, I think, he sufficiently vindicates my conduct in the present case and warns all with whom I am concerned, not to be at all displeased with me, or to find the least fault with me merely because I examine for myself, have a judgment of my own and am for practicing in some particulars different from him. How positive soever he was that his judgment and practice were right. It is reasonably hoped and expected that they who have a great regard to his judgment will impartially regard his judgment and hearken to his admonition in these things.

I can seriously declare that an affectation of making a show as if I were something wiser than that excellent person is exceeding distant from me and very far from having the least influence in my appearing to oppose in this way of the press, an opinion which he so earnestly maintained and promoted. Sure I am, I have not affected to vary from his judgment, nor in the least been governed by a spirit of contradiction, neither indulged a cavilling humour, in remarking on any of his arguments or expressions. I have formerly been of his opinion, which I imbibed from his books, even from my childhood, and have in my proceedings conformed to his practice, though never without some difficulties in my view, which I could not solve. Yet, however, a distrust of my own understanding and deference to the authority of so venerable a man, the seeming strength of some of his arguments, together with the success he had in his ministry, and his great reputation and influence, prevailed for a long time to bear down my scruples. But the difficulties and uneasiness on my mind increasing as I become more studied in divinity and as I improved in experience; this brought me to closer diligence and care to search the scriptures, and more impartially to examine and weigh the arguments of my grandfather and such other authors as I could get on his side of the question. By which means, after long searching, pondering, viewing, and reviewing, I gained satisfaction, became fully settled in the opinion I now maintain as in the discourse here offered to public view, and dared to proceed no further in a practice and administration inconsistent therewith. Which brought me into peculiar circumstances, laying me under an inevitable necessity publicly to declare and maintain the opinion I was thus established in; as also to do it from the press, and to do it at this time without delay.

It is far from a pleasing circumstance of this publication, that it is against what my honoured grandfather strenuously maintained, both from the pulpit and press. I can truly say, on account of this and some other considerations, it is what I engage in with the greatest reluctance that ever I undertook any public service in my life. But the state of things with me is so ordered by the sovereign disposal of the great Governor of the world, that my doing this appeared to me very necessary and altogether unavoidable. I am conscious, not only is the interest of religion concerned in this affair, but my own reputation, future usefulness, and my very subsistence, all seem to depend on my freely opening and defending myself, as to my principles, and agreeable conduct in my pastoral charge; and on my doing it from the press. In which way alone am I able to state and justify my opinion, to any purpose before the country (which is full of noise, misrepresentations, and many censures concerning this affair), or even before my own people, as all would be fully sensible, if they knew the exact state of the case. I have been brought to this necessity in divine providence by such a situation of affairs and coincidence of circumstances and events, as I choose at present to be silent about; and which it is not needful, nor perhaps expedient, for me to publish to the world.

One thing among others that caused me to go about this business with so much backwardness was the fear of a bad improvement some ill-minded people might be ready, at this day, to make of the doctrine here defended; particularly that wild enthusiastic sort of people, who have of late gone into unjustifiable separations, even renouncing the ministers and churches of the land in general, under pretence of setting up a pure church. It is well known that I have heretofore publicly remonstrated, both from the pulpit and press, against very many of the notions and practices of this kind of people; and shall be very sorry if what I now offer to the public should be any occasion of their encouraging or strengthening themselves in those notions and practices. To prevent which, I would now take occasion to declare, I am still of the same mind concerning them that I have formerly manifested. I have the same opinion concerning the religion and inward experiences chiefly in vogue among them, as I had when I wrote my *Treatise on Religious Affections*, and when I wrote my *Observations and Reflections on Mr. Brainerd's Life*. I have no better opinion of their notion of a pure church by means of a spirit of discerning, public exhortings, and administering sacraments; their assuming, self-confident, contentious, uncharitable, separating spirit; their going about the country, as sent by the Lord to make proselytes with their many other extravagant and wicked ways. My holding the doctrine that is defended in this discourse is no argument of any change of my opinion concerning them. For when I wrote those two books before mentioned, I was of the same mind concerning the qualifications of communicants at the Lord's table that I am of now.

However, it is not likely that some will still exclaim against my principles as being of the same pernicious tendency with those of the Separatists. To such I can only by a solemn protestation aver the sincerity of my aims and the great care I have exercised to avoid whatsoever is erroneous or might be in any respect mischievous. But as to my success in these my upright aims and endeavours, I must leave it to every reader to judge for himself after he has carefully perused and impartially considered the following discourse: which, considering the nature and importance of the subject, I hope all serious readers will accompany with their earnest prayers to the Father of lights, for his gracious direction and influence. And *to Him be glory in the churches by Christ Jesus.*

## PART ONE

### THE QUESTION STATED AND EXPLAINED

The main question I would consider, and for the negative of which I would offer some arguments in the following discourse, is this: *Whether, according to the rules of Christ, any ought to be admitted to the communion and privileges of members of the visible church of Christ in complete standing, but such as are in profession, and in the eye of the church's Christian judgment, godly or gracious persons?*

When I speak of members of the visible church of Christ, in complete standing, I would be understood of those who are received as the proper immediate subjects of all the external privileges Christ has appointed for the ordinary members of his church. I say ordinary members, in distinction from any peculiar privileges and honours of church officers and rulers. All allow, there are some that are in some respect in the church of God, who are not members in complete standing, in the sense that has been explained. All that acknowledge infant baptism, allow infants, who are the proper subjects of baptism, and are baptised, to be in some sort members of the Christian church. Yet none suppose them to be members in such standing as to be the proper immediate subjects of all ecclesiastical ordinances and privileges. But that some further qualifications are requisite in order to this, to be obtained, either in a course of nature, or by education, or by divine grace. And some who are baptised in infancy, even after they come to be adult, may yet remain for a season short of such a standing as has been spoken of; being destitute of sufficient knowledge, and perhaps some other qualifications, through the neglect of parents or their own negligence, or otherwise; or because they carelessly neglected to qualify themselves for ecclesiastical privileges by making a public profession of the Christian faith, or owning the Christian covenant, or forbear to offer themselves as candidates for these privileges; and yet not be cast out of the church, or cease to be in any respect its members. This, I suppose, will also be generally allowed.

One thing mainly intended in the foregoing question is whether any adult persons but such as are in the profession and in appearance endowed with the Christian grace or piety ought to be admitted to the Christian sacraments. Particularly, whether they ought to be admitted to the Lord's supper; and, if they are such as were not baptised in infancy, ought to be admitted to baptism. Adult persons having those qualifications that oblige others to receive them as the proper immediate subjects of the Christian sacraments is a main thing intended in the question, by being such as "ought to be admitted to the communion and privileges of members of the visible church, in complete standing." There are many adult persons that by the allowance of all are in some respects within the church of God, who are not members in good standing, in this respect. There are many, for instance, that have not at present the qualifications proper to recommend them to the Lord's supper. There are many scandalous persons, who are under suspension. The late venerable Mr. Stoddard, and many other great divines suppose that even excommunicated persons are still members of the church of God; and some suppose, the worshippers of Baal in Israel, even those who were bred up such from their infancy, remained still members of the church of God. And very many Protestant divines suppose, that the members of the church of Rome, though they are brought up and live continually in gross idolatry, and innumerable errors and superstitions that tend utterly to make void the gospel of Christ, still are in the visible

church of Christ. Yet, I suppose, no orthodox divines would hold these to be properly and regularly qualified for the Lord's supper. It was therefore requisite, in the question before us, that a distinction should be made between the members of the visible church in general, and members in complete standing

It was also requisite that such a distinction should be made in the question, to avoid lengthening out this discourse exceedingly with needless questions and debates concerning the state of baptised infants; that it is needless as to my present purpose. Though I have no doubts about the doctrine of infant baptism; yet God's manner of dealing with such infants as are regularly dedicated to him in baptism is a matter liable to great disputes and many controversies, and would require a large dissertation by itself to clear it up. Which, as it would extend this discourse beyond all bounds, so it appears not necessary in order to a clear determination of the present question. The revelation of God's Word is much plainer and more express concerning adult persons that act for themselves in religious matters than concerning infants. The Scriptures were written for the sake of adult persons, or those that are capable of knowing what is written. It is to such the apostle speaks in the epistles, and to such only does God speak throughout his Word; and the Scriptures especially speak for the sake of these, and about those to whom they speak. And therefore if the Word of God affords us light enough concerning those spoken of in the question, as I have stated it, clearly to determine the matter with respect to them, we need not wait till we see all doubts and controversies about baptised infants cleared and settled before we pass a judgment with respect to the point in hand. The denominations, characters, and descriptions, which we find given in the Scripture to visible Christians, and to the visible church, are principally with an eye to the church of Christ in its adult state and proper standing. If anyone was about to describe that kind of birds called doves, it would be most proper to describe grown doves, and not young ones in the egg or nest without wings or feathers. So if anyone should describe a palm tree or olive tree by their visible form and appearance, it would be presumed that they described those of these kind of trees in their natural and proper state; and not as just peeping from the ground, or as thunder-struck or blown down. And therefore I would here give notice, once for all, and when in the ensuing discourse I use such like phrases as visible saints, members of the visible church, etc. I, for the most part, mean persons that are *adult* and in good standing.

The question is not whether Christ has made converting grace or piety itself the condition or rule of his people's admitting any to the privileges of members in full communion with them. There is no one qualification of the mind whatsoever, that Christ has properly made the term of this; not so much as a common belief that Jesus is the Messiah, or a belief of the being of a God. It is the credible profession and visibility of these things, that is the church's rule in this case. Christian piety, or godliness may be a qualification requisite to communion in the Christian sacraments, just in the same manner as a belief that Jesus is the Messiah, and the Scriptures the Word of God, are requisite qualifications. And in the same manner as some kind of repentance is the qualification in one that has been suspended for being grossly scandalous, in order to his coming again to the Lord's supper. And yet godliness itself not to be properly the rule of the church's proceeding, in like manner as such a belief and repentance, as I have mentioned, are not their rule. It is a visibility to the eye of a Christian judgment, that is the rule of the church's proceeding in each of these cases. There are two distinctions must be here observed. As,

1. We must distinguish between such qualifications as are requisite to give a person a right to ecclesiastical privileges in *foro ecclesiae*, or a right to be admitted by the church to those privileges; and those qualifications that are a proper and good foundation for a man's own conduct in coming and offering himself as a candidate for immediate admission to these privileges. There is a difference between these. Thus, for instance, a profession of the belief of a future state and of revealed religion, and some other things that are internal and out of sight, and a visibility of these things to the eye of a Christian judgment, is all relating to these things, that is requisite to give a man a right in *foro ecclesiae*, or before the church. But it is the real existence of these things, that is what lays a proper and good foundation for his making this profession, and so demanding these privileges. None will suppose that he has good and proper ground for such a conduct, who does not believe another world, nor believe the Bible to be the Word of God. And then,

2. We must distinguish between that which next brings an obligation on a man's conscience to seek admission to a Christian ordinance, and that which is a good foundation for the dictate of an enlightened well-informed conscience, and so is properly a solid foundation of a right in him to act thus. Certainly this distinction does really take place among mankind in innumerable cases. The dictates of men's consciences are what bring them under almost immediate obligation to act: But it is that which is a good foundation for such a dictate of an enlightened conscience, that alone is a solid foundation of a right in him so to act. Believing the doctrine of the Trinity with all the heart, in some sense (let us suppose a moral sense) is one thing requisite in order to a person's having a solid foundation of a right in him to go and demand baptism in the name of the Trinity. But his best judgment or dictate of his conscience, concerning his believing this doctrine with this sincerity, or with all his heart, may be sufficient to bring an obligation on his conscience. Again, when a delinquent has been convicted of scandal, it is repentance in some respect sincere (suppose a moral sincerity) that is a proper foundation of a right in him to offer himself for forgiveness and restoration: But it is the dictate of his conscience or his best judgment concerning his sincerity, that is the thing which immediately obliges him to offer himself. It is repentance itself, that is the proper qualification fundamental of his right, and without which he can not have a proper right. For though he may be deceived and think he has real repentance when he has not, yet he has not properly a right to be deceived; and perhaps deceit in such cases is always owing to something blamable, or the influence of some corrupt principle. But yet his best judgment brings him under obligation. In the same manner, and no otherwise, I suppose that Christian grace itself is a qualification requisite in order to a proper solid ground of a right in a person to come to the Christian sacraments. But of this I may say something more when I come to answer objections.

When I speak, in the question, of being godly or gracious in the eye of a Christian judgment; by Christian judgment I intend something further than a kind of mere negative charity, implying that we forbear to censure and condemn a man because we do not know but that he may be godly, and therefore forbear to proceed on the foot of such a censure or judgment in our treatment of him: as we would kindly entertain a stranger, not knowing but in so doing we entertain an angel or precious saint of God. But I mean a positive judgment, founded on some positive appearance, or visibly, some outward manifestations that ordinarily render the thing probable. There is a difference

between suspending our judgment, or forbearing to condemn, or having some hope that possibly the thing may be so, and so hoping the best; and a positive judgment in favour of a person. For having some hope, only implies that a man is not in utter despair of a thing, though his prevailing opinion may be otherwise, or he may suspend his opinion. Though we can not know a man believes that Jesus is the Messiah, yet we expect some positive manifestation or visibility of it, to be a ground of our charitable judgment. So I suppose the case is here.

When I speak of Christian judgment, I mean a judgment wherein men do properly exercise reason, and have their reason under the due influence of love and other Christian principles; which do not blind reason, but regulate its exercises; being not contrary to reason, though they be very contrary to censoriousness or unreasonable niceness and rigidity.

I say in the eye of the church's Christian judgment, because it is properly a visibility to the eye of the public charity and not of a private judgment, that gives a person a right to be received as a visible saint by the public. If any are known to be persons of an honest character, and appear to be of good understanding in the doctrines of Christianity, and particularly those doctrines that teach the grand condition of salvation, and the nature of true saving religion, and publicly and seriously profess the great and main things wherein the essence of true religion or godliness consists, and their conversation is agreeable; this justly recommends them to the good opinion of the public. Whatever suspicions and fears any particular person, either the minister, or some other, may entertain, from what he in particular has observed, perhaps from the manner of his expressing himself in giving an account of his experiences, or an obscurity in the order and method of his experiences, etc. The minister, in receiving him to the communion of the church, is to act as a public officer, and in behalf of the public society, and not merely for himself, and therefore is to be governed, in acting, by a proper visibility of godliness in the eye of the public.

It is not my design in holding the negative of the foregoing question, to affirm, that all who are regularly admitted as members of the visible church in complete standing, ought to be believed to be godly or gracious persons, when taken collectively, or considered in the gross, by the judgment of any person or society. This may not be, and yet each person taken singly may visibly be a gracious person to the eye of the judgment of Christians in general. These two are not the same thing, but vastly diverse; and the latter may be, and yet not the former. If we should know so much of a thousand persons one after another, and from what we observed in them should have a prevailing opinion concerning each one of them, singly taken, that they were indeed pious, and think the judgment we passed, when we consider each judgment apart, to be right; it will not follow, when we consider the whole company collectively, that we shall have so high an opinion of our own judgment, as to think it probable, there was not one erroneous judgment in the whole thousand. We all have innumerable judgments about one thing or other, concerning religious, moral, secular, and philosophical affairs, concerning past, present, and future matters, reports, facts, persons, things, etc. And concerning all the many thousand dictates of judgment that we have, we think them everyone right, taken singly. For if there was anyone that we thought wrong, it would not be our judgment; and yet there is no man, unless he is stupidly foolish, who, when he considers all in the gross, will say he thinks that his

every opinion he is of, concerning all persons and things whatsoever, important and trifling, is right, without the least error. But the more clearly to illustrate this matter, as it relates to visibility, or probable appearances of holiness in professors: Supposing it had been found by experience concerning precious stones, that such and such external marks were probable signs of a diamond. And supposing, by putting together a great number of experiments, the probability is as ten to one, that, take one time with another, one in ten of the stones which have these marks (and no visible signs to the contrary) proves to be not a true diamond. Then it will follow, that when I find a particular stone with these marks, and nothing to the contrary there is a probability of ten to one, concerning that stone, that it is a diamond; and so concerning each stone that I find with these marks: But if we take ten of these together, it is as probable as not, that some one of the ten is spurious; because, if it were not as likely as not, that one to ten is false, or if taking one ten with another, there were not one in ten that was false, then the probability of those that have these marks, being true diamonds, would be more than ten to one, contrary to the supposition; because that is what we mean by a probability of ten to one, that they are not false, *viz.* that take one ten with another, there will be one false stone among them, and no more. Hence if we take an hundred such stones together, the probability will be just ten to one, that there is one false among them; and as likely as not that there are ten false ones in the whole hundred. And the probability of the individuals must be much greater than ten to one, even a probability of more than a hundred to one, in order to its making it probable that everyone is true. It is an easy mathematical demonstration. Hence the negative of the foregoing question by no means implies a pretence of any scheme, that shall be effectual to keep all hypocrites out of the church, and for the establishing in that sense a pure church.

When it is said, those who are admitted, etc. ought to be by profession godly or gracious persons; it is not meant, they should merely profess or say that they are converted or are gracious persons, that they know so, or think so; but that they profess the great things wherein Christian piety consists, *viz.* a supreme respect to God, faith in Christ, etc. Indeed it is necessary, as men would keep a good conscience, that they should think that these things are in them, which they profess to be in them; otherwise they are guilty of the horrid wickedness of wilfully making a lying profession. Hence it is supposed to be necessary, in order to men's regularly and with a good conscience coming into communion with the church of Christ in the Christian sacraments, that they themselves should suppose the essential things, belonging to Christian piety, to be in them.

It does not belong to the present question to consider and determine what the nature of Christian piety is, or wherein it consists. This question may be properly determined, and the determination demonstrated, without entering into any controversies about the nature of conversion, etc. Nor does an asserting the negative of the question determine anything how particular the profession of godliness ought to be, but only that the more essential things, which belong to it, ought to be professed. Nor is it determined, but that the public professions made on occasion of persons' admission to the Lord's supper, in some of our churches, who yet go upon that principle, that persons need not esteem themselves truly gracious in order to a coming conscientiously and properly to the Lord's supper. I say, it is not determined but that some of these professions are sufficient, if those that made them were taught to use the words, and others to

understand them, in no other than their proper meaning, and principle and custom had not established a meaning very diverse from it, or perhaps a use of the words without any distinct and clear determinate meaning.

## PART TWO

### REASONS FOR THE NEGATIVE OF THE FOREGOING QUESTION

Having thus explained what I mean, when I say, “That none ought to be admitted to the communion and privileges of members of the visible church of Christ in complete standing, but such as are in profession, and in the eye of the church’s Christian judgment, godly or gracious persons,” I now proceed to observe some things which may tend to evince the truth of this position.

#### SECTION I

*None ought to be admitted as members of the visible church of Christ but visible and professing saints.*

I begin with observing, I think it is both evident by the Word of God, and also granted on all hands, that none ought to be admitted as members of the visible church of Christ but *visible* and *professing saints*, or visible and professing Christians. We find the word *saint*, when applied to men, used two ways in the New Testament. The word in some places is so used as to mean those that are *real* saints, who are converted, and are truly gracious persons; as 1 Cor. 6:2, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” Eph. 1:18, “The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.” Eph. 3:17, 18, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth,” etc. 2 Thes. 1:10, “When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.” So Rev. 5:8; Rev. 8:4, and Rev. 11:18, and Rev. 13:10, and Rev. 14:12, and Rev. 19:8. In other places the word is used so as to have respect not only to real saints, but to such as were saints in visibility, appearance, and profession; and so were outwardly, as to what concerns their acceptance among men and their outward treatment and privileges, of the company of saints. So the word is used in very many places, which it is needless to mention, as everyone acknowledges it.

In like manner we find the word Christian used two ways: the word is used to express the same thing as “a righteous man that shall be saved,” 1 Pet. 4:16-18. Elsewhere it is so used as to take in all that were Christians by profession and outward appearance; Acts 11:26. So there is a twofold use of the word disciples in the New Testament. There were disciples in name, profession, and appearance; and there were those whom Christ calls disciples indeed, John 8:30, 31. The expression plainly supposes this distinction of true or real disciples, and those who were the same in pretence and appearance. See also Luke 14:25-27, and John 15:8. The same distinction is signified, in the New Testament, by those that live, being alive from the dead, and risen with Christ (2 Cor. 4:11; Rom. 6:11, and elsewhere), and those who have a name to live, having only a pretence and appearance of life. And the distinction of the visible church of Christ into these two is plainly signified of the growth of the good ground, and that in the stony and thorny ground, which had the same appearance and show with the other, till it came to wither away; and also by the two sorts of virgins, Mat. 25, who both had a show, profession, and visibility of the same thing. By these things, and many others which might be observed, it appears, that the distinction of real and visible or professing saints is scriptural, and that the visible church was made up of these two, and that none are according to Scripture admitted into the visible church of Christ, but

those who are visible and professing saints or Christians. And it is the more needless to insist longer upon it, because it is not a thing in controversy; so far as my small reading will inform me, it is owned by all Protestants. To be sure, the most eminent divine in New England who has appeared to maintain the Lord's supper to be properly a converting ordinance, was very full in it. In his *Appeal to the Learned*, in the title-page, and through the Treatise, he supposes that all who come to the Lord's supper, must be visible saints, and sometimes speaks of them as professing saints, page 85, 86: and supposes that it is requisite in order to their being admitted to the communion of the Lord's table, that they make a personal public profession of their faith and repentance to the just satisfaction of the church, page 93, 94. In these things the whole of the position that I would prove is in effect granted. If it be allowed (as it is allowed on all sides) that none ought to be admitted to the communion of the Christian visible church, but visible and professing saints or Christians, if these words are used in any propriety of speech, or in any agreement with scripture representations, the whole of that which I have laid down is either implied or will certainly follow.

As real saints are the same with real converts, or really gracious persons, so visible saints are the same with visible converts, or those that are visibly converted and gracious persons. Visibility is the same with manifestation or appearance to our view and apprehension. And therefore to be visibly a gracious person is the same thing as to be a truly gracious person to our view, apprehension, or esteem. The distinction of real and visible does not only take place with regard to saintship or holiness, but with regard to innumerable other things. There is visible and real truth, visible and real honesty, visible and real money, visible and real gold, visible and real diamonds, etc. etc. Visible and real are words that stand related one to another, as the words real and seeming, or true and apparent. Some seem to speak of visibility with regard to saintship or holiness, as though it had no reference to the reality, or as though it were a distinct reality by itself; as though by visible saints were not meant those who to appearance are real saints or disciples indeed, but properly a distinct sort of saints, which is an absurdity. There is a distinction between real money and visible money, because all that is esteemed money and passes for money is not real money, but some is false and counterfeit. By visible money, is not meant that which is taken and passes for a different sort from true money, but that which is esteemed and taken as real money, or which has that appearance that recommends it to men's judgment and acceptance as true money; though men may be deceived, and some of it may finally prove not to be so.

There are not properly two sorts of saints spoken of in Scripture. Though the word saints may be said indeed to be used two ways in Scripture, or used so as to reach two sorts of persons. Yet the word has not properly two significations in the New Testament, any more than the word gold has two significations among us. The word gold among us is so used as to extend to several sorts of substances. It is true, it extends to true gold, and also to that which only appears to be gold, and is reputed such, and by that appearance or visibility some things that are not real obtain the name of gold. But this is not properly through a diversity in the signification of the word, but by a diversity of the application of it, through the imperfection of our discerning. It does not follow that there are properly two sorts of saints, because some who are not real saints, do by the show and appearance they make obtain the name of saints, and are reputed such, and whom by the rules of Scripture (which are accommodated to our

imperfect state) we are directed to receive and treat as saints; any more than it follows that there are two sorts of honest men, because some who are not truly honest men, yet being so seemingly or visibly, do obtain the name of honest men, and ought to be treated by us as such. So there are not properly two distinct churches of Christ, one the real, and another the visible; though they that are visibly or seemingly of the one only church of Christ, are many more than they who are really of his church; and so the visible or seeming church is of larger extent than the real.

Visibility is a relative thing, and has relation to an eye that views or beholds. Visibility is the same as appearance or exhibition to the eye; and to be a visible saint is the same as to appear to be a real saint in the eye that beholds; not the eye of God, but the eye of man. Real saints or converts are those that are so in the eye of God; visible saints or converts are those who are so in the eye of man; not his bodily eye, for thus no man is a saint any more in the eye of a man than he is in the eye of a beast; but the eye of his mind, which is his judgment or esteem. There is no more visibility of holiness in the brightest professor to the eye of our bodies without the exercise of the reason and judgment of our minds, than may be in a machine. But nothing short of an apparent probability, or a probable exhibition, can amount to a visibility to the eye of man's reason or judgment. The eye which God has given to man is the eye of reason, and the eye of a Christian is reason sanctified, regulated, and enlightened, by a principle of Christian love. But it implies a contradiction to say, that that is visible to the eye of reason, which does not appear probable to reason. And if there be a man that is in this sense a visible saint, he is in the eye of a rational judgment a real saint. To say a man is visibly a saint, but not visibly a real saint, but only visibly a visible saint, is a very absurd way of speaking; it is as much as to say, he is to appearance an appearing saint; which is in effect to say nothing, and to use words without signification. The thing which must be visible and probable, in order to visible saintship, must be saintship itself, or real grace and true holiness; not visibility of saintship, not unregenerate morality, not mere moral sincerity. To pretend, or in any respect to exhibit, moral sincerity, makes nothing visible beyond what is pretended to or exhibited. For a man to have that visibly, which if he had it really, and have nothing more, would not make him a real saint, is not to be visibly a saint.

Mr. Stoddard, in his *Appeal to the Learned*, seems to express the very same notion of visibility, and that visibility of saintship which is requisite to persons coming to the Lord's supper, that I have here expressed. On page 10, he makes a distinction between being visibly circumcised in heart, and being really so; evidently meaning by the latter, saving conversion; and he allows the former, *viz.* a visibility of heart-circumcision, to be necessary to a coming to the Lord's supper. So that according to him, it is not a visibility of moral sincerity only, but a visibility of circumcision of heart, or saving conversion, that is a necessary requisite to a person's coming to the Lord's table. And in what manner this must be visible, he signifies elsewhere, when he allows, that it must be so to a judgment of charity; a judgment of rational charity. This he expressly allows over and over; as in page 2, 3, 28, 33, 73, and 95, and having reason to look upon them as such, page 28. And towards the close of his book, he declares himself steadfastly of the mind, that it is requisite those be not admitted to the Lord's supper, who do not "make a personal and public profession of their faith and repentance, to the just satisfaction of the church," page 93, 94. But how he reconciled these passages with the rest of his Treatise, I would modestly say, I must confess myself at a loss. And

particularly, I can not see how they consist with what this venerable and ever-honoured author says, page 16, in these words; “Indeed by the rule that God has given for admissions, if it be carefully attended, more unconverted persons will be admitted than converted.” I would humbly inquire, how those visible, qualifications can be the ground of a rational judgment, that a person is circumcised in heart, which nevertheless, at the same time, we are sensible are so far from being any probable signs of it, that they are more frequently without it than with it. The appearance of that thing surely can not imply an appearing probability of another thing, which at the same time we are sensible is most frequently, and so most probably, without that other thing.

Indeed I can easily see, how that may seem visible, and appear probable, to God’s people, by reason of the imperfect and dark state they are in, and so may oblige their charity, which yet is not real, and which would not appear at all probable to angels, who stand in a clearer light. And the different degrees of light, in which God’s church stands, in different ages, may make a difference in this respect. The church under the New Testament being favoured by God with a vastly greater light in divine things, than the church under the Old Testament, that might make some difference, as to the kind of profession of religion that is requisite, under these different dispensations, in order to a visibility of holiness; also a proper visibility may fail in the greater number in some extraordinary case and in exempt circumstances. But how those signs can be a ground of a rational judgment that a thing is, which, at that very time, and under that degree of light we then have, we are sensible do oftener fail than not, and this ordinarily, I own myself much at a loss. Surely nothing but appearing reason is the ground of a rational judgment. And indeed it is impossible in the nature of things, to form a judgment, which at that very time we think to be not only without, but against probability

If it be said, that although persons do not profess that wherein sanctifying grace consists, yet seeing they profess to believe the doctrines of the gospel, which God is wont to make use of in order to sanctification, and are called the doctrine which is according to godliness; and since we see nothing in their lives to make us determine that they have not had a proper effect on their hearts, we are obliged in charity to hope, that they are real saints, or gracious persons, and to treat them accordingly, and so to receive them into the Christian church, and to its special ordinances.

I answer, this objection does in effect suppose and grant the very thing mainly in dispute. For it supposes, that a gracious character is the thing that ought to be aimed at in admitting persons into the communion of the church; and so that it is needful to have this charity for persons, or such a favourable notion of them, in order to our receiving them as properly qualified members of the society, and properly qualified subjects of the special privileges to which they are admitted. Whereas, the doctrine taught is that sanctifying grace is not a necessary qualification, and that there is no need that the person himself, or any other, should imagine he is a person so qualified. The assigned reason is, because it is no qualification requisite in itself. The ordinance of the Lord’s supper is as proper from them that are not qualified as for those that are. It being according to the design of the institution a converting ordinance, and so an ordinance as much intended for the good of the unconverted, as of the converted; even as it is with preaching of the gospel. Now if the case be so, why is there any talk about a charitable hoping they are converted, and so admitting them? What need of any charitable hope of such a qualification, in order to admitting them to an ordinance that

is as proper for those who are without this qualification, as for those that have it? We need not have any charitable hope of any such qualification in order to admit a person to hear the word preached. What need have we to aim at anything beyond the proper qualifications? And what need of any charitable opinion or hope of anything further? Some sort of belief, that Jesus is the Messiah, is a qualification properly requisite to a coming to the Lord's supper; and therefore it is necessary that we should have a charitable hope that those have such a belief whom we admit; though it be not necessary that we should know it, it being what none can know of another. But as to grace or Christian piety, it clearly follows, on the principles which I oppose, that no kind of visibility or appearance, whether direct or indirect, whether to a greater or less degree, no charity or hope of it, have anything at all to do in the affair of admission to the Lord's supper. For, according to them, it is properly a converting ordinance. What has any visibility or hope of a person being already in health to do, in admitting him into an hospital for the use of those means that are appointed for the healing of the sick and bringing them to health? And therefore it is needless here to dispute about the nature of visibility; and all arguing concerning a profession of Christian doctrines, and an orderly life being a sufficient ground of public charity, and an obligation on the church to treat them as saints, are wholly impertinent and nothing to the purpose. For on the principles which I oppose, there is no need of any ground for treating them as saints, in order to admitting them to the Lord's supper, the very design of which is to make them saints, any more than there is need of some ground of treating a sick man as being a man in health, in order to admitting him into an hospital. Persons, by the doctrine that I oppose, are not taught to offer themselves as candidates for church communion under any such notion, or with any such pretence, as their being gracious persons; and therefore surely when those that teach them, receive them to the ordinance, they do not receive them under any such notion, nor has any appearance, hope, or thought of it, anything to do in the case.

The apostle speaks of the members of the Christian church, as those that made a *profession of godliness*. 2 Cor. 9:13, "They glorified God for your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ." 1 Tim. 2:9, 10, "In like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel - not with costly array; but which becometh women professing godliness, with good works." The apostle is speaking of the women that were members of that great church of Ephesus, which Timothy for the present had the care of; and he speaks of them as supposing that they all professed godliness. By the allowance of all, profession is one thing belonging to the visibility of Christianity or holiness, in the members of the visible church. Visible holiness is an appearance or exhibition of holiness, by those things which are external, and so fall under our notice and observation, and these are two, *viz.* profession, and outward behaviour agreeable to that profession. That profession which belongs to visible saintship, must be a profession of godliness, or real saintship. For a profession makes nothing visible beyond what is professed. What is it to be a saint by profession, but to be by profession a true saint? For to be by profession a false saint, is to be by profession no saint; and only to profess that, which if never so true, is nothing peculiar to a saint, is not to be a professing saint.

In order to man's being properly a professing Christian, he must profess the religion of Jesus Christ. And he surely does not profess the religion that was taught by Jesus Christ, if he leaves out of his profession the most essential things that belong to that

religion. That which is most essential in that religion itself, the profession of that is essential in a profession of that religion; for (as I have observed elsewhere) that which is most essential in a thing, in order to its being truly denominated that thing, the same is essentially necessary to be expressed or signified in any exhibition or declaration of that thing, in order to its being truly denominated a declaration or exhibition of that thing. If we take a more inconsiderable part of Christ's religion, and leave out the main and most essential, surely what we have, can not be properly called the religion of Jesus Christ. So if we profess only a less important part, and are silent about the most important and essential part, it can not be properly said that we profess the religion of Jesus Christ. And therefore we can not in any propriety be said to profess Christ's religion, unless we profess those things wherein consist piety of heart, which is vastly the most important and essential part of that religion, and is in effect all; being that without which all the rest that belongs to it, is nothing, and wholly in vain. But they who are admitted to the Lord's supper, proceeding on the principles of those who hold it to be a converting ordinance, do in no respect profess Christian piety, neither in whole nor in part, neither explicitly nor implicitly, directly nor indirectly; and therefore are not professing Christians, or saints by profession. I mean, though they may be godly persons, yet as they come to the ordinance without professing godliness, they can not properly be called professing saints.

Here it may be said, that although no explicit and formal profession of those things which belong to true piety, be required of them; yet there are many things they do, that are a virtual and implicit profession of these things. Such as their owning the Christian covenant, their owning God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be their God; and by their visibly joining in the public prayers and singing God's praises, there is a show and implicit profession of supreme respect to God and love to him; by joining in the public confessions, they make a show of repentance; by keeping Sabbaths and hearing the Word, they make a show of a spirit of obedience; by offering to come to sacraments, they make a show of love to Christ and a dependence on his sacrifice.

To this I answer. It is a great mistake, if anyone imagines, that all these external performances are of the nature of a profession, of anything that belongs to saving grace, as they are commonly used and understood. None of them are so, according to the doctrines that are taught and embraced, and the customs that are established in such churches as proceed on the footing of the principles fore-mentioned. For what is professing, but exhibiting, uttering, or declaring, either by intelligible words, or by other established signs that are equivalent? But in such churches, neither their publicly saying, that they avouch God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be their God and that they give themselves up to him, and promise to obey all his commands. Nor their coming to the Lord's supper, or to any other ordinances, are taken for expressions or signs, of anything belonging to the essence of Christian piety. But on the contrary, the public doctrine, principle, and custom in such churches, establishes a diverse use of these words and signs. People are taught, that they may use them all, and not so much as make any pretence to the least degree of sanctifying grace; and this is the established custom. So they are used, and so they are understood. And therefore whatever some of these words and signs may in themselves most properly and naturally import, they entirely cease to be significations of any such thing among people accustomed to understand and use them otherwise; and so cease to be of the nature of a profession of Christian piety. There can be no such thing among such a people, as either an explicit

or implicit, profession of godliness by anything which (by their established doctrine and custom) an unregenerate man may and ought to say and perform, knowing himself to be so. For let the words and actions otherwise signify what they will, yet people have in effect agreed among themselves, that persons who use them need not intend them so, and that others need not understand them so. And hence they cease to be of the nature of any pretension to grace. And surely it is an absurdity to say, that men openly and solemnly profess grace, and yet do not so much as pretend to it. If a certain people should agree, and it should be an established principle among them, that men might and ought to use such and such words to their neighbours, which according to their proper signification were a profession of entire love and devoted friendship towards the man they speak to, and yet not think that he has any love in his heart to him, yea, and know at the same time that he had a reigning enmity against him. And it was known that this was the established principle of the people, would not these words, whatever their proper signification was, entirely cease to be any profession or testimony of friendship to his neighbour? To be sure, there could be no visibility of it to the eye of reason.

Thus it is evident, that those who are admitted into the church on the principles that I oppose, are not professing saints, nor visible saints; because that thing which alone is truly saintship, is not what they profess, or pretend, or have any visibility of, to the eye of a Christian judgment. Or if they in fact be visible and professing saints, yet, they are not admitted as such; no profession of true saintship, nor any manner of visibility of it, has anything to do in the affair.

There is one way to evade these things, which has been taken by some. They plead, although it be true, that the Scripture represents the members of the visible church of Christ as professors of godliness; and they are abundantly called by the name of saints in Scripture, undoubtedly because they were saints by profession, and in visibility, and the acceptance of others, yet this is not with any reference to saving holiness, but to quite another sort of saintship, viz. moral sincerity. And that this is the real saintship, discipleship, and godliness, which is professed, and visible in them, and with regard to which, as having an appearance of it to the eye of reason, they have the name of saints, disciples, etc. in Scripture. It must be noted, that in this objection the visibility is supposed to be of real saintship, discipleship, and godliness, but only another sort of real godliness, than that which belongs to those who shall finally be owned by Christ as his people, at the day of judgment.

To which I answer, "This is a mere evasion; the only one, that ever I saw or heard of; and I think the only one possible." For it is certain, they are not professors of sanctifying grace, or true saintship. The principle proceeded on being, that they need make no pretence to that; nor has any visibility of saving holiness anything to do in the affair. If then they have any holiness at all, it must be of another sort. And if this evasion fails, all fails, and the whole matter in debate must be given up. Therefore I desire that this matter may be impartially considered and examined to the very bottom; and that it may be thoroughly inquired, whether this distinction of these two sorts of real Christianity, godliness, and holiness, is a distinction of which Christ in his Word is the author; or whether it be a human invention of something which the New Testament knows nothing of, devised to serve and maintain an hypothesis. And here I desire that the following things may be observed:

1. According to this hypothesis, the words saints, disciples, and Christians, are used four ways in the New Testament, as applied to four sorts of persons. (1.) To those that in truth and reality are the heirs of eternal life, and that shall judge the world, or have indeed that saintship which is saving. (2.) To those who profess this, and pretend to and make a fair show of a supreme regard to Christ, and to renounce the world for his sake, but have not real ground for these pretences and appearances. (3.) To those who, although they have not saving grace, yet have that other sort of real godliness, or saintship, viz. moral sincerity in religion; and so are properly a sort of real saints, true Christians, sincerely godly persons, and disciples indeed, though they have no saving grace. And (4.) To those who make a profession and have a visibility of this latter sort of sincere Christianity, and are nominally such kind of saints, but are not so indeed. So that here are two sorts of real Christians, and two sorts of visible Christians; two sorts of invisible and real churches of Christ, and two sorts of visible churches. Now will anyone that is well acquainted with the New Testament say, there is in that the least appearance or shadow of such a four-fold use of the words, saints, disciples, etc.? It is manifest by what was observed before, that these words are there used but two ways; and that those of mankind to whom these names are applied, are there distinguished into but two sorts, viz. Those who have really a saving interest in Christ, spiritual conformity and union to him, and those who have a name for it, as having a profession and appearance of it. And this is further evident by various representations, which we there find of the visible church; as in the company of virgins that went forth to meet the bridegroom, we find a distinction of them into but two sorts, viz. The wise that had both lamps and oil; and those who had lamps indeed like the wise virgins (therein having an external show of the same thing), but really had no oil; signifying that they had the same profession and outward show of religion, and entertained the same hopes with the wise virgins. So when the visible church is represented by the husbandman's floor, we find a distinction but of two sorts, viz. the wheat and the chaff. And, when the church is compared to the husbandman's field, we find a distinction but of two sorts, the wheat and the tares, which (naturalists observe) appear exactly like the wheat, till it comes to bring forth its fruit; representing, that those who are only visible Christians, have an appearance of the nature of wheat, which shall be gathered into Christ's barn, that is, of the nature of saving grace.

2. It is evident, that those who had the name of disciples in the times of the New Testament, bore that name with reference to a visibility of the same relation to Christ, which they had who should be finally owned as his. This is manifest, John 8:30, 31, "As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." (Compare Luke 14:25, 26, 27, and John 15:8.) The phrase, "disciples indeed," is relative; and has reference to a visibility, pretence, or name, only, to which it is set in opposition; which makes it evident, that those who then bore the name of disciples, had a visibility and pretence of discipleship indeed. For true discipleship is not properly set in opposition to anything else but a pretence to the same thing, that is not true. The phrase, "gold indeed," is in opposition to something that has the appearance of that same metal, and not to an appearance of brass. If there were another sort of real discipleship in those days, besides saving discipleship, persons might be Christ's disciples indeed, or truly (as the word in the original is), without continuing in his Word, and without selling all that they had, and without hating father and mother and their own lives, for his sake. By this it appears, that those who bore the name of

disciples in those times were distinguished into but two sorts, disciples in name or visibility, and disciples indeed; and that the visibility and profession of the former was of the discipleship of the latter.

3. The same thing is evident by 1 John 2:19, “They went out from us, because they were not of us: If they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.” The words naturally suggest and imply, that those professing Christians, who at last proved false, did, before they went out, seem to belong to the society of the true saints, or those endued with persevering grace and holiness. They seemed to be of their number, and so were accepted in the judgment of charity.

4. The name that visible Christians had in the days of the New Testament, was of saving Christianity, and not of moral sincerity; for they had a name to live, though many of them were dead, Rev. 3:1. Now it is very plain what that is in religion which is called by the name of life, all over the New Testament, viz. saving grace; and I do not know that anything else, of a religious nature, is ever so called.

5. The visibility of saintship in the apostle’s days, was not of moral sincerity, but gracious sincerity, or saving saintship. For they are spoken of as being visibly of the number of those saints who shall judge the world, and judge angels. 1 Cor. 6:1, 2, 3, “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know, that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged BY YOU, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that WE shall judge angels?” These things manifestly imply, that if the Christian Corinthians were what they supposed they were, what they professed to be, and what they were accepted to be, they were some of those saints who at the day of judgment should judge angels and men.

6. That the visibility was not only of moral sincerity but saving grace, is manifest, because the apostle speaks of visible Christians as visible “members of Christ’s body, of his flesh, and of his bones, and one spirit with him, and temples of the Holy Ghost,” Eph. 5:30, and 1 Cor. 6:16, 19. And the apostle Peter speaks of visible Christians as those who were visibly such righteous persons as should be saved; and that are distinguished from the ungodly, and them that obey not the gospel, who shall perish. 1 Pet. 4:16, 17, 18, “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; “and if it first begin at us,” (us Christians, comprehending himself, and those to whom he wrote, and all of that sort), “what shall the end of them be that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinners appear?”

7. That the visibility was not merely of moral sincerity, but of that sort of saintship which the saints in heaven have, is manifest by this, that they are often spoken of as visibly belonging to heaven, and as of the society of the saints in heaven. So the apostle in his Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of them as visibly of the same household or family of God, a part of which is in heaven. Eph. 2:19, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” Together with the next chapter, Eph. 3:15, “Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” Where the context and continuation of discourse demonstrates, that he is still speaking of the same family or household he had spoken

of in the latter part of the preceding chapter. So all visible Christians are spoken of as visibly the children of the church which is in heaven. Gal. 4:26, "Jerusalem which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all." The same apostle speaks of visible Christians as being visibly come to the heavenly city, and having joined the glorious company of angels there, and as visibly belonging to the "general assembly and church of the first-born, that are written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect," Heb. 12:22, 23. And elsewhere they are spoken of as being visibly of the number of those who have their "names written in the book of life," Rev. 3:5, and Rev. 22:19. They who truly have their names written in the book of life, are God's true saints, that have saving grace: as is evident by Rev. 13:8, "And all that dwell on the earth, shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And Rev. 20:12, "And another book was opened, which was the book of life." Rev. 20:15, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." We are told in the conclusion of this chapter, how they were disposed of whose names were not written in the book of life; and then the prophet proceeds, in the next chapter, to tell us, how they were disposed whose names were found there written, *viz.* that they were admitted into the New Jerusalem. Rev. 21:27, "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." And yet in the next chapter it is implied, that some who were not truly gracious persons, and some that should finally perish, were visibly of the number of those that had both a part in the New Jerusalem, and also their names written in the book of life. Rev. 22:19, "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city."

8. That baptism, by which the primitive converts were admitted into the church, was used as an exhibition and token of their being visibly "regenerated, dead to sin, alive to God, having the old man crucified, being delivered from the reigning power of sin, being made free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness, those servants of God that have their fruit unto that holiness whose end is everlasting life;" as is evident by Rom. 6, throughout. In the former part of the chapter, he speaks of the Christian Romans, as "dead to sin, being buried with Christ in baptism, having their old man crucified with Christ," etc. He does not mean only, that their baptism laid them under special obligations to these things, and was a mark and token of their engagement to be thus hereafter; but was designed as a mark, token, and exhibition, of their being visibly thus already. As is most manifest by the apostle's prosecution of his argument in the following part of the chapter. Rom. 6:14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. 6:17, 18, "God be thanked, ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Rom. 6:22, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

9. It is evident, that it is not only a visibility of moral sincerity in religion, which is the scripture qualification of admission into the Christian church, but a visibility of regeneration and renovation of heart, because it was foretold that God's people and the ministers of his house in the days of the Messiah, should not admit into the Christian church any that were not visibly circumcised in heart. Eze. 44:6-9, "And thou

shalt say to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations, in that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat, and the blood; and they have broken my covenant, because of all your abominations: and ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things, but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves. Thus saith the Lord, No stranger uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.”

The venerable author of the *Appeal to the Learned*, says, page 10, “That this scripture has no particular reference to the Lord’s supper.” I answer, though I do not suppose it has merely a reference to that ordinance, yet I think it manifest, that it has reference to admitting persons into the Christian church, and to external church privileges. It might be easy to prove, that these nine last chapters of Ezekiel must be a vision and prophecy of the state of things in the church of God in the Messiah’s days. But I suppose it will not be denied, it being a thing wherein divines are so generally agreed. And I suppose, none will dispute but that by the house of God and his sanctuary, which it is here foretold the uncircumcised in heart should not be admitted into the days of the gospel, is meant the same house, sanctuary, or temple of God, that the prophet had just before been speaking of, in the foregoing part of the same chapter, and been describing throughout the four preceding chapters. But we all know, that the New Testament house of God is his church. Heb. 3:3, “For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who builded the house, hath more honour than the house.” Heb. 3:6, “But Christ as a Son over his own house, whose house are we,” etc. 2 Tim. 2:20, “In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth,” etc. 1 Tim. 3:15, “That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God.” Eph. 2:20, 21, “And are built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord.” 1 Cor. 3:9, “Ye are God’s building.” 1 Cor. 3:16, “Know ye not, that ye are the temple of God?” 1 Pet. 2:5, “Ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house.” 1 Pet. 4:17, “For the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it begin at us, what shall the end be?” etc. Heb. 10:21, “And having an high priest over the house of God.” Ezekiel’s temple is doubtless the same which it is foretold the Messiah should build. Zec. 6:12, 13, “The man whose name is the Branch, he shall build the temple of the Lord, even he shall build the temple of the Lord.” And what the temple that Christ builds is, the apostle tells us, Heb. 3:3, 6. The temple that Ezekiel in his vision was bid to observe the measures of, as measured with a reed (Eze. 40:3, 4.) we have reason to think, was the same the apostle John in his vision was bid to measure with a reed (Rev. 11:1). And when it is here foretold, that the uncircumcised in heart should not enter into the Christian sanctuary or church, nor have communion in the offerings of God’s bread, of the fat and blood, that were made there, I think so much is at least implied, that they should not have communion in those ordinances of the Christian sanctuary, in which that body and blood of Christ were symbolically represented, which used of old to be symbolically represented by the fat and the blood. For the admission into the Christian church here spoken of, is an admission into the visible and not the mystical church. For such an admission is spoken of as is made by the officers of the church. And I suppose

it will not be doubted, but that by circumcision of heart is meant the spiritual renewing of the heart; not any common virtues, which do not in the least change the nature, and mortify the corruption of the heart; as is held by all orthodox divines, and as Mr. Stoddard in particular abundantly insisted. However, if anybody disputes it, I desire that the Scripture may be allowed to speak for itself; for it very often speaks of circumcision of heart, and this everywhere, both in the Old Testament and New, manifestly signifies that great change of heart that was typified by the ceremony of circumcision of the flesh. The same which afterwards was signified by baptism, viz. regeneration, or else the progress of that work in sanctification; as we read of the washing of regeneration, etc. The apostle tells us what was signified both by circumcision and baptism, Col. 2:11, 12, "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, buried with him in baptism; wherein also you are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God." Where I would observe by the way, he speaks of all the members of the church of Colossae as visibly circumcised with this circumcision; agreeable to Ezekiel's prophecy, that the members of the Christian church shall visibly have this circumcision. The apostle speaks, in like manner, of the members of the church of Philippi as spiritually circumcised (i.e. in profession and visibility), and tells wherein this circumcision appeared. Phil. 3:3, "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." And in Rom. 2:28, 29. the apostle speaks of this Christian and Jewish circumcision together, calling the former the circumcision of the heart. "But he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the FLESH; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of THE HEART, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." And whereas in this prophecy of Ezekiel it is foretold, that none should enter into the Christian sanctuary or church, but such as are circumcised in heart and circumcised in flesh; thereby I suppose is intended, that none should be admitted but such as were visibly regenerated, as well as baptised with outward baptism.

By what has been observed, I think it abundantly evident, that the saintship, godliness, and holiness, of which, according to Scripture, professing Christians and visible saints do make a profession and have a visibility, is not any religion and virtue that is the result of common grace, or moral sincerity (as it is called), but saving grace. Yet there are many other clear evidences of the same thing, which may in some measure appear in all the following part of this discourse.

## SECTION II

*All who are capable of it are bound to make  
an explicit open profession of the true religion.*

I come to another reason, why I answer the question at first proposed, in the negative, viz. That it is a duty which in an ordinary state of things is required of all that are capable of it, to make an explicit open profession of the true religion, by owning God's covenant; or, in other words, professedly and verbally to unite themselves to God in his covenant, by their own public act.

Here I would (*first*) prove this point; and then (*secondly*) draw the consequence, and show how this demonstrates the thing in debate.

First, I shall endeavour to establish this point, viz. That it is the duty of God's people thus publicly to own the covenant; and that it was not only a duty in Israel of old, but is so in the Christian church, and to the end of the world; and that it is a duty required of adult persons before they come to sacraments. And this being a point of great consequence in this controversy, but a matter seldom handled (though it seems to be generally taken for granted), I shall be the more particular in the consideration of it.

This not only seems to be in itself most consonant to reason, and is a duty generally allowed in New England, but is evidently a great institution of the Word of God, appointed as a very important part of that public religion by which God's people should give honour to his name. This institution we have in Deu. 6:13, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name." It is repeated, Deu. 10:20, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name." In both places it might have been rendered; thou shalt swear in his name, or into his name. In the original, *bishmo*, with the prefix *beth*, which signifies in or into, as well as by. And whereas, in the latter place, in our translation, it is said, to him shalt thou cleave and swear by his name. The words are thus in the Hebrew, *ubho thidhbak ubhishmo tisshabheang*. The literal translation of which is, into him shalt thou cleave [or unite], and into his name shalt thou swear. There is the same prefix, *beth*, before him, when it is said, Thou shalt cleave to him, as before his name, when it is said, Thou shalt swear by his name. Swearing into God's name, is a very emphatic and significant way of expressing a person's taking on himself, by his own solemn profession, the name of God, as one of his people; or by swearing to or covenanting with God, uniting himself by his own act to the people that is called by his name. The figure of speech is something like that by which Christians in the New Testament are said to be baptised INTO THE NAME of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. So Christians are said to be baptised into Christ, Gal. 3:17. This swearing by the name, or into the name, of the Lord, is so often, and in such a manner, spoken of by the prophets as a great duty of God's solemn public worship, as much as praying or sacrificing, that it would be unreasonable to understand it only, or chiefly, of occasionally taking an oath before a court of judicature, which, it may be, one tenth part of the people never had occasion to do once in their lives. If we well consider the matter, we shall see abundant reason to be satisfied, that the thing intended in this institution was publicly covenanting with God. Covenanting in Scripture is very often called by the name of swearing, and a covenant is called an oath. (As Gen. 21:23, to the end; Gen. 26:28, to the end; Gen. 31:44, 53; Jos. 2:12, etc. 1 Sam. 20:16, 17, 42; 2 Kin. 11:4; Ecc. 8:2; Eze. 16:59; Eze. 17:16, and many other places.) And particularly God's covenant is called his oath, Deu. 29:12, "Thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath." Deu. 29:14, "Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath." 1 Chr. 16:15, 16, "Be ye mindful always of his covenant - Even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac." 2 Chr. 15:12, "And they entered into covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers." 2 Chr. 15:14, 15, "And they sware unto the Lord with a loud voice: and all Judah rejoiced at the oath." Swearing to the Lord, or swearing in or into the name of the Lord, are equipollent expressions in the Bible. The prefixes *beth* and *lamed* are evidently used indifferently in this case to signify the same thing, Zep. 1:5, "That swear by the Lord, and that swear by Malcham." The word translated to the Lord, is *Laihovah*, with the prefix *lamed*; but to Malcham, is *Bemalcham* with the prefix *beth*, into Malcham. In 1 Kin. 18:32, it is said, "Elijah built an altar in the name of the Lord;" *beshem*. Here the

prefix *beth* is manifestly of the same force with *lamed*, in 1 Kin. 8:44, “The house I have built for thy name or to thy name;” *leshem*.

God’s people in swearing to his name, or into his name, according to the institution, solemnly professed two things, viz. their faith and obedience. The former part of this profession of religion was called, “Saying, the Lord liveth.” Jer. 5:2, “And though they say, the Lord liveth, yet surely they swear falsely.” Jer. 5:7, “They have sworn by them that are no gods:” that is, they had openly professed idol-worship. Jer. 4:2, “Thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.” (Compare this with Isa. 45:23, 24, 25.) Jer. 44:26, “Behold I have sworn by my great name, saith the Lord, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, the Lord liveth:” i.e. They shall never any more make any profession of the true God, and of the true religion, but shall be wholly given up to heathenism. See also Jer. 12:16, and Jer. 16:14, 15, and Jer. 23:7, 8; Hos. 4:15; Amos 8:14, and Amos 8:5.

These words, CHAI JEHOVAH, Jehovah liveth, summarily comprehend a profession of faith in that all-sufficiency and immutability of God, which is implied in the name JEHOVAH, and which attributes are very often signified in Scripture by God’s being the LIVING GOD, as is very manifest from Jos. 3:10; 1 Sam. 17:26, 36; 2 Kin. 19:4, 16; Dan. 6:26; Psa. 18:46, and innumerable other places.

The other thing professed in swearing into the Lord was obedience, called, Walking in the name of the Lord. Micah 4:5, “All people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.” Still with the prefix *beth*, *beshem*, as they were said to swear *beshem*, in the name, or into, the name of the Lord.

This institution, in Deuteronomy, of swearing into the name of the Lord, or visibly and explicitly uniting themselves to him in covenant, was not prescribed as an extraordinary duty, to be performed on a return from a general apostasy, and some other extraordinary occasions. But is evidently mentioned in the institution, as a part of the public worship of God to be performed by all God’s people, properly belonging to the visible worshippers of Jehovah. And so it is very often mentioned by the prophets, as I observed before, and could largely demonstrate, if there was occasion for it, and would not too much lengthen out this discourse.

And this was not only an institution belonging to Israel under the Old Testament, but also to Gentile converts, and Christians under the New Testament. Thus God declares concerning the Gentile nations, Jer. 12:16, “If they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to SWEAR BY MY NAME, THE LORD LIVETH, as they taught my people to swear by Baal: then shall they be built in the midst of my people,” i.e. They shall be added to my church; or as the apostle Paul expresses it, Eph. 2:19-22, “They shall be no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and be built upon the foundation of Christ; in whom all the BUILDING fitly framed together, etc. In whom they also shall be BUILDED for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” So it is foretold, that the way of public covenanting should be the way of the Gentiles joining themselves to the church in the days of the gospel, Isa. 44:3-5, “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods

upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring, and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses; one shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord," - as subscribing an instrument whereby they bound themselves to the Lord. This was subscribing and covenanting themselves into the name of Israel, and swearing into the name of the Lord, in the language of those fore-mentioned texts in Deuteronomy. So taking hold of God's covenant, is foretold as the way in which the sons of the stranger in the days of the gospel should be joined to God's church, and brought into God's sanctuary, and to have communion in its worship and ordinances, in Isa. 56:3, 6, 7. So in Isa. 19:18 the future conversion of the Gentiles in the days of the gospel, and their being brought to profess the true religion, is expressed by saying, that they should SWEAR TO THE LORD OF HOSTS. "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts." So in Jer. 23:5-8, it seems to be plainly foretold, that after Christ is come, and has wrought out his great redemption, the same way of publicly professing faith in the all-sufficient and immutable God, by swearing, The Lord liveth, should be continued, which was instituted of old; but only with this difference, that whereas formerly they covenanted with God as their Redeemer out of Egypt, now they shall as it were forget that work, and have a special respect to a much greater redemption, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch. Therefore they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, which brought up, and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country," etc.

Another remarkable place wherein it is plainly foretold, that the like method of professing religion should be continued in the days of the gospel, is Isa. 45:22-25, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else: I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, EVERY TONGUE SHALL SWEAR: surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come - in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." This prophecy will have its last fulfilment at the day of judgment; but it is plain, that the thing most directly intended is the conversion of the Gentile world to the Christian religion. What is here called swearing, the apostle, in citing this place, once and again calls confessing; Rom. 14:11 - "Every tongue shall confess to God." Phil. 2:10 - "That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Which is the word commonly used in the New Testament, to signify making a public profession of religion. So Rom. 10:9, 10, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Where a public profession of religion with the mouth is evidently spoken of as a great duty of all Christ's people, as well as believing in him; and ordinarily requisite to salvation; not that it is necessary in the same manner that faith is, but in like manner as baptism is. Faith and verbal profession are jointly spoken of here as necessary to salvation, in the same manner as faith and baptism are, in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved." And I know no good reason why we should not look on moral profession and covenanting with Christ,

in those who are capable of it, as much of a stated duty in the Christian church, and an institution universally pertaining to the followers of Christ, as baptism.

And if explicit, open covenanting with God be a great duty required of all, as has been represented, then it ought to be expected of persons before they are admitted to the privileges of the adult in the church of Christ. Surely it is proper, if this explicit covenanting takes place at all, that it should take place before persons come to those ordinances wherein they, by their own act, publicly confirm and seal this covenant. This public transaction of covenanting, which God has appointed, ought to have existence, before we publicly confirm and seal this transaction. It was that by which the Israelites of old were introduced into the communion of God's nominal or visible church and holy city: as appears by Isa. 48:1, 2, "Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which ARE CALLED BY THE NAME OF ISRAEL, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, WHICH SWEAR BY THE NAME OF THE LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth nor in righteousness: FOR THEY CALL THEMSELVES OF THE HOLY CITY," etc. When, and after what manner particularly, the Israelites ordinarily performed this explicit covenanting, I do not know that we can be certain. But, as it was first done on occasion of God's first promulgating his law or covenant at mount Sinai - on a repetition or renewed promulgation of it on the plains of Moab - on the public reading of the law in Josiah's time (2 Kin. 23:3) - on after the return from the captivity - and on the public reading of it at the feast of tabernacles (Neh. 8, 9, and 10) so it appears to me most likely, that it was done every seventh year, when the law or covenant of God was, by divine appointment, read in the audience of all the people at the feast of tabernacles. At least by all who then heard the law read the first time, and who never had publicly owned the covenant of God before. There are good evidences that they never had communion in those ordinances which God had appointed as seals of his covenant, wherein they themselves were to be active, such as their sacrifices, etc. till they had done it. It is plainly implied in Psa. 50 that it was the manner in Israel vocally to own God's covenant, or to take it into their mouths, before they sealed that covenant in their sacrifices. See Psa. 50:16 taken with the preceding part of the psalm, from verse 5. And that they did it before they partook of the Passover (which indeed was one of their sacrifices), or entered into the sanctuary for communion in the temple-worship, is confirmed by the words of Hezekiah, when he proclaimed a Passover, 2 Chr. 30:8, "Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were; but yield yourselves unto the Lord (in the Hebrew, Give the hand to the Lord), and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever, and serve the Lord your God." To give the hand, seems to be a Hebrew phrase for entering into covenant, or obliging themselves by covenant, Ezra 10:19, "And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives." And, as has been already observed, it was foretold that Christians should in this way be admitted to communion in the privileges of the church of Christ. Having thus established the premises of the argument, I now come to the consequence.

### SECTION III

*That none ought to be admitted to the privileges of adult persons  
in the church of Christ, but such as make a profession of real piety.*

The covenant to be owned or professed, is God's covenant, which he has revealed as the method of our spiritual union with him, and our acceptance as the objects of his

eternal favour; which is no other than the covenant of grace; at least it is so, without dispute, in these days of the gospel. To own this covenant, is to profess the consent of our hearts to it; and that is the sum and substance of true piety. It is not only professing the assent of our understandings, that we understand there is such a covenant, or that we understand we are obliged to comply with it; but it is to profess the consent of our wills, it is to manifest that we do comply with it. There is mutual profession in this affair, a profession on Christ's part, and a profession on our part; as it is in marriage. And it is the same sort of profession that is made on both sides, in this respect, that each professes a consent of heart. Christ in his Word declares an entire consent of heart as to what he offers; and the visible Christian, in the answer that he makes to it in his Christian profession, declares a consent and compliance of heart to his proposal. Owning the covenant is professing to make the transaction of that covenant our own. The transaction of that covenant is that of espousals to Christ; on our part, it is giving our souls to Christ as his spouse. There is no one thing that the covenant of grace is so often compared to in Scripture, as the marriage covenant; and the visible transaction, or mutual profession there is between Christ and the visible church, is abundantly compared to the mutual profession there is in marriage. In marriage the bride professes to yield to the bridegroom's suit, and to take him for her husband, renouncing all others, and to give up herself to him to be entirely and forever possessed by him as his wife. But he that professes this towards Christ, professes saving faith. They that openly covenanted with God according to the tenor of the institution (Deu. 10:20) visibly united themselves to God in the union of that covenant. They professed on their parts the union of the covenant of God, which was the covenant of grace. It is said in the institution, "Thou shalt cleave to the Lord, and swear by his name;" or, as the words more literally are, "Thou shalt unite unto the Lord, and swear into his name." So in Isa. 56:6 it is called a "joining themselves to the Lord." But the union, cleaving, or joining of that covenant is saving faith, the grand condition of the covenant of Christ, by which we are in Christ. This is what, on our part, brings us into the Lord. For a person explicitly or professedly to enter into the union or relation of the covenant of grace with Christ, is the same as professedly to do that which on our part is the uniting act, and that is the act of faith. To profess the covenant of grace, is to profess it, not as a spectator, but as one immediately concerned in the affair, as a party in the covenant professed; and this is to profess that in the covenant which belongs to us as a party, or to profess our part in the covenant; and that is the soul's believing acceptance of the Saviour. Christ's part is salvation, our part is a saving faith in him; not a feigned, but unfeigned faith; not a common, but special and saving faith; no other faith is the condition of the covenant of grace.

I know the distinction made by some, between the internal and external covenant; but, I hope, the divines that make this distinction, would not be understood, that there are really and properly two covenants of grace; but only that those who profess the one only covenant of grace, are of two sorts. There are those who comply with it internally and really, and others who do so only externally, that is, in profession and visibility. But he that externally and visibly complies with the covenant of grace, appears and professes to do so really. There is also this distinction concerning the covenant of grace; it is exhibited two ways, the one externally, by the preaching of the word, the other internally and spiritually, by enlightening the mind rightly to understand the word. But it is with the covenant, as it is with the call of the gospel: he that really complies with the external call, has the internal call; so he that truly complies with the

external proposal of God's covenant, as visible Christians profess to do, does indeed perform the inward condition of it. But the New Testament affords no more foundation for supposing two real and properly distinct covenants of grace, than it does to suppose two sorts of real Christians.

When those persons who were baptised in infancy properly own their baptismal covenant, the meaning is, that they now, being capable to act for themselves, do professedly and explicitly make their parents' act, in giving them up to God, their own, by expressly giving themselves up to God. But this no person can do, without either being deceived, or dissembling and professing what he himself supposes to be a falsehood, unless he supposes that in his heart he consents to be God's. A child of Christian parents never does that for himself which his parents did for him in infancy, till he gives himself wholly to God. But surely he does not do it, who not only keeps back a part, but the chief part, his heart and soul. He that keeps back his heart, does in effect keep back all; and therefore, if he be sensible of it, is guilty of solemn wilful mockery, if at the same time he solemnly and publicly professes that he gives himself up to God. If there are any words used by such, which in their proper signification imply that they give themselves up to God; and if these words, as they intend them to be understood, and as they are understood by those that hear them, according to their established use and custom among that people, do not imply, that they do it really, but do truly reserve or keep back the chief part; it ceases to be a profession of giving themselves up to God, and so ceases to be a professed covenanting with God. The thing which they profess belongs to no existing covenant of God; for God has revealed no such covenant, in which our transacting of it is a giving up ourselves to him with reserve, or holding back our souls, our chief part, and in effect our all. And therefore, although such public and solemn professing may be a very unwarrantable and great abuse of words, and taking God's name in vain, it is no professed covenanting with God.

One thing, as observed, that belonged to Israel's swearing in to the name of the Lord, was saying, The Lord liveth; whereby they professed their faith in God's all-sufficiency, immutability, and faithfulness. But if they really had such a faith, it was a saving grace. To them who indeed trust in the all-sufficiency of God, he will surely be an all-sufficient portion; and them who trust in God's immutability and faithfulness, he surely will never leave nor forsake. There were two ways of swearing Jehovah liveth, that we read of in Scripture; one we read of, Jer. 4:2, "Thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness;" and the other way is swearing falsely, which we read of in the next chapter, Jer. 5:2, 3, "And though they say, The Lord liveth, yet surely they swear falsely." And certainly none ought to do this. It follows, "O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth?" i.e. God desires sincerity of heart in those that profess religion. Here a gracious sincerity is opposed to a false profession; for when it is said, "O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth?" the expression is parallel with Psa. 51:6, "Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts." 1 Sam. 16:7, "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Psa. 11:7, "His countenance doth behold the upright." But these texts speak of a gracious sincerity. Those spoken of, Jer. 4:2, that "sware, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and righteousness," were gracious persons, who had a thorough conversion to God, as appears by the preceding verse, "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me"; i.e. Do not do as Judah was charged with doing in the foregoing chapter,

Jer. 3:10, "Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly." Do not do thus, "But if thou wilt return, return unto me." And then it is added in the second verse, "And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth," etc.; that is, then your profession of religion will be worth regarding, you will be indeed what you pretend to be, you will be Israelites indeed, in whose profession is no guile. They who said, "The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness;" said, The Lord liveth, as David did, Psa. 18:46, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my Rock." And as the apostle says he did, 1 Tim. 4:10, "We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe," and as he would have Timothy exhort rich men to do, 1 Tim. 6:17, "That they trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God." When the apostle speaks of a profession of our faith in Christ, as one duty which all Christians ought to perform as they seek salvation, it is the profession of a saving faith. His words plainly imply it: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." The faith which was to be professed with the mouth, was the same which the apostle speaks of as in the heart, but that is saving faith. The latter is yet plainer in the following words; "for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Believing unto righteousness, is saving faith; but it is evidently the same faith which is spoken of, as professed with the mouth, in the next words in the same sentence. And that the Gentiles, in professing the Christian religion, or swearing to Christ, should profess saving faith, is implied, Isa. 45:23, 24. "Every tongue shall swear; surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" i.e. should profess entirely to depend on Christ's righteousness and strength.

For persons merely to promise, that they will believe in Christ, or that they will hereafter comply with the conditions and duties of the covenant of grace, is not to own that covenant. Such persons do not profess now to enter into the covenant of grace with Christ, or into the relation of that covenant to Christ. All they do at present, is to say, they will do it hereafter; they profess, that they will hereafter obey that command of God, to believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. But what is such a profession good for, and what credit is to be given to such promises of future obedience; when at the same time they pretend no other at present, than to live and continue in rebellion against those great commands which give no allowance or license for delay? They who do thus, instead of properly owning the covenant, do rather for the present visibly reject it. It is not unusual, in some churches, where the doctrine I oppose has been established, for persons at the same time that they come into the church, and pretend to own the covenant, freely to declare to their neighbours, they have no imagination that they have any true faith in Christ, or love to him. Such persons, instead of being professedly united to Christ, in the union of the covenant of grace, are rather visibly destitute of the love of Christ; and so, instead of being qualified for admission to the Lord's supper, are rather exposed to that denunciation of the apostle, 1 Cor. 16:22, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha."

That outward covenanting, which is agreeable to scripture-institution, is not only a promising what is future (though that is not excluded), but a professing what is present, as it is in the marriage-covenant. For a woman to promise, that she will hereafter renounce all other men for the sake of him who makes suit to her, and will in some future time accept of him for her husband, is not for her now to enter into the marriage-covenant with him. She that does this with a man, professes now to accept of

him, renouncing all others; though promises of hereafter behaving towards him as a wife, are also included in the transaction. It seems the primitive converts to Christianity, in the profession they made of religion, in order to their admission into the Christian church, and in their visibly entering into covenant, in order to the initiating seal of the covenant in baptism, did not explicitly make any promises of anything future. They only professed the present sentiments and habit of their minds, they professed, that they believed in Christ, and so were admitted into the church by baptism; and yet undoubtedly they were, according to fore-mentioned prophecies, admitted in the way of public covenanting. As the covenant-people of God, they owned the covenant, before the seal of the covenant was applied. Their professing faith in Christ was visibly owning the covenant of grace, because faith in Christ was the grand condition of that covenant. Indeed, if the faith which they professed in order to baptism, was only an historical or doctrinal faith (as some suppose), or any common faith, it would not have been any visible entering into the covenant of grace; for a common faith is not the condition of that covenant; nor would there properly have been any covenanting in the case. If we suppose, the faith they professed was the grace by which the soul is united to Christ, their profession was a covenanting in this respect also, that it implied an engagement of future obedience; for true faith in Christ includes in its nature an acceptance of him as our Lord and King, and devoting ourselves to his service. But a profession of historical faith implies no profession of accepting Christ as our King, nor engagement to submit to him as such.

When the Israelites publicly covenanted with God, according to the institution in Deuteronomy, they did not only promise something future, but professed something present; they avouched Jehovah to be their God, and also promised to keep his commands. Thus it was in that solemn covenant-transaction between God and the people on the plains of Moab; which is summarily described, Deu. 26:17, 18, "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice; and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep all his commandments." The people in avouching God for their God, professed a compliance with the terms of the covenant of grace; as summarily expressed in those words, "I will by thy God, and thou shalt be my people." They that avouch the Lord to be their God; and that is to accept him as the object of their supreme respect and trust. For that which we choose as the object of our highest regard, that, and that only, do we take as our God. None therefore that value and love the world more than Jehovah, can, without lying, or being deceived, avouch Jehovah to be their God. And none that do not trust in Christ, but trust more in their own strength or righteousness, can avouch Christ to be their Saviour. To avouch God to be our God, is to profess that he is our God by our own act; i.e. That we choose him to be our chief good and last end, the supreme object of our esteem and regard, to whom we devote ourselves. And if we are sensible that we do not do this sincerely, we can not profess that we actually do it; for he that does not do it sincerely, does not do it at all. There is no room for the distinction of a moral sincerity and gracious sincerity in this case. A supreme respect of heart to God, or a supreme love to him, which is real, is but of one sort. Whoever does with any reality at all make God the object of the supreme regard of his heart, is certainly a gracious person. And whoever does not make God the supreme object of his respect with a gracious sincerity, certainly does not do it with any sincerity. I fear, while leading people in

many of our congregations, who have no thought of their having the least spark of true love to God in their hearts, to say, publicly and solemnly, that they avouch God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be their God, and that they give themselves up to him, we have led them to say they know not what. To be sure, they are very obscure expressions, if they mean anything that a carnal man does, under the reigning power of sin and enmity against God.

Here possibly it may be objected, that it is unreasonable to suppose any such thing should be intended, in the profession of the congregation in the wilderness, as a gracious respect to God, that which is the condition of God's covenant, when we have reason to think that so few of them were truly gracious. But I suppose, upon mature consideration, this will not appear at all unreasonable. It is no more unreasonable to suppose this people to make a profession of that respect to God, which they had not in their hearts now, than at other times when we are informed they did so, as in Eze. 33:31, "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people:" [i.e. as though they were my saints, as they profess to be:] "For with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." So in the apostle's time, people professed that to be in their hearts towards God, which was not there. The apostle is speaking of them, when he says, Tit. 1:16, "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him." This was common among that people; God declares them to an hypocritical nation, Isa. 10:6. And it is certain, this was the case with them in the wilderness; they there professed that respect to God which they had not; as is evident by Psa. 78:36, 37, "They did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." In owning the covenant with God, they professed their heart was right with him, because it is mentioned as an evidence of their having lied or dealt falsely in their profession, that their heart was not right with him, and so proved not steadfast in God's covenant, which they had owned. If their heart had been right with God, they would have been truly pious persons; which is a demonstration, that what they professed was true piety. It also appears that if they had had such a heart in them, as they pretended to have, they would have been truly pious persons, Deu. 5, where we have a rehearsal of their covenanting at mount Sinai: Concerning this it is said, Deu. 5:28, 29, "And the Lord heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the Lord said unto me, They have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever." The people were mistaken about their disposition and preparation of heart to go through the business of God's service, as the man in the parable, who undertook to build a tower without counting the cost. Nor need it seem at all incredible, that the generation who covenanted at mount Sinai, should, the greater part of them, be deceived, and think their hearts thoroughly disposed to give up themselves forever to God, if we consider how much they had strongly to move their affections. They saw the wonders wrought in Egypt and at the Red sea, where they were led through on dry ground, and the Egyptians miraculously destroyed; whereby their affections were greatly raised, and they sang God's praises. And particularly they now saw at mount Sinai, the astonishing manifestations of God's majesty. Probably the greater part of the sinners among them were deceived with false affections; and if there were others less affected and not deceived, it is not incredible that they, in those circumstances, should wilfully dissemble in their profession, and so in a more gross sense flatter God with

their lips, and lie to him with their tongues. And these things are more credible concerning a generation peculiarly left to hardness and blindness of mind in divine matters, and peculiarly noted in the book of Psalms for hypocrisy. And the generation of their children, who owned the covenant on the plains of Moab, had much to move their affections; they saw the awful judgments of God on their fathers. God had brought them through the wilderness, and subdued Sihon king of the Amorites and Og the king of Bashan before them. They had heard Moses' affecting rehearsal of the whole series of God's wonderful dealings with them, together with his most pathetic exhortations. But it was also a time of great revival of religion and powerful influence of the Spirit of God, and that generation was probably the most excellent that ever was in Israel. There is more good and less hurt spoken of them, than of any other generation that we have any account of in Scripture. (See Num. 14:31; Deu. 1:39, and Deu. 8:15, 16; Jos. 22:2, 11, to the end, and Jos. 23:8; Deu. 4:4; Jos. 24:31; Jdg. 2:17, 22; Psa. 68:14; Jer. 2:2, 3, 21, and Jer. 31:2, 3; Hos. 9:10.) A very great part of them swore in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness. And no wonder that others at such a time fell in, either deceiving, or being deceived, with common affections; as is usual in times of great works of God for his church, and of the flourishing of religion. In succeeding generations, as the people grew more corrupt, I suppose, their covenanting or swearing into the name of the Lord degenerated into a matter of mere form and ceremony; even as subscribing religious articles seems to have done with the church of England; and as, it is to be feared, owning the covenant, as it is called, has too much done in New England; it being visibly a prevailing custom for persons to neglect this, till they come to be married, and then to do it for their credit's sake, and that their children may be baptised. And I suppose, there was commonly a great laxness in Israel among the priests who had the conduct of this affair. There were many things in the nature of that comparatively carnal dispensation, which negatively gave occasion for such things: that is, whereby, it had by no means so great a tendency to prevent such irregularities, as the more excellent dispensation introduced by Christ and his apostles. And though these things were testified against by the prophets, before the Babylonian captivity; yet God, who is only wise, did designedly in a great measure wink at these and many other great irregularities in the church, till the time of reformation should come, which the Messiah was to have the honour of introducing. But of these things I may perhaps have occasion to say something more, when I come to answer the objection concerning the Passover.

Now to return to the argument from the nature of covenanting, with God, or giving God's covenant. As to the promises which are herein either explicitly or implicitly made, these imply a profession of true piety. For in the covenant of grace universal obedience is engaged, obedience to all the commands of God; and the performance of inward spiritual duties is as much engaged, as external duties; and in some respects much more. Therefore he that visibly makes the covenant of grace his own, promises to perform those internal duties, and to perform ill duties with a gracious sincerity. We have no warrant, in our profession of God's covenant, to divide the duties of it, to take some, and leave out others: especially to leave out those great commands, of believing with the heart, of loving the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul, and our neighbours as ourselves. He that leaves out these, in effect leaves out all; for these are the sum of our whole and of all God's commands. If we have these out of our profession, surely it is not the covenant of grace which we profess. The Israelites, when they covenanted with God at mount Sinai, and said, when God had declared to

them the ten commandments, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient;" promised, that as they professed to know God, they would in works not deny, but own and honour him, and would conform to those two great commandments, which are the sum of all the ten, and concerning which God said, "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart," Deu. 6:6. And when they covenanted on the plains of Moab, they promised to keep and do God's commands, "with all their heart, and with all their soul," as is very evident by Deu. 26:16, 17. So it was also when the people owned their covenant in Asa's time, 2 Chr. 15:12, "They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul." We have also another remarkable instance, 2 Kin. 23:3, and 2 Chr. 34:31.

Now he who is wholly under the power of a carnal mind, which is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be, can not promise these things without either great deceit, or the most manifest and palpable absurdity. Promising supposes the person to be conscious to himself, or persuaded of himself, that he has such a heart in him; for his lips pretend to declare his heart. The nature of a promise implies intention or design. And proper real intention implies will, disposition, and compliance of heart. But no natural man is properly willing to do these duties, nor does his heart comply with them: and to make natural men believe otherwise, tends greatly to their hurt. A natural man may be willing, from self-love, and from sinister views, to use means and take pains that he may obtain a willingness or disposition to these duties. But that is a very different thing from actually being willing, or truly having a disposition to them. So he may promise, that he will, from some considerations or other, take great pains to obtain such a heart; but this is not the promise of the covenant of grace. Men may make many religious promises to God some way relating to the covenant of grace, which yet are not themselves the promises of that covenant; nor is there anything of the nature of covenanting in the case, because although they should actually fulfil their promises, God is not obliged by promise to them. If a natural man promises to do all that it is possible for a natural man to do in religion, and fulfils his promises, God is not obliged, by any covenant that he has entered into with man, to perform anything at all for him, respecting his saving benefits. And therefore he that promises these things only, enters into no covenant with God; because the very notion of entering into covenant with any being, is entering into a mutual agreement, doing or engaging that which, if done, the other party becomes engaged on his part. The New Testament informs us but of one covenant God enters into with mankind through Christ, and that is the covenant of grace; in which God obliges himself to nothing in us that is exclusive of unfeigned faith, and the spiritual duties that attend it. Therefore if a natural man makes never so many vows, that he will perform all external duties, and will pray for help to do spiritual duties, and for an ability and will to comply with the covenant of grace, from such principles as he has, he does not lay hold of God's covenant, nor properly enter into any covenant with God. For we have no opportunity to covenant with God in any other way, than that which he has revealed; he becomes a covenant-party in no other covenant. It is true, every natural man that lives under the gospel, is obliged to comply with the terms of the covenant of grace; and if he promises to do it, his promise may increase his obligation, though he flattered God with his mouth, and lied to him with his tongue, as the children of Israel did in promising. But it will not thence follow, that they ought knowingly to make a lying promise, or that ministers and churches should countenance them in so doing.

Indeed there is not natural man but what deceives himself, if he thinks he is truly willing to perform external obedience to God, universally and perseveringly through the various trials of life. And therefore in promising it, he is either very deceitful, or is like the foolish deceived man that undertook to build when he had not wherewith to finish. And if it be known by the church, before whom he promises to build and finish, that at the same time he does not pretend to have a heart to finish, his promise is worthy of no credit or regard from them, and can make nothing visible to them but his presumption.

A great confirmation of what has been said under this head of covenanting, is Psa. 50:16, "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" This term, the wicked, in the more general use of it in Scripture, is applied in that extent as to include all ungodly or graceless persons, all that are under the reigning power of sin, and are the objects of God's anger, or exposed to his eternal vengeance; as might easily be made to appear by a particular enumeration of texts all over the Bible. All such are in Scripture called, workers of iniquity, the children of the wicked one, Mat. 13:38. All such are said to be of the devil, 1 John 3:8. And to be the children of the devil, 1 John 3:10. The righteous and the wicked are, in a multitude of places in Scripture, evidently opposed one to the other, and distinguished as saints and sinners, holy and unholy, those that fear God and those that fear him not, those that love him and those that hate him. All mankind are in Scripture divided by these distinctions, and the Bible knows of no neuters or third sort.

Indeed those who are really wicked, may be visibly righteous, righteous in profession and outward appearance. But a sort of men who have no saving grace, and yet are not really wicked, the Scripture is entirely ignorant of. It is reasonable to suppose, that by wicked men, in this psalm, is meant all that hate instruction, and reject God's Word (Psa. 50:17) and not merely such as are guilty of particular crimes mentioned, Psa. 50:17-20, stealing, adultery, fraud, and backbiting. Though only some particular ways of wickedness are mentioned, yet we are not to understand that all others are excluded. Yea the words, in the conclusion of the paragraph, are expressly applied to all that forget God in such a manner as to expose themselves to be torn in pieces by God's wrath in hell, Psa. 50:22, "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." We can no more justly argue, that because some gross sins are here specified, that no sinners are meant but such as live in those or other gross sins, than we can argue from Rev. 22:14, 15, that none shall be shut out of heaven but those who have lived in the gross sins there mentioned; "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city: for without are dogs, and sorcerers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Nothing is more common in Scripture, than - in the descriptions it gives both of the godly and ungodly, together with their general character - to insert some particular excellent practices of the one to which grace tends, and some certain gross sins of the other for which there is a foundation in the reigning corruption of their hearts. So, lying is mentioned as part of the character of all natural men, Psa. 58:3, 4 (there called wicked men, as in Psa. 50). "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies: their poison is like the poison of a serpent," etc. So it is said of the wicked, Psa. 10:2, 3, 4, 7, "His mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." This the apostle, Rom. 3, cites as a description of all natural men. So it is said of the wicked,

Psa. 140:3, "They have sharpened their tongues as a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips;" which the same apostle, in the same place, also cites as what is said of all natural men. The very same gross sins which are here mentioned in the fiftieth psalm, are from time to time inserted in Solomon's' descriptions of the wicked man, as opposed to the righteous, in the book of Proverbs. Particularly, the sins mentioned in the 19th verse of that psalm (Psa. 50:19), "Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit;" are thus mentioned, as belonging to the character of the wicked man, Pro. 12:5, 6, "The thoughts of the righteous are right; but the counsels of the wicked are deceit. The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood; but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them." Nevertheless it is plain, that the wise man in this book, in his distinction of the righteous and the wicked, means the same as godly and ungodly. Only reading the two foregoing chapters will be enough to satisfy any of this. Observe Pro. 10:3, 7, 16, 20, 21, 24, 28-32; and 11:3, 5, 9, 11, 18-23, 30, 31, besides innumerable other like texts all over the book. In Pro. 1:16 it is said of sinners, "Their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood." This the apostle, in Rom. 3:15, cites as belonging to the description of all natural men. So in the description of the wicked, Pro. 4:14-19. it is said that "they sleep not unless they have done mischief; that they drink the wine of violence," etc. and yet by the wicked there is meant the same with the graceless man; as appears by the antithesis there made between him and the just, or righteous, "whose path is as the shining light, that shineth more and more to the perfect day."

As a further evidence that by the wicked in Psa. 50:16 is meant the same as the ungodly or graceless, it is to be observed, here is a pretty manifest antithesis, or opposition between the wicked, and the saints, that shall be gathered to Christ at the day of judgment, Psa. 50:5. There God speaking of his coming to judgment, says, "Gather my saints together, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice;" and then, after showing the insufficiency of the sacrifices of beasts, implying that it is a greater sacrifice by which these saints make a covenant with him, it is added, "But to the wicked" [that are not in the number of my saints] "God doth say, What hast thou to do, take my covenant into thy mouth?" Approving of the covenanting of the former, but disapproving the covenanting of the latter. As to the gathering of God's saints, there mentioned, if we consider the foregoing and the following verses, it is evidently the same with the gathering of his elect, when Christ comes in the clouds of heaven, Mat. 24:30, 31, and with the gathering of the righteous, as his wheat into his barn, at the day of judgment, Mat. 13. And therefore there is as much reason to suppose, that by the wicked, which are opposed to them, is meant all graceless persons, as there is to understand the doers of iniquity, Mat. 13, as opposed to the righteous, which shall then "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," Mat. 13:43. And there is one thing more which still further confirms me in my construction of Psa. 50:16, which is, that the plain reason here given against wicked men taking God's covenant into their mouths, holds good with respect to all graceless men, viz. Because they do not comply with, but reject, the very covenant, which they with their mouths profess to own and consent to. Psa. 50:17, "Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee;" as much as to say, "Thou rejectest and hast a reigning enmity against my statutes, with which thou declarest and professest a compliance." And this is the spirit and practice of all who live in the sin of unbelief and rejection of Christ; they live in a way that is altogether inconsistent with the covenant of grace; for against the sum and substance of the condition and engagement of that covenant every natural man is under

the reigning power of enmity, and lives in contradiction to it. Therefore, I think, it follows, that they who know it is thus with them, have nothing to do to take God's covenant into their mouths.

#### SECTION IV

*The nature of things seems to afford no good reason why the people of Christ should not openly profess a proper respect to him in their hearts, as well as a true notion of him in their heads, or a right opinion of him in their judgments, and this is confirmed by scripture testimony.*

I can conceive of nothing reasonably to be supposed as the design or end of a public profession of religion, that does not as much require a profession of honour, esteem, and friendship of heart towards Christ, as an orthodox opinion about him. Or why the former should not be as much expected and required in order to be admitted into the company of his friends and followers, as the latter. It can not be because the former in itself is not as important as the latter; seeing the very essence of religion itself consists in the former, and without it the latter is wholly vain, and makes us never the better; neither happier in ourselves, nor more acceptable to God. One end of a public profession of religion is giving public honour to God. But surely the profession of inward esteem and a supreme respect of heart towards God more directly ends to it, than the declaring of right speculative notions of him. We look upon it that our friends do the more especially and directly put honour upon us, when upon proper occasions they stand ready not only to own the truth of such and such facts concerning us, but also to testify their high esteem and cordial and entire regard to us. When persons only manifest their doctrinal knowledge of religion, and express the assent of their judgments, but at the same time make no pretence but that they are wholly destitute of all true love to God, and are under the dominion of enmity against him, their profession is, in some respects, very greatly to God's dishonour. For they leave reason for the public greatly to suspect that they hold the truth in unrighteousness, and that they are some of those who have both seen and hated Christ and his Father, John 15:24. Who of all persons have the greatest sin, and are most to God's dishonour.

I am at a loss, how that visibility of saintship, which the honoured author of *The Appeal to the Learned*, supposes to be all that is required in order to admission to the Lord's supper, can be much to God's honour, viz. Such a visibility as leaves reason to believe, that the greater part of those who have it, are enemies to God in their hearts, and inwardly the servants of sin. Such a visibility of religion as this, seems rather to increase a visibility of wickedness in the world, and so of God's dishonour, than anything else; i.e. it makes more wickedness visible to the eye of a human judgment, and gives men reason to think, there is more wickedness in the world than otherwise would be visible to them. Because we have reason to think, that those who live in a rejection of Christ, under the light of the gospel, and the knowledge and common belief of its doctrine, have vastly greater sin and guilt than other men. And that venerable divine himself did abundantly teach this.

Christ came into the world to engage in a war with God's enemies, sin and Satan; and a great war there is maintained between them; and the contest is, who shall have the possession of our hearts. Now it is reasonable, under these circumstances, that we should declare on whose side we are, whether on Christ's side, or on the side of his

enemies. If we would be admitted among Christ's friends and followers, it is reasonable, that we should profess we are on the Lord's side, and that we yield our hearts to him, and not to his rivals. And this seems plainly to be the design and nature of a public profession of Christ. If this profession is not made, no profession is made that is worth regarding, in such a case as this, and to any such purpose as being admitted among his visible friends. There is no being on Christ's side, in this case, but with an undivided heart preferring him to all his rivals, and renouncing them all for his sake. The case admits of no neutrality, or lukewarmness, or a middle sort of persons with a moral sincerity, or such a common faith as is consistent with loving sin and the world better than Christ. He that is not with me (says Christ) is against me. And therefore none profess to be on Christ's side, but they who profess to renounce his rivals. For those who would be called Christians, to profess no higher regard to Christ than what will admit of a superior regard to the world, is more absurd than if a woman pretending to marry a man, and take him for her husband, should profess to take him in some sort, but yet not pretend to take him in such a manner as is inconsistent with her allowing other men a fuller possession of her, and greater intimacy with her, than she allows him. The nature of the case, as it stands between us and Jesus Christ, is such, that an open solemn profession of being entirely for him, and giving him the possession of our hearts, renouncing all competitors, is more requisite in this, than a like profession in any other case. The profession of an intermediate sort of state of our mind, is very disagreeable to the nature of Christ's work and kingdom in the world, and all that belongs to the designs and ends of his administrations. And for ministers and churches openly to establish such a profession of Christ as part of his public service, which does not imply more than lukewarmness, is, I fear, to make a mere sham of a solemn public profession of Christianity, and seems to be wholly without warrant from the Word of God, and greatly to his dishonour.

It can not be justly pretended, as a reason why the opinion concerning doctrines should be professed, and not friendship or respect of heart, that the former is more easily discerned and known by us than the latter. For though it be true, that men may be at a loss concerning the latter, yet it is as true they may be so concerning the former too. They may be at a loss in many cases concerning the fullness of the determination of their own inclination and choice; and so they may concerning the fullness of the determination of their judgment. I know of nothing in human nature that hinders the acts of men's wills being properly subject to their own consciousness, any more than the acts of their judgment; nor of any reason to suppose that men may not discern their own consent, as well as their assent. The Scripture plainly supposes gracious dispositions and acts to be things properly under the eye of conscience. 2 Cor. 13:5, "Know ye not your own selves?" John 21:15, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" and many other places. Nor is the nature of godliness less made known, that the true doctrines of religion. Piety of heart, in the more essential things belonging to it, is as clearly revealed, as the doctrines concerning the nature of God, the person of the Messiah, and the method of his redemption.

We find in Scripture, that all those of God's professing people or visible saints who are not truly pious, are represented as counterfeits, as having guile, disguise, and a false appearance, as making false pretences, and as being deceitful and hypocrites. Thus Christ says of Nathanael, John 1:47, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile;" that is, a truly gracious person; implying, that those of God's professing people, who

are not gracious, are guileful, and deceitful in their profession. So sinners in Zion, or in God's visible church, are called hypocrites. Isa. 33:14, "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites." Isa. 9:17, "Every one is an hypocrite and an evil-doer." So they are called lying children, Isa. 30:9, and Isa. 59:13, and are represented as lying, in pretending to be of the temple or church of God. Jer. 7:2, 4, "Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." These are spoken of as falsely calling themselves of the holy city, Isa. 48:1, 2. They are called silver-dross, and reprobate or refuse silver (Eze. 22:18; Jer. 6:30), which glisters and shows like true silver, but has not its inward worth. So they are compared to adulterated wine, Isa. 1:22 and to trees full of leaves, bidding fair for fruitfulness, Mat. 21:19. Clouds that look as if they were full of rain, yet bring nothing but wind, Jude 12. Wells without water, that do but cheat the thirsty traveller, 2 Pet. 2:17. A deceitful bow, that appears good, but fails the archer, Psa. 78:57; Hos. 7:16. Mr. Stoddard, in his Appeal to the Learned, from time to time, supposes all visible saints, who are not truly pious, to be hypocrites, as in page 15, 17, 18.

Now what ground or reason can there be thus to represent those to be visible saints, or members of God's visible church, who are not truly pious, if the profession of such does not imply any pretence to true piety; and when they never made a pretence to anything more than common grace, or moral sincerity, which many of them truly have, and therefore are not at all hypocritical or deceitful in their pretences, and are as much without guile, in what they make a profession of, as Nathanael was? The psalmist speaking of sincere piety, calls it truth in the inward parts. Psa. 51:6, "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts." It is called truth with reference to some declaration or profession made by God's visible people; but on the hypothesis which I oppose, common grace is as properly truth in the inward parts, in this respect, as saving grace. God says concerning Israel, Deu. 32:5, "Their spot is not the spot of his children." God here speaks of himself, as it were, disappointed; the words having reference to some profession they had made. For why should the remark be made, after this manner, that spots appeared upon them, and showed marks that they were not his children, if they never pretended to be his children, and never were accepted under any such notion to any of the privileges of his people?

God is pleased to represent himself in his word as if he trusted the profession of his visible people, and as disappointed when they did not approve themselves as his faithful, steadfast, and thorough friends. Isa. 63:8, 9, 10, "For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie. So he was their Saviour: in all their affliction he was afflicted. But they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy." The same is represented in many other places. I suppose that God speaks after this manner, because, in his present external dealings with his visible people, he does not act in the capacity of the Searcher of hearts, but accommodates himself to their nature, and the present state and circumstances of his church, and speaks to them and treats them after the manner of men, and deals with them in their own way. <sup>\*1\*</sup> But supposing the case to be even thus, there would be no ground for such representations, if there were no profession of true godliness. When God is represented as trusting that men will be his faithful friends, we must understand that he trusts to their pretences. But how improperly would the matter be so represented, if

there were no pretences to trust to, no pretences of any real thorough friendship! However there may be a profession of some common affection that is morally sincere, yet there is no pretence of loving him more than, yea not so much as, his enemies. What reason to trust that they will be faithful to God as their master, when the religion they profess amounts to no more than serving two masters? What reason to trust that they will be stable in their ways, when they do not pretend to be of a single heart, and all know that the double-minded persons used to be unstable in all their ways? Those who only profess moral sincerity or common grace, do not pretend to love God above the world. And such grace is what God and man know is liable to pass away as the early dew, and the morning cloud. If what men profess amounts to nothing beyond lukewarmness, it is not to be expected, that they will be faithful to the death. If men do not pretend to have any root in them, what cause is there for any disappointment when they wither away.

When God, in the fore-mentioned place, Isa. 63, represents himself as trusting Israel's profession, and saying, "Surely they are my people, children that will not lie;" it can not be understood, as if he trusted that they were his people in that sense, in which the ten tribes were called God's people after they had given up themselves to idolatry for two or three hundred years together without once repenting. But, surely they are my sincere saints and children, as they profess to be, Israelites indeed, without guile; they would not do so evil a thing as to make a lying profession. This seems to be the plain import of the words. It therefore shows that the profession they made was of real vital godliness.

The eight first verses of the fifty-sixth chapter of Isaiah (Isa. 56:1-8), I think, afford good evidence, that such qualifications are requisite in order to the privileges of a visible church state, as I have insisted on. In the four preceding chapters we have a prophecy of gospel-times, the blessed state of things which the Messiah should introduce. The prophecy of the same times is continued in the former part of this chapter. Here we have a prophecy of the abolishing of the ceremonial law, which was a wall of separation, that kept two sorts of persons (viz. eunuchs and Gentiles), out from the ordinances of the church or congregation of the Lord (for the words congregation and church are the same), the place of whose meeting was in God's house within God's walls, Isa 56:5, and on God's holy mountain, Isa. 56:7. That in the ceremonial law which especially kept out the Gentiles, was the law of circumcision; and the law that the eunuch shall not enter into the congregation or church of the Lord, we have in Deu. 23:1. Now here it is foretold, that in the days when "God's salvation shall be come, and his righteousness revealed," by the coming of the Messiah, this wall of separation should be broken down, this ceremonial law removed out of the way; (but still taking care to note, that the law of the Sabbath shall be continued, as not being one of those ceremonial observances which shall be abolished;) and then it is declared, what is the great qualification which should be looked at in those blessed days, when these external ceremonial qualifications of circumcision and soundness of body should no more be insisted on, viz. piety of heart and practice, "joining themselves to the Lord, loving the name of the Lord, to be his servants, choosing the things that please him," etc. Isa. 56:3-8, "Neither let the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people; neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree; for thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my

covenant, even unto them will I give in my house, and within my walls, a place, and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give unto them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant: even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar: for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord God which gathered the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him besides those that are gathered unto him.”

## SECTION V

*The representations which Christ makes of his visible church, from time to time, in his discourses and parables, make the thing manifest which I have laid down.*

This is required by the representation which Christ makes in the latter end of Matthew 7. of the final issue of things with respect to the different sorts of members of his visible church. Those that only say, Lord, Lord, and those who do the will of his Father which is in heaven; those who build their house upon a rock, and those who build upon the sand. They are all (of both kinds) evidently such as have pretended to a high honour and regard to Christ, have claimed an interest in him, and accordingly hoped to be finally acknowledged and received as his. Those visible Christians who are not true Christians cry, Lord, Lord; that is, are forward to profess respect and claim relation to him; and will be greatly disappointed hereafter in not being owned by him. They shall then come and cry, Lord, Lord. This compellation, Lord, is commonly given to Jesus Christ in the new Testament, as signifying the special relation which Christ stood in to his disciples, rather than his universal dominion. They shall then come and earnestly claim relation, as it is represented of Israel of old, in the day of their distress, and God’s awful judgments upon them, Hos. 8:2, “Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee.” To know does not here intend speculative knowledge, but knowing as one knows his own, with a peculiar respect and interest. These false disciples shall not only claim an interest in Christ, but shall plead and bring arguments to confirm their claim; “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works?” It is evidently the language of those that are dreadfully disappointed. “Then (says Christ) I will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity:” q. d, “Though they profess a relation to me, I will profess none to them; though they plead that they know me, and have an interest in me, I will declare to them that I never owned them as any of mine; and will bid them depart from me as those that I will never own, nor have any thing to do with in such a relation as they claim.” Thus all the hopes they had lived in, of being hereafter received and owned by Christ as in the number of his friends and favourites, are dashed in pieces. This is further illustrated by what follows, in the comparison of the wise man who built his house on a rock; representing those professed disciples who build their hope of an interest in him on a sure foundation, whose house shall stand in the trying day: and the foolish man who built his house on the sand; representing those professed disciples or hearers of his word, who build their opinion and hope of an interest in him on a false foundation, whose house in the great time of trial shall have a dreadful fall, their vain hope shall issue in dismal disappointment and confusion.

On the whole, it is manifest that all visible Christians or saints, all Christ's professing disciples or hearers that profess him to be their Lord, according to the scripture notion of professing Christ, are such as profess a "saving interest in him and relation to him, and live in the hope of being hereafter owned as those that are so interested and related." By those that hear Christ's sayings, in this place, are not meant merely auditors of the word preached; for there are many such who make no pretence to an interest in Christ, and have no such hope or opinion built on any foundation at all; but those who profess to hearken, believe, and yield submission to the word of Christ. This is confirmed by the manner in which the matter is expressed in Luke 6:47, "Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doth them, I will show you to whom he is like:" i.e. Whosoever visibly comes to me, and is one of my professed disciples, etc.

This matter is confirmed by that parallel representation that Christ gives us in Luke 13:25-29 of his final disposal of the two different sorts of persons that are in the kingdom or church of God; viz. those who shall be allowed in his church or kingdom when it comes to its state of glory, and those who though they have visibly been in it, shall be thrust out of it. It is represented of the latter, that they shall then come and claim relation and interest, and cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us;" and "Christ shall answer, and say, I know you not whence you are." As much as to say, "Why do you claim relation and acquaintance with me? You are strangers to me, I do not own you." "Then (it is said) they shall begin to say, We have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." As much as to say, "This is a strange thing, that thou dost not own us! We are exceedingly surprised, that thou shouldst account us as strangers that have no part in thee, when we have eaten and drank in thy presence," etc. And when he shall finally insist upon it, that he does not own them, and will have nothing to do with them as his, "then there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;" then they shall be filled with dismal disappointment, confusion, and despair, when they shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, with whom they expected to dwell forever there, and they themselves thrust out. By this it is evident, that those visible members of the kingdom of God, that hereafter shall be cast out of it, are such as look upon themselves now interested in Christ and the eternal blessings of his kingdom, and make that profession.

The same is manifest by the parable of the ten virgins, Mat. 25. In the first verse it is said, "The kingdom of heaven (*i. e.* the church of Christ) is likened unto ten virgins." The two sorts of virgins evidently represent the two sorts of members of the visible church of Christ; the wise, those who are true Christians; and the foolish, those who are apparent but not true Christians. The foolish virgins were to all appearance the children of the bride-chamber; such as had accepted of the invitation to the wedding, which represents the invitations of the gospel, wherein the bridegroom and bride say, *Come*. They herein had testified the same respect to the bridegroom and bride that the wise had. The parable naturally leads us to suppose, that they were to appearance every way of the same society with the wise, pretended to be the same sort of persons, in like manner interested in the bridegroom, and that they were received by the wise under such a notion. They made a profession of the very same kind of honour and regard to the bridegroom, in going forth to meet him with their lamps, as his friends to show him respect, and had the same hopes of enjoying the privileges and entertainments of the wedding. There was a difference with respect to oil in their vessels, but there was no difference with respect to their lamps. One thing intended by

their lamps, as I suppose is agreed by all, is their profession. This is the same in both; and in both it is a profession of grace, as a lamp (from its known end and use) is a manifestation or show of oil. Another thing signified by the blaze of their lamps seems to be the light of hope. Their lamps signify in general the appearance of grace or godliness, including both the appearance of it to the view or judgment of others, and also to their own view, and the judgment they entertain of themselves. Their lamps shone, not only in the eyes of others, but also in their own eyes. This is confirmed because on hearing the midnight cry, they find their lamps are gone out; which seems most naturally to represent, that however hypocrites may maintain their hopes while they live, and while their judge is at a distance, yet when they come to be alarmed by the sound of the last trumpet, their hopes will immediately expire and vanish away, and very often fail them in the sensible approaches of death. Where is the hope of the hypocrite, when God takes away his soul? But till the midnight cry the foolish virgins seem to entertain the same hopes with the wise. When they first went forth with the wise virgins, their lamps shone in their own eyes, and in the eyes of others, in like manner with the lamps of the wise virgins. So that by this parable it also appears, that all visible members of the Christian church, or kingdom of heaven, are those that profess to be gracious persons, as looking on themselves, and at least pretending, to be such.

And that true piety is what persons ought to look at in themselves as the qualification that is proper in coming into the visible church of Christ, and taking the privileges of its members, I think, is evident also from the parable of the marriage, which the king made for his son, Mat. 22, particularly the 11th and 12th verses (Mat. 22:11-12), "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding-garment? and he was speechless." Mr. Stoddard says (Appeal, page 4, 5), "Here is a representation of the day of judgment; and such persons as come for salvation without a wedding-garment shall be rejected in that day. So that here being nothing said about the Lord's supper, all arguing from this scripture falls to the ground." Upon which I take leave to observe, that the king's coming in to see the guests, means Christ's visiting his professing church at the day of judgment, I make no doubt; but, that the guests coming into the king's house means persons coming for salvation at the day of judgment, I am not convinced. If it may properly be represented, that any reprobates will come for salvation at the day of judgment, they will not do so before the king appears; but Christ will appear first, and then they will come and cry to him for salvation. Whereas, in this parable, the guests are represented as gathered together in the king's house before the king appears, and the king as coming in and finding them there; where they had entered while the day of grace lasted, while the door was kept open, and invitations given forth; and not like those who come for salvation at the day of judgment, Luke 13:25, who come "after the door is shut, and stand without knocking at the door." I think it is apparent beyond all contradiction, that by the guests coming into the king's house at the invitation of the servants, is intended Jews and Gentiles coming into the Christian church, at the preaching of Christ's apostles and others, making profession of godliness, and expecting to partake of the eternal marriage supper. I showed before, that what is called the house of God in the New Testament, is his church. In this parable, the king first sends forth his servants to call them that were bidden, and they would not come; and they having repeatedly rejected the invitation, and evil-entreated the servants, the king sent forth his armies

and burnt up their city; representing the Jews being first invited, and rejecting the invitations of the gospel, and persecuting Christ's ministers, and so provoking God to give up Jerusalem and the nation to destruction. Then the king sends forth his servants into the highways, to call in all sorts; upon which many flocked into the king's house; hereby most plainly representing the preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, and their flocking into the Christian church. This gathering of the Gentiles into the king's house, is before the day of judgment, and the man without the wedding-garment among them. It fitly represents the resorting that should be to the Christian church, during the day of grace, through all ages; but by no means signifies men's coming for salvation after the day of grace is at an end, at Christ's appearing in the clouds of heaven. Let this parable be compared with that parallel place, Luke 14:16-24. The company gathered to the marriage in this parable, plainly represents the same thing with the company of virgins gathered to the marriage in the other parable, Mat. 25. viz. the company of visible saints, or the company belonging to the visible kingdom of heaven; and therefore both parables are introduced alike with these words, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto," etc. As to the man's being cast out of the king's house when the king comes in to see his guests, it is agreeable to other representations made of false Christians being thrust out of God's kingdom at the day of judgment; the "servant's not abiding in the house for ever, though the son abideth ever;" God's "taking away their part out of the holy city, and blotting their names out of the book of life," etc.

Mr. Stoddard says, "This person that had not a wedding-garment, was a reprobate; but every one that partakes of the Lord's supper without grace is not a reprobate." I answer, all that will be found in the king's house without grace when the king comes in to see the guests, are doubtless reprobates.

If it be questioned, whether by the wedding-garment be meant true piety, or whether hereby is not intended moral sincerity, let the Scripture interpret itself; which elsewhere tells us plainly what the wedding-garment is at the marriage of the Son of God: Rev. 19:7, 8, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." None, I suppose, will say, this righteousness that is so pure, is the common grace of lukewarm professors, and those that go about to serve God and mammon. The same wedding-garment we have an account of in Psa. 45:13, 14, "The king's daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold: she shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-work." But we need go no where else but to the parable itself; that alone determines the matter. The wedding-garment spoken of as that without which professors will be excluded from among God's people at the day of judgment, is not moral sincerity, or common grace, but special saving grace. If common grace were the wedding-garment intended, not only would the king cast out those whom he found without a wedding-garment, but also many with a wedding-garment: for all such as shall be found then with no better garment than moral sincerity, will be bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness; such a wedding-garment as this will not save them. So that true piety, unfeigned faith, or the righteousness of Christ which is upon everyone that believeth, is doubtless the wedding-garment intended. But if a person has good and proper ground to proceed on in coming into the king's house, that knows he is without this wedding-garment, why should the king upbraid him, saying, "How camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment?" And why should he be speechless, when asked such a question?

Would he not have had a good answer to make? viz. “Thou thyself has given me leave to come in hither, without a wedding-garment.” Or this, “Thy own word is my warrant; which invited such as had only common grace, or moral sincerity, to come in.”

## SECTION VI

*What took place, in fact, in the manner and circumstances of the admission of members into the primitive Christian church, and the profession they made in order to their admission, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, will further confirm the point.*

We have an account, concerning these, of their being first awakened by the preaching of the apostles and other ministers, and earnestly inquiring what they should do to be saved, and of their being directed to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus, as the way to have their sins blotted out, and to be saved; and then, upon their professing that they did believe, of their being baptised and admitted into the Christian church. Now can any reasonably imagine, that these primitive converts, when they made that profession in order to their admission, had any such distinction in view as that which some now make, of two sorts of real Christianity, two sorts of sincere faith and repentance, one with a moral and another with a gracious sincerity? Or that the apostles, who disciplined them and baptised them, had instructed them in any such distinction? The history informs us of their teaching them but one faith and repentance; believing in Christ that they might be saved, and repentance for the remission of sins; and it would be unreasonable to suppose, that a thought of any lower or other kind entered into the heads of these converts, when immediately upon their receiving such instructions they professed faith and repentance; or that those who admitted them understood them as meaning any other but what they professed.

Let us particularly consider what we are informed concerning those multitudes, whose admission we have an account of in Acts 2. We are told concerning the three thousand first converts, that they were greatly awakened by the preaching of the apostles, pricked in their hearts, made sensible of their guilt and misery; “and said to Peter, and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” i.e. What shall we do to be saved, and that our sins may be remitted? Upon which they directed them what they should do, viz. “Repent, and be baptised, in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins.” They are here directed into the way of salvation, viz. faith and repentance, with a proper profession of these. Then, we are told, that they which gladly received the word were baptised; that is, they which appeared gladly to receive the word, or manifested and professed a cordial and cheerful compliance with the calls of the word, with the directions which the apostles had given them. The manifestation was doubtless by some profession, and the profession was of that repentance for the remission of sins, and that faith in Christ, which the apostles had directed them to, in answer to their inquiry, what they should do to be saved? I can see no ground to suppose they thought of any lower or other kind. And it is evident by what follows, that these converts now looked upon it that they had complied with these directions, and so were at peace with God. Their business now is to rejoice and praise God from day to day; “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship - continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to

house, they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God.” The account of them now is not as of persons under awakenings, weary and heavy-laden sinners, under an awful sense of guilt and wrath, pricked in their hearts, as before; but of persons whose sorrow was turned into joy, looking on themselves as now in a good estate. And in the last verse it is said, “The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved;” in the original it is “the saved”; it was a common appellation given to all visible Christians, or to all members of the visible Christian church. It is as much as to say, the converted, or the regenerate. Being converted is in Scripture called being saved, because it is so in effect; they were “passed from death to life,” John 5:24. Tit. 1:4, “According to his mercy he SAVED us, by the washing of REGENERATION, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” 2 Tim. 1:9, “Who hath SAVED us, and called us with an holy calling.” Not that all who were added to the visible church were indeed regenerated, but they were so in profession and repute, and therefore were so in name. 1 Cor. 1:18, “The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us [i.e. us Christians] which are SAVED, it is the power of God.” So those that from time to time were added to the primitive church, were all called “the saved.” Before, while under awakenings, they used to inquire of their teachers, what they should do to be saved; and the directions that used to be given them, were to repent and believe in Christ; and before they were admitted into the church, they professed that they did so; and thenceforward, having visibly complied with the terms proposed, they were called THE SAVED; it being supposed, that they now had obtained what they inquired after when they asked what they should do to be saved. Accordingly we find that Christ’s ministers treated them no more as miserable perishing sinners, but as true converts; not setting before them their sin and misery to awaken them, and to convince them of the necessity of a Saviour, exhorting them to fly from the wrath to come, and seek conversion to God; but exhorting them to hold fast the profession of their faith, to continue in the grace of God, and persevere in holiness; endeavouring by all means to confirm and strengthen them in grace. Thus when a great number believed and turned to the Lord at Antioch, Barnabas was sent to them; “who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they should cleave to the Lord.” Acts 11:23. See also Acts 13:43, and Acts 14:22, and Acts 15:32, 41; and Acts 20:32. And when the apostles heard of the conversion of the Gentiles to the Christian faith, visible by their profession when they joined themselves to the Christian church, they supposed and believed that God had given them saving repentance, and a heart-purifying faith. Acts 11:18, “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also granted unto the Gentiles REPENTANCE unto LIFE.” Acts 15:9, “And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by FAITH.”

If any should here object, that when such multitudes were converted from Judaism and heathenism, and received into the Christian church in so short a season, it was impossible there should be time for each one to say so much in his public profession, as to be any credible exhibition of true godliness, to the church I answer. This objection will soon vanish, if we particularly consider how the case was with those primitive converts, and how they were dealt with by their teachers. It was apparently the manner of the first preachers of the gospel, when their hearers were awakened and brought in good earnest to inquire what they should do to be saved, then particularly to instruct them in the way of salvation, and explain to them what qualifications must be in them, or what they must do in order to their being saved, agreeable to Christ’s direction,

Mark 16:15, 16. This we find was the method they took with the three thousand, in the second chapter of Acts, Acts 2:37-40. And it seems, they were particular and full in it: they said much more to them than the words recorded. It is said, Acts 2:40, "With many other words did Peter testify and exhort." And this we find to be the course Paul and Silas took with the jailer, Acts 16. Who also gave more large and full instructions than are rehearsed in the history. And when they had thus instructed them, they doubtless saw to it, either by themselves or some others who assisted them, that their instructions were understood by them, before they proceeded to baptise them. For I suppose, none with whom I have to do in this controversy, will maintain, from the apostles' example, that we ought not to insist on a good degree of doctrinal knowledge in the way and terms of salvation, as requisite to the admission of members into the church. And after they were satisfied that they well understood these things, it took up no great time to make a profession of them, or to declare that they did, or found in themselves, those things they had been told of as necessary to their salvation. After they had been well informed what saving faith and repentance were, it took up no more time to profess that faith and repentance, than any other. In this case not only the converts' words, but the words of the preacher, which they consented to, and in effect made their own, are to be taken into their profession. For persons that are known to be of an honest character, and manifestly qualified with good doctrinal knowledge of the nature of true godliness, in the more essential things which belong to it, solemnly to profess they have or do those things, is to make as credible a profession of godliness as I insist upon. And we may also well suppose, that more words were uttered by the professors, and with other circumstances to render them credible, than are recorded in that very brief history, which we have of the primitive church in the Acts of the Apostles; and also we may yet suppose one thing further, viz. that in that extraordinary state of things so particular a profession was not requisite in order to the church's satisfaction, either of doctrines assented to, or of the consent and disposition of the heart, as may be expedient in a more ordinary state of things; for various reasons that might be given, would it not too much lengthen out this discourse.

One thing which makes it very evident, that the inspired ministers of the primitive Christian church looked upon saving faith as the proper matter of the profession requisite in order to admission into the church, is the story of Philip and the eunuch, in Acts 8. For when the eunuch desires to be baptised, Philip makes answer, Acts 8:37, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayst." Which words certainly imply, that believing with all his heart was requisite in order to his coming to this ordinance properly and in a due manner. I can not conceive what should move Philip to utter these words, or what he should aim at in them, if at the same time he supposed, that the eunuch had no need to look at any such qualification in himself, or at all to inquire whether he had such a faith, in order to determine whether he might present himself as the subject of baptism.

It is said by some, that Philip intended nothing more by believing with all his heart, than that he believed that doctrine, that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, with a moral sincerity of persuasion. But here again I desire, that the Scripture may be allowed to be its own interpreter. The Scripture very much abounds with such phrases as this, with all the heart, or with the whole heart, in speaking of religious matters. And the manifest intent of them is to signify a gracious simplicity and godly sincerity. Thus, 1 Sam. 12:20, "Turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your

heart.” So 1 Sam 12:24, “Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth, with all your heart.” 1 Kin. 8:23, “Who keepest covenant and mercy with they servants, that walk before thee with all their heart.” 1 Kin. 14:8, “My servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart.” 2 Kin. 10:31, “But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart.” 2 Chr. 22:9, “Jehoshaphat sought the Lord with all his heart.” 2 Chr. 31:20, 21, “Hezekiah wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God; and in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart.” Psa. 9:1, “I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart.” Psa. 86:12, “I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and will glorify thy name.” Psa. 111:1, “I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright.” Psa. 119:2, “Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.” Psa. 119:10, “With my whole heart have I sought thee.” Psa. 119:34, “Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law, yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.” Psa. 119:69, “The proud have forged a lie against me, but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.” Jer. 24:7, “And I will give them an heart to know me - for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.” Joel 2:12, 13, “Turn ye even unto me with all your heart - and rend your heart, and not your garments.” And we have the like phrases in innumerable other places. And I suppose that not so much as one place can be produced, wherein there is the least evidence or appearance of their being used to signify anything but a gracious sincerity. And indeed it must be a very improper use of language, to speak of those as performing acts of religion with all their hearts, whose heart the Scriptures abundantly represent as under the reigning power of sin and unbelief - and as those that do not give God their hearts, but give them to other things - as those who go about to serve two masters, and who draw near to God with their lips, but have at the same time their hearts far from him, running more after other things; and who have not a single eye, nor single heart. The word believe, in the New Testament, answers to the word trust in the Old; and therefore the phrase used by Philip, of believing with all the heart, is parallel to that in Pro. 3:5, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart.” And believing with the heart is a phrase used in the New Testament, to signify saving faith. Rom. 10:9, 10, “If thou shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” The same is signified by obeying the form of doctrine from the heart, Rom. 6:17, 18, “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you; being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Here it is manifest, that saving faith is intended by obeying the form of doctrine from the heart, and the same is signified as if it had been said, “ye have believed with the heart” the form of doctrine. But Philip uses a yet stronger expression, he does not only say, if thou believest with the heart, or from the heart, but with ALL thine heart. Besides, for any to suppose, that those same persons which the Scriptures represent in some places as under the power of an evil heart of unbelief - as double-minded with regard to their faith (Jam. 1:6, 7, 8) who, though they believe for a while, have their hearts like a rock, in which faith has no root (Luke 8) - and yet that this same sort of persons are in other scriptures spoken of as believing with all their heart; I say, for any to suppose this, would be to make the voice of God’s word not very harmonious and consonant to itself. And one thing more I would observe on this head, there is good reason to suppose, that Philip, while he sat in the chariot with the eunuch, and (as we are told)

preached unto him Jesus, had showed to him the way of salvation - had opened to him the way of getting an interest in Christ, or obtaining salvation by him, viz. believing in him, agreeable to Christ's own direction, Mark 16:15, 16. and agreeable to what we find to be the manner of the first preachers of the gospel. And therefore, when after this discourse he puts it to the eunuch, whether he believed with all his heart; it is natural to suppose, that he meant whether he found his heart acquiescing in the gospel-way of salvation, or whether he sincerely exercised that belief in Christ which he had been inculcating; and it would be natural for the eunuch so to understand him.

Here if it be objected, that the eunuch's answer and the profession he hereupon made (wherein he speaks nothing of his heart, but barely says), I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, shows that he understood no more by the inquiry, than whether he gave his assent to that doctrine: to this I answer; we must take this confession of the eunuch together with Philip's words, to which they were a reply, and expound the one by the other. Nor is there any reason but to understand it in the same sense in which we find the words of the like confession elsewhere in the New Testament, and as the words of such a confession were wont to be used in those days; as particularly the words of Peter's confession, Mat. 16:16, "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." Which was a profession of saving faith, as appears by what Christ says upon it. And we read, 1 Cor. 12:3, "No man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Not but that a man might make a profession in these words without the Holy Ghost, but he could not do it heartily, or WITH ALL HIS HEART. So 1 John 4:15, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." i.e. Whoever makes this Christian confession (this profession which all Christians were wont to make) cordially, or with his whole heart, God dwells in him, etc. But it was thus that the eunuch was put upon making this confession.

## SECTION VII

*The epistles of the apostles to the churches, prove what has been asserted.*

It is apparent by the epistles of the apostles to the primitive Christian churches, their manner of addressing and treating them throughout all those epistles, and what they say to them and of them, that all those churches were constituted of members so qualified as has been represented, having such a visibility of godliness as has been insisted on. Those who were reputed to be real saints, were taken into the church under a notion of their being truly pious persons, made that profession, and had this hope of themselves; and that natural and graceless men were not admitted designedly, but unawares, and beside the aim of the primitive churches and ministers; and that such as remained in good standing, and free from an offensive behaviour, continued to have the reputation and esteem of real saints, with the apostles, and one with another.

There were numbers indeed in these churches, who after their admission fell into an offensive behaviour; of some of whom the apostles in their epistles speak doubtfully; others that had behaved themselves very scandalously, they speak of in language that seems to suppose them to be wicked men. The apostle Paul, in his epistles to the Corinthians, oftentimes speaks of some among them that had embraced heretical opinions, and had behaved themselves in a very disorderly and schismatic manner, whom he represents as exposed to censure, and to whom he threatens

excommunication. On occasion of so many offences of this kind appearing among them that for a while had been thought well of, he puts them all upon examining themselves, whether they were indeed in the faith, and whether Christ was truly in them, as they and others had supposed, 2 Cor. 13. And the same apostle speaks of great numbers among the Galatians, who had made a high profession, and were such as he had thought well of when they were first admitted into the church, but since had given him cause to doubt of their state, by giving heed to seducers, that denied the great gospel-doctrine of justification by faith alone. Yet notwithstanding, the apostle speaks of them in such language as shows surprise and disappointment, and implies that he had looked upon them as true Christians, and hoped that his labours among them had had a saving effect upon them. Gal. 1:6, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel." Gal. 4:11, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." And Gal. 4:20, "I desire to be present with you now, and change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you." As much as to say, "I have heretofore addressed you with the voice of love and charity, as supposing you the dear children of God; but now I begin to think of speaking to you in other language." In the same chapter, to show them what little reason he had to expect that they would come to this, he puts them in mind of the great profession they had made, and the extraordinary appearances there had formerly been in them of fervent piety. Gal. 4:15, "Where is the blessedness you spake of? For I bear you record, that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them unto me." The apostle James, in his epistle, speaks of scandalous persons among the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad; some that were men of unbridled tongues; some that seem to have been a kind of antinomians in their principles, and of a very bitter and violent spirit, that reproached, condemned, and cursed their brethren, and raised wars and fightings among professing Christians, and were also very unclean in their practice, adulterers and adulteresses, Jam. 4:4. And in the fifth chapter of his epistle, he seems to speak to the unbelieving Jews, who persecuted the Christians, Jam. 5:6. And the apostles also often speak of some who had once been admitted into the church, crept in unawares, but who apostatised from Christianity, and finally proved notoriously wicked men. But otherwise, and as to such members of the visible church as continued in the same good standing and visibility of Christianity, wherein they were admitted, it is evident by the epistles of the apostles, they were all in the eye of a Christian judgment truly pious or gracious persons. And here I desire the following things may be particularly observed.

The apostles continually, in their epistles, speak to them and of them, as supposing and judging them to be gracious persons. Thus the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, Rom. 1:7, speaks of the members of that church as beloved of God. In chap. 6:17, 18, etc. he "thanks God, that they had obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which had been delivered them - were made free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness," etc. The apostle in giving thanks to God for this, must not only have a kind of negative charity for them, as not knowing but that they were gracious persons, and so charitably hoping (as we say) that it was so; but he seems to have formed a positive judgment that they were such. His thanksgiving must at least be founded on rational probability; since it would be but a mocking of God, to give him thanks for bestowing a mercy which at the same time he did not see reason positively to believe was bestowed. In Rom. 7:4-6, the apostle speaks of them as those that once were in the flesh, and were under the law, but now delivered from the law, and dead to

it. In Rom. 8:15, and following verses, he tells them, they had received the Spirit of adoption, and speaks of them as having the witness of the Spirit that they were the children of God, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. And the whole of his discourse, to the end of the chapter, implies, that he esteemed them truly gracious persons. In Rom. 9:23, 24, he speaks of the Christian Romans, together with all other Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, as vessels of mercy. In Rom. 14:6, 7, 8, speaking of the difference that then was among professing Christians, in point of regard to the ceremonial institutions of the law, he speaks of both parties as acting from a gracious principle, and as those that lived to the Lord, and should die unto the Lord; "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord, etc. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man [i.e. none of us] dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's." In Rom. 15:14. he says, "I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye are full of goodness." His being thus persuaded implies a positive judgment of charity.

And the same apostle in his first epistle to the Corinthians, directs it "to the church at Corinth, that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus;" i.e. to all visible Christians through the world, or all the members of Christ's visible church everywhere. And continuing his speech, 1 Cor. 1:8, he speaks of them as those "that God would confirm to the end, that they may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ:" plainly speaking of them all as persons, in Christian esteem, savingly converted. In the next verse, he speaks of the faithfulness of God as engaged thus to preserve them to salvation, having called them to the fellowship of his Son. And in the 30th verse (1 Cor. 1:30), he speaks of them as having a saving interest in Christ; "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus; who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." In 1 Cor. 3:21-23, he says to the members of the church of Corinth, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's." In 1 Cor. 4:15. he tells them, he had begotten them through the gospel. In 1 Cor. 6:1-3. he speaks of them as "those who shall judge the world, and shall judge angels." And in 1 Cor. 6:11, he says to them, "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God." And in 1 Cor. 15:49, to the end, he speaks of them as having an interest, with him and other Christians, in the happiness and glory of the resurrection of the just. And in his second epistle, 2 Cor. 1:7, he says to them, "Our hope of you is steadfast; knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation." This steadfast hope implies a positive judgment. We must here understand the apostle to speak of such members of the church of Corinth, as had not visibly backslidden. Again, in the 14th and 15th verses (2 Cor. 1:14-15), he speaks of a confidence which he had, that they should be his rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. In all reason we must conclude, there was a visibility of grace, carrying with it an apparent probability in the eyes of the apostle, which was the ground of this his confidence. Such an apparent probability, and his confidence as built upon it, are both expressed in 2 Cor. 3:3, 4, "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us; written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart; and such trust have we through Christ to God-ward." And in 2 Cor. 3:18, the apostle speaks of them, with himself and

other Christians, as all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and being changed into the same image, from glory to glory.

And in the epistle to the churches of Galatia, Gal. 4:26, the apostle speaks of visible Christians, as visibly belonging to heaven, the Jerusalem which is above. And, Gal. 4:28, 29. represents them to be the children of the promise, as Isaac was; and born after the Spirit. In the 6th verse of the same chapter (Gal 4:6), he says to the Christian Galatians, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." And Gal. 6:1, he speaks of those of them that had not fallen into scandal, as spiritual persons.

In his epistle to that great church at Ephesus, he blesses God on behalf of its members, as being, together with himself and all the faithful in Christ Jesus, "Chosen in him before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blame before him in love, being predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein God had made them accepted in the beloved: in whom they had redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." In Eph. 1:13, 14. he thus writes to them, "In whom ye also trusted - In whom after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession." And in Eph. 2 at the beginning; "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." With much more, showing that they were, in a charitable esteem, regenerated persons, and heirs of salvation.

So in the epistle to the church at Philippi, the apostle tells them, that he "thanks God upon every remembrance of them, for their fellowship in the gospel; being confident of this very thing, that he which had begun a good work in them, would perform it until the day of Christ: even (says he) as it is meet for me to think this of you all." If it was meet for him to think this of them, and to be confident of it, he had at least some appearing rational probability to found this judgment and confidence upon; for surely it is not meet for reasonable creatures to think at random, and be confident without reason. In Phil. 1:25, 26, he speaks of his "confidence that he should come to them for their furtherance and joy of faith, that their rejoicing might be more abundant in Christ Jesus." Which words certainly suppose that they were persons who had already received Christ, and comfort in him; had already obtained faith and joy in Christ, and only needed to have it increased.

In the epistle to the members of the church at Colossae, the apostle saluting them in the beginning of the epistle, "gives thanks for their faith in Christ Jesus, and love to all saints, and the hope laid up for them in heaven;" and speaks of "the gospel bringing forth fruit in them, since the day they knew the grace of God in truth;" i.e. since the day of their saving conversion. In Col. 1:8, he speaks of "their love in the Spirit;" and Col. 1:12-14, as "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; as being delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; as having redemption through Christ's blood, and the forgiveness of sins." In Col. 3, at the beginning, he speaks of them as "risen with Christ; as being dead; [i.e. to the law, to sin, and the world;] as having their life hid with Christ in God;" and being such as, "when Christ their life should appear, should appear with him in glory." In Col. 3:7, he speaks of them as "having once walked and lived in lusts, but as having

now put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.”

In the first epistle to the members of the church at Thessalonica, in words annexed to his salutation, 1 Thes. 1, he declares what kind of visibility there was of their election of God, in the appearance there had been of true and saving conversion, and their consequent holy life, 1 Thes. 1:3-7. And in the beginning of the second epistle, he speaks of their faith and love greatly increasing; and in verse 7, expresses his confidence of meeting them in eternal rest, when the Lord Jesus Christ should be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. And in 2 Thes. 2:13. he gives thanks to God, that from the beginning he had chosen them to salvation.

In the epistle to the Christian Hebrews, though the apostle speaks of some that once belonged to their churches, but had apostatised and proved themselves hypocrites; yet concerning the rest that remained in good standing, he says, Heb. 6:9, “I am persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.” Where we may again note, his being thus persuaded evidently implies a positive judgment. And in Heb. 12:22, etc. he speaks of them as visibly belonging to the glorious society of heaven. And in chap. 13:5, 6, he speaks of them as those who may boldly say, The Lord is my helper.

The apostle James, writing to the Christians of the twelve tribes which were scattered abroad, speaks of them as regenerated persons, meaning, as I observed before, those which were in good standing. Jam. 1:18, “Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.” The apostle Peter writing to the Jewish Christians, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (large countries, and therefore they must in the whole be supposed to be a great multitude of people), to all these, gives the title of elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. And in the verses next following, speaks of them as regenerated, “or begotten again to a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible,” etc. And as “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” And says to them in 1 Pet. 1:8, 9, “Whom (namely, Christ) having not seen, ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” And in 1 Pet. 1:18, to the end, the apostle speaks of them as “redeemed from their vain conversation, by the precious blood of Christ. And as having purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit. Being born again of incorruptible seed,” etc. And in the former part of chapter 2 (1 Pet. 2:5), he speaks of them as “living stones, coming to Christ, and on him built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. And as those that believe, to whom Christ is precious. As a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, called out of darkness into marvellous light.” The church at Babylon, occasionally mentioned in 1 Pet. 5:13, is said to be elected together with them. And in his second epistle (which appears by 2 Pet. 3:1 to be written to the same persons) the inscription is, To them which have obtained like precious faith with us, i.e. with the apostles and servants of Christ. And in the third chapter, he tells them, both his epistles were designed to stir up their pure minds.

In the first epistle of John, written (for ought appears) to professing Christians in general, 1 John 2:12, etc. the apostle tells them, "He writes to them because their sins were forgiven, because they had known him that was from the beginning. Because they had overcome the wicked one," etc. In 1 John 2:20, 21, he tells them, they have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things; and that he did not write to them because they had not known the truth, but because they had known it, etc. And in 1 John 2:27, he says, "The anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you, and ye need not that any man should teach you, ye shall abide in him." And in the beginning of 1 John 3, he addresses them as those "who were the sons of God, who when he should appear should be like him, because they should see him as he is." In 1 John 4:4, he says, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome," etc.

The apostle Jude, in his general epistle, speaks much of apostates and their wickedness; but to other professing Christians, that had not fallen away, he says, Jude 20, 21, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Plainly supposing, that they had professed faith with love to God our Saviour, and were by the apostle considered as his friends and lovers. Many other passages to the like purpose might be observed in the epistles, but these may suffice.

Now how unaccountable would these things be, if the members of the primitive Christian churches were not admitted into them under any such notion as their being really godly persons and heirs of eternal life, nor with any respect to such a character appearing on them; and that they themselves joined to these churches without any such pretence, as having no such opinion of themselves!

But it is particularly evident that they had such an opinion of themselves, as well as the apostles of them, by many things the apostles say in their epistles. Thus, in Rom. 8:15, 16, the apostle speaks of them as "having received the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of God bearing witness with their spirits, that they were the children of God." And Rom. 5:2, of "their rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." In 1 Cor. 1:7, he speaks of them as "waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus." In 1 Cor. 15:17, the apostle says to the members of the church at Corinth, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins:" plainly supposing, that they hoped their sins were forgiven. In Phil. 1:25, 26, the apostle speaks of his coming to Philippi, to "increase their joy of faith, and that their rejoicing in Christ might be more abundant:" implying (as was observed before), that they had received comfort already, in some degree, as supposing themselves to have a saving interest in Christ. In 1 Thes. 1:10, he speaks of the members of the church at Thessalonica as "waiting for Christ from heaven, as one who had delivered them from the wrath to come." In Heb. 6:19, he speaks of the Christian Hebrews as having that "hope which was an anchor of their souls." The apostle Peter, 1 Pet. 1:3-9, speaks of the visible Christians he wrote to, as being "begotten to a lively hope, of an inheritance incorruptible, etc. Wherein they greatly rejoiced," etc. And even the members of the church of Laodicea, the very worst of all the seven churches of Asia, yet looked upon themselves as truly gracious persons, and made that profession; they "said they were rich, and increased in goods, and knew not that they were wretched and miserable," etc. Rev. 3:17.

It is also evident, that the members of these primitive churches had this judgment one of another, and of the members of the visible church of Christ in general. In 1 Thes. 4:13, etc. the apostle exhorts the Christian Thessalonians, in mourning for their deceased friends who were visible Christians, not to sorrow as the hopeless heathen were wont to do for their departed friends; upon this consideration, that they had reason to expect to meet them again in glorious circumstances at the day of judgment, never to part more. The ground of comfort concerning their dead friends, is evidently something more than such a hope as we ought to have of all that profess Christian doctrines, and are not scandalous in life, whom we must forbear to censure, because we do not know but they are true saints. The members of the church of Sardis, next to Laodicea, the worst of the seven churches of Asia, yet had a name that they lived; though Christ, who speaks to these seven churches from heaven, in the character of the Searcher of hearts (see Rev. 2:23) explicitly tells them, that they were dead; perhaps all in a dead frame, and then most in a dead state.

These things evidently show, how all the Christian churches through the world were constituted in those days; and what sort of holiness or saintship it was, that all visible Christians in good standing had a visibility and profession of, in that apostolic age; and also what sort of visibility of this they had, viz. not only that which gave them right to a kind of negative charity, or freedom from censure, but that which might justly induce a positive judgment in their favour. The churches to whom these epistles were written, were all the principal churches in the world; some of them very large, as the churches at Corinth and Ephesus. Some of the epistles were directed to all the churches through large countries where the gospel had great success, as the epistle to the Galatians. The epistle to the Hebrews was written to all the Jewish Christians in the land of Canaan, in distinction from the Jews that lived in other countries, who were called Hellenists or Grecians, because they generally spake the Greek tongue. The epistles of Peter were written to all the Christian Jews through many countries, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia; containing great numbers of Jews, beyond any other Gentile countries. The epistle of James was directed to all Christian Jews, scattered abroad through the whole world. The epistles of John and Jude, for ought appears in those epistles, were directed to all visible Christians through the whole world. And the apostle Paul directs the first epistle to the Corinthians, not only to the members of that church, but to all professing Christians on the face of the earth: 1 Cor. 1:2, and 1 Cor. 14:33, calling them all churches of the saints. And by what Christ says to the churches of Sardis and Laodicea in the Apocalypse, of whom more evil is said than of any Christian churches spoken of in the New Testament, it appears that even the members of those churches looked on themselves as in a state of salvation, and had such a name with others.

Here possibly some may object, and say, it will not follow from the apostles speaking to and of the members of the primitive church after the manner which has been observed, as though they supposed them to be gracious persons, that therefore a profession and appearance of this was looked upon in those days as a requisite qualification for admission into the visible church; because another reason may be given for it, viz. Such was the extraordinary state of things at that day, that the greater part of those converted from heathenism and Judaism to Christianity, were hopefully gracious persons, by reason of its being a day of such large communications of divine grace, and such great and unavoidable sufferings of professors, etc. And the apostles

knowing those facts, might properly speak to and of the churches, as if they were societies of truly gracious persons, because there was just ground on such accounts, to think the greater part of them to be so; although no profession or visibility of this was requisite in their members by the constitution of those churches, and the door of admission was as open for others as for such.

But this can not be a satisfactory nor a true account of the matter, if we consider the following things.

(1.) The apostles in the very superscription or direction of their letters to these churches, and in their salutation at the beginning of their epistles, speak of them as gracious persons. For instance, the apostle Peter, in the direction of his first letter to all professing Jewish Christians through many countries, says thus, "To the strangers scattered through Pontus, etc. elect, according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." And in his directing his second epistle to the same persons, he says, "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us," etc. And the apostle Paul directs his epistle to the Romans thus, "To them that be at Rome, beloved of God." So he directs his first epistle to the Corinthians thus, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus." In what sense he means sanctified, his following words show, 1 Cor. 1:4-9. The same was before observed of words annexed to the apostle's salutations, in the beginning of several of the epistles. This shows, that the apostles extend this character as far as they do the epistles themselves. Which surely would be very improper, and not agreeable to truth, if the apostles at the same time knew very well that such a character did not belong to members of churches, as such, and that they were not received into those churches with any regard to such a character, or upon the account of any right they had to be esteemed such persons. In the superscription of letters to societies of men, we are wont to give them that title or denomination which properly belongs to them as members of such a body. Thus, if one should write to the Royal Society in London, or the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris, it would be proper and natural to give them the title of Learned; for whether everyone of the members truly deserve the epithet, or not, yet the title is agreeable to their profession, and what is known to be aimed at, and is professedly insisted on, in the admission of members. But if one should write to the House of Commons, or to the East-India Company, and in his superscription give them the title of Learned, this would be very improper, and ill-judged; because that character does not belong to their profession as members of that body, and learning is not a qualification insisted on in their admission of members. Nor would it excuse the impropriety, though the writer might, from his special acquaintance, know it to be fact, that the greater part of them were men of learning. To inscribe a letter to them, would be something strange; but more strange, if it should appear, by various instances, to be a custom so to direct letters to such societies; as it seems to be the manner of the apostles, in their epistles to Christian churches, to address them under titles which imply a profession and visibility of true holiness.

(2.) The apostle John, in his general epistle, very plainly manifests, that all to whom he wrote were supposed to have true grace, inasmuch as he declares this to be the qualification he respects in writing to them; and lets them know, he writes to them for

that reason, because they are supposed to be persons of the character of such as have known God, overcome the wicked one, and have had their sins forgiven them. 1 John 2:12-14, 21.

(3.) The apostles, when speaking of visible Christians, as a society, and what belongs to such a kind of society, speak of it as visibly (i.e. in profession and reputation) a society of gracious persons. So the apostle Peter speaks of them as a spiritual house, an holy and royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, a chosen or elect generation, called out of darkness into marvellous light, 1 Pet. 2. The apostle Paul also speaks of them as the family of God, Eph. 2:19. And in the next chapter he explains himself to mean that family a part of which is in heaven; i.e. they were by profession a part of that divine family.

(4.) The apostle Paul speaks often and expressly of the members of the churches to whom he wrote, as all of them in esteem and visibility truly gracious persons. Phil. 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of the Lord Jesus Christ: even as it is meet for me to think this of you all" (that is, all singly taken, not collectively, according to the distinction before observed). So Gal. 4:26, "Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all." Rom. 6:3, "As many of us as have been baptised into Christ, have been baptised into his death." Here he speaks of all that have been baptised; and in the continuation of the discourse, explaining what is here said, he speaks of their "being dead to sin, no longer under the law, but under grace; having obeyed the form of doctrine from the heart, being made free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness," etc. Rom. 14:7, 8, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (taken together with the context); 2 Cor. 3:18, "We all with open face beholding as in a glass," etc.; and Gal. 3:26, "Ye are all children of God by faith."

(5.) It is evident, that even in those churches where the greater part of the members were not true saints, as in those degenerate churches of Sardis and Laodicea, which we may suppose were become very lax in their admissions and discipline; yet they looked upon themselves as truly gracious persons, and had with others the reputation of such.

(6.) If we should suppose, that, by reason of the extraordinary state of things in that day, the apostles had reason to think the greater part of the members of churches to be true Christians, yet unless profession and appearance of true Christianity was their proper qualification and the ground of their admission - and unless it was supposed that all of them esteemed themselves true Christians - it is altogether unaccountable that the apostles in their epistles to them never make any express particular distinction between those different sorts of members. If the churches were made up of persons who looked on themselves in so different a state - some the children of God, and others the children of the devil, some the high favourites of heaven and heirs of eternal glory, others the children of wrath, being under condemnation to eternal death, and every moment in danger of dropping into hell - why do the apostles make no distinction in their manner of addressing them, and in the counsels, reproofs, and warnings they gave them? Why do they never direct their speech to the unconverted members of churches, in particular, in a manner tending to awaken them, and make them sensible of the miserable condition they were in, and press them to seek the converting grace of God? It is to be considered that the apostle Paul was very

particularly acquainted with the circumstances of most of those churches to whom he wrote; for he had been among them, was their spiritual father, had been the instrument of gathering and founding those churches, and they had received all their instructions and directions relating to Christianity and their soul-concerns from him; nor can it be questioned but that many of them had opened the case of their souls to him. And if he was sensible, that there was a number among them who made no pretensions to a regenerate state, and that none had reason to judge them to be in such a state, he knew that the sin of such - who lived in the rejection of a Saviour, even in the very house of God, in the midst of gospel-light, and in violation of the most sacred vows - was peculiarly aggravated, and their guilt and state peculiarly dreadful. Why should he therefore never particularly and distinctly point his addresses to such, applying himself to them in much compassion to their souls, and putting them in mind of their awful circumstances? But instead of this, we observe him continually lumping all together, and indifferently addressing the whole body, as if they were all in happy circumstances, expressing his charity for them all, and congratulating them all in their glorious and eternal privilege. Instead of speaking to them in such a manner as should have a tendency to alarm them with a sense of danger, we see him, on the contrary, calling on all without distinction to rejoice. Phil. 3:1, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." So, 2 Cor. 13:11, "Finally, brethren, be of good comfort." Phil. 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice." The matter is insisted upon, as though rejoicing were a duty especially proper for them, and what they had the highest reason for. The apostle not only did not preach terror to those to whom he wrote, but is careful to guard them against fears of God's wrath. In 1 Thes. 5, at the beginning, the apostle observes, how that Christ will come on ungodly men "as a thief in the night; and when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them, as travail on a woman with child, and they shall not escape." Then immediately he uses caution, that the members of the church at Thessalonica should not take this to themselves, and be terrified, as though they were in danger; and says, in the next words, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief; ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day." 1 Thes. 5:9-11, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ; who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another; even as also ye do." And 1 Thes. 5:16, "Rejoice evermore." How diverse is this way of treating churches, from the method in which faithful ministers are wont to deal with their congregations, wherein are many that make no pretence to true piety, and from the way in which Mr. Stoddard was wont to deal with his congregation. And how would he have undoubtedly judged such a way of treating them the most direct course in the world eternally to undo them! And shall we determine that the apostle Paul was one of those prophets, who daubed with untempered mortar, and sewed pillows under all arm-holes, and healed the hurt of immortal souls slightly, crying, peace, peace, when there was no peace. These things make it most evident, that the primitive churches were not constituted as those modern churches, where persons knowing and owning themselves unregenerate, are admitted, on principle.

If it be here objected, that the apostle sometimes exhorts those to whom he writes, to put off the old man, and put on the new man, and to be renewed in the spirit of their minds, etc. as exhorting them to seek conversion. I answer. That the meaning is manifestly this, that they should mortify the remains of corruption, or the old man, and

turn more and more from sin to God. Thus he exhorts the Ephesians to be renewed, etc. Eph. 4:22, 23, whom yet he had before in the same epistle abundantly represented as savingly renewed already; as has been before observed. And the like might be shown of other instances.

(7.) It is clear, not only that the greater part of the members of the primitive churches were to appearance true Christians; but that they were taken in under that notion, and because there appeared in them grounds of such an estimation of them. When any happened to be admitted that were otherwise, it was beside their aim; inasmuch as when others were admitted, they are represented as brought or crept in unawares. Thus the matter is represented by the apostles. Jude, in verse 4, "There are certain men crept in unawares - ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness." Gal. 2:4, "False brethren, unawares brought in." If it be said, these here spoken of were openly scandalous persons and heretics, I answer. They were not openly scandalous when they were brought in; nor is there any reason to think they were heretics when admitted, though afterwards they turned apostates. Mr. Stoddard says, it does not follow that all hypocrites crept in unawares because some did (Appeal, p. 17). To which I would humbly say, it must be certainly true with respect to all hypocrites who were admitted, either that the church which admitted them was aware they were such, or else was not. If there were some of whom the church was aware that they were hypocrites, at the time when they were taken in, then the church, in admitting them, did not follow the rule that Mr. Stoddard often declares himself to suppose ought to be followed in admitting members, viz. to admit none but what in a judgment of rational charity are true Christians (Appeal, p. 2, 3, 10, 28, 33, 67, 73, 93, 94). But that not only heretics and designing dissemblers crept in unawares, but that all false brethren, all church-members not truly gracious, did so, appears by such being represented as bastards in a family, who are false children and false heirs, brought into it unawares, and imposed upon the disposers of those privileges by stealth. Heb. 12:8, "If ye are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

Thus it is abundantly manifest, from the apostolic writings, how the visible church of Christ, through the whole world, was at first constituted, under the direction of the apostles themselves, who regulated it according to the infallible guidance of the Spirit of their great Lord and Master. And doubtless, as the Christian church was constituted then, so it ought to be constituted now. What better rule have we for our ecclesiastical regulations in other respects, than what was done in the primitive churches, under the apostles' own direction; as particularly the standing officers of the church, presbyters and deacons, the method of introducing ministers in their ordination, etc.? In this matter that I have insisted on, I think the Scripture is abundantly more full, than in those other things.

## SECTION VIII

*The Scripture represents the visible church of Christ, as a society having its several members united by the bond of Christian brotherly love.*

Besides that general benevolence or charity which the saints have to mankind, and which they exercise towards both the evil and the good in common, there is a peculiar and very distinguishing kind of affection, that every true Christian experiences towards those whom he looks upon as truly gracious persons. The soul, at least at times, is very

sensibly and sweetly knit to such persons, and there is an ineffable oneness of heart with them; whereby, to use the scripture phrase (Acts 4:32), "They are of one heart and one soul:" which holy affection is exercised towards others on account of the spiritual image of God in them, their supposed relation to God as his children, and to Christ as his members, and to them as their spiritual brethren in Christ. This sacred affection is a very good and distinguishing note of true grace, much spoken of as such in Scripture, under the name of the love of the brethren, or brotherly love; and is called by Christ, "the receiving a righteous man in the name of a righteous man; and receiving one of Christ's little ones in the name of a disciple, or because he belongs to Christ;" (Mat. 10:41, 42; Mark 9:41) and a "loving one another as Christ has loved them" (John 13:34, and 15:13-15); having a peculiar image of that oneness which is between Christ himself and his saints. Compare John 17:20, to the end.

This love the apostles are often directing Christians to exercise towards fellow-members of the visible church; as in Rom. 12:10, "Be ye kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love." The words are much more emphatic in the original, and represent in a more lively manner, that peculiar endearment there is between gracious persons, or those that look on one another as such. The expressions properly signify, cleaving one to another with brotherly, natural, strong endearment. With the like emphasis and energy does the apostle Peter express himself, 1 Pet. 1:22, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." Again, 1 Pet. 3:8, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." The words in the Greek are much more significant, elegant, and forcible. The same peculiar endearment the apostle has doubtless respect to in 1 Pet. 4:8, "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves." And from time to time, he considers it as a note of their piety. Col. 1:4, "We heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all saints." 1 Thes. 4:9, "As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." So Phm. 5, "Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and towards all saints." And this is what he exhorts to, Heb. 13:1, "Let brotherly love continue." 1 Thes. 5:26, "Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss." Compare 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12, and 1 Pet. 5:14.

This love to the brethren is that virtue which the apostle John so much insists on in his first epistle, as one of the most distinguishing characteristics of true grace, and a peculiar evidence that God dwelleth in us, and we in God. By which must needs be understood a love to saints as saints, or on account of the spiritual image of God supposed to be in them, and their spiritual relation to God; according as it has always been understood by orthodox divines. No reasonable doubt can be made, but that the apostle John, in this epistle, has respect to the same sort of love, which Christ prescribed to his disciples, in that which he called by way of eminence HIS COMMANDMENT, and HIS NEW COMMANDMENT, which he gave as a great mark of their being truly his disciples, as this same apostle gives an account in his gospel; and to which he plainly refers, when speaking of the love of the brethren in his epistle, 1 John 2:7, 8, and 1 John 3:23. But that love, which Christ speaks of in his new commandment, is spoken of as between those that Christ loves, or is supposed to love; and which has his love to them for its ground and pattern. And if this love of the brethren, so much spoken of by Christ, and by the apostles Paul and John, be not that

peculiar affection which gracious persons or true saints have one to another, which is so great a part, and so remarkable an exercise, of true grace, where is it spoken of at all in the New Testament?

We see how often the apostles exhort visible Christians to exercise this affection to all other members of the visible church of Christ, and how often they speak of the members of the visible church as actually thus united, in places already mentioned. In 2 Cor. 9:14, the apostle speaks of the members of other churches loving the members of the church of Corinth, with this peculiar endearment and oneness of heart, for the grace of God in them; “And by their prayer for you, which long after you, for the exceeding grace of God in you.” The word properly signifies to love with an exceeding and dear love. And this is represented as the bond that unites all the members of the visible church; Acts 4:32, “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.” This is the same thing which elsewhere is called being of one mind: 1 Pet. 3:8, “Finally, be ye all of one mind.” And being of the same mind; 1 Cor. 1:10, “That ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind.” And Phil. 4:2, “I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.” And being like-minded (the word is the same in the Greek), Rom. 15:5, 6, “Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another; that ye may with one mind, and one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” There is reason to think, that it is this oneness of mind, or being of one heart and soul, is meant by that charity which the apostle calls the bond of perfection, Col. 3:14, and represents as the bond of union between all the members of the body, in Eph. 4:15, 16, “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying itself in love.”

Herein seems much to consist the nature of scandal in the members of a church, viz. such an offence as is a wound and interruption to this kind of affection, being a stumbling-block to a Christian judgment, in regard of its esteem of the offender as a real Christian, and what much lessens the visibility of his Christian character. And therefore when scandal is removed by visible repentance, the church is directed to confirm their love to the offender, 2 Cor. 2:8.

Now this intimate affection towards others as brethren in Christ and fellow-members of him, must have some apprehension of the understanding, some judgment of the mind for its foundation. To say, that we must thus love others as visible members of Christ, if anything else be meant, than that we must love them because they are visibly, or as they appear to our judgment, real members of Christ, is in effect to say, that we must thus love them without any foundation at all. In order to a real and fervent affection to another, on account of some amiableness of qualification or relation, the mind must first judge there is that amiableness in the object. The affections of the mind are not so at command that we can make them strongly to go forth to an object as having such loveliness, when at the same time we do not positively judge any such thing concerning them, but only hope it may be so, because we see no sufficient reason to determine the contrary. There must be a positive dictate of the understanding, and some degree of satisfaction of the judgment, to be a ground of that oneness of heart and soul, which is agreeable to scripture representations of brotherly love. And a

supposition only of that moral sincerity and virtue, or common grace, which some insist upon, though it may be a sufficient ground of this intimate affection to them as brethren in the family of a heavenly Father - this fervent love to them in the bowels of Jesus Christ. For gospel-sinners and domestic enemies in the house of God, Christians know, are of all others the most hateful enemies to Christ.

It well agrees with the wisdom of Christ, with that peculiar favour he has manifested to his saints, and with his dealings towards them in many other respects, to suppose, he has made provision in his institutions, that they might have the comfort of uniting with such as their hearts are united with, in some special religious exercises and duties of worship, and visible intercourse with their Redeemer. That they should join with those concerning whom they can have some satisfaction of mind, that they are cordially united with them in adoring and expressing their love to their common Lord and Saviour, that they may with one mind, with one heart, and one soul, as well as with one mouth, glorify him; as in the fore-mentioned Rom. 15:5, 6, compared with Acts 4:32. This seems to be what this heavenly affection naturally inclines to. And how eminently fit and proper for this purpose is the sacrament of the Lord's supper, the Christian church's great feast of love; wherein Christ's people sit together as brethren in the family of God, at their Father's table, to feast on the love of their Redeemer, commemorating his sufferings for them, and his dying love to them, and sealing their love to him and one another! - It is hardly credible, that Christ has so ordered things as that there are no instituted social acts of worship, wherein his saints are to manifest their respect to him, but such as wherein they ordinarily are obliged (if the rule for admissions be carefully attended) to join with a society of fellow-worshippers, concerning whom they have no reason to think but that the greater part of them are unconverted (and are more provoking enemies to that Lord they love and adore, than most of the very heathen), which Mr. Stoddard supposes to be the case with the members of the visible church. Appeal, p. 16.

## SECTION IX

*It is necessary, that those who partake of the Lord's supper, should judge themselves truly and cordially to accept of Christ, as their only Saviour and chief good; for of this the actions which communicants perform at the Lord's table, are a solemn profession.*

There is in the Lord's supper a mutual solemn profession of the two parties transacting the covenant of grace, and visibly united in that covenant; the Lord Christ by his minister, on the one hand, and the communicants (who are professing believers) on the other. The administrator of the ordinance acts in the quality of Christ's minister, acts in his name, as representing him; and stands in the place where Christ himself stood at the first administration of this sacrament, and in the original institution of the ordinance. Christ, by the speeches and actions of the minister, makes a solemn profession of his part in the covenant of grace. He exhibits the sacrifice of his body broken and his blood shed; and in the minister's offering the sacramental bread and wine to the communicants, Christ presents himself to the believing communicants, as their propitiation and bread of life; and by these outward signs confirms and seals his sincere engagements to be their Saviour and food, and to impart to them all the benefits of his propitiation and salvation. And they in receiving what is offered, and eating and

drinking the symbols of Christ's body and blood also profess their part in the covenant of grace. They profess to embrace the promises and lay hold of the hope set before them, to receive the atonement, to receive Christ as their spiritual food, and to feed upon him in their hearts by faith. Indeed what is professed on both sides is the heart. For Christ, in offering himself, professes the willingness of his heart to be theirs who truly receive him; and the communicants, on their part, profess the willingness of their hearts to receive him, which they declare by significant actions. They profess to take Christ as their spiritual food, and bread of life. To accept of Christ as our bread of life, is to accept of him as our Saviour and portion; as food is both the means of preserving life, and is also the refreshment and comfort of life. The signification of the word manna, that great type of this bread of life, is a portion. That which God offers to us as our food, he offers as our portion; and that which we accept as our food, we accept as our portion. Thus the Lord's supper is plainly a mutual renovation, confirmation, and seal of the covenant of grace. Both the covenanting parties profess their consent to their respective parts in the covenant, and each affixes his seal to his profession. And there in this ordinance the very same thing acted over in profession and sensible signs, which is spiritually transacted between Christ and his spouse in the covenant that unites them. Here we have from time to time the glorious bridegroom exhibiting himself with his great love that is stronger than death, appearing clothed in robes of grace, and engaging himself, with all his glory and love, and its infinite benefits, to be theirs, who receive him. And here we have his spouse accepting this bridegroom, choosing him for her friend, her only Saviour and portion, and relying on him for all his benefits. And thus the covenant transaction of this spiritual marriage is confirmed and sealed, from time to time. The actions of the communicants at the Lord's table have as expressive and significant a language, as the most solemn words. When a person in this ordinance takes and eats and drinks those things which represent Christ, the plain meaning and implicit profession of these his actions, is this: "I take this crucified Jesus as my Saviour, my sweetest food, my chief portion, and the life of my soul, consenting to acquiesce in him as such, and to hunger and thirst after him only, renouncing all other Saviours, and all other portions, for his sake." The actions, thus interpreted, are a proper renovation and ratification of the covenant of grace, and no otherwise. And those that take, and eat and drink the sacramental elements at the Lord's table with any other meaning, I fear, know not what they do.

The actions at the Lord's supper thus implying in their nature and signification, a renewing and confirming of the covenant, there is a declarative explicit covenanting supposed to precede it; which is the profession of religion, before spoken of, that qualifies a person for admission to the Lord's supper. And doubtless there is, or ought to be, as much explicitly professed in words, as is implicitly professed in these actions; for by these significant actions, the communicant sets his seal but to his profession. The established signs in the Lord's supper are fully equivalent to words; they are a renewing and reiterating the same thing which was done before. Only with this difference, that now it is done by speaking signs, whereas before it was by speaking sounds. Our taking the bread and wine is as much a professing to accept of Christ, at least as a woman's taking a ring of the bridegroom in her marriage is a profession and seal of her taking him for her husband. The sacramental elements in the Lord's supper represent Christ as a party in covenant, as truly as a proxy represents a prince to a foreign lady in her marriage; and our taking those elements is as truly a professing to accept of Christ, as in the other case the lady's taking the proxy is her professing to

accept the prince as her husband. Or the matter may more fitly be represented by this similitude: It is as if a prince should send an ambassador to a woman in a foreign land, proposing marriage, and by his ambassador should send her his picture, and should desire her to manifest her acceptance of his suit, not only by professing her acceptance in words to his ambassador, but in token of her sincerity openly to take or accept that picture, and to seal her profession by thus representing the matter over again by a symbolic action.

To suppose persons ought thus solemnly to profess that which at the same time they do not at all imagine they experience in themselves, and do not really pretend to, is a very great absurdity. For a man sacramentally to make such a profession of religion, proceeding avowedly on the foot of such doctrine, is to profess that which he does not profess; his actions being no established signs of the thing supposed to be professed, nor carrying in them the least pretension to it. And therefore doing thus can be no man's duty; unless it be men's duty to make a solemn profession of that which in truth they make no profession of. The Lord's supper is most evidently a professing ordinance; and the communicant's profession must be such as is adjusted to the nature and design of the ordinance; which nothing short of faith in the blood of Christ will answer, even faith unfeigned, which worketh by love. A profession therefore exclusive of this, is essentially defective, and quite unsuitable to the character of a communicant.

When the apostle says, 1 Cor. 11:28, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat;" it seems most reasonable to understand it of trying himself with regard to the truth of his Christianity, or the reality of his grace; the same as 2 Cor. 13:5, where the same word is used in the original. The Greek word will not allow of what some have supposed to be the apostle's meaning, viz. that a man should consider and inquire into his circumstances, and the necessities of his case, that he may know what are the wants for the supply of which he should go to the Lord's table. The word properly signifies proving or trying a thing with respect to its quality and goodness, or in order to determine whether it be true and of the right sort. And so the word is always used in the New Testament; unless that sometimes it is used metonymically, and in such places is variously translated, either discerning, or allowing, approving, liking, etc. these being the effects of trial. Nor is the word used more frequently in the New Testament for any sort of trial whatever, than for the trial of professors with regard to their grace or piety. The word (as Dr. Ames in his *Catecheseos Sciagraphia*, and Mr. Willard in his *Body of Divinity*, observe) is borrowed from goldsmiths, properly signifying the trial they make of their silver and gold, whether it be genuine or counterfeit. And with a manifest allusion to this original application of the word, is often used in the New Testament for trying the piety of professors. It is used with this view in all the following texts: 1 Pet. 1:7, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise," etc. 1 Cor. 3:13, "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." Jam. 1:3, "The trying of your faith worketh patience." 1 Thes. 2:4, "God who trier our hearts." The same word is used in 2 Cor. 8:8, "To prove the sincerity of your love." So, Gal. 6:3, 4, "If any man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself: but let every man prove his own work." In all these places there is the same word in the Greek with that in the text now under consideration.

When the apostle directs professing Christians to try themselves, using this word indefinitely, as properly signifying the examining or proving of a thing whether it be genuine or counterfeit, the most natural construction of his advice is, that they should try themselves with respect to their spiritual state and religious profession, whether they are disciples indeed, real and genuine Christians, or whether they are not false and hypocritical professors. As if a man should bring a piece of metal that had the colour of gold, with the impress of the king's coin, to a goldsmith, and desire him to try that money, without adding any words to limit his meaning, would not the goldsmith naturally understand, that he was to try whether it was true gold or true money?

But here it is said by some, that the context of the passage under debate (1 Cor. 11:28), plainly limits the meaning of the word in that place; the apostle there speaking of those things that had appeared among the communicants at Corinth, which were of a scandalous nature, so doubtless unfitting them for the Lord's supper; and therefore when the apostle directs them to examine or prove themselves, it is but just, to suppose his meaning to be, that they should try whether they be not disqualified by scandal. To this I answer, though the apostle putting the Corinthians upon trying themselves, was on occasion of mentioning some scandalous practices found among them, yet this is by no means any argument of its being only his meaning, that they should try themselves whether they were scandalous persons; and not, that they should try whether they were genuine Christians. The very nature of scandal (as was observed before) is, that which tends to obscure the visibility of the piety of professors, and wound others' charity towards them, by bringing the reality of their grace into doubt; and therefore what could be more natural, than for the apostle, when mentioning such scandals among the Corinthians, to put them upon trying the state of their souls, and proving their sincerity? This is certainly the case in this apostle's directing the same persons to prove themselves, 2 Cor. 13:5, using the same word there which he uses here, and giving his direction on the like occasion. For in the second epistle (as well as in the first) his putting them on examining and proving themselves, was on occasion of his mentioning some scandals found among them; as is plain from the foregoing context. And yet there it is expressly said, that the thing concerning which he directs them to prove themselves, is, whether they be in the faith, and whether Christ is in them. Nor is there anything more in the preceding context of one place, than in that of the other, obliging or leading us to understand the apostle to intend only a trying whether they were scandalous, and not whether they were sincere Christians.

And as to the words following in the next verse; "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body:" - these words by no means make it evident (as some hold), that what the apostle would have them examine themselves about, is, whether they have doctrinal knowledge, sufficient to understand, that the bread and wine in the sacrament signify the body and blood of Christ. But on the contrary, to interpret the apostle in this sense only, is unreasonable, upon several accounts. (1.) None can so much as attempt such an examination, without first knowing, that the Lord's body and blood is signified by these elements. For merely a man putting this question to himself, do I understand that this bread and this wine signify the body and blood of Christ? supposes him already to know it from a previous information; and therefore to exhort persons to such an examination, would be absurd. And then (2.) It is incredible, that there should be any such gross ignorance in a number of the communicants in the Corinthian church, if we

consider what the Scripture informs us concerning that church. St. Paul was an able and thorough instructor and spiritual father, who founded that church, brought them out of their heathenish darkness, and initiated them in the Christian religion. He had instructed them in the nature and ends of gospel-ordinances, and continued at Corinth, constantly labouring in the word and doctrine for a long while, no less than a year and six months; and, we may well suppose, administered the Lord's supper among them every Lord's day; for the apostle speaks of it as the manner of that church to communicate at the Lord's table with such frequency, 1 Cor. 16:2. And the Corinthian church, when the apostle wrote this epistle, was noted for excelling in doctrinal knowledge; as is evident by 1 Cor. 1:5-7, and several other passages in the epistle. Besides, the communicants were expressly told at every communion, every week, when the bread and wine were delivered to them in the administration, that the bread signified the body, and that the wine signified the blood, of Christ. And (3.) The apostle by his argument in 1 Cor. 10:16, supposes the Corinthians doctrinally acquainted with this subject already. It therefore appears to me much more reasonable, to apprehend the case to be thus: the offensive behaviour of the communicants at Corinth gave the apostle reason to suspect, that some of them came to the Lord's table without a proper impression and true sense of the great and glorious things there signified; having no habitual hunger or relish for the spiritual food there represented, no inward vital and experimental taste of that flesh of the Son of man, which is meat indeed. The word translated discerning, signifies to discriminate or distinguish. The taste is the proper sense whereby to discern or distinguish food, Job 34:3. And it is by a spiritual sense or taste we discern or distinguish spiritual food. Heb. 5:14. "Those who by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil:" discern - a word of the same root with that rendered discerning, in 1 Cor. 11:29. He that has no habitual relish of that spiritual food, which is represented and offered at the Lord's table; he that has no spiritual taste, wherewith to perceive anything more at the Lord's supper, than in common food; or that has no higher view, than with a little seeming devotion to eat bread, in the way of an ordinance, but without regarding in his heart the spiritual meaning and end of it, and without being at all suitably affected by the dying love of Christ therein commemorated; such a one may most truly and properly be said not to discern the Lord's body. When therefore the apostle exhorts to self-examination as a preparative for the sacramental supper, he may well be understood to put professors upon inquiring whether they have such a principle of faith, by means whereof they are habitually in a capacity and disposition of mind to discern the Lord's body practically and spiritually (as well as speculatively and notionally) in their communicating at the Lord's table: which is what none can do who have a faith short of that which is justifying and saving. It is only a living faith that capacitates men to discern the Lord's body in the sacrament with that spiritual sensation or spiritual gust, which is suitable to the nature and design of the ordinance, and which the apostle seems principally to intend.

## PART THREE

### OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

#### OBJECTION I

The Scripture calls the members of the visible church by the name of disciples, scholars, or learners: and that suggests to us this notion of the visible church, that it is the school of Christ, into which persons are admitted in order to their learning of Christ, and coming to spiritual attainments, in the use of the means of teaching, discipline, and training up, established in the school. Now if this be a right notion of the visible church, then reason shows that no other qualifications are necessary in order to being members of this school, than such a faith and disposition of mind as are requisite to persons' putting themselves under Christ as their Master and Teacher, and subjecting themselves to the orders of the school. But a common faith and moral sincerity are sufficient for this. Therefore the Scripture leads us to suppose the visible church to be properly constituted of those who have these qualifications, though they have not saving faith and true piety.

Answer 1. I own, the Scripture calls the members of the visible church by the name of disciples; but deny, that it therefore follows that the church of which they are members, is duly and properly constituted of those who have not true piety. Because, if this consequence was good, then it would equally follow, that not only the visible, but also the invisible or mystical, church is properly constituted of those who have not unfeigned faith and true piety. For the members of the mystical church, as such, and to denote the special character of such, are called disciples; Luke 14:26, 27, 33, and John 8:31, and John 13:35, and John 15:8. This shows, that in the argument I am answering, there is no connection between the premises and the conclusion. For the force of the objection consists in this that the members of the visible church are called disciples in Scripture: this is the sum total of the premises: and if there be any connection between the premises and the conclusion, it must lie in the truth of this proposition; The church whose members are called by the name of disciples, as signifying their state and quality as members of that society, that church is properly and fitly constituted, not only of persons truly pious, but of others that have merely a common faith and virtue. But this proposition, we have seen, is not true; and so there is no connection between the former and latter part of it, which are the same with the premises and conclusion of this argument.

2. Though I do not deny, that the visible church of Christ may fitly be represented as a school of Christ, where persons are trained up in the use of means, in order to some spiritual attainments. Yet it will not hence necessarily follow, that this is in order to all good attainments; for it will not follow but that certain good attainments may be pre-requisite, in order to a place in the school. The church of Christ is a school appointed for the training up Christ's little children, to greater degrees of knowledge, higher privileges, and greater serviceableness in this world, and more meetness for the possession of their eternal inheritance. But there is no necessity of supposing, that it is in order to fit them to become Christ's children, or to be introduced into his family; any more than there is a necessity of supposing, because a prince puts his children under tutors, that therefore it must be in order to their being of the royal family. It is necessary, that there should be a church of Christ appointed as a school of instruction

and discipline, to bring persons to all good attainments whatsoever, then it will follow, that there must be a visible church constituted of scandalous and profane persons and heretics, and all in common that assume the Christian name, that so means may be used with them in order to bring them to moral sincerity, and an acknowledgment of the Christian faith.

3. I grant, that no other qualifications are necessary in order to being members of that school of Christ which is his visible church, than such as are requisite in order to their subjecting themselves to Christ as their Master and Teacher, and subjecting themselves to the laws and orders of his school: nevertheless I deny, that a common faith, and moral sincerity are sufficient for this; because none do truly subject themselves to Christ as their Master, but such as having their hearts purified by faith, are delivered from the reigning power of sin: for we can not subject ourselves to obey two contrary masters at the same time. None submit to Christ as their Teacher, but those who truly receive him as their Prophet, to teach them by his Word and Spirit; giving up themselves to his teachings, sitting with Mary at Jesus' feet to hear his word; and hearkening more to his dictates, than those of their blind and deceitful lusts, and relying on his wisdom more than their own. The Scripture knows nothing of an ecclesiastical school constituted of enemies of the cross of Christ, and appointed to bring such to be reconciled to him and submit to him as their Master. Neither have they who are not truly pious persons, any true disposition of heart to submit to the laws and orders of Christ's school, the rules which his Word prescribes to all his scholars; such as, to love their Master supremely; to love one another as brethren; and to love their book, i.e. their Bible, more than vain trifles and amusements, yea, above gold and silver; to be faithful to the interest of the Master and of the school; to depend on his teachings; to cry to him for knowledge; above all their gettings, to get understanding, etc.

4. Whatever ways of constituting the church may to us seem fit, proper, and reasonable, the question is, not what constitution of Christ's church seems convenient to human wisdom, but what constitution is actually established by Christ's infinite wisdom. Doubtless, if men should set their wits to work, and proceed according to what seems good in their sight, they would greatly alter Christ's constitution of his church, to make it more convenient and beautiful, and would adorn it with a vast variety of ingenious inventions; as the church of Rome has done. The question is, whether this school of Christ which they talk of, made up very much of those who pretend to no experiences or attainments but what consist with their being enemies of Christ in their hearts, and who in reality love the vilest lust better than him, be that church of Christ which in the New Testament is denominated his city, his temple, his family, his body, etc. by which names the visible church of Christ is there frequently called.

I acknowledge, that means of Christ's appointment, are to be used with those who are Christ's, and do not profess themselves any other, to change their hearts, and bring them to be Christ's friends and disciples. Such means are to be used with all sorts of persons, with Jews, Mahometans, heathens, with nominal Christians that are heretical or vicious, the profane, the intemperate, the unclean, and all other enemies of Christ; and these means to be used constantly, and laboriously. Scandalous persons need to go to school, to learn to be Christians, as much as other men. And there are many persons that are not morally sincere, who from selfish and sinister views consent ordinarily to

go to church, and so be in the way of means. And none ought to forbid them thus going to Christ's school, that they may be taught by him, in the ministry of the gospel. But yet it will not follow, that such a school is the church of Christ. Human laws can put persons, even those who are very vicious, into the school of Christ, in that sense; they can oblige them constantly to be present at public teaching, and attend on the means of grace appointed by Christ, and dispensed in his name. But human laws can not join men to the church of Christ, and make them members of his body.

## OBJECTION II

Visible saintship in the scripture sense can not be the same with that which has been supposed and insisted on, because Israel of old were called God's people, when it is certain the greater part of them were far from having any such visible holiness as this. Thus the ten tribes were called God's people, Hos. 4:6, after they had revolted from the true worship of God, and had obstinately continued in their idolatrous worship at Bethel and Dan for about two hundred and fifty years, and were at that time, a little before their captivity especially, in the height of their wickedness. So the Jews are called God's people, because of any visibility of true piety to the eye of reason or of a rational charity, because most of them were grossly wicked, and declared their sin as Sodom. And in the same manner wherein the Jews of old were God's people, are the members of the visible Christian Gentile church God's people; for they are spoken of as grafted into the same olive-tree, from whence the former were broken off by unbelief.

ANSWER 1. The argument proves too much, and therefore nothing at all. Those whom I oppose in this controversy, will in effect as much oppose themselves in it, as me. The objection, if it has any force, equally militates against their and my notion of visible saintship. For those Jews, which it is alleged were called God's people, and yet were so notoriously, openly, and obstinately wicked, had neither any visibility of true piety, not yet of that moral sincerity in the profession and duties of the true religion, which the opponents themselves suppose to be requisite in order to a proper visible holiness, and a due admission to the privileges and ordinances of the church of God. None will pretend, that these obstinate idolaters and impious wretches had those qualifications which are now requisite in order to an admission to the Christian sacraments. And therefore to what purpose can they bring this objection? Which, if it proves anything, overthrows my scheme and their own both together, and both in an equally effectual manner. And not only so, but will thoroughly destroy the schemes of all Protestants through the world, concerning the qualifications of the subjects of Christian ordinances. And therefore the support of what I have laid down against those whom I oppose in this controversy, requires no further answer to this objection. Nevertheless, for greater satisfaction, I would here observe further:

2. That such appellations as God's people, God's Israel, and some other like phrases, are used and applied in Scripture with considerable diversity of intention. Thus, we have a plain distinction between the house of Israel, and the house of Israel, in Eze. 20:38-40. By the house of Israel in the 39th verse is meant literally the nation or family of Israel; but by the house of Israel in the 40th verse seems to be intended the spiritual house, the body of God's visible saints, that should attend the ordinances of his public worship in gospel-times. So likewise there is a distinction make between the house of

Israel, and God's disciples who should profess and visibly adhere to his law and testimony, in Isa. 8:14-17. And though the whole nation of the Jews are often called God's people in those degenerate times wherein the prophets were sent to reprove them, yet at the same time they are charged as falsely calling themselves of the holy city, Isa. 48:2. And God often tells them, they are rather to be reckoned among aliens, and as children of the Ethiopians, or posterity of the ancient Canaanites, on account of their grossly wicked and scandalous behaviour. See Amos 9:7, etc. Eze. 16:2-3, etc. Eze. 16:45, etc. Isa. 1:10.

It is evident that God sometimes, according to the methods of his marvellous mercy and long-suffering towards mankind, has a merciful respect to a degenerate church, become exceeding corrupt, and constituted of members who have not those qualifications which ought to be insisted on. God continues still to have respect to them so far as not utterly to forsake them, or wholly to deny his confirmation of and blessing on their administrations. And not being utterly renounced of God, their administrations are to be looked upon as in some respect valid, and the society as in some sort a people or church of God. This was the case with the church of Rome, at least till the Reformation and council of Trent; for till then we must own their baptisms and ordinations to be valid. The church that the pope sits in, is called, The temple of God, 2 Thes. 2:4.

And with regard to the people of Israel, it is very manifest, that something diverse is oftentimes intended by that nation being God's people, from their being visible saints, visible holy, or having those qualifications which are requisite in order to a due admission to the ecclesiastical privileges of such. That nation, that family of Israel according to the flesh, and with regard to that external and carnal qualification, were in some sense adopted by God to be his peculiar people, and his covenant people. This is not only evident by what has been already observed, but also indisputable manifest from Rom. 9:2-5, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart; for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the ADOPTION, and the glory, and the COVENANTS, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the PROMISES; whose are the fathers; and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came." It is to be noted, that the privileges here mentioned are spoken of as belonging to the Jews, not now as visible saints, not as professors of the true religion, not as members of the visible church of Christ; but only as people of such a nation, such a blood, such an external and carnal relation to the patriarchs their ancestors, Israelites ACCORDING TO THE FLESH. For the apostle is speaking here of the unbelieving Jews, professed unbelievers, that were out of the Christian church, and open visible enemies to it, and such as had no right to the external privileges of Christ's people. So, in Rom. 11:28, 29, this apostle speaks of the same unbelieving Jews, as in some respect an elect people, and interested in the calling, promises, and covenants God formerly gave to their forefathers, and as still beloved for their sakes. "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes: for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." These things are not privileges belonging to the Jews now as a people of the right religion, or in the true church of visible worshippers of God; but as a people of such a pedigree or blood; and that even after the ceasing of the Mosaic administration. But there were privileges more especially belonging to them under the

Old Testament. They were a family that God had chosen in distinction from all others, to show special favour to above all other nations. It was manifestly agreeable to God's design to constitute things so under the Old Testament, that the means of grace and spiritual privileges and blessings should by - though not wholly, yet in a great measure - confined to a particular family, much more than those privileges and blessings are confined to any posterity or blood now under the gospel. God purposely by these favours distinguished that nation not only from those who were not professed worshippers of the true God, but also in a great measure from other nations, by a constituted wall of separation. This was not merely a wall between professors and non-professors, but between NATION and NATIONS. God, if he pleases, may by his sovereignty annex his blessing, and in some measure fix it, for his own reasons, to a particular blood, as well as to a particular place or spot of ground, to a certain building, to a particular heap of stones, or altar of brass, to particular garments, and other external things. And it is evident, that he actually did affix his blessing to that particular external family of Jacob, very much as he did to the city Jerusalem, where he chose to place his name, and to mount Zion where he commanded the blessing. God did not so affix his blessing to Jerusalem or mount Zion, as to limit himself, either by confining the blessing wholly to that place, never to bestow it elsewhere; nor by obliging himself always to bestow it on those that sought him there; nor yet obliging himself never to withdraw his blessing from thence, by forsaking his dwelling-place there, and leaving it to be a common or profane place. But he was pleased to make it the seat of his blessing in a peculiar manner, in great distinction from other places. In like manner did he fix his blessing to the progeny of Jacob. It was a family which he delighted in, and which he blessed in a peculiar manner, and to which in a great measure he confined the blessing; but not so as to limit himself, or so as to oblige himself to bestow it on all of that blood, or not to bestow it on others that were not of that blood. He affixed his blessing both to the place and nation, by sovereign election, Psa. 132:13-15. He annexed and fixed his blessing to both by covenant.

To that nation he fixed his blessing by his covenant with the patriarchs. Indeed the main thing, the substance and marrow of that covenant which God made with Abraham and the other patriarchs, was the covenant of grace, which is continued in these days of the gospel, and extends to all his spiritual seed, of the Gentiles as well as Jews. But yet that covenant with the patriarchs contained other things that were appendages to that everlasting covenant of grace; promises of lesser matters, subservient to the grand promise of the future seed, and typical of things appertaining to him. Such were those that annexed the blessing to the land of Canaan, and the progeny of Isaac and Jacob. Just as it was also as to the covenant God made with David, 2 Sam. 7, and Psa. 132. If we consider that covenant with regard to its marrow and soul, it was the covenant of grace. But there were other subservient promises which were typical of its benefits; such were promises of blessings to the nation of Israel, of continuing the temporal crown to David's posterity, and of fixing the blessing to Jerusalem or mount Zion, as the place which he chose to set his name there. And in this sense it was that the very family of Jacob were God's people by covenant, and his chosen people; even when they were no visible saints, when they lived in idolatry, and made no profession of the true religion.

On the whole, it is evident that the very nation of Israel, not as visible saints, but as the progeny of Jacob according to the flesh, were in some respect a chosen people, a

people of God, a covenant people, an holy nation; even as Jerusalem was a chosen city, the city of God, a holy city, and a city that God had engaged by covenant to dwell in.

Thus a sovereign and all-wise God was pleased to ordain things with respect to the nation of Israel. Perhaps we may not be able to give all the reasons of such a constitution; but some of them seem to be pretty manifest; as,

1. The great and main end of separating one particular nation from all others, as God did the nation of Israel, was to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. God's covenant with Abraham and the other patriarchs implied that the Messiah should be of their blood, or their seed according to the flesh. And therefore it was requisite that their progeny according to the flesh should be fenced in by a wall of separation, and made God's people. If the Messiah had been born of some of the professors of Abraham's religion, but of some other nation, that religion being propagated from nation to nation, as it is now under the gospel, it would not have answered the covenant with Abraham, for the Messiah to have been born of Abraham's seed only in this sense. The Messiah being by covenant so related to Jacob's progeny according to the flesh, God was pleased, agreeable to the nature of such a covenant, to show great respect to that people on account of that external relation. Therefore the apostle mentions it as one great privilege, that of them according to the flesh Christ came, Rom. 9:5. As the introducing of the Messiah and his salvation and kingdom was the special design of all God's dealings and peculiar dispensations towards that people, the natural result of this was, that great account should be made of their being of that nation, in God's covenant dealings with them.

2. That nation was a typical nation. There was then literally a land, which was a type of heaven, the true dwelling-place of God; and an external city, which was a type of the spiritual city of God; an external temple of God, which was a type of his spiritual temple. So there was an external people and family of God, by carnal generation, which was a type of his spiritual progeny. And the covenant by which they were made a people of God, was a type of the covenant of grace; and so is sometimes represented as a marriage-covenant. God, agreeable to the nature of that dispensation, showed a great regard to external and carnal things in those days, as types of spiritual things. What a great regard God did show then to external qualifications for privileges and services, appears in this, that there is ten times so much said in the books of Moses about such qualifications in the institutions of the Passover and tabernacle services, as about any moral qualifications whatsoever. And so much were such typical qualifications insisted on, that even by the law of Moses, the congregation of the Lord, or church of visible worshippers of God, and the number of public professors of the true religion who were visible saints, were not the same. Some were of the latter, that were not of the former; as the eunuchs, who were excluded the congregation, though never so externally religious, yea truly pious; and so also bastards, etc.

3. It was the sovereign pleasure of God to choose the posterity of Jacob according to the flesh, to reserve them for special favours to the end of time. And therefore they are still kept a distinct nation, being still reserved for distinguishing mercy in the latter day, when they shall be restored to the church of God. God is pleased in this way to testify his regard to their holy ancestors, and his regard to their external relation to Christ. Therefore the apostle still speaks of them as an elect nation, and beloved for the

fathers' sakes, even after they were broken off from the good olive by unbelief. God's covenant with Abraham is in some sense in force with respect to that people, and reaches them even to this day; and yet surely they are not God's covenant people, in the sense that visible Christians are. See Lev. 26:42.

If it be said, It was often foretold by the prophets, that in gospel-days other nations should be the people of God, as well as the nation of the Jews. And when Christ sent forth his apostles, he bid them go and disciple all nations.

I answer: By a common figure of speech the prevailing part of a nation are called the nation, and what is done to them is said to be done to the nation, and what is done by them is said to be done by that nation. And it is to be hoped, that the time is coming when the prevailing part of many nations, yea of every nation under heaven, will be regularly brought into the visible church of Christ. If by nations in these prophecies we understand any other than the prevailing part, and it be insisted on that we must understand it of all the people belonging to those nations. There never yet has been any nation in this sense regularly brought into the visible church of Christ, even according to the scheme of those whom I oppose. For there never yet has been a whole nation outwardly moral. And besides, what Mr. Blake says in his Treatise of the Covenant, page 238, may be applied here, and serve as an answer to this objection: "The prophecies of the Old Testament (says he) of the glory of the New Testament times, are in Old Testament phrases, by way of allusion to the worship of those times, set forth to us." In Rev. 21:24, nations are spoken of, as having an interest in the New Jerusalem, which yet is represented as perfectly pure, without the least degree of pollution and defilement, Rev. 21:27. And as for the command to the apostles, to disciple all nations, it was a direction to them as to what they should attempt, not a prediction of what they should bring to pass in their day. For they never brought one-half of any one nation into the visible Christian church, nor any at all in one-half of the nations in the world, it is very probable.

If it should be further objected, that it is an evidence that Gentile Christians are visible saints, according to the New Testament notion of visible saintship, in the very same manner as the whole Jewish nation were till they were broken off by their obstinate rejection of the Messiah; that the Gentile Christians are represented as being grafted into the same olive, from whence the Jews were broken off by unbelief, Rom. 11:17, etc.

I would inquire, what anyone can intend by this objection? Whether it be this, viz. That we ought to insist on no higher or better qualifications, in admitting persons as members of the Christian church, and to all its privileges, than the whole Jewish nation in Christ's time possessed, till they had obstinately persisted in their rejection of him? If this is not intended, the objection is nothing to the purpose: or, if this be intended, neither then is it to the purpose of those with whom I have especially to do in this controversy, who hold orthodoxy, knowledge of the fundamental doctrines of religion, moral sincerity, and a good conversation, to be qualifications, which ought to be insisted on, in order to a visible church-state. For a very great part of those Jews were destitute of these qualifications; many of them were Sadducees, who denied a future state; others of them Herodians, who were occasional conformists with the Romans in their idolatries; the prevailing sect among them were Pharisees, who openly professed

the false doctrine of justification by the works of the law and external privileges, that leaven of the Pharisees, which Christ warns his disciples to beware of. Many of them were scandalously ignorant, for their teachers had taken away the key of knowledge. Multitudes were grossly vicious, for it was a generation in which all manner of sin and wickedness prevailed.

I think that text in Rom. 11, can be understood no otherwise, in any consistency with plain fact, than that the Gentile Christians succeeded the Jews, who had been, either in themselves or ancestors, the children of Abraham, with respect to a visible interest in the covenant of grace, until they were broken off from the church, and ceased to be visible saints by their open and obstinate unbelief. Indeed their ancestors had all been in the church of visible saints, and each branch withered and failed through unbelief. This was the highest and most important sense, in which any of the Jews were externally the children of Abraham, and implied the greatest privileges. But there was another sense, in which the whole nation, including even those of them who were no visible saints, were his children, which (as has been shown) implied great privileges, wherein Christian Gentiles do not succeed them, though they have additional ecclesiastical privileges, vastly beyond the Jews.

Whether I have succeeded, in rightly explaining these matters, or no, yet my failing in it is of no great importance with regard to the strength of the objection, that occasioned my attempting it; which was, that scandalously wicked men among the Jews are called God's people, etc. The objection, as I observed, is as much against the scheme of those whom I oppose, as against my scheme; and therefore it as much concerns them, to find out some explanation of the matter, that shall show something else is intended by it, than their having the qualifications of visible saints, as it does me; and a failing in such an attempt as much affects and hurts their cause, as it does mine.

### OBJECTION III

Those in Israel, who made no profession of piety of heart, did according to divine institution partake of the Passover; a Jewish sacrament, representing the same things, and a seal of the very same covenant of grace, with the Lord's supper; and particularly, it would be unreasonable to suppose, that all made a profession of godliness whom God commanded to keep that first Passover in Egypt, which the whole congregation were required to keep, and there is no shadow of any such thing as all first making a solemn public profession of those things wherein true piety consists. And so the people in general partook of the Passover, from generation to generation; but it would be improbable to suppose, that they all professed a supreme regard to God in their hearts.

ANSWER 1. The affair of the Israelites' participation of the Passover, and particularly that first Passover in Egypt, is attended with altogether as much difficulty in regard to the qualifications which the objectors themselves suppose requisite in communicants at the Lord's table, as with regard to those which I insist upon; and if there be any argument in the case, it is fully as strong an argument against their scheme, as mine.

One thing they insist upon as a requisite qualification for the Lord's supper, is a public profession of religion as to the essential doctrines of it. But there is no more public profession of this kind, preceding that Passover in Egypt, than of a profession of godliness. Here, not to insist on the great doctrines of the fall of man, of our undone

state by nature, of the Trinity, of our dependence on the free grace of God for justification, etc. let us take only those two doctrines of a future state of rewards and punishments, and the doctrine of the Messiah to come, that Messiah who was represented in the Passover. Is there any more appearance, in sacred story, of the people making a public profession in Egypt of these doctrines, before they partook of the Passover, than of their making profession of the love of God? And is there any more probability of the former, than of the latter? Another thing which they on the other side suppose necessary to a due attendance on the Lord's supper, is, that when any have openly been guilty of gross sins, they should before they come to this sacrament, openly confess and humble themselves for their faults. Now it is evident by many scriptures, that a great part of the children of Israel in Egypt had been guilty of joining with the Egyptians in worshipping their false gods, and had lived in idolatry. But the history of Exodus gives us no account of any public solemn confession of , or humiliation, for this great sin, before they came to the Passover. Mr. Stoddard observes (Appeal, P. 58, 59.) that there was in the church of Israel a way appointed by God for the removal of scandals; men being required in that case to offer up their sacrifices, attended with confession and visible signs of repentance. But where do we read of the people offering up sacrifices in Egypt, attended with confession, for removing the scandal of that most heinous sin of idolatry they had lived in? Or is there any more probability of their publicly professing their repentance and humiliation for their sin, before their celebrating the Passover, than of their publicly professing to love God above all? Another thing which they suppose to be requisite in order to admission to the Lord's table, and about which they would have a particular care to be taken, is, that every person admitted give evidence of a competent knowledge in the doctrines of religion, and none be allowed to partake who are grossly ignorant. Now there is no more appearance of this with regard to the congregation in Egypt, than of a profession of godliness; and it is as difficult to suppose it. There is abundant reason to suppose, that vast numbers in that nation, consisting of more than a million of adult persons, had been brought up in a great degree of ignorance, amidst their slavery in Egypt, were the people seem to have almost forgotten the true God and the true religion. And though pains had been taken by Moses, now for a short season, to instruct the people better; yet it must be considered, it is a very great work, to take a whole nation under such degrees of ignorance and prejudice, and bring everyone of them to a competent degree of knowledge in religion; and a greater work still for Moses both thus to instruct them, and also by examination or otherwise, to come to a just satisfaction, that all had indeed attained to such knowledge.

Mr. Stoddard insists, that if grace be requisite in the Lord's supper, it would have been as much so in the Passover, inasmuch as the chief thing which the Passover (as well as the Lord's supper) represents, is Christ's sufferings. But if, on this account, the same qualifications are requisite in both ordinances, then it would be as requisite that the partakers should have knowledge to discern the Lord's body (in Mr. Stoddard's sense of 1 Cor. 11:29) in the Passover, as in the Lord's supper. But this certainly is as difficult to suppose, as that they professed godliness. For how does it appear, that the people in general who partook of the Passover – knew that it signified the death of the Messiah, and the way in which he should make atonement for sin by his blood? Does it look very likely that they should know this, when Christ's own disciples had not knowledge thus to discern the Lord's body in the Passover, of which they partook from year to year with their Master? Can it be supposed, they actually knew Christ's

death and the design of it to be thereby signified, when they did not so much as realise the fact itself, that Christ was to die, as least not till the year before the last Passover? Besides, how unreasonable would it be, to suppose, that the Jews understood what was signified, pertaining to Christ and salvation by him, in all those many kinds of sacrifices, which they attended and partook of, and all the vast variety of ceremonies belonging to them; all which sacrifices were sacramental representations of Christ's death, as well as the sacrifice of the Passover! The apostle tells us, that all these things had a shadow of good things to come, the things concerning Christ; and yet there are many of them, which the church of Christ to this day does not understand; though we are under a thousand times greater advantage to understand them, than they were. For we have the New Testament, wherein God uses great plainness of speech, to guide us, and live in days wherein the veil which Moses put over his face is taken away in Christ, and the veil of the temple rent, and have the substance and antitype plainly exhibited, and so have opportunity to compare these with those shadows.

If it be objected, as a difficulty that lies against our supposing a profession of godliness requisite to a participation of the Passover, that they who were uncircumcised were expressly forbidden to partake, and if conversion was as important and a more important qualification than circumcision, why were not the unregenerate as expressly forbidden? I answer: Why were not scandalous sinners as expressly forbidden? And why was not moral sincerity as expressly required as circumcision?

If it be objected, that they were *all* expressly and strictly required to keep the Passover; but if grace was requisite, and God knew that many of the partakers would have no grace, why would he give such universal orders?

I answer: When God gave those commands, he knew that the commands, in all their strictness, would reach many persons who in the time of the Passover would be without so much as moral sincerity in religion. Every man in the nation, from the first institution till the death of Christ, were all (excepting such as were ceremonially unclean, or on a journey) strictly required to keep the feast of Passover; and yet God knew that multitudes would be without the qualification of moral seriousness in religion. It would be very unreasonable to suppose, that every single person in the nation was morally serious, even in the very best time, or that ever there was such a happy day with any nation under heaven, wherein all were morally sincere in religion. How much then was it otherwise many times with that nation, which was so prone to corruption, and so often generally involved in gross wickedness! But the strict command of God to keep the Passover reached the morally insincere, as well as other; they are no where excepted, any more than the unconverted. And as to any general commands of God's Word, these no more required men to turn from a state of moral insincerity before they came to the Passover, than they required them to turn from a graceless state.

But further, I reply, that God required them all to keep the Passover, no more strictly than he required them all to love the Lord their God with their whole heart. And if God might strictly command this, he might also strictly command them to keep that ordinance wherein they were especially to profess it, and seal their profession of it. That evil generation were not expressly forbidden to keep the Passover in succeeding years, for the whole forty years during which they went on provoking God, very often

by gross sin and open rebellion; but still the express and strict commands for the whole congregation to keep the Passover reached them, nor were they released from their obligation.

If it be said, that we must suppose multitudes in Israel attended the Passover, from age to age, without such a visibility of piety as I have insisted on; and yet we do not find their attending this ordinance charged on them as a sin, in Scripture. I answer: We must also suppose that multitudes in Israel, from age to age, attended the Passover, who lived in moral insincerity, yea and scandalous wickedness. For the people in general very often notoriously corrupted themselves, and declined to ways of open and great transgression; and yet there is reason to think, that in these times of corruption, for the most part, they held circumcision and the Passover; and we do not find their attending on these ordinances under such circumstances, any more expressly charged on them as a sin, than their coming without piety of heart. The ten tribes continued constantly in idolatry for about 250 years, and there is ground to suppose, that in the mean time they ordinarily kept up circumcision and the Passover. For though they worshipped God by images, yet they maintained most of the ceremonial observances of the law of Moses, called the manner of the God of the land, which their priests taught the Samaritans who were settled in their stead, 2 Kin. 17:26, 27. Nevertheless we do not find Elijah, Elisha, or other prophets, reproofing them for attending these ordinances without the required moral qualifications. Indeed there are some things in the writings of the prophets, which may be interpreted as a reproof of this; but no more as a reproof of this, than of attending God's ordinances without a gracious sincerity and true piety of heart and life.

How many seasons were there, wherein the people in general fell into and lived in idolatry, that scandal of scandals, in the times of the judges, and of the kings both in Judah and Israel! But still amidst all this wickedness, they continued to attend the sacrament of circumcision. We have every whit as much evidence of it, as that they attended the Passover without a profession of godliness. We have no account of their ever leaving it if at such seasons, nor any hint of its being renewed (as a thing which had ceased) when they come to reform. Though we have so full an account of the particulars of Josiah's reformation, after the long and scandalous reign of Manasseh, there is no hint of any reviving of circumcision, or returning to it after a cessation. And where have we an account of the people being once reproofed for attending this holy sacrament while thus involved in scandalous sin, in all the Old Testament? And where is this once charged on them as a sin, any more than in the case of unconverted persons attending the sacrament of the Passover?

ANSWER 2. Whatever was the case with respect to the qualifications for the sacraments of the Old Testament dispensation, I humbly conceive it is nothing to the purpose in the present argument, nor needful to determine us with respect to the qualifications for the sacraments of the Christian dispensation, which is a matter of such plain fact in the New testament. Far am I from thinking the Old Testament to be like an old almanac out of use; nay, I think it is evident from the New Testament, that some things which had their first institution under the Old Testament, are continued under the New. For instance, the acceptance of the infant-seed of believers as children of the covenant with their parents; and probably some things belonging to the order and discipline of Christian churches, had their first beginning in the Jewish synagogue.

But yet all allow that the Old Testament dispensation is out of date, with its ordinances; and I think, in a matter pertaining to the constitution and order of the New Testament church - matter of fact, wherein the New Testament itself is express, full, and abundant - to have recourse to the Mosaic dispensation for rules or precedents to determine our judgment, is quite needless, and out of reason. There is perhaps no part of divinity attended with so much differ, as the stating of the precise agreement and difference between the two dispensations of Moses and of Christ. And probably the reason why God has left it so intricate, is, because our understanding the ancient dispensation, and God's design in it, is not of so great importance, nor does it so nearly concern us. Since God uses great plainness of speech in the New Testament, which is as it were the charter and municipal law of the Christian church, what need we run back to the ceremonial and typical institutions of an antiquated dispensation, wherein God's declared design was, to deliver divine things in comparative obscurity, hid under a veil, and involved in clouds?

We have no more occasion for going to search among the types, dark revelations, and carnal ordinances of the Old Testament, to find out whether this matter of fact concerning the constitution and order of the New Testament church be true, than we have occasion for going there to find out whether any other matter of fact, of which we have an account in the New Testament, be true. As particularly, whether there were such officers in the primitive church as bishops and deacons, whether miraculous gifts of the Spirit were common in the apostles' days, whether the believing Gentiles were received into the primitive Christian church, and the like.

ANSWER 3. I think, nothing can be alleged from the Holy Scripture, sufficient to prove a profession of godliness to be not a qualification requisite in order to a due and regular participation of the Passover.

Although none of the requisite moral qualifications for this Jewish sacrament, are near so clearly made known in the Old Testament, as the qualifications for the Christian sacraments are in the New; and although a supposed visibility of either moral sincerity or sanctifying grace, is involved in some obscurity and difficulty; yet I would humbly offer what appears to me to be the truth concerning that matter, in the things that follow.

(1.) Although the people in Egypt before the first Passover, probably made no explicit public profession at all, either of their humiliation for their former idolatry or of present devotedness of heart to God; it being before any particular institution of an express public profession, either of godliness, or repentance in case of scandal. Yet I think, there was some sort of public manifestation, or implicit profession of both. Probably in Egypt they implicitly professed the same things, which they afterwards professed more expressly and solemnly in the wilderness. The Israelites in Egypt had very much to affect their hearts, before the last plague, in the great things that God had done for them; especially in some of the latter plagues, wherein they were so remarkable distinguished from the Egyptians. They seem now to be brought to a tender frame, and a disposition to show much respect to God (see Exo. 12:27); and were probably now very forward to profess themselves devoted to him, and true penitents.

(2.) After the institution of an explicit public profession of devotedness to God, or (which is the same thing) of true piety of heart, this was wont to be required in order

to a partaking of the Passover and other sacrifices and sacraments that adult persons were admitted to. Accordingly all the adult persons that were circumcised at Gilgal, had made this profession a little before on the plains of Moab. Not that all of them were truly gracious; but seeing they all had a profession and visibility, Christ in his dealings with his church as to external things, acted not as the Searcher of hearts, but as the Head of the visible church, accommodating himself to the present state of mankind; and therefore he represents himself in Scripture as trusting his people's profession; as I formerly observed.

(3.) In degenerate times in Israel, both priests and people were very lax with respect to covenanting with God, and professing devotedness to him; and these professions were used, as public professions commonly are still corrupt times, merely as matters of form and ceremony, at least by great multitudes.

(4.) Such was the nature of the Levitical dispensation, that it had in no measure so great a tendency to preclude and prevent hypocritical professions, as the New Testament dispensation; particularly, on account of the vastly greater darkness of it. For the covenant of grace was not then so fully revealed, and consequently the nature of the conditions of that covenant was not then so well known. There was then a far more obscure revelation of those great duties of repentance towards God and faith in the Mediator, and of those things wherein true holiness consists, and wherein it is distinguished from other things. Persons then had not equal advantage to know their own hearts, while viewing themselves in this comparatively dim light of Moses' law, as now they have in the clear sunshine of the gospel. In that state of the minority of the church, the nature of true piety, as consisting in the Spirit of adoption, or ingenuous filial love to God, and as distinguished from a spirit of bondage, servile fear, and self-love, was not so clearly made known. The Israelites were therefore the more ready to mistake for true piety, that moral seriousness and those warm affections and resolutions that resulted from that spirit of bondage, which showed itself in Israel remarkable at mount Sinai; and to which through all the Old Testament times, they were especially incident.

(5.) God was pleased in a great measure to suffer (though he did not properly allow) a laxness among the people, with regard to the visibility of holiness, and the moral qualifications requisite to an attendance on their sacraments. This he also did in many other cases of great irregularity, under that dark, imperfect, and comparatively carnal dispensation; such as polygamy, putting away their wives at pleasure, the revenging of blood, killing the man-slayer, etc. And he winked at their worshipping in high places in Solomon's time (1 Kin. 3:4, 5) the neglect of keeping the feast of tabernacles according to the law, from Joshua's time till after the captivity (Neh. 8:17), and the neglect of the synagogue-worship, or the public service of God in particular congregations, till after the captivity, though the light of nature, together with the general rules of the law of Moses, did sufficiently teach and require it.

(6.) It seems to be foretold in the prophecies of the Old Testament, that there would be a great alteration in this respect, in the days of the gospel; that under the new dispensation there should be far greater purity in the church. Thus, in the fore-mentioned place in Ezekiel it is foretold, that "those who are [visible] uncircumcised in heart, should NO MORE enter into God's sanctuary." Again, Eze. 20:37,38, "And I

will cause you to pass under the rod, and will bring you into the bond of the covenant; and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me.” It seems to be a prophecy of the greater purity of those who are visibly in covenant with God. Isa. 4:3, “And it shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even everyone that is written among the living [i.e. has a name to live, or is enrolled among the saints] in Jerusalem.” Isa. 52:1 “Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; from henceforth there shall NO MORE come to thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.” Zec. 14:21, “And in that day, there shall be NO MORE the Canaanite in the house of the Lord.”

(7.) This is just such an alteration as might reasonably be expected from what we are taught of the whole nature of the two dispensations. As the one had carnal ordinances (so they are called Heb. 9:10), the other a spiritual service (John 4:24); the one an earthly Canaan, the other a heavenly; the one a worldly sanctuary, the other a spiritual; the one a bodily and temporal redemption, which is all that they generally discerned or understood in the Passover), the other a spiritual and eternal. And agreeable to these things, it was so ordered in providence, that Israel, the congregation that should enter this worldly sanctuary, and attend these carnal ordinances, should be much more a worldly, carnal congregation, than the New Testament congregation. One reason of such a difference seems to be this, viz. That the Messiah might have the honour of introducing a state of greater purity and spiritual glory. Hence God is said to find fault with that ancient dispensation of the covenant, Heb. 8:7-8. And the time of introducing the new dispensation is called the time of reformation, Heb. 9:10. And one thing, wherein the amendment of what God found fault with in the former dispensation should consist, the apostle intimates, is the greater purity and spirituality of the church, Heb. 8:7, 8, 11.

#### OBJECTION IV

It is not reasonable to suppose, that the multitudes which John the Baptist baptised, made a profession of saving grace, or had any such visibility of true piety, as has been insisted on.

ANSWER. Those whom John baptised, came to him confessing their sins, making a profession of some kind of repentance; and it is not reasonable to suppose, the repentance they professed was specifically or in kind diverse from that which he had instructed them in, and called them to, which is called repentance for the remission of sins; and that is saving repentance. John’s baptism is called the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. I know not how such a phrase can be reasonably understood any otherwise, than so as to imply, that his baptism was some exhibition of that repentance, and a seal of the profession of it. Baptism is a seal of some sort of religious profession, in adult persons; but the very name of John’s baptism shows, that it was a seal of a profession of repentance for the remission of sins. It is said in, Luke 3:3, “John PREACHED the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” What can be understood by this, but his preaching that men should now speedily turn to God, by true repentance and faith in the promised Saviour, and come and confess their sins, and openly declare this repentance towards God, and faith in the Lamb of God, and that they should confirm and seal this their profession by baptism, as well as therein receive the seal of God’s willingness to remit the sins of such as had this faith and repentance.

Accordingly, we are told, the people came and were baptised of him, confessing their sins, manifesting and professing that sort of repentance and faith which he preached. They had no notion of any other sort of repentance put into their heads, that they could suppose John called them to profess in baptism, but this accompanied with faith in the Lamb whom he called them to behold; for he preached no other to them. The people that John baptised, professed both repentance for the remission of sins, and also faith in the Messiah; as is evident by Acts 19:4, 5, “John verily baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him that should come after him;” i.e. on Christ Jesus. “When they heard this [John preaching] they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

If it be objected here, that we are told, Mat. 3:5, 6, “Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptised of him in Jordan, confessing their sins;” and that it is not to be imagined, all these made any credible profession of saving repentance and faith, I answer. No more is to be understood by these expressions, according to the phraseology of the Scripture, than that there was a very great resort of people from these places to John. Nor is any more to be understood by the like term of universality in John 3:26, “They came to John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptiseth, and ALL MEN come to him;” that is, there was a great resort to him from all quarters. It is in nowise unreasonable to suppose, there was indeed a very great number of people that came to John from the places mentioned, who being exceedingly moved by his preaching, in the time of extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit, made profession of the faith and repentance which John preached. Doubtless there were many more professors than real converts. But still in the great resort to John, there were many of the latter character; as we may infer from the prophecy, as appears by Luke 1:16, 17, “And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” And from that account of fact in Mat. 11:12, “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” And in Luke 16:16, “The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.” Here the expression is no less universal, than that which is objected in Mat. 3:5, 6. As to those wicked Pharisees, that so much opposed Christ, some of them I suppose had been baptised by John, and then had a great show of repentance and faith; but they afterwards apostatised, and were much worse than ever before. Therefore Christ speaks of them as being like a house from which the unclean spirit is visibly turned out for a while, and is left empty, swept, and garnished, but afterward is repossessed, and has many devils instead of one, Luke 11:24, etc. Yet as to the greater part of these Pharisees, they were not baptised by John; as appears by Luke 7:29, 30.

If it be further objected, that John in baptising such multitudes could not have time to be sufficiently informed of those he baptised, whether their profession of godliness was credible, or no, I answer. That we are not particularly informed of the circumstances of his teaching, and of the assistance he was favoured with, and the means he had of information, concerning those whom he baptised. But we may be sure of one thing, viz. He had as much opportunity to inquire unto the credibility of their profession, as

he had to inquire into their doctrinal knowledge and moral character; which my opponents suppose to be necessary, as well as I: and this is enough to silence the present objection.

### OBJECTION V

Christ says, Mat. 20:16, and again, Mat. 22:14, that many are called, but few are chosen. By which it is evident, that there are many who belong to the visible church, and yet but few real and true saints; and that it is ordinarily thus, even under the New Testament, and in days of gospel-light: and therefore that visibility of saintship, whereby persons are visible saints in a scripture sense, can not imply an apparent probability of their being real saints, or truly gracious persons.

ANSWER In these texts, by those that are called, are not meant those who are visible saints, and have the requisite qualifications for Christian sacraments; but all such as have the eternal call of the Word of God, and have its offers and invitations made to them. And it is undoubtedly true, and has been matter of fact, for the most part, that of those called in this sense, many have been but only called, and never truly obedient to the call, few have been true saints. So it was in the Jewish nation, to which the parable in the twentieth of Matthew has a special respect; in general they had the eternal call of God's Word, and attended many religious duties, in hopes of God's favour and reward, which is called labouring in God's vineyard; and yet but few of them eventually obtained salvation. Nay, great multitudes of those who were called in this sense, were scandalous persons, and gross hypocrites. The Pharisees and Sadducees were called, and they laboured in the vineyard, in the sense of the parable; for which they expected great rewards, above the Gentile converts or proselytes; wherefore their eye was evil towards them, and they could not bear that they should be made equal to them. But still these Pharisees and Sadducees had not generally the intellectual and moral qualifications, that my opponents suppose requisite for Christian sacraments; being generally scandalous persons, denying some fundamental principles of religion, and explaining away some of its most important precepts. Thus, many in Christendom are called, by the outward call of God's Word, and yet few of them are in a state of salvation. But not all who sit under the sound of the gospel, and hear its invitations, are fit to come to sacraments.

That by those who are called, in this saying of our Saviour, is meant those that have the gospel-offer, and not those who belong to the society of visible saints, is evident beyond all dispute, in Mat. 22:14. By the many that are called, are plainly intended the many that are invited to the wedding. In the foregoing parable, we have an account of those who from time to time were bidden, or CALLED (for the word is the same in the original), Mat. 22:3, "And sent forth his servants to CALL them that were CALLED and they would not come." This has respect to the Jews, who refused not only savingly to come to Christ, but refused so much as to come into the visible church of Christ. Mat. 22:4, "Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden (or CALLED), Behold I have prepared my dinner," etc. Mat. 22:8, "They which were hidden (or CALLED) were not worthy." Mat. 22:9, "Go ye therefore into the high-ways, and as many as ye shall find, bid (or CALL) to the marriage," or nuptial banquet; representing the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles; who upon it came into the king's house, i.e. the visible church, and among them one that had not a wedding-

garment, who was bound hand and foot, and cast out when the king came: and then, at the conclusion, Christ adds this remark, Mat. 22:14, "For many are CALLED or bidden, but few are chosen;" which must have reference, not only to the man last mentioned, who came into the wedding-house, the Christian visible church, without a wedding-garment, but to those also mentioned before, who were called, but would not so much as come into the king's house, or join to the visible Christian church. To suppose this saying to have reference only to that one man who came without a wedding-garment (representing one that comes into the visible church, but is not a true saint), would be to make the introduction of this aphorism, and its connection with what went before, very strange and unintelligible, thus, "Multitudes came into the king's house, who were called, and the house was full of guests; but among them was found one man who was not chosen; for many are called, but few are chosen."

### OBJECTION VI

When the servants of the householder, in the parable of the wheat and tares (Mat. 13) unexpectedly found tares among the wheat, they said to their master, "Wilt thou that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them; let both grow together until the harvest." Which shows the mind of Christ, that we ought not to make a distinction between true saints and others in this world, or aim at admitting true saints only into the visible church, but ought to let both be together in the church till the day of judgment.

ANSWER 1. These things have no reference to introduction into the field, or admission into the visible church, as though no care nor measures should be taken to prevent tares being sown; or as though the servants who had the charge of the field, would have done will to have taken tares, appearing to be such, and planted them in the field amongst the wheat. No, instead of this, the parable plainly implies the contrary. But the words cited have wholly respect to a CASTING OUT and purging the field, after the tares had been introduced unawares, and contrary to design, though men's infirmity and Satan's procurement. Concerning purging the tares out of the field, or casting men out of the church, there is no difference between me and those whom I oppose in the present controversy: and therefore it is impossible there should be any objection from that which Christ says here concerning this matter against me, but what is as much of an objection against them; for we both hold the same thing. It is agreed on all hands, that adult persons, actually admitted to communion in the visible church, however they may behave themselves so as to bring their spiritual state into suspicion, yet ought not to be cast out, unless they are obstinate in heresy or scandal; lest, while we go about to root out the tares, we should root out the wheat also. And it is also agreed on all hands, that when those represented under the name of tares bring forth such evil fruit, such scandalous and obstinate wickedness, as is plainly and visible inconsistent with the being of true grace, they ought to be cast out. And therefore it is impossible that this objection should be anything to the purpose.

ANSWER 2. I think this parable, instead of being a just objection against the doctrine I maintain, is on the contrary a clear evidence for it.

For (1.) the parable shows plainly, that if any are introduced into the field of the householder, or church of Christ, who prove to be not wheat (i.e. not true saints), they are brought in unawares, or contrary to design. If tares are as properly to be sown in

the field, as is the wheat, which must be the case if the Lord's supper be a converting ordinance; then surely no care ought to be taken to introduce wheat only, and no respect ought to be had more to the qualities of wheat in sowing the field, than the qualities of tares; nor is there any more impropriety in the tares having a place there, than the wheat. But this surely is altogether inconsistent with the scope of the parable.

(2.) This parable plainly shows, that those who are in the visible church, have at first a visibility, or appearance to human sight of true grace, or of the nature of true saints. For it is observed, tares have this property, that when they first appear, and till the products of the field arrive to some maturity, they have such a resemblance of wheat, that it is next to impossible to distinguish them.

## OBJECTION VII

Christ himself administered the Lord's supper to Judas, whom he knew at the same time to be graceless; which is a full evidence, that grace is not in itself a requisite qualification in order to coming to the Lord's supper; and if it be not requisite in itself, a profession of it can not be requisite.

ANSWER 1. It is to me apparent, that Judas was not present at the administration of the Lord's supper. It is true, he was present at the Passover, and dipped with Christ in the paschal dish. The three former evangelists do differ in the order of the account they give of this dipping in the dish. Luke gives an account of it after his account of the Lord's supper, Luke 22:21. But Matthew and Mark both give an account of it before (Mat. 26:23; Mark 14:20). And the like might be shown in other instances of these three evangelists differing one from another in the order of their narratives; one places those things in his history after others, which another places first. These sacred historians do not undertake to declare precisely the date of every incident, but regard more the truth of facts, than the order of time. However, in the present case, the nature of the thing speaks for itself, and shows, that Judas' dipping with Christ in the dish, or his hand being with Christ on the table, or receiving a sop dipped in the dish, must be in that order wherein Matthew and Mark place it in their history, viz. at the Passover, antecedent to the Lord's supper. For there is no such thing in the Lord's supper as dipping of sops, and dipping together in the dish; but there was in the Passover, where all had their hands together in the dish, and dipped their sops in the bitter sauce. None of these three evangelists give us any account of the time when Judas went out. But John - who is vastly more particular as to what passed that night, and is everywhere more exact as to the order of time than the other evangelists - is very precise as to the time, viz. that Jesus when he gave him the sop, at the same time sent him away, bidding him do quickly what he intended to do; and accordingly when he had received the sop, he went immediately out, John 13:27-30. Now this sop being at the Passover, it is evident he was not present at the Lord's supper which followed. Many of the best expositors are of this opinion, such as Van Mastricht, Dr. Doddridge, and others.

ANSWER 2. If Judas was there, I deny the consequence. As I have observed once and again concerning the Lord's dealings with his people under the Old Testament, so under the New the same observation takes place. Christ did not come to judge the secrets of men, nor did ordinarily act in his external dealings with his disciples, and in the administration of ordinances, as the Searcher of hearts; but rather as the Head of the visible church, proceeding according to what was exhibited in profession and

visibility; therein setting an example to his ministers, who should stand in his place when he was gone, and act in his name in the administration of ordinances. Judas had made the same profession of regard to his Master, and of forsaking all for him, as the other disciples. And therefore Christ did not openly renounce him till he himself had destroyed his profession and visibility of saintship, by public scandalous apostasy. Supposing then the presence of Judas at the Lord's supper, this affords no consequence in favour of what I oppose.

ANSWER 3. If they with whom I have to do in this controversy, are not contented with the answers already given, and think there is a remaining difficulty in this matter lying against my scheme, I will venture to tell them, that this difficulty lies full as hard against their own scheme; and if there be any strength at all in the argument, it is to all intents of the same strength against the need of those qualifications which they themselves suppose to be necessary in order to an approach to the Lord's table. For although they do not think renewing saving grace necessary, yet they suppose moral seriousness or (as they variously speak) moral sincerity in religion to be necessary. They suppose it to be requisite, that persons should have some kind of serious principle and view in coming to the Lord's table; some intention of subjecting themselves to Christ, and of seeking and serving him, in general; and in particular some religious end in coming to the sacramental supper, some religious respect to Christ in it. But now did not Christ at that time perfectly know, that Judas had none of these things? He knew he had nothing of sincerity in the Christian religion, or of regard to Christ in that ordinance, of any sort whatsoever; he knew, that Satan had entered into him and filled his heart, and that he was then cherishing in himself a malignant spirit against his Master, excited by the reproof Christ had lately given him (compare John 12:8; with Mat. 26:8-16, and Mark 14:4-11), and that he had already formed a traitorous, murderous design against him, and was now in the prosecution of that bloody design, having actually just before been to the chief priests, and agreed with them to betray him for thirty pieces of silver (see Mat. 26:14, 15, 16; Mark 14:10, 11; Luke 22:3-6, and John 13:2). Christ knew these things, and knew that Judas was utterly unqualified for the holy sacrament of the Lord's supper; though it had not yet been made known to the church, or the disciples. Therefore it concerns those on the contrary part in this controversy, to find out some solution of this difficulty, as much as it does me; and they will find they have as much need to take refuge in the solution already given, in one or other of the two preceding answers to this objection.

By the way I would observe, that Christ's not excluding Judas from the Passover, under these circumstances, knowing him to be thus unqualified, without so much as mortal sincerity, etc. is another thing that effectually enervates all the strength of the objection against me, from the Passover. For Judas did not only in common with others fall under God's strict command, in the law of Moses, to keep this feast, without any exception of his case there to be found; but Christ himself, with his own hand, gave him the sop, a part of the paschal feast; even although at the same instant he had in view the man's secret wickedness and hypocrisy, the traitorous design which was then in his heart, and the horrid conspiracy with the chief priests, which he had already entered into, and was now prosecuting. This was then in Christ's mind, and he intimated it to him, at the same moment when he gave him the sop, saying, "What thou doest, do quickly." This demonstrates, that the objection from the Passover is no stronger argument against my scheme, than the scheme of those whom I oppose;

because it is no stronger against the necessity of sanctifying grace, the qualification for Christian sacraments, which I insist upon, than it is against the necessity of moral seriousness or sincerity, the qualification which they insist upon.

### **OBJECTION VIII**

If sanctifying grace be a requisite qualification in order to due access to Christian sacraments, God would have given some certain rule, whereby those who are to admit them, might know whether they have such grace, or not.

ANSWER This objection was obviated in my stating the question. However, I will say something further to it in this place; and would observe, that if there be any strength in this objection, it lies in the truth of this proposition, viz. That whatever qualifications are requisite in order to persons' due access to Christian sacraments, God has given some certain rule, whereby those who admit them, may know whether they have those qualifications, or not. If this proposition is not true, then there is no force at all in the argument. But I dare say, there is not a divine, nor Christian of common sense, on the face of the earth, that will assert and stand to it, that this proposition is true. For none will deny, that some sort of belief of the being of a God, some sort of belief that the Scriptures are the Word of God, that there is a future state of rewards and punishments, and that Jesus is the Messiah, are qualifications requisite in order to a due access to Christian sacraments; and yet God has given those who are to admit persons no certain rule, whereby they may know whether they believe any one of these things. Neither has he given his ministers or churches any certain rule, whereby they may know whether any person that offers himself for admission to the sacrament, has any degree of moral sincerity, moral seriousness of spirit, or any inward moral qualification whatsoever. These things have all their existence in the soul, which is out of our neighbour's view. Not therefore a certainty, but a profession and visibility, of these things, must be the rule of the church's proceeding; and it is as good and as reasonable a rule of judgment concerning saving grace, as it is concerning any other internal invisible qualifications, which can not be certainly known by any but the subject himself.

### **OBJECTION IX**

If sanctifying grace be requisite to a due approach to the Lord's table, then no man may come but he that knows he has such grace. A man must not only think he has a right to the Lord's supper, in order to his lawful partaking of it; but he must know he has a right. If nothing but sanctification gives him a real right to the Lord's supper, then nothing short of the knowledge of sanctification gives him a known right to it. Only an opinion and probable hopes of a right will not warrant his coming.

ANSWER 1. I desire those who insist on this as an invincible argument, to consider calmly whether they themselves ever did, or ever will, stand to it. For here these two things are to be observed:

(1.) If no man may warrantably come to the Lord's supper, but such as know they have a right, then no unconverted persons may come unless they not only think, but know, it is the mind of God, that unconverted persons should come, and know that he does not require grace in order to their coming. For unless they know that men may come

without grace, they can not know that they themselves have a right to come, being without grace. And will anyone assert and stand to it, that of necessity all adult persons, of every age, rank, and condition of life, must be so versed in this controversy, as to have a certainty in this matter, in order to their coming to the Lord's supper? It would be most absurd for any to assert it to be a point of easy proof, the evidence of which is so clear and obvious to everyone of every capacity, as to supersede all occasion of their being studied in divinity, in order to a certainty of its truth, that persons may come to the sacred table of the Lord, notwithstanding they know themselves to be unconverted! Especially considering, that the contrary to this opinion has been in general the judgment of Protestant divines and churches, from the Reformation to this day; and that the most of the greatest divines that have ever appeared in the world, who have spent their lives in the diligent prayerful study of divinity, have been fixed in the reverse of that opinion. This is sufficient at least to show, that this opinion is not so plain as not to be a disputable point; and that the evidence of it is not so obvious to persons of the lowest capacity and little inquiry, as that all may come to a certainty in the matter, without difficulty and without study. I would humbly ask here, what has been the case in fact in our churches, who have practiced for so many years on this principle? Can it be pretended, or was it ever supposed, that the communicants in general, even persons of mean intellects and low education, not excepting the very boys and girls of sixteen years old, that have been taken into the church, had so studied divinity, as not only to think, but know, that our pious forefathers, and almost all the Protestant and Christian divines in the world, have been in an error in this matter? And have people ever been taught the necessity of this previous knowledge? Has it ever been insisted upon, that before persons come to the Lord's supper, they must look so far into the cast of a right to the Lord's supper, as to come not only to a full settled opinion, but even certainty, in this point? And has any one minister or church in their admissions ever proceeded on the supposition, that all whom they took into communion were so versed in this controversy, as this comes to? Has it ever been the manner to examine them as to their thorough acquaintance with this particular controversy? Has it been the manner to put by those who had only an opinion and not a certainty; even as the priests who could not find their register, were put by, till the matter could be determined by Urim and Thummin? And I dare appeal to every minister, and every member of a church that has been concerned in admitting communicants, whether they ever imagined, or it ever entered into their thought, concerning each one to whose admission they have consented, that they had looked so much into this matter, as not only to have settled their opinion, but to be arrived to a proper certainty?

(2.) I desire it may be remembered, that the venerable author of the *Appeal to the Learned*, did in his ministry ever teach such doctrine from whence it will unavoidably follow, that no one unconverted man in the world can know he has a warrant to come to the Lord's supper. For if any unconverted man has a warrant to worship his Maker in this way, it must be because God has given him such warrant by the revelation of his mind in the Holy Scriptures. And therefore if any unconverted man not only thinks, but knows, he has a warrant from God, he must of consequence, not only think, but know, that the Scriptures are the Word of God. But I believe all that survive of the stated hearers of that eminent divine, and all who were acquainted with him, well remember it to be a doctrine which he often taught and much insisted on, that no natural man knows the Scripture to be the Word of God; that although such may think so, yet they

do not know it; and that at best they have but a doubtful opinion. And he often would express himself thus; No natural man is thoroughly convinced, that the Scriptures are the Word of God; if they were convinced, they would be gained. Now if so, it is impossible any natural man in the world should ever know, it is his right, in his present condition, to come to the Lord's supper. True, he may think it is his right, he may have that opinion: but he can not know it; and so must not come, according to this argument. For it is only the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures, that gives a man a right to worship the Supreme Being in this sacramental manner, and to come to him in this way, or any other, as one in convenient with him. The Lord's supper being no branch of natural worship, reason without institution is no ground of duty or right in this affair. And hence it is plainly impossible for those that do not so much as know the Scriptures are the Word of God, to know they have any good ground of duty or right in this matter. Therefore, supposing unconverted men have a real right, yet since they have no known right, they have no warrant (according to the argument before us) to take and use their right; and what good then can their right do them? Or how can they excuse themselves from presumption, in claiming a right, which they do not know belongs to them? - It is said, a probable hope that persons are regenerate, will not warrant them to come; if they come, they take a liberty to do that which they do not know God gives them leave to do, which is horrible presumption in them. But if this be good arguing, I may as well say, a probable opinion that unregenerate men nay communicate, will not warrant such to do it. They must have certain knowledge of this; else their right being uncertain, they run a dreadful venture in coming.

ANSWER 2. Men are liable to doubt concerning their moral sincerity, as well as saving grace. Suppose an unconverted man, sensible of his being under the reigning power of sin, was about to appear solemnly to own the covenant (as it is commonly called), and to profess to give up himself to the service of God in a universal and persevering obedience; and suppose at the same time he knew, that if he sealed this profession at the Lord's supper, without moral sincerity (supposing him to understand the meaning of that phrase), he should eat and drink judgment to himself; and if accordingly, his conscience being awakened, he was afraid of God's judgment; in this case, I believe, the man would be every whit as liable to doubts about his moral sincerity, as godly men are about their gracious sincerity. And if it be not matter of fact, that natural men are so often exercised and troubled with doubts about their moral sincerity, as godly men are about their regeneration, I suppose it to be owing only to this cause, viz. that godly men being of more tender consciences than those under the dominion of sin, are more afraid of God's judgments, and more ready to tremble at his Word. The divines on the other side of the question, suppose it to be requisite, that communicants should believe the fundamental doctrines of religion with all their heart (in the sense of Acts 8:37) the doctrine of Three Persons and one God, in particular. But I think there can be no reasonable doubt, that natural men - who have so weak and poor a kind of faith in these mysteries - if they were indeed as much afraid of the terrible consequences of their being deceived in being not morally sincere in their profession of the truth, as truly gracious men are wont to be of delusion concerning their experience of a work of grace - or whether they are evangelically sincere in choosing God for their portion - the former would be as frequently exercised with doubts in the one case, as the latter in the other. And I very much question, whether any divine on the other side of the controversy would think it necessary, that natural men in professing those things should mean that they know they are morally sincere, or intend any more than that they

trust they have that sincerity, so far as they know their own hearts. If a man should come to them, proposing to join with the church, and tell them, though indeed he was something afraid whether he believed the doctrine of the Trinity with all his heart (meaning in a moral sense), yet that he had often examined himself as to that matter with the utmost impartiality and strictness he was capable of, and on the whole he found reasons of probable hope, and his preponderating thought of himself was, that he was sincere in it; would they think such an one ought to the sacrament, because he did not certainly know he had this sincerity, but only thought he had it?

ANSWER 3. If we suppose sanctifying grace requisite in order to be properly qualified, according to God's Word, for an attendance on the Lord's supper; yet it will not follow, that a man must know he has this qualification, in order to his being capable of conscientiously attending it. If he judges that he has it, according to the best light he can obtain, on the most careful examination, with the improvement of such helps as he can get, the advice of his pastor, etc. he may be bound in conscience to attend. And the reason is this; Christians partaking of the Lord's supper is not a matter of mere claim, or right and privilege, but a matter of duty and obligation; being an affair wherein God has a claim and demand on us. And as we ought to be careful, on the one hand, that we proceed on good grounds in taking to ourselves a privilege, lest we take what we have no good claim to; so we should be equally careful, on the other hand, to proceed on good grounds in what we withhold from another, lest we do not withhold that from him which is his due, and which he justly challenges from us. Therefore in a case of this complex nature, where a thing is both a matter of right or privilege to us, and also a matter of obligation to another, or a right of his from us, the danger of proceeding without right and truth is equal both ways; and consequently, if we can not be absolutely sure either way, here the best judgment we can form, after all proper endeavours to know the truth, must govern and determine us; otherwise we shall designedly do that whereby, according to our own judgment, we run the greatest risk; which is certainly contrary to reason. If the question were only what a man has a right to, he might forbear till he were sure. But the question is, not only whether he has right to attend the supper, but whether God also has not a right to his attendance there? Supposing it were merely a privilege which I am allowed but not commanded, in a certain specified case, then, supposing I am uncertain whether that be the case with me or no, it will be safest to abstain. But supposing I am not only forbidden to take it, unless that be the case with me, but positively commanded and required to take it, if that be the case in fact, then it is equally dangerous to neglect on uncertainties, as the take on uncertainties. In such a critical situation, a man must act according to the best of his judgment on his case; otherwise he wilfully runs into that which he thinks the greatest danger of the two.

Thus it is in innumerable cases in human life. I shall give one plain instance. A man ought not to take upon him the work of the ministry, unless called to it in the providence of God; for a man has no right to take this honour to himself, unless called of God. Now let us suppose a young man, of a liberal education, and well accomplished, to be at a loss whether it is the will of God that he would follow the work of the ministry; and he examines himself, and examines his circumstances, with great seriousness and solemn prayer, and well considers and weighs the appearances in divine providence. And yet when he has done all, he is not come to a proper certainty, that God calls him to this work; but however, it looks so to him, according to the best

light he can obtain, and the most careful judgment he can form. Now such a one appears obliged in conscience to give himself to this work. He must by no means neglect it under a notion that he must not take this honour to himself, till he knows he has a right to it. Because, though it be indeed a privilege, yet it is not a matter of mere privilege, but a matter of duty too; and if he neglects it under these circumstances, he neglects what, according to his own best judgment, he thinks God requires of him, and calls him to; which is to sin against his conscience.

As to the case of the priests, that could not find their register (Ezra 2) alleged in the *Appeal to the Learned*, p. 64. it appears to me of no force in this argument; for if those priests had never so great assurance in themselves of their pedigree being good, or of their being descended from priests, should have professed such assurance, yet it would not have availed. Nor did they abstain from the priesthood, because they wanted satisfaction themselves, but they were subject to the judgment of the Sanhedrin. God had never made any profession of the parties themselves, but the visibility of the thing, and evidence of the fact to their own eyes, as the rule to judge of the qualification; this matter of pedigree being an external object, ordinarily within the view of man; and not any qualification of heart. But this is not the case with regard to requisite qualifications for the Lord's supper. These being many of them internal invisible things, seated in the mind and heart, such as the belief of a Supreme Being, etc. God has made a credible profession of these things the rule to direct in admission of persons to the ordinance. In making this profession they are determined and governed by their own judgment of themselves, and not by anything within the view of the church.

### **OBJECTION X**

The natural consequence of the doctrine which has been maintained, is the bringing multitudes of persons of a tender conscience and true piety into great perplexities; who being at a loss about the state of their worlds, must needs be as much in suspense about their duty. And it is not reasonable to suppose, that God would order things to in the revelations of his will, as to bring his won people into such perplexities.

ANSWER 1. It is for want of the like tenderness of conscience which the godly have, that the other doctrine which insists on moral sincerity, does not naturally bring those who are received to communion on those principles, into the same perplexities through their doubting of their moral sincerity, of their believing mysteries with all their heart, etc. as has been already observed. And being free from perplexity, only through stupidity and hardness of heart, is worse than being in the greatest perplexity through tenderness of conscience.

ANSWER 2. Supposing the doctrine which I have maintained, be indeed the doctrine of God's Word, yet it will not follow, that the perplexities true saints are in through doubting of their state, are effects owing to the revelations of God's Word. Perplexity and distress of mind, not only on occasion of the natural and unavoidable consequence of true Christians doubting of their state. But shall we therefore say, that all these perplexities are owing to the Word of God? No, it is not owing to God, nor to any of his revelations, that true saints ever doubt of their state; his revelations are plain and clear, and his rules sufficient for men to determine their own condition by. But, for the most part, it is owing to their own sloth, and giving way to their sinful dispositions. Must God's institutions and revelations be answerable for all the perplexities men bring

on themselves, through their own negligence and unwatchfulness? It is wisely ordered that the saints should escape perplexity in no other way than that of great strictness, diligence, and maintaining the lively, laborious, and self-denying exercises of religion.

It might as well be said, it is unreasonable to suppose that God should order things so as to bring his own people into such perplexities, as doubting saints are wont to be exercised with, in the sensible approaches of death; when their doubts tend to vastly greater perplexity, than in their approaches to the Lord's table. If Christians would more thoroughly exercise themselves unto godliness, labouring always to keep a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man, it would be the way to have the comfort and taste the sweetness of religion. If they would so run, not as uncertainly; so fight, not as they that beat the air; it would be the way for them to escape perplexity, both in ordinances and providences, and to rejoice and enjoy God in both. Not but that doubting of their state sometimes arises from melancholy, and some other peculiar disadvantages. But however, it is not owing to God's revelations nor institutions; which, whatsoever we may suppose them to be, will not prevent the perplexities of such persons.

ANSWER 3. It appears to me reasonable to suppose, that the doctrine I maintain, if universally embraced by God's people - however it might be an accidental occasion of perplexity in many instance, through their own infirmity and sin - would, on the whole, be a happy occasion of much more comfort to the saints than trouble, as it would have a tendency, on every return of the Lord's supper, to put them on the strictest examination and trial of the state of their souls, agreeable to that rule of the apostle, 1 Cor. 11:28. The neglect of which great duty of frequent and thorough self-examination, seems to be one main cause of the darkness and perplexity of the saints, and the reason why they have so little comfort in ordinances, and so little comfort in general. Mr. Stoddard often taught his people, that assurance is attainable, and that those who are true saints might know it, if they would; i.e. if they would use proper means and endeavours in order to it. And if so, then certainly it is not just, to charge those perplexities on God's institutions, which arise through men's negligence; nor would it be just on the supposition of God's institutions being such as I suppose them to be.

### OBJECTION XI

You may as well say, that unsanctified persons may not attend any duty of divine worship whatsoever, as that they may not attend the Lord's supper; for all duties of worship are holy and require holiness, in order to an acceptable performance of them, as well as that.

ANSWER If this argument has any foundation at all, it has its foundation in the supposed truth of the following propositions, viz. Whosoever is qualified for admission to one duty of divine worship, is qualified for admission to all; and he that is unqualified for one, and may be forbidden one, is unqualified for all, and ought to be allowed to attend none. But certainly these propositions are not true. There are many qualified for some duties of worship, and may be allowed to attend them, who yet are not qualified for some others, nor by any means to be admitted to them. As everybody grants, the unbaptised, the excommunicated, heretics, scandalous livers, etc. may be admitted to hear the word preached; nevertheless then are not to be allowed to come

to the Lord's supper. Even excommunicated persons remain still under the law of the Sabbath, and are not to be forbidden to observe the Lord's day. Ignorant persons, such as have not knowledge sufficient for an approach to the Lord's table, yet are not excused from the duty of prayer: they may pray to God to instruct them, and assist them in obtaining knowledge. They who have been educated in Arianism and Socinianism, and are not yet brought off from these fundamental errors, and so are by no means to be admitted to the Lord's supper, yet may pray to God to assist them in their studies, and guide them into the truth, and for all other mercies which they need. Socrates, that great Gentile philosopher, who worshipped the true God, as he was led by the light of nature, might pray to God, and he attended his duty when he did so; although he knew not the revelation which God had made of himself in his Word. That great philosopher, Seneca, who was contemporary with the apostle Paul, held one Supreme Being, and had in many respects right notions of the divine perfections and providence, though he did not embrace the gospel, which at that day was preached in the world: yet might pray to that Supreme Being whom he acknowledged. And if his brother Gallio at Corinth, when Paul preached there, had prayed to this Supreme Being to guide him into the truth, that he might know whether the doctrine Paul preached was true, he therein would have acted very becoming a reasonable creature, and anyone who'll have acted unreasonably in forbidding him; but yet surely neither of these men was qualified for the Christian sacrament. So that it is apparent there is and ought to be a distinction made between duties of worship, with respect to qualifications for them; and that which is a sufficient qualification for admission to one duty, is not so for all. And therefore the position is not true, which is the foundation whereon the whole weight of this argument rests. To say, that although it be true there ought to be a distinction made, in admission to duties of worship, with regard to some qualifications, yet sanctifying grace is not one of those qualifications that make the difference; would be but giving up the argument, and a perfect begging the question.

It is said, there can be no reason assigned, why unsanctified persons may attend other duties of worship, and not the Lord's supper. But I humbly conceive this must be an inadvertence. For there is a reason very obvious from that necessary and very notable distinction among duties of worship, which follows:

1. There are some duties of worship, that imply a profession of God's covenant; whose very nature and design is an exhibition of those vital active principles and inward exercises, wherein consists the condition of the covenant of grace, or that union of soul to God, which is the union between Christ and his spouse, entered into by an inward hearty consenting to that covenant. Such are the Christian sacraments, whose very design is to make and confirm a profession of compliance with that covenant, and whose very nature is to exhibit or express the uniting acts of the soul. Those sacramental duties therefore can not be attended by any whose hearts do not really consent to that covenant, and whose souls do not truly close with Christ, without either their being self-deceived, or else wilfully making a false profession, and lying in a very aggravated manner.

2. There are other duties, which are not in their own nature an exhibition of a covenant-union with God, or of any compliance with the condition of the covenant of grace; but are the expression of general virtues, or virtues in their largest extent, including both special and common. Thus prayer, or asking mercy of God, is in its own

nature no profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace. It is an expression of some belief of the being of a God, some sense of our wants, and or a need of God's help, some sense of our dependence, etc. but not merely such a sense of these things as is spiritual and saving. Indeed there are some prayers proper to be made by saints, and many things proper to be expressed by them in prayer, which imply the profession of a spiritual union of heart to God through Christ; but such as no heathen, no heretic, nor natural man whatever, an or ought to make. Prayer in general, and asking mercy and help from God, is no more a profession of consent to the covenant of grace, than reading the Scriptures, or meditation, or performing any duty of morality and natural religion. A Mahometan may as well ask mercy, as hear instruction: and any natural man may as well express his desires to God, as hear when God declares his will to him. It is true, when an unconverted man prays, the manner of his doing it is sinful. But when a natural man, knowing himself to be so, comes to the Lord's super, the very matter of what he does, in respect of the profession he there makes, and his pretension to lay hold of God's covenant, is a lie, and a lie told in the most solemn manner.

In a word, the venerable Mr. Stoddard himself, in his Doctrine of Instituted Churches, has taught us to distinguish between instituted and natural acts of religion. The word and prayer he places under the head of moral duty, and considers as common to all; but the sacraments, according to what he says there, being instituted, are of special administration, and must be limited agreeable to the institution.

## OBJECTION XII

The Lord's supper has a proper tendency to promote men's conversion, being an affecting representation of the greatest and most important things of God's Word: it has a proper tendency to awaken and humble sinners; here being a discovery of the terrible anger of God for sin, by the infliction of the curse upon Christ, when sin was imputed to him; and the representation here made of the dying love of Christ has a tendency to draw the hearts of sinners from sin to God, etc.

ANSWER. Unless it be an evident truth, that what the Lord's supper may have tendency to promote, the same it was appointed to promote, nothing follows from this argument. If the argument affords any consequence, the consequence is built on the tendency of the Lord's supper. And if the consequence be good and strong on this foundation, as drawn from such premises, then wherever the premises hold, the consequence holds; otherwise it must appear, that the premises and consequence are not connected. And not let us see how it is in fact. Do not scandalous persons need to have these very effects wrought in their hearts which have been mentioned? Yes, surely; they need them in a special manner. They need to be awakened. They need to have an affecting discovery of that terrible wrath of God against sin, which was manifested in a peculiar manner by the terrible effects of God's wrath in the sufferings of his own incarnate Son. Gross sinners need this in some respect more than others. They need to have their hearts broken by an affecting view of the great and important things of God's Word. They need especially to fly to Christ for refuge, and therefore need to have their hearts drawn. And seeing the Lord's supper has so great a tendency to promote these things, if the consequence from the tendency of the Lord's supper, as inferring the end of its appointment, be good, then it must be a consequence also well

inferred, that the Lord's supper was appointed for the reclaiming and bringing to repentance scandalous persons.

To turn this off, by saying, *scandalous persons are expressly forbid*, is but giving up the argument, and begging the question. It is giving up the argument since it allows the consequence not to be good. For it allows, that notwithstanding the proper tendency of the Lord's supper to promote a design, yet it may be the Lord's supper was not appointed with a view to promote that end. And it is a begging the question; since it supposes, that unconverted men are not evidently forbidden, as well as scandalous persons; which is the thing in controversy. If they be evidently forbid, that is as much to reasonable creatures (who need nothing but good evidence) as if they were expressly forbidden. To say here, that the Lord's supper is a converting ordinance only to orderly members, and that there is another ordinance appointed for the bringing scandalous persons to repentance, this is no solution of the difficulty; but is only another instance of yielding up the argument, and begging the question. For it plainly concedes, that the tendency of an ordinance does not prove it appointed to all the ends, which it seems to have a tendency to promote; and also supposes, that there is not any other ordinance, appointed for converting sinners that are moral and orderly in their lives, exclusive of this, which is the thing in question.

It is at best but very precarious arguing from the seeming tendency of things, to the divine appointment, or God's will and disposition with respect to the use of those things. Would it not have had a great tendency to convince the scribes and Pharisees, and to promote their conversion, if they had been admitted into the mount when Christ was transfigured? But yet it was not the will of Christ, that they should be admitted there, or any other but Peter, James, and John. Would it not have had a very great tendency to convince and bring to repentance the unbelieving Jews, if they had been allowed to see and converse freely with Christ after his resurrection, and see him ascend into heaven? But yet it was the will of God, that none but disciples should be admitted to these privileges. Might it not have had a good tendency, if all that were sincere followers of Christ, women as well as men, had been allowed to be present at the institution of the Lord's supper? But yet it is commonly thought, none were admitted beside the apostles.

Indeed the ever honoured author of the *Appeal to the Learned* has supplied me with the true and proper answer to this objection, in the following words, p. 27, 28, "The efficacy of the Lord's supper does depend upon the blessing of God." Whatever TENDENCY ordinances have in their OWN NATURE to be serviceable to men, yet they will not prevail any further than God doth bless them. "The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God," 2 Cor. 10:4. It is God that teaches men to profit, and makes them profitable and serviceable to men's souls. There is reason to hope for a divine blessing on the Lord's supper, then it is administered to those that it ought to be administered to; God's blessing is to be expected in God's way. If men act according to their won humours and fancies, and do not keep in the way of obedience, it is presumption to expect God's blessing, Mat. 15:9, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." But when they are admitted to the Lord's supper that God would have to be admitted, there is ground to hope that he will make it profitable."

### OBJECTION XIII

All that are members of the visible church and in the external covenant, and neither ignorant nor scandalous, are commanded to perform all external covenant duties; and particularly they are commanded to attend the Lord's supper, in those words of Christ, This do in remembrance of me.

ANSWER This argument is of no force, without first taking for granted the very thing in question. For this is plainly supposed in it, that however these commands are given to such as are in the external covenant, yet they are given indefinitely, but with exceptions and reserves, and do not immediately reach all such; they do not reach those who are unqualified, though they be in the external covenant. Now the question is, who are these that are unqualified? The objection supposes, that only ignorant and scandalous persons are so. But why are they only supposed unqualified; and not unconverted persons too! Because it is taken for granted, that these are not unqualified. And thus the grand point in question is supposed, instead of being proved. Why are these limitations only singled out, neither ignorant nor scandalous; and not others as well? The answer must be, because these are all the limitations which the Scripture makes. But this now is the very thing in question. Whereas, the business of an argument is to prove, and not to suppose, or to take for granted, the very thing which is to be proved.

If it be here said, it is with good reason that those who are ignorant or scandalous alone are supposed to be excepted in God's command, and obligations of the covenant; for the covenant spoken of in the objection, is the external covenant, and this requires only external duties; which alone are what lie within the reach of man's natural power, and so in the reach of his legal power: God does not command or require what men have no natural power to perform, and which can not be performed before something else, some antecedent duty, is performed, which antecedent duty is not in their natural power.

I reply, still things are but supposed, which should be proved, and which want confirmation.

(1.) It is supposed, that those who have externally (i.e. by oral profession and promise) entered into God's covenant, are thereby obliged to no more than the external duties of that covenant. Which is not proved, and I humbly conceive, is certainly not the true state of the case. They who have externally entered into God's covenant, are by external profession and engagements entered into that one only covenant of grace, which the Scripture informs us of; and therefore are obliged to fulfil the duties of that covenant, which are chiefly internal. The children of Israel, when they externally entered into covenant with God at mount Sinai, promised to perform all the duties of the covenant, to obey all the ten commandments spoken by God in their hearing, and written in table of stone, which were therefore called The Tables of the Covenant; the sum of which ten commands was, to love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and to love their neighbour as themselves; which principally at least are internal duties. In particular, they promised not to covet; which is an internal duty. They promised to have no other god before the Lord; which implied, that they would in their hearts regard no other being or object whatever above God, or in equality with him, but would give him their supreme respect.

(2.) It is supposed, that God does not require impossibilities of men, in this sense, that he does not require those things of them which are out of their natural power, and particularly that he does not require them to be converted. But this is not proved; nor can I reconcile it with the tenor of the scripture revelation. And the chief advocates for the doctrine I oppose, have themselves abundantly asserted the contrary. The venerable author fore-mentioned, as everybody knows, that knew him, always taught, that God justly requires men to be converted, to repent of their sins, and turn to the Lord, to close with Christ, and savingly to believe in him; and that in refusing to accept of Christ and turn to God, they disobeyed the divine commands, and were guilty of the most heinous sin; and that their moral inability was no excuse.

(3.) It is supposed, that God does not command men to do those things which are not to be done till something else is done, that is not within the reach of men's natural ability. This also is not proved; nor do I see how it can be true, even according to the principles of those who insist on this objection. The fore-mentioned memorable divine ever taught, that God commanded natural men without delay to believe in Christ. And yet he always held, that it was impossible for them to believe till they had by a preceding act submitted to the sovereignty of God; and yet he held, that men never could do this of themselves, till humbled and bowed by powerful convictions of God's Spirit. Again, he taught, that God commands natural men to love him with all their heart. And yet he held, that this could not be till men had first believed in Christ; the exercise of love being a fruit of faith; and believing in Christ, he supposed not to be within the reach of man's natural ability. Further, he held, that God requires of all men holy, spiritual, and acceptable obedience; and yet that such obedience is not within the reach of their natural ability; and not only so, but that there must first be love to God, before there could be new obedience, and that this love to God is not within the reach of men's natural ability. Yet, before this love there must be faith, which faith is not within the reach of man's natural power; and till, before faith there must be the knowledge of God, which knowledge is not in natural men's reach. And, once more, even before the knowledge of God there must be a thorough humiliation, which humiliation men could not work in themselves by any natural power of their own. Now, must it needs be thought, notwithstanding all these unreasonable things, that God should command those whom he has nourished and brought up, to honour him by giving an open testimony of love to him; only because wicked men can not testify love till they have love, and love is not in their natural power? And is it any good excuse in the sight of God, for one who is under the highest obligations to him, and yet refuses him suitable honour by openly testifying his love of him, to plead that he has no love to testify; but on the contrary, has an infinitely unreasonable hatred? God may most reasonably require a proper testimony and profession of love to him; and yet it may also be reasonable to suppose, at the same time, he forbids men to lie; or to declare that they have love, when they have none. Because, though it be supposed, that God requires men to testify love to him, yet he requires them to do it in a right way, and in the true order, viz. first loving him, and then testifying their love.

(4.) I do not see how it can be true, that a natural man has not a legal power to be converted, accept of Christ, love God, etc. By a legal power to do a thing, is plainly meant such power as brings a person properly within the reach of a legal obligation, or the obligation of a law or command to do that thing. But he that has such natural faculties, as render him a proper subject of moral government, may properly be

commanded, and put under the obligation of a law to do things so reasonable; notwithstanding any native aversion and moral inability in him to do his duty, arising from the power of sin. This also, I must observe, was a known doctrine of Mr. Stoddard's, and what he ever taught.

#### OBJECTION XIV

Either unsanctified persons may lawfully come to the Lord's supper, or it is unlawful for them to carry themselves as saints; but it is not unlawful for them to carry themselves as saints.

ANSWER. It is the duty of unconverted men both to become saints, and to behave as saints. The scripture rule is, Make the tree good, that the fruit may be good. Mr. Stoddard himself never supposed, that the fruit of saints was to be expected from men, or could possibly be brought forth by them in truth, till they were saints.

And I see not how it is true, that unconverted men ought, in every respect, to do those external things, which it is the duty of a godly man to do. It is the duty of a godly man, conscious of his having given his heart unto the Lord, to profess his love to God and his esteem of him above all, his unfeigned faith in Christ, etc. and in his closet-devotions to thank God for these graces as the fruit of the Spirit in him. But it is not the duty of another that really has no faith, nor love to God, to do thus. Neither any more is it a natural man's duty to profess these things in the Lord's supper. Mr. Stoddard taught it to be the duty of converts, on many occasions, to profess their faith and love and other graces before men, by relating their experiences in conversation. But it would be great wickedness, for such as know themselves to be not saints, thus to do; because they would speak falsely, and utter lies in so doing. Now, for the like reason, it would be very sinful, for men to profess and seal their consent to the covenant of grace in the Lord's supper, when they know at the same time that they do not consent to it, nor have their hearts at all in the affair.

#### OBJECTION XV

This scheme will keep out of the church some true saints; for there are some such who determine against themselves, and their prevailing judgment is, that they are not saints: and we had better let in several hypocrites, than exclude one true child of God.

ANSWER. I think, it is much better to insist on some visibility to reason, of true saintship, in admitting members, even although this, through men's infirmity and darkness, and Satan's temptations, be an occasion of some true saints abstaining; than by express liberty given, to open the door to as many as please, of those who have no visibility of real saintship, and make no profession of it, nor pretension to it; and that because this method tends to the ruin and great reproach of the Christian church, and also to the ruin of the persons admitted.

1. It tends to the reproach and ruin of the Christian church. For by the rule which God hath given for admissions, if it be carefully attended (it is said), MORE unconverted than converted persons, will be admitted. It is then confessedly the way to have the grater part of the members of the Christian church ungodly men; yea, so much greater, that the godly shall be but few in comparison of the ungodly; agreeable to their

interpretation of that saying of Christ, many are called, but few are chosen. Now, if this be an exact state of the case, it will demonstrably follow, on scripture principles, that opening the door so wide has a direct tendency to bring into Christian churches such as are without even moral sincerity, and do not make religion at all their business, neglecting and casting off secret prayer and other duties, and living a life of carnality and vanity, so far as they can, consistently with avoiding church censures; which possibly may be sometimes to a great degree. Ungodly men may be morally sober, serious, and conscientious, and may have what is called moral sincerity, for a while; and even may have these things in a considerable measure, when they first come into the church. But if their hearts are not changed, there is no probability at all of these things continuing long. The Scripture has told us, that this their goodness is apt to vanish like the morning cloud and early dew. How can it be expected but that their religion should in a little time wither away, when it has no root? How can it be expected but that the lamp should burn long, without oil in the vessel to feed it? If lust be unmortified, and left in reigning power in the heart, it will sooner or later prevail; and at length sweep away common grace and moral sincerity, however excited and maintained for a while by conviction and temporary affections. It will happen to them according to the true proverb, The dog is returned to his vomit; and the swine that was washed, to his wallowing in the mire. It is said of the hypocrite, Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God? - And thus our churches will be likely to be such congregations as the psalmist said he hated, and would not sit with. *Psa.* 26:4, 5, "I have not sat with vain persons, nor will I go in with dissemblers; I have hated the congregation of evil-doers, nor will I sit with the wicked." This will be the way to have the Lord's table ordinarily furnished with such guests as allow themselves to live in known sin, meeting together only to crucify Christ afresh, instead of commemorating his crucifixion with the repentance, faith, gratitude, and love of friends. And this is the way to have the governing part of the church such as are not even conscientious men, and are careless about the honour and interest of religion. And the direct tendency of that is, in process of time, to introduce a prevailing negligence in discipline, and carelessness in seeking ministers of a pious and worthy character. And the next step will be, the church being filled with persons openly vicious in manners, or else scandalously erroneous in opinions. It is well if this be not already the case in fact with some churches that have long professed and practiced on the principles I oppose. And if these principles should be professed and proceeded on by Christian churches everywhere, the natural tendency of it would be, to have the greater part of what is called the church of Christ, through the world, made up of vicious and erroneous persons. And how greatly would this be to the reproach of the Christian church, and of the holy name and religion of Jesus Christ in the sight of all nations!

And now is it not better, to have a few real living Christians kept back through darkness and scruples, than to open a door for letting in such universal ruin as this? To illustrate it by a familiar comparison. Is it not better, when England is at war with France, to keep out of the British realm a few loyal Englishmen, than to give leave for as many treacherous French to come in as please?

2. This way tends to the eternal ruin of the parties admitted; for it lets in such, yea, it persuades such to come in, as known themselves to be impenitent and unbelieving, in a dreadful manner to take God's name in vain; in vain to worship him, and abuse sacred things, by performing those external acts and rites in the name of God, which are

instituted for declarative signs and professions of repentance toward God, faith in Christ, and love to him, at the same time that they know themselves destitute of those things which they profess to have. And is it not better, that some true saints, through their own weakness and misunderstanding, should be kept away from the Lord's table, which will not keep such out of heaven, than voluntarily to bring in multitudes of false professors to partake unworthily, and in effect to seal their own condemnation.

### **OBJECTION XVI**

You can not keep out hypocrites, when all is said and done; but as many graceless persons will be likely to get into the church in the way of a profession of godliness, as if nothing were insisted on, but a freedom from public scandal.

ANSWER. It may possibly be so in some places through the misconduct of ministers and people, by remissness in their inquiries, carelessness as to the proper matter of a profession, or setting up some mistaken rules of judgment; neglecting those things which the Scripture insists upon as the most essential articles in the character of a real saint; and substituting others in the room of them; such as impressions on the imagination, instead of renewing influences on the heart; pangs of affection, instead of the habitual temper of the mind; a certain method and order of impressions and suggestions, instead renewing influences on the heart; pangs of affection, instead of the habitual temper of the mind; a certain method and order of impressions and suggestions, instead of the nature of things experienced, etc. But to say, that in churches were the nature, the notes, and evidences of true Christianity, as described in the Scriptures, are well understood, taught, and observed, there as many hypocrites are likely to get in; or to suppose, that there as many persons of an honest character, who are well instructed in these rules, and well conducted by them - and judging of themselves by these rules, do think themselves true saints, and accordingly make profession of godliness, and are admitted as saints in a judgment of rational charity - are likely to be carnal, unconverted men, as of those who make no such pretence and have no such hope, nor exhibit any such evidences to the eye of a judicious charity, is not so much an objection against the doctrine I am defending, as a reflection upon the Scripture itself, with regard to the rules it gives, either for persons to judge of their own state, or for others to form a charitable judgment, as if they were of little or no service. We are in miserable circumstances indeed, if the rules of God's holy word in things of such infinite importance, are so ambiguous and uncertain, like the heathen oracles. And it would be very strange, if in these days of the gospel, when God's mind is revealed with such great plainness of speech, and the canon of Scripture is completed, it should ordinarily be the case in fact, that those who, having a right doctrinal understanding of the Scripture, and judging themselves by its rules, do probably conclude or seriously hope of themselves, that they are real saints, are as many of them in a state of sin and condemnation, as others who have no such rational hope concerning their good estate, nor pretend to any special experiences in religion.

## OBJECTION XVII

If a profession of godliness be a thing required in order to admission into the church, there being some true saints who doubt of their state, and from a tender conscience will not dare to make such a profession; and there being others, that have no grace, nor much tenderness of conscience, but great presumption and forwardness, who will boldly make the highest profession of religion, and so will get admittance. It will hence come to pass, that the very thing, which will in effect procure for the latter an admission, rather than the former, will be their presumption and wickedness.

ANSWER 1. It is no sufficient objection against the wholesomeness of a rule established for regulating the civil state of mankind, that in some instances men's wickedness may take advantage by that rule, so that even their wickedness shall be the very thing, which, by an abuse of that rule, procures them temporal honours and privileges. For such is the present state of man in this evil world, that good rules, in many instances, are liable to be thus abused and perverted. As for instance, there are many human laws, accounted wholesome and necessary, by which an accused or suspected person's own solemn profession of innocence, upon oath, shall be the condition of acquittance and impunity; and the want of such a protestation or profession shall expose him to the punishment. And yet, by an abuse of these rules, in some instance, nothing but the horrid sin of perjury, or that most presumptuous wickedness of false swearing, shall be the very thing that acquits a man. While another of a more tender conscience, who fears an oath, must suffer the penalty of the law.

2. Those rules, by all wise lawgivers, are accounted wholesome, which prove of general good tendency, notwithstanding any bad consequences arising in some particular instances. And as to the ecclesiastical rule now in question, or admission to sacraments on a profession of godliness, when attended with requisite circumstances; although in particular instances it may be an occasion of some tender-hearted Christians abstaining, and some presumptuous sinners being admitted, yet that does not hinder but that a proper visibility of holiness to the eye of reason, or a probability of it in a judgment of rational Christian charity, may this way be maintained, as the proper qualification of candidates for admission. Nor does it hinder but that it may be reasonable and wholesome for mankind, in their outward conduct, to regulate themselves by such probability; and that this should be a reasonable and good rule for the church to regulate themselves by in their admissions; notwithstanding it may happen in particular instances, that things are really diverse from, yea the very reverse if, what they are visibly. Such a profession as has been insisted on, when attended with requisite circumstances, carries in it a rational credibility in the judgment of Christian charity. For it ought to be attended with an honest and sober character, and with evidences of good doctrinal knowledge, and with all proper, careful, and diligent instructions of a prudent pastor. And though the pastor is not to act as a searcher of the heart, or a lord of conscience in this affair, yet that hinders not but that he may and ought to inquire particularly into the experiences of the souls committed to his care and charge, that he may be under the best advantages to instruct and advise them, to apply the teachings and rules of God's Word unto them, for their self-examination, to be helpers of their joy, and promoters of their salvation. However, finally, not any pretended extraordinary skill of his in discerning the heart, but the person's own serious profession concerning what he finds in his own soul, after he has been well

instructed, must regulate the public conduct with respect to him, where there is no other external visible thing to contradict and overrule it. And a serious profession of godliness, under these circumstance, carries in it a visibility to the eye of the church's rational and Christian judgment.

3. If it be still insisted on, that a rule of admission into the church can not be good, if liable to such abuse as that fore-mentioned, I must observe, this will overthrow the rules that the objectors themselves go by in their admissions. For they insist upon it, that a man must not only have knowledge and be free of scandal, but must appear orthodox and profess the common faith. Now presumptuous lying for the sake of the honour of being in the church, having children baptised, and voting in ecclesiastical affairs, may possibly be the very thing that brings some men into the church by this rule; while greater tenderness of conscience may be the very thing that keeps others out. For instance, a man who secretly in his mind gives no credit to the commonly received doctrine of the Trinity, yet may, by pretending an assent to it, and in hypocrisy making a public profession of it, get into the church; when at the same time another that equally disbelieves it, but has a more tender conscience than to allow himself in solemnly telling a lie, may by that very means be kept off from the communion.

### **OBJECTION XVIII**

It seems hardly reasonable to suppose, that the only wise God has made men's opinion of themselves, and a profession of it, the term of their admission to church-privileges; when we know, that very often the worst men have the highest opinion of themselves.

ANSWER 1. It must be granted me, that in fact this is the case, if any proper profession at all is expected and required, whether it be of sanctifying grace, or of moral sincerity, or anything else that is good. And to be sure, nothing is required to be professed, or is worthy to be professed, any further than it is good.

ANSWER 2. If some things, by the confession of all, must be professed, because they are good, and of great importance; then certainly it must be very unreasonable, to say, that those things wherein true holiness consists are not to be professed, or that a profession of them should not be required, because they are good, even in the highest degree, and infinitely the most important and most necessary things of any in the world. And it is unreasonable to say, that it is the less to be expected we should profess sincere friendship to Christ, because friendship to Christ is the most excellent qualification of any whatsoever, and the contrary the most odious. How absurd is it to say this, merely under a notion that for a man to profess what is so good and so reasonable, it to profess a high opinion of himself!

ANSWER 3. Though some of the worst men are apt to entertain the highest opinion of themselves, yet their self-conceit is no rule to the church; but the apparent credibility of men's profession is to be the ground of ecclesiastical proceedings.

### **OBJECTION XIX**

If it be necessary that adult persons should make a profession of godliness, in order to their own admission to baptism, then undoubtedly it is necessary in order to their children being baptised on their account. For parents can not convey to their children a

right to this sacrament by virtue of any qualifications lower than those requisite in order to their own right: children being admitted to baptism only as being, as it were, parts and members of their parents. And besides, the act of parents in offering up their children in a sacrament, which is a seal of the covenant of grace, is in them a solemn attending that sacrament as persons interested in the covenant, and a public manifestation of their approving and consenting to it, as truly as if they then offered up themselves to God in that ordinance. Indeed it implies a renewed offering up themselves with their children, and devoting both jointly to God in covenant; themselves, with their children, as parts of themselves. But now what fearful work will such doctrine make amongst us! We shall have multitudes unbaptised, who will be without the external badge of Christianity, and so in that respect will be like heathens. And this is the way to have the land full of persons who are destitute of that which is spoken of in Scripture as ordinarily requisite to men's salvation; and it will bring a reproach on vast multitudes, with the families they belong to. And not only so, but it will tend to make them profane and heathenish; for by thus treating our children, as though "they had no part in the Lord, we shall cause them to cease from fearing the Lord;" Jos. 22:24, 25.

ANSWER 1. As to children being destitute of that which is spoken of in Scripture as one thing ordinarily requisite to salvation; I would observe, that baptism can do their souls no good any otherwise than through God's blessing attending it: but we have no reason to expect his blessing with baptism, if administered to those that it does not belong to by his institution.

ANSWER 2. As to the reproach, which will be brought on parents and children, by children going without baptism, through the parents neglecting a profession of godliness, and so visible remaining among the unconverted; if any insist on this objection, I think it will savour of much unreasonableness and even stupidity.

It will savour of an unreasonable spirit. Is it not enough, if God freely offers men to own their children and to give them the honour of baptism, in case the parents will turn from sin and relinquish their enmity against him, heartily give up themselves and their children to him, and take upon them the profession of godliness? - If men are truly excusable, in not turning to God through Christ, in not believing with the heart, and in not confessing with the mouth, why do not we openly plead that they are so? And why do we not teach sinners, that they are not to blame for continuing among the enemies of Christ, and neglecting and despising his great salvation? If they are not all excusable in this, and it be wholly owing to their own indulged lusts, that they refuse sincerely to give up themselves and their children to God, then how unreasonable is it for them to complain that their children are denied the honour of having God's mark set upon them as some of his? If parents are angry at this, such a temper shows them to be very insensible of their own vile treatment of the blessed God. Suppose a prince send to a traitor in prison, and upon opening the prison doors make him the offer, that if he would come forth and submit himself to him, he should not only be pardoned himself, but both he and his children should have such and such badges of honour conferred upon them; and yet the rebel's enmity and stoutness of spirit against his prince is such, that he can not find in his heart to comply with the gracious offer, will he have any cause to be angry, that his children have not those badges of honour given them? Besides, it is very much owing to parents, that there are so many young people who

can make no profession of godliness. They have themselves therefore to blame, if proceeding on the principles which have been maintained, there is like to rise a generation of unbaptised persons. If ancestors had thoroughly done their duty to their posterity in instructing, praying for, and governing their children, and setting them good examples, there is reason to think, the case would have been far otherwise.

Insisting on this objection would savour of much stupidity. For the objection seems to suppose the country to be full of those that are unconverted, and so exposed every moment to eternal damnation; yet it seems we do not hear such great and general complaints and lamentable outcries concerning this. Now why is it looked upon so dreadful, to have great numbers going without the name and honourable badge of Christianity, when at the same time it is no more resented and laid to heart, that such multitudes go without the thing, which is infinitely more dreadful? Why are we so silent about this? What is the name good for, without the thing? Can parents bear to have their children go about the world in the most odious and dangerous state of soul, in reality the children of the devil, and condemned to eternal burnings; when at the same time they can not bear to have them disgraced by going without the honour of being baptised? A high honour and privilege this is; yet how can parents be contented with the sign, exclusive of the thing signified? Why should they covet the external honour for their children, while they are so careless about the spiritual blessing? Does not this argue a senselessness of their own misery, as well as of their children's, in being in a Christless state? If a man and his child were both together bitten by a viper, dreadfully swollen, and like to die, would it not argue stupidity in the parent, to be anxiously concerned only about his child's having on a dirty garment in such circumstances, and angry at others for not putting some outward ornament upon it? But the difference in this present case is infinitely greater, and more important. Let parents pity their poor children because they are without baptism; and pity themselves who are in danger of everlasting misery, while they have no interest in the covenant of grace, and so have no right to covenant favours and honours, for themselves nor children. No religious honours, to be obtained in any other way than by real religion, are much worth contending for. And in truth, it is no honour at all to a man, to have merely the outward badges of a Christian, without being a Christian indeed; any more than it would be an honour to a man that has no learning, but is a mere dunce, to have a degree at college; or than it is for a many who has no valour, but is a grand coward, to have an honourable commission in an army; which only serves, by lifting him up, to expose him to deeper reproach, and sets him forth as the more notable object of contempt.

ANSWER 3. Concerning the tendency of this way of confining baptism to professors of godliness and their children, to promote irreligion and profaneness; I would observe, first, that Christ is best able to judge of the tendency of his own institutions. Secondly, I am bold to say, that supposing this principle and practice to have such a tendency, is a great mistake, contrary to Scripture and plain reason and experience. Indeed such a tendency it would have, to shut men out from having any part in the Lord (in the sense of the two tribes and half, Jos. 22:25), or to fence them out by such a partition-wall as formerly was between Jews and Gentiles; and so to shut them out as to tell them, if they were never so much disposed to serve God, he was not ready to accept them; acceding to the notion the Jews seem to have had of the uncircumcised Gentiles. But to forbear giving men honours to which they have no title, and not to compliment them

with the name and badge of God's people and children, while they pretend to nothing but what is consistent with their being his enemies, this has no such tendency. But the contrary has very much this tendency. For is it not found by constant experience through all ages, that blind, corrupt mankind, in matters of religion, are strongly disposed to rest in a name instead of the thing; in the shadow, instead of the substance; and to make themselves easy with the former, in the neglect of the latter? This over-valuing of common grace, and moral sincerity, as it is called; this building so much upon them, making them the conditions of enjoying the seals of God's covenant, and the appointed privileges, and honourable and sacred badges, of God's children; this, I can not but think, naturally tends to soothe and flatter the pride of vain man, while it tends to aggrandise those things in men's eyes, which they of themselves are strongly disposed to magnify and trust in, without such encouragement to prompt them to it, yea, against all discouragements and dissuasive that can possibly be used with them.

This way of proceeding greatly tends to establish the negligence of parents, and to confirm the stupidity and security of wicked children. If baptism were denied to all children, whose parents did not profess godliness, and in a judgment of rational charity appear real saints, it would tend to excite pious heads of families to more thorough care and pains in the religious education of their children, and to more fervent prayer for them, that they might be converted in youth, before they enter into a married state; and so if they have children, the entail of the covenant be secured. And it would tend to awaken young people themselves, as yet unconverted, especially when about to settle in the world. Their having no right to Christian privileges for their children, in case they should become parents, would tend to lead them at such a time seriously to reflect on their own awful state; which, if they do not get out of it, must lay a foundation for so much calamity and reproach to their families. And if after their becoming parents, they still remain unconverted, the melancholy thought of their children going without so much as the external mark of Christians, would have a continual tendency to affect them with their own sin and folly in neglecting to turn to God, by which they bring such visible calamity and disgrace on themselves and families. They would have this additional motive continually to stir them up to seek grace for themselves and their children. Whereas, the contrary practice has a natural tendency to quiet the minds of persons, both in their own and their children's unregeneracy. Yea, may it not be suspected, that the way of baptising the children of such as never make any proper profession of godliness, is an expedient originally invented for that very end, to give ease to ancestors with respect to their posterity, in times of general declension and degeneracy? This way of proceeding greatly tends to establish the stupidity and irreligion of children, as well as the negligence of parents. It is certain, that unconverted parents do never truly give up their children to God; since they do not truly give up themselves to him. And if neither of the parents appear truly pious, in the judgment of rational charity, there is not in this case any ground to expect that the children will be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, or that they will have anything worthy the name of a Christian education, how solemnly soever the parents may promise it. The faithfulness of Abraham was such as might be trusted in this matter. See Gen. 18:19. But men that are not so much as visibly godly, upon what grounds are they to be trusted. How can it be reasonably expected, that they would faithfully bring up their children for God, who were never sincerely willing that their children or themselves should be his? And it will be but presumption, to expect that those children who are never given up to God, nor brought up for him, should

prove religious, and be God's children. There is no manner of reason to expect any other than that such children ordinarily will grow up in irreligion, whether they are baptised or not. And for persons to go about with the name and visible seal of God, and the sacred badge of Christianity upon them, having had their bodies, by a holy ordinance, consecrated to God as his temples, yet living in irreligion and ways of wickedness; this serves to tend exceedingly to harden them, and establish in them an habitual contempt of sacred things. Such persons, above all men, are like to be the most hardened and abandoned, and reclaimed with most difficulty. As it was with the wicked Jews, who were much more confirmed in their wickedness, than those heathen cities of Tyre and Sidon. To give that which is holy to those who are profane, or whom we have no reason, from the circumstances of parentage and education, to expect will be otherwise, is not the way to make them better, but worse. It is the way to have them habitually trample holy things under their feet, and increase in contempt of them, yea, even to turn again and rend us, and be more mischievous and hurtful enemies of that which is good, than otherwise they would be.

### OBJECTION XX

Some ministers have been greatly blessed in the other way of proceeding, and some men have been converted at the Lord's supper.

ANSWER. Though we are to eye the providence of God, and not disregard his works, yet to interpret them to a sense, or to apply them to an use, inconsistent with the scope of the Word of God, is a misconstruction and misapplication of them. God has not given us his providence, but his Word, to be our governing rule. God is sovereign in his dispensations of providence; he bestowed the blessing on Jacob, even when he had a lie in his mouth. He was pleased to meet with Solomon, and make known himself to him, and bless him in an extraordinary manner, while he was worshipping in a high place. He met with Saul, when in a course of violent opposition to him, and out of the way of his duty in the highest degree, going to Damascus to persecute Christ; and even then bestowed the greatest blessing upon him, that perhaps ever was bestowed on a mere man. The conduct of Divine Providence, with its reason, is too little understood by us, to be improved as our rule. "God has his way in the sea, his path in the mighty waves, and his footsteps are not known: and he gives none account of any of his matters." But God has given us his Word, to this very end, that it might be our rule; and therefore has so ordered it that it may be understood by us. And strictly speaking, this is our only rule. If we join anything else to it, as making it our rule, we do that which we have no warrant for, yea, that which God himself has forbidden. See Deu. 4:2; Pro. 30:6. And with regard to God's blessing and succeeding ministers, have not some had remarkable experience of it in the way which I plead for, as well as some who have been for the way I oppose? However, we can not conclude, that God sees nothing at all amiss in ministers, because he blesses them. In general, he may see those things in them which are very right and excellent; these he approves and regards, while he overlooks and pardons their mistakes in opinion or practice, and, notwithstanding these, is pleased to crown their labours with his blessing.

As to the two last arguments in the *Appeal to the Learned*, concerning the subjects of the Christian sacraments, their being members of the visible church, and not the invisible; the force of those arguments depends entirely on the resolution of this

question, who are visible saints? or what adult persons are regularly admitted to the privileges of members of the visible church? Which question has already been largely considered; and, I think, it has been demonstrated that they are those who exhibit a credible profession and visibility of gospel holiness or vital piety, and not merely of moral sincerity. So that there is no need of further debating the point in this place.

I might here mention many things not yet noticed, which some object as inconveniences attending the scheme I have maintained. If men should set up their own wit and wisdom in opposition to God's revealed will, there is no end of objections of this kind, which might be raised against any of God's institutions. Some have found great fault even with the creation of the world, as being very inconveniently done, and have imagined that they could tell how it might be mended in a great many respects. But however God's altar may appear homely to us, yet if we lift up our hand to mend it, we shall pollute it. Laws and institutions are given for the general good, and not to avoid every particular inconvenience. And however it may so happen, that sometimes inconveniences (real or imaginary) may attend the scheme I have maintained; yet, I think, they are in no measure equal to the manifest conveniences and happy tendencies of it, or to the palpable inconveniences and pernicious consequences of the other. I have already mentioned some things of this aspect, and would here briefly observe some others.

Thus, the way of making such a difference between outward duties of morality and worship, and those great inward duties of our love of God and acceptance of Christ, that the former must be visible, but that there need be no exhibition nor pretence of the latter, in order to persons being admitted into the visible family of God; and that under a notion of the latter being impossibilities, but the other being within men's power; this, I think, has a direct tendency to confirm in men an insensibility of the heinousness of unbelief and enmity against God our Saviour, which are the source and sum of all wickedness. It tends to prevent their coming under an humbling conviction of the greatness and utter inexcusableness of these sins, which men must be brought to if ever they obtain salvation. Indeed it is a way that not only has this tendency, but has actually and apparently this effect, and that to a great degree.

The effect of this method of proceeding in the churches in New England, which have fallen into it is actually this. There are some that are received into these churches under the notion of their being in the judgment of rational charity visible saints or professing saints, who yet at the same time are actually open professors of heinous wickedness. I mean, the wickedness of living in known impenitence and unbelief, the wickedness of living in enmity against God, and in the rejection of Christ under the gospel. Or, which is the same thing, they are such as freely and frequently acknowledge, that they do not profess to be as yet born again, but look on themselves as really unconverted, as having never unfeignedly accepted of Christ; and they do either explicitly or implicitly number themselves among those that love not the Lord Jesus Christ; of whom the apostle says, let such be Anathema Maran-atha! And accordingly it is known, all over the town where they live, that they make no pretensions to any sanctifying grace already obtained; nor of consequence are they commonly looked upon as any other than unconverted persons. Now, can this be judged the comely order of the gospel? or shall God be supposed the author of such confusion?

In this way of church-proceeding, God's own children and the true disciples of Christ are obliged to receive those as their brethren, admit them to the communion of saints, and embrace them in the highest acts of Christian society, even in their great feast of love, where they feed together on the body and blood of Christ, whom yet they have no reason to look upon otherwise than as enemies of the cross of Christ, and haters of their heavenly Father and dear Redeemer. For they make no pretension to anything at all inconsistent with those characters; yea, in many places, as I said before, freely professing this to be actually the case with them.

Christ often forbids the members of his church to judge one another. But in this way of ecclesiastical proceeding, it is done continually, and looked upon as no hurt; a great part of those admitted into the church are by others of the same communion judge unconverted, graceless persons; and it is impossible to avoid it, while we stretch not beyond the bounds of a rational charity.

This method of proceeding must inevitably have one of these two consequences: either there must be no public notice at all given of it, when so signal a work of grace is wrought, as a sinner being brought to repent and turn to God, and hopefully become the subject of saving conversion; or else this notice must be given in the way of conversation, by the persons themselves, frequently, freely, and in all companies, declaring their own experiences. But surely, either of these consequences must be very unhappy. The former is so, viz. forbidding and preventing any public notice being given on earth of the repentance of a sinner, an event so much to the honour of God, and so much taken notice of in heaven, causing joy in the presence of the angels of God, and tending so much to the advancement of religion in the world. For it is found by experience, that scarce any one thing has so great an influence to awaken sinners, and engage them to seek salvation, and to quicken and animate saints, as the tidings of a sinner's repentance, or hopeful conversion. God evidently makes use of it as an eminent means of advancing religion in a time of remarkable revival. And to take a course effectually to prevent its being notified on earth, appears to me a counteracting of God, in that which he ever makes use of as a chief means of the propagation of true piety, and which we have reason to think he will make use of as one principal means of the conversion of the world in the glorious latter day. But now as to the other way - the way of giving notice to the public of this event, by particular persons themselves publishing their own experiences, from time to time and from place to place, on all occasions and before all companies - I must confess, it is a practice that appears to me attended with many inconveniences, yea, big with mischiefs. The abundant trial of this method lately made, and the large experience we have had of the evil consequences of it, is enough to put all sober and judicious people forever out of conceit with it. I shall not pretend to enumerate all the mischiefs attending it, which would be very tedious; but shall now only mention two things. One is, the bad effect it has upon the persons themselves that practice it, in the great tendency it has to spiritual pride; insensibly begetting and establishing an evil habit of mind in that respect, by the frequent return of the temptation, and this many times when they are not guarded against it, and have no time, by consideration and prayer, to fortify their minds. And then it has a very bad effect on the minds of others that hear their communication, and so on the state of religion in general, in this way. It being thus the custom for persons of all sorts, young and old, wise and unwise, superiors and inferiors, freely to tell their own experiences before all companies, it is commonly done very injudiciously, often very rashly and

foolishly, out of season, and in circumstance tending to defeat any good end. Even sincere Christians too frequently in their conversation insist mainly on those things that are no part of their true spiritual experience; such as impressions on their imagination, suggestions of facts by passages of Scripture, etc.; in which case children and weak persons that hear, are apt to form their notions of religion and true piety by such experimental communications, and much more than they hear from the pulpit. This it found to be one of the devices whereby Satan has an inexpressible advantage to ruin the souls of men, and utterly to confound the interest of religion. This matter of making a public profession of godliness or piety of heart, is certainly a very important affair, and ought to be under some public regulation, and under the direction of skilful guides, and not left to the management of every man, woman, and child, according to their humour or fancy. And when it is done, it should be done with great seriousness, preparation, and prayer, as a solemn act of public respect and honour to God, in his house and in the presence of his people. Not that I condemn, but greatly approve of, persons speaking sometimes of their religious experiences in private conversation, to proper persons and on proper occasions, with modesty and discretion, when the glory of God and the benefits or just satisfaction of others require it of them.

In a word, the practice of promiscuous admission - or that way of taking all into the church indifferently, as visible saints, who are not either ignorant or scandalous - and at the same time that custom taking place of persons publishing their own conversion in common conversation; where these two things meet together, they unavoidably make two distinct kinds of visible churches, or different bodies of professing saints, one within another, openly distinguished one from another, as it were by a visible dividing line. One company consisting of those who are visibly gracious Christians, and open professors of godliness; another consisting of those who are visibly moral liver, and only profess common virtues, without pretending to any special and spiritual experiences in their hearts, and who therefore are not reputed to be converts. I may appeal to those acquainted with the state of the churches, whether this be not actually the case in some, where this method of proceeding has been long established. But I leave the judicious reader to make his own remarks on this case, and to determine, whether there be a just foundation in Scripture or reason for any such state of things; which to me, I confess, carries the face of glaring absurdity.

And now I commit this whole discourse (under God's blessing) to the reader's candid reflection and impartial judgment. I am sensible, it will be very difficult for many to be truly impartial in this affair; their prejudices being very great against the doctrine which I have maintained. And, I believe, I myself am the person, who, above all other upon the face of the earth, have had most in my circumstances to prejudice me against this doctrine, and to make me unwilling to receive conviction of its truth. However, the clear evidence of God's mind in his Word, as things appear to me, has constrained me to think and act as I have now done. I dare not go contrary to such texts as these, Lev. 10:10; Jer. 15:19; Eze. 22:26, and 44:6-8. And having been fully persuaded in my own mind, as to what is the scripture rule in this matter, after a most careful, painful, and long search, I am willing, in the faithful prosecution of what appears to me of such importance and so plainly the mind and will of God, to resign to his providence, and leave the event in his hand.

It may not be improper to add here, as I have often had suggested to me the probability of my being answered from the press: If anyone shall see cause to undertake this, I have these reasonable requests to make to him, viz. That he would avoid the ungenerous and unmanly artifices used by too many writers, while they turn aside to vain jangling, in carping at incidental passages, and displaying their wit upon some minute particulars, or less material things, in the author they oppose, with much exclamation, if possible to excite the ignorant and unwary reader's disrelish of the author, and to make him appear contemptible, and so to get the victory that way; perhaps dwelling upon, and glorying in, some pretended inconsistencies in some parts of the discourse, without ever entering thoroughly into the merits of the cause, or closely encountering any of the main arguments. If anyone opposed me from the press, I desire he would attend to the true state of the question, and endeavour fairly to take off the force of each argument, by answering the same directly, and distinctly, with calm and close reasoning; avoiding (as much as may be) both dogmatically assertion and passionate reflection. Sure I am, I shall not envy him the applause of a victory over me, however signal and complete, if only gained by superior light and convincing evidence. I would also request him to set his name to his performance, that I may in that respect stand on even ground with him before the world, in a debate wherein the public is to judge between us. This will be the more reasonable, in case he should mingle anything of accusation with his arguing. It was the manner even of the heathen Romans, and reputed by them but just and equal, to have accusers face to face.

May the God of all grace and peace unite us more in judgment, affection, and practice, that with one heart, and one mouth, we may glorify his name through Jesus Christ.

AMEN.