

Humble Inquiry into the Qualifications for Full Communion

Jonathan Edwards



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ABOUT THIS BOOK



A pivotal 18th-century treatise arguing that only those who credibly profess **genuine saving faith** — not merely moral sincerity — should be admitted to the Lord's Supper and full church membership. With careful biblical exegesis and rigorous logic, Edwards challenges the open communion practice of his own grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, distinguishing between **real saints** and **visible saints** to establish that the church must require evidence of true piety. This bold work, which cost Edwards his Northampton pastorate, remains essential reading for understanding **Reformed ecclesiology** and the nature of the visible church.



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TITLE PAGE



A **Humble Inquiry** into the Rules of the **Word of God** Concerning the **Qualifications** Required for **Complete Standing** and **Full Communion** in the Visible Christian **Church**.

By **Jonathan Edwards**, Master of Arts, Pastor of the First Church in **Northampton**. With an Appendix by Mr. **Foxcroft**.

Job 33:2-3 Behold, now I have opened my mouth: My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart.

Confitebatur [**Lutherus**] dolorem suum, quod ab ipsis reflorescentis Evangelii Primordiis, quosvis absque Discrimine ad Coenam dominicam admisisset, quodque Disciplinam, Fratrum Disciplinae similem, apud suos non constituisset. Quia objiciebatur, Fratres non habere Ecclesiam apertam; Responsum fuit, Sancta dare non Sanctis prohibuisse Christum: Errorem [in **Papatu**] corrigi non posse **aliter quam ut certa Probatione, nec illa subitanea, Cordium Arcana revelunter**, Novitiique diu et caute tum informentur, tum explorentur. **_Ratio Disciplinae Fratrum Bohemorum._**

BOSTON: Printed and Sold by S. KNEELAND in Queen Street, 1749.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE



THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

My public appearance on this side of the question, which I defend in the following pages, will probably surprise many people. It is well known that Mr. Stoddard, a great and distinguished minister and my respected predecessor as pastor of the church in **Northampton** -- as well as my own grandfather -- publicly and forcefully opposed the doctrine I now maintain.

However, I hope no one will hold it against me that I think as I do, simply because I differ from him, even though he was so far above me and someone whose name and memory I am deeply obligated to treat with great respect and honor. I especially expect that no one will consider it a crime for me to disagree with him on every point, since no one more than he himself insisted on this scriptural and Protestant principle: that we should **call no man on earth Master**, or make the authority of the greatest and holiest of mere men the foundation of our belief in any religious doctrine. We are certainly not obligated to consider any man infallible when he himself completely rejected the idea of infallibility. Mr. **Stoddard** rightly states in his **Appeal to the Learned** (page

97): All Protestants agree that there is no infallibility at **Rome**, and I know of no one else who has claimed any since the days of the apostles. He also insists in his **Preface** to his **Sermon** on the same subject that it shows no lack of proper respect for our **fore-fathers** for us to **examine** their opinions. Some of his words in that **Preface** serve as a good defense for me and are worth repeating here. 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 outstanding act of obedience to depart from them in **some** things. People tend to make a great **fuss** that we are introducing innovations and departing from the **old way**. But I cannot see where the **wrong** in this lies. We may find reason to **change some practices of our fathers** without despising **them**, without taking pride in our own wisdom, without abandoning the faith, without misusing the advantages God has given us, without a spirit of compromise with corrupt people, without leaning toward superstition, and without causing disturbance in the church of God. There is no reason this should be turned into a **reproach** against us. Surely it is **praiseworthy** for us to **examine** the practices of our fathers when we have no good reason to accept them on **trust** alone. Let them have as high a reputation as they deserve, yet we must not treat their principles as **oracles**. Nathan himself was wrong in his assumptions about **building the house of God**. Anyone who believes principles simply because **they** affirm them makes **idols** of them. And it would not be **humility** but **cowardice** for us to consider ourselves **unable** to examine the principles handed down to us. If we are by any means **fit to explain the mysteries of the Gospel**, we are capable of judging **these** matters. It would

poorly suit us to give in to **laziness** and **neglect** examining received principles. If the practices of our fathers in any particular areas were **mistaken**, it is **right** that they should be **rejected**. If they are not mistaken, they will stand up to examination. If we are forbidden to examine their practices, that will cut off all hope of **reformation**.

In these very timely and fitting words, Mr. Stoddard, **though dead, yet speaks**. And here, applying them to my own case, he tells **me** that I am not at all to blame for refusing to **accept his principles on trust**. He says that despite **the high reputation** rightly **belonging to him**, I should not **treat his principles as oracles**, as though he could **not make mistakes**, any more than Nathan himself could **in his assumptions about building the house of God**. In fact, I am even **to be praised for examining his practice** and judging for myself. He says it **would poorly suit me** to do otherwise, and that this **would not show humility** but rather reveal a **cowardice of spirit**. He declares that if **I am not capable of judging for myself in these matters, I am by no means fit to explain the mysteries of the Gospel**, and that if I **should believe his principles simply because he taught them, I would be guilty of making him an idol**. He also tells his and my congregation, along with everyone else, that it **poorly suits them to give in to laziness and neglect examining received principles and practices**, and that it is **right for mistakes in any particular areas to be rejected**. He says that if I differ from him in my judgment on some things, it would be very unreasonable to **make a great fuss, as though I were introducing innovations and departing from the old way**. He says I **may find reason to change some practices**

of my grandfather and predecessor without despising him, without taking pride in my own wisdom, without abandoning the faith, without misusing the advantages God has given me, without leaning toward superstition, and without causing disturbance in the church of God. In short, he says it is **beyond him to find out where the wrong in my doing so lies**, and that **there is no reason it should be turned as a reproach against me.** In this way, I believe he sufficiently defends my conduct in the present situation and warns everyone concerned not to be displeased with me or find any fault with me, simply because I examine things for myself, have my own judgment, and practice differently from him in some areas -- however confident he was that his own judgment and practice were correct. It is reasonably hoped and expected that those who greatly respect his judgment will impartially consider his judgment and listen to his advice in these things.

I can sincerely declare that any desire to show myself wiser than that excellent man is completely foreign to me and has not had the slightest influence on my decision to publicly oppose, through the press, an opinion he so earnestly maintained and promoted. I am certain that I have not tried to differ from his judgment, nor have I been driven in the least by a spirit of contradiction. Neither have I indulged a fault-finding attitude in responding to any of his arguments or statements.

I previously held **his opinion**, which I absorbed from his books even from my childhood, and I followed **his practice** in my own ministry -- though never without some difficulties that I could not resolve. However, my distrust of my own understanding, my deference to the authority of such a respected man, the apparent

strength of some of his arguments, together with the success he had in his ministry and his great reputation and influence, were enough for a long time to override my doubts. But the difficulties and uneasiness in my mind grew as I studied theology more deeply and gained more experience. This drove me to more careful and thorough effort to **search the Scriptures** and to examine and weigh more impartially the arguments of my **grandfather** and other authors I could find on his side of the question. Through this process, after long searching, reflecting, examining, and re-examining, I reached a settled conclusion. I became fully established in the opinion I now hold, as presented in this discourse offered to the public. I could no longer continue a practice and administration inconsistent with it. This put me in a unique position, making it absolutely necessary for me to publicly declare and defend the opinion I had come to hold -- and to do it through the press, and to do it now without delay. It is far from a pleasant aspect of this publication that it goes against what my honored **grandfather** forcefully maintained, both from the pulpit and the press. I can honestly say that because of this and other considerations, I take on this task with greater reluctance than anything I have ever publicly undertaken in my life. But the circumstances of my situation have been ordered by the sovereign plan of the great Governor of the world in such a way that doing this seemed absolutely necessary and unavoidable. I am convinced that the cause of true religion is at stake in this matter. But my own reputation, future usefulness, and my very livelihood all seem to depend on my freely explaining and defending my principles and my corresponding conduct in my pastoral role -- and on doing it through the press. This is the only way I can properly present and justify my position before the wider

community, which is full of rumors, misrepresentations, and criticisms about this matter, or even before my own congregation, as everyone would fully understand if they knew the exact details of the situation.

I have been brought to this necessity by divine providence, through a combination of circumstances and events that I choose to remain silent about for now, and which it is not necessary or perhaps wise for me to share with the public.

One thing among others that made me approach this task with such reluctance was the fear that some hostile people might misuse the doctrine defended here -- particularly that wild, fanatical group of people who have recently pursued unjustifiable **separations**, even rejecting the ministers and churches of the land in general, under the pretense of establishing a pure church. It is well known that I have previously spoken out publicly, both from the pulpit and in print, against many of the beliefs and practices of this kind of people. I will be very sorry if what I now offer to the public gives them any occasion to encourage or strengthen themselves in those beliefs and practices. To prevent this, I want to take this opportunity to declare that I still hold the same views about them that I have previously expressed. I hold the same opinion about the religious experiences and inner feelings chiefly popular among them as I did 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 idea of a **pure church** achieved through a **spirit of discernment**, their **judgmental attacks** on the established ministers and churches in general, their **lay ordinations**, their **lay preaching** and **public exhorting and administering of**

sacraments, their arrogant, self-confident, argumentative, un-charitable **separating spirit**, or their going about the country as if **sent by the Lord** to win converts -- along with their many other extreme and sinful practices. My holding the doctrine defended in this discourse is no sign of any change in my opinion about them, because when I wrote those two books I just mentioned, I already held the same view about the qualifications of communicants at the Lord's Table that I hold now.

Nevertheless, it is likely that some will still protest against my principles as having the same dangerous tendencies as those of the **Separatists**. To such people I can only solemnly declare the sincerity of my intentions and the great care I have taken to avoid anything erroneous or in any way harmful. But as for how well I have succeeded in these honest intentions and efforts, I must leave it to each reader to judge for himself, after he has carefully read and impartially considered the following discourse. Given the nature and importance of the subject, I hope all serious readers will accompany their reading with earnest prayers to the **Father of Lights** for His gracious direction and influence. And, **to Him be glory in the churches by Christ Jesus**. AMEN.

J. E.

PREFACE



PREFACE.

Though the doctrine maintained here by our dear and reverend brother was brought to this country by the devout and wise fathers who came from the Puritans in England, and was held by them and their successors in our churches for more than sixty years without disagreement, some good and learned men have since adopted a different way of thinking on this matter. And since the Word of God is our only standard for judging, and this alone can bind the conscience in matters of religion, it is essential that every person search the Scriptures. Each one must come to the most satisfying knowledge possible about whether he has a right to the Lord's Supper, whether it is his immediate duty to take part in it, and whether he should admit others to it. And for all that we had previously read on this subject, it seemed to us that further investigation and discoveries were still needed.

And though not all of us have had the opportunity to read the following work, we believe the reverend author is uniquely qualified to handle this important argument. This is because of his great familiarity with the Scriptures and his careful study of them with the specific goal of finding the mind of Christ and settling his own judgment on this particular matter -- both to gain more light for himself and to share it with others. We also have a special reason to pay attention to what he writes: he is so far from arguing out of bias or the influence of his upbringing that, although he was raised in the opposite way of thinking and was further inclined toward it because of a deep respect for his reverend grandfather, his careful study of the sacred Scriptures compelled him to accept the conclusions they produced in him and to change his judgment.

The following treatise contains the substance of those conclusions, that is, the specific reasons for this change. And if those who currently share his former way of thinking would search the Scriptures and consider his arguments drawn from them with proper seriousness, humility, calmness, diligence, and fairness -- looking up to God through Christ and submitting their minds entirely to Him -- they may either see and accept the same conclusions and find reason to change their judgments as well, or they will at least maintain their brotherly affection toward the worthy author and others who share his views.

We sincerely pray that the reverend author and his congregation may be happy together for a long time. We pray that their heartfelt love and tenderness toward each other may continue and express itself in mutual and proper willingness to accommodate and be patient with one another despite different views on these particular matters. We pray that everyone may be open to new light and guard against all prejudice, hasty conclusions, and passionate reactions. We pray that they may be very watchful against Satan's schemes to divide or alienate them, and that they may pursue the things that make for peace and spiritual growth. And the God of light, love, and peace will continue with them.

Boston, August 11, 1749. Thomas Prince, John Webb, Thomas Foxcroft, M. Byles.

PART 1



The main question I want to consider, and for which I will argue the negative in the following discourse, is this:

According to the rules of Christ, should anyone be admitted to the communion and privileges of full membership in the visible church of Christ except those who, by their profession and in the eyes of the church's Christian judgment, are godly or gracious persons?

When I speak of members of the visible church of Christ **in complete standing**, I mean those who are accepted as the proper and direct recipients of all the external privileges Christ has appointed for the ordinary members of His church. I say **ordinary members** to distinguish them from any special privileges and honors belonging to church officers and leaders. Everyone agrees that there are some people who are in some sense part of the church of God but who are not members in complete standing as I have just described. All who accept infant baptism agree that infants who are proper subjects of baptism, and who are baptized, are in some sense members of the Christian church. Yet no one considers them to be members in a standing that makes them proper and direct recipients of all church ordinances and privileges. Rather, some further qualifications are needed for that --

qualifications gained either through the natural course of growing up, through education, or through divine grace. And some who were baptized as infants, even after they reach adulthood, may still remain for a time short of the standing I have described. They may lack sufficient knowledge, and perhaps other qualifications, due to the neglect of their parents, their own negligence, or other reasons. Or they may carelessly fail to qualify themselves for church privileges by making a public profession of the Christian faith, or by affirming the Christian covenant, or they may simply neglect to present themselves as candidates for these privileges. Yet they are not expelled from the church or cease to be its members in every sense. I believe this too will be generally accepted.

One main point of the question above is whether any adult persons -- other than those who profess and appear to possess Christian grace or piety -- should be admitted to **the Christian sacraments**. Specifically, should they be admitted to the **Lord's Supper**? And if they were not baptized in infancy, should they be admitted to **baptism**? The main thing intended by the question -- when I speak of those who **ought to be admitted to the communion and privileges of members of the visible church in complete standing** -- is that adult persons have those qualifications that require others to receive them as proper and direct subjects of the Christian sacraments. There are many adult persons who, by everyone's agreement, are in some sense within the church of God but who are not members in good standing in this sense. For instance, there are many who do not currently have the proper qualifications to recommend them for admission to the **Lord's Supper**. There are many scandalous persons who are under suspension. The late respected Mr. **Stoddard** and many other

great theologians hold that even excommunicated persons are still members of the church of God. Some hold that the worshippers of Baal in **Israel**, even those raised in that worship from infancy, still remained members of the church of God. And very many Protestant theologians hold that members of the Church of **Rome**, though they are raised and live continually in gross idolatry and countless errors and superstitions that tend to completely undermine the Gospel of Christ, are still in the visible church of Christ. Yet I believe no orthodox theologians would consider these people to be properly and regularly qualified for the Lord's Supper. It was therefore necessary, in the question before us, to make a distinction between members of the visible church **in general** and members **in complete standing**.

It was also necessary to make this distinction in the question to avoid dragging out this discourse with needless questions and debates about the status of baptized infants -- **needless**, that is, for my present purpose. Though I have no doubts about the doctrine of infant baptism, God's manner of dealing with infants who are properly dedicated to Him in baptism is a matter open to great disputes and many controversies. It would require a lengthy discussion on its own to settle it. This would extend this discourse beyond all reasonable limits, and it does not appear necessary for a clear answer to the present question. God's Word is much plainer and more direct concerning adult persons who act for themselves in religious matters than concerning infants. The Scriptures were written for adult persons, or those capable of understanding what is written. The apostles address such people in their epistles, and God speaks to such people throughout His Word. The Scriptures especially speak for the sake of those to whom they are addressed

and about those to whom they speak. Therefore, if the Word of God gives us enough light concerning the people described in my question to clearly settle the matter regarding them, we do not need to wait until all doubts and controversies about baptized infants are resolved before making a judgment on the point at hand. The names, descriptions, and characteristics that Scripture gives to visible Christians and to the visible church primarily refer to the church of Christ in its adult state and proper standing. If someone were to describe the kind of birds called doves, it would be most appropriate to describe full-grown doves, not young ones still in the egg or nest without wings or feathers. Similarly, if someone were to describe a palm tree or an olive tree by its visible form and appearance, it would be assumed that they were describing those trees in their mature and proper state -- not as just sprouting from the ground, or as struck by lightning or blown down. Therefore I want to note here, once and for all, that when I use phrases like **visible saints, members of the visible church**, and so on in the following discourse, I generally mean persons who are **adult** and in **good standing**.

The question is not whether Christ has made converting grace or piety **itself** the condition or rule by which His people admit anyone to the privileges of full communion. No single qualification of the mind, whatever it may be, has Christ properly made the requirement for this -- not even a common belief that **Jesus** is the **Messiah**, or a belief in the existence of God. It is the credible **profession** and **visibility** of these things that serves as the church's rule in this case. Christian piety or godliness may be a qualification required for communion in the Christian sacraments in exactly the same way that a belief that Jesus is the Messiah and

that the Scriptures are the Word of God are required qualifications. It is required in the same way that some kind of repentance is a required qualification for someone who has been suspended for gross scandal before he can return to the Lord's Supper. Yet godliness itself is not properly the church's rule for proceeding, just as such belief and repentance as I have mentioned are not the church's rule. A visibility to the eye of Christian judgment is the rule the church follows in each of these cases.

There are two **distinctions** that must be observed here. First, we must distinguish between qualifications that give a person a right to church privileges **in foro ecclesiae** (that is, a right to be admitted by the church to those privileges) and qualifications that provide a proper and good foundation for a person's own decision to come forward and present himself as a candidate for immediate admission to these privileges. There is a difference between these. For example, a **profession** of belief in a future life and in revealed religion, along with some other things that are internal and out of sight, and a visibility of these things to the eye of Christian judgment -- this is all that is needed, regarding these things, to give a person a right **in foro ecclesiae**, or before the church. But it is the real existence of these things that provides the proper and good foundation for him to make this profession and thus claim these privileges. No one would say that a person has proper grounds for such action if he does not believe in the afterlife or does not believe the Bible to be the Word of God. And then:

Second, we must distinguish between what directly brings an obligation on a person's conscience to seek admission to a Christian ordinance and what provides a good foundation for the judgment of an enlightened, well-informed conscience -- and so is

properly a solid foundation for a right to act in this way. This distinction certainly applies among people in countless cases. The judgments of people's consciences are what place them under the most direct and immediate obligation to act. But it is what provides a good foundation for such a judgment of an enlightened conscience that alone is a solid foundation for a right to act that way. Believing the doctrine of the Trinity **with all the heart**, in some sense (let us say a moral sense) is one thing required in order for a person to have a solid foundation for a right to go and request baptism in the name of the Trinity. But his best judgment or the verdict of his conscience concerning whether he believes this doctrine with this sincerity, or with all his heart, may be enough to place an obligation on his conscience. Again, when an offender has been convicted of scandal, it is repentance that is in some sense sincere (let us say morally sincere) that is the proper foundation for a right to present himself for forgiveness and restoration. But it is the verdict of his conscience, or his best judgment about his sincerity, that is the thing that immediately obliges him to present himself. It is repentance itself that is the proper qualification underlying his right, and without which he cannot have a proper right. For though he may be deceived and think he has real repentance when he does not, he does not properly have a right to be deceived. Perhaps such deception is always caused by something blameworthy, or the influence of some corrupt principle. But still, his best judgment places him under obligation. In the same way, and no other, I hold that Christian grace itself is a qualification required in order for a person to have a proper, solid foundation for a right to come to the Christian sacraments. But I may say more about this when I come to answering objections.

When I speak in the question of being godly or gracious in the eye of Christian judgment, by **Christian judgment** I mean something more than a merely **negative** kind of charity. By negative charity I mean simply refraining from criticizing and condemning a person because we do not know that he is not godly, and therefore we hold back from treating him on the basis of such criticism or judgment -- just as we would kindly receive a stranger, not knowing whether by doing so we might be welcoming an angel or a precious saint of God. Instead I mean **a positive judgment**, based on some positive appearance or visibility -- some outward evidence that ordinarily makes the thing probable. There is a difference between withholding judgment, refraining from condemnation, or having some hope that something might be the case and thus hoping for the best on the one hand, and making a positive judgment in a person's favor on the other. Simply having some hope only means that a person is not in complete despair about something, even though his prevailing opinion may be otherwise, or he may withhold his opinion entirely. Though we cannot know that a person believes **Jesus** is the **Messiah**, we still expect some positive evidence or visibility of it as a basis for our charitable judgment. I believe the same is true here.

When I speak of Christian **judgment**, I mean a judgment in which people properly exercise reason and have their reason under the appropriate influence of love and other Christian principles. These principles do not blind reason but regulate how it is exercised. They are not contrary to reason, even though they are very contrary to a judgmental spirit or unreasonable strictness and rigidity.

I say **in the eye of the church's Christian judgment** because it is properly a visibility to the eye of public charity, and not of private judgment, that gives a person a right to be received as a visible saint by the public. If someone is known to be a person of honest character and appears to have a good understanding of the doctrines of Christianity -- particularly those doctrines that teach the great condition of salvation and the nature of true saving religion -- and publicly and seriously professes the great and essential things in which true religion or godliness consists, and his conduct matches this profession, then this rightly recommends him to the good opinion of the public. This is so regardless of whatever suspicions and fears any particular person, whether the minister or someone else, might have based on what he personally has observed -- perhaps from the way the person expressed himself in giving an account of his experiences, or from some lack of clarity in the order and manner of his experiences, and so on. The minister, in receiving someone into the communion of the church, is to act as a public officer and on behalf of the public body, not merely for himself. Therefore he is to be guided in his actions by a proper visibility of godliness in the eye of the public.

In holding the negative of the preceding question, it is not my intention to claim that all who are regularly admitted as members of the visible church in complete standing should be believed to be godly or gracious persons when taken **collectively**, or considered as a whole, by the judgment of any person or group. This may not be the case, and yet each person taken individually may visibly be a gracious person to the eye of Christian judgment in general. These two things are not the same but are vastly different. The latter may be true without the former being true. If we came to know a thou-

sand people one after another, and from what we observed in each one we formed a prevailing opinion that they were indeed devout, and we thought the judgment we passed on each one, when considered separately, was correct -- it would not follow that, when we considered the whole company together, we would be confident enough in our own judgment to say it was probable that not a single one of our thousand judgments was wrong. We all make countless judgments about one thing or another -- concerning religious, moral, secular, and philosophical matters, concerning past, present, and future events, reports, facts, persons, things, and so on. Concerning every one of the many thousands of judgments we hold, we believe each one is right when taken individually. If we thought any one of them was wrong, it would no longer be our judgment. Yet there is no one, unless he is foolishly overconfident, who would say when considering all his opinions together that he thinks every single opinion he holds about all persons and things -- both important and trivial -- is correct without the slightest error. But to illustrate this point more clearly as it relates to visibility, or probable appearances of holiness in those who profess faith: Suppose experience had shown that certain external marks were probable signs of a diamond. Suppose it was demonstrated, by compiling a large number of tests, that the probability was exactly **ten to one** and no more or less -- meaning that, on average, **one in ten** of the stones with these marks (and no visible signs to the contrary) turns out not to be a true diamond. Then it follows that when I find a particular stone with these marks and nothing to the contrary, there is a probability of **ten to one** that it is a diamond - - and likewise for each stone I find with these marks. But if we take **ten** of these together, it is just as probable as not that some **one** of

the ten is fake. This is because if it were not equally likely that **one in ten** is false, or if on average there were not **one in ten** that was false, then the probability of stones with these marks being true diamonds would be more than **ten to one**, which contradicts our assumption. For what we mean by a probability of **ten to one** that they are not false is precisely that, on average, there will be **one** false stone among every **ten**, and no more. So if we take a **hundred** such stones together, the probability is exactly **ten to one** that there is **one** false stone among them. And it is just as likely as not that there are **ten** false ones in the whole hundred. The probability for each individual stone would have to be much greater than **ten** to one -- even a probability of more than a **hundred** to one -- in order to make it probable that every single one is genuine. This is a simple mathematical demonstration. Therefore, the negative of the preceding question by no means implies any claim to a system that will be effective in keeping all hypocrites out of the church, or in establishing, in that sense, **a pure church**.

When I say that those who are admitted should by profession be **godly** or **gracious** persons, I do not mean they should merely **state** or **claim** that they are converted or gracious, that they **know** this or **think** this. Rather, I mean they should profess the great things in which Christian piety consists -- namely, a supreme regard for God, faith in Christ, and so on. Indeed, if people want to maintain a good conscience, they must believe that the things they profess to have are actually in them. Otherwise they are guilty of the terrible wickedness of deliberately making a false profession. Therefore it is assumed to be necessary, in order for people to regularly and with a good conscience come into communion with the

church of Christ in the Christian sacraments, that they themselves believe the essential things belonging to Christian piety are present in them.

It is not part of the present question to consider and determine what the nature of Christian piety is or what it consists of. This question can be properly settled and the conclusion demonstrated without entering into any controversies about the nature of conversion and so on. Nor does affirming the negative of the question determine how detailed the profession of godliness ought to be -- only that the more essential things belonging to it should be professed. Nor does it rule out the possibility that the public professions made when people are admitted to the Lord's Supper in some of our churches -- churches that operate on the principle that people need not consider themselves truly gracious in order to properly come to the Lord's Supper -- might be sufficient. I say it is not ruled out that some of these professions might be adequate, if those who made them were taught to use the words, and others to understand them, in their proper meaning alone, and if established custom and practice had not given them a meaning very different from the proper one, or perhaps a use of the words with no clear or definite meaning at all.

PART 2



Having explained what I mean when I say **that no one should be admitted to the communion and privileges of full membership in the visible church of Christ except those who, by their profession and in the eyes of the church's Christian judgment, are godly or gracious persons**, I now move on to present some points that may help prove the truth of this position. And here:

1. I begin by observing that I think it is both evident from the Word of God and also granted by everyone that no one should be admitted as members of the visible church of Christ except **visible saints** and **professing saints**, or visible and professing Christians. We find the word **saint**, when applied to people, used in two ways in the New Testament. In some places the word refers to those who are **real** saints -- who are converted and are truly gracious persons -- as in 1 Corinthians 6:2: **Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?** Ephesians 1:18: **The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.** Ephesians 3:17-18: **That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that you being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth,** etc. 2 Thessalonians 1:10: **When He shall come to be glorified**

in His saints, and admired in all those who believe. Also Revelation 5:8. Revelation 8:4. And Revelation 11:18. And Revelation 13:10. And Revelation 14:12. And Revelation 19:8. In other places, the word is used to refer not only to real saints but also to those who were saints in **visibility, appearance, and profession** -- and so were outwardly, in terms of their acceptance among people and their outward treatment and privileges, part of the company of saints. The word is used this way in very many places, which there is no need to list, since everyone acknowledges it.

Similarly, we find the word **Christian** used in two ways. The word is used to express the same thing as a **righteous person who shall be saved**, in 1 Peter 4:16-18. Elsewhere it is used to include all who were Christians by profession and outward appearance, as in Acts 11:26. There is also 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** in John 8:30-31. The word means **truly**. The expression clearly assumes this distinction between true or real disciples and those who were the same only in pretense and appearance. See also Luke 14:25-27 and John 15:8. The same distinction is expressed in the New Testament by those who **live**, being alive from the dead and risen with Christ (2 Corinthians 4:11; Romans 6:11, and elsewhere), and those who **have a name to live**, having only a pretense and appearance of life. The distinction within the visible church of Christ between these two groups is clearly represented by the crop of the good ground versus that in the stony and thorny ground, which had the same appearance and show as the other until it withered away. It is also represented by

the two groups of virgins in Matthew 25, who both had a show, profession, and visibility of the same thing. From these and many other things that could be noted, it is clear that the distinction between real saints and visible and professing saints is scriptural, that the visible church was made up of both, and that no one is admitted into the visible church of Christ according to Scripture except those who are visible and professing saints or Christians. There is all the less need to dwell on this point because it is not in dispute. As far as my limited reading informs me, it is acknowledged by all Protestants. Certainly, the most prominent theologian in **New England** who maintained that the Lord's Supper is properly a converting ordinance was very clear about this. In his **Appeal to the Learned**, in the title page and throughout the treatise, he assumes that all who come to the Lord's Supper must be **visible saints**, and sometimes refers to them as **professing saints**, on pages 85-86. He also assumes that it is necessary, in order for them to be admitted to communion at the Lord's Table, that they make a personal, public profession of their faith and repentance to the just satisfaction of the church, on pages 93-94. In these statements, the whole of the position I want to prove is essentially granted. If it is allowed -- as it is allowed on all sides -- that no one should be admitted to communion in the Christian visible church except visible and professing saints or Christians, and if these words are used with any proper meaning or any agreement with the way Scripture presents things, then everything I have set forth is either implied or will certainly follow.

Just as **real** saints are the same as real converts or truly gracious persons, so **visible** saints are the same as visible converts or those who are visibly converted and gracious persons. **Visibility** is

the same as **manifestation** or **appearance** to our view and understanding. Therefore, to be visibly a gracious person is the same as being a truly gracious person to our view, understanding, or estimation. The distinction between **real** and **visible** applies not only to sainthood or holiness but to countless other things. There is visible and real truth, visible and real honesty, visible and real money, visible and real gold, visible and real diamonds, and so on. **Visible and real** are words that relate to one another like the words **real and seeming**, or **true and apparent**. Some people seem to speak of **visibility** regarding sainthood or holiness as though it had no reference to **reality**, or as though it were a separate reality in itself -- as if by visible saints they did not mean those who appear to be real saints or disciples indeed, but rather a properly distinct kind of saints. This is absurd. There is a distinction between real money and visible money, because not everything that is regarded as money and passes for money is real money -- some is false and counterfeit. But by visible money, we do not mean something taken and passed as a different kind of money from true money. Rather, we mean that which is regarded and accepted as real money, or which has the appearance that commends it to people's judgment and acceptance as true money -- even though people may be deceived, and some of it may ultimately prove not to be genuine.

There are not properly two kinds of saints spoken of in Scripture. Although the word **saints** may be said to be used in two ways, or to apply to two kinds of persons, the word does not properly have two meanings in the New Testament -- any more than the word **gold** has two meanings among us. The word gold among us applies to several kinds of substances. It is true that it extends

to real gold and also to what merely appears to be gold and is accepted as gold. By that appearance or visibility, some things that are not real gold receive the name of gold. But this is not properly because the word has different meanings; rather, it is because the word is applied differently due to the imperfection of our ability to distinguish. It does not follow that there are properly two kinds of saints just because some who are not real saints, yet being visible or seeming saints, obtain the name of saints by the appearance they present and are accepted as saints. According to the rules of Scripture -- which are adapted to our imperfect condition -- we are directed to receive and treat such people as saints. This no more proves two kinds of saints than it proves two kinds of honest men just because some who are not truly honest, yet appearing to be so, receive the name of honest men and should be treated as such by us. Similarly, there are not properly two distinct churches of Christ, one real and another visible. But those who are visibly or seemingly part of the one only church of Christ are many more than those who are really part of His church. So the visible or seeming church is larger in extent than the real one.

Visibility is a relative thing and has a relationship to the eye that views or observes. Visibility is the same as appearance or presentation to the eye. To be a visible saint is the same as appearing to be a real saint in the eye that looks -- not the eye of God, but the eye of man. Real saints or converts are those who are so in the eye of God. Visible saints or converts are those who are so in the eye of man -- not his physical eye, for in that sense no person is a saint any more in the eye of a man than in the eye of an animal -- but the eye of his mind, which is his judgment or estimation. There is no more visibility of holiness in the most outstanding professor of

faith to our physical eyes, without exercising the reason and judgment of our minds, than there would be in a machine. But nothing short of an apparent probability, or a probable presentation, can amount to visibility in the eye of human reason or judgment. The eye 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 is a contradiction to say that something is visible to the eye of reason when it does not appear probable to reason. And if there is a person who is a visible saint in this sense, he is in the eye of rational judgment a real saint. To say a person is visibly a saint but not visibly a real saint -- only visibly a visible saint -- is a very absurd way of speaking. It amounts to saying he apparently appears to be a saint, which in effect says nothing and uses words without meaning. The thing that must be visible and probable in order to achieve **visible sainthood** must be sainthood **itself**, or real grace and true holiness -- not visibility of sainthood, not unregenerate morality, not mere moral sincerity. To claim or in any way display moral sincerity makes nothing visible beyond what is claimed or displayed. For a person to visibly have something that, even if truly possessed with nothing more, would not make him a real saint -- that is not to be visibly a saint.

Mr. **Stoddard**, in his **Appeal to the Learned**, seems to express the very same understanding of visibility, and of the visibility of sainthood required for persons coming to the Lord's Supper, that I have expressed here. On page 10 he makes a distinction between being **visibly** circumcised in heart and being **really** so, clearly meaning by the latter saving **conversion**. He allows the former -- namely, a visibility of **heart-circumcision** -- **to be necessary for coming to the Lord's Supper**. So according to

him, it is not a visibility of **moral sincerity** alone, but a visibility of **circumcision of heart**, or saving conversion, that is a necessary requirement for a person coming to the Lord's Table. And how this must be **visible**, he indicates elsewhere when he says it must be so **to a judgment of charity -- a judgment of rational charity**. He expressly affirms this repeatedly, on pages 2-3, page 28, page 33, page 72, and page 95. He also speaks of **having reason to look upon them as such**, on page 28. And toward the close of his book, he declares himself firmly of the view that those who do not **make a personal and public profession of their faith and repentance to the just satisfaction of the church** should **not** be admitted to the Lord's Supper, on pages 93-94. But how he reconciled these statements with the rest of his treatise, I would modestly say, I must confess myself at a loss. In particular, I cannot see how they are consistent with what this respected and ever-honored author says on page 16 in these words: **Indeed by the rule that God has given for admissions, if it be carefully followed, more unconverted persons will be admitted than converted**. I would humbly ask: how can those visible qualifications be the basis of a **rational judgment** that a person **is circumcised in heart**, when at the same time we are aware that these qualifications are so far from being probable signs of it that they are **more** frequently found without it than with it? The appearance of one thing surely cannot imply an apparent probability of another thing when at the same time we are aware that the first thing is most frequently, and therefore most probably, found without the second.

I can easily see how something might seem visible and appear probable to God's people because of the imperfect and dim condition they are in, and so may rightly claim their charity, even though it is not real -- and even though it would not appear probable at all to **angels** who stand in a clearer light. The different degrees of light that God's church has in different **ages** may make a difference in this respect. The church under the New Testament, being favored by God with vastly greater light in divine things than the church under the Old Testament, might make some difference in the kind of profession of religion required under these different dispensations in order to achieve a visibility of holiness. Also, a proper visibility may fail in the majority of cases in some extraordinary situation and exceptional circumstances. But how those signs can be the basis of a **rational judgment** that something is the case when, at that very time and under the degree of light we then have, we are aware that those signs **more often** fail than not, and this routinely -- that is something I confess myself much at a loss to understand. Surely nothing but **apparent reason** is the basis of a **rational judgment**. And indeed it is impossible, by the very nature of things, to form a **judgment** that we ourselves at that very time consider to be not only without but against **probability**.

It may be argued that although persons do not profess those things that make up **sanctifying grace**, yet since they profess belief in the **doctrines** of the **Gospel** -- which God typically uses to bring about people's sanctification and which are called the **doctrine that leads to godliness** -- and since we see nothing in their **lives** to make us conclude that these doctrines have not had their proper effect on their **hearts**, we are obligated in charity to

hope that they are **real saints or gracious** persons and to treat them accordingly. And so we should receive them into the Christian church and admit them to its special ordinances.

I answer: this objection actually assumes and grants the very thing mainly in dispute. For it assumes that a **gracious character** is what should be looked for and aimed at in admitting persons to church communion. It assumes that we need to have this **charity** toward people, or such a favorable **view** of them, in order to receive them as properly qualified members of the body and properly qualified recipients of the special privileges they are admitted to. But the doctrine I am opposing teaches that sanctifying grace is not a necessary qualification for this, and that there is no need for the person himself or anyone else to have any idea that he possesses this qualification. This is because, according to that view, we know it is not a required qualification in itself. We know the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is just as appropriate for those who do not have this qualification as for those who do, since by the design of its institution it is a **converting** ordinance. As such, it is an ordinance intended for the good of the **unconverted** just as much as for the **converted** -- just as it is with the preaching of the Gospel. Now if this is the case, why is there any talk about **charitably hoping** they are converted and then admitting them? What need is there for any charitable hope of such a qualification in order to admit them to an ordinance that is just as appropriate for those without this qualification as for those who have it? We do not need any charitable hope of such a qualification in order to allow a person to hear the Word preached. What need do we have to aim at anything beyond the proper qualifications? And what need is there for any charitable opinion or hope of anything further?

Some sort of belief that **Jesus** is the **Messiah** is a qualification properly required for coming to the Lord's Supper. Therefore it is necessary that we should have a charitable hope that those we admit hold such a belief -- though it is not necessary that we should know it, since that is something no one can know about another person. But as for grace or Christian piety, it clearly follows from the principles I am opposing that even if there is any visibility of it -- more or less, of any kind -- no kind of visibility or appearance, whether more direct or indirect, whether to a greater or lesser degree, and no charity or hope of it, has anything at all to do with the matter of admission to the Lord's Supper. For according to those principles, it is properly a **converting** ordinance. What does any visibility or hope that a person is already healthy have to do with admitting him to a hospital for the use of the proper appointed means for healing the sick and restoring them to health? Therefore it is pointless to dispute here about the nature of visibility. All arguments about a profession of Christian doctrines and an orderly life being sufficient grounds for public charity and an obligation on the church to treat them as saints are entirely irrelevant and beside the point. For on the principles I am opposing, there is no need for any kind of grounds for **treating them as saints** in order to admit them to the Lord's Supper -- the very purpose of which is **to make them saints** -- any more than there is need for some grounds for treating a sick person as healthy in order to admit him to a hospital. According to the doctrine I oppose, persons are not taught to offer themselves as candidates for church communion under any such idea, or with any such claim, as being gracious persons. Therefore surely when those who teach them receive them to

the ordinance, they do not receive them under any such idea, nor does any notion, appearance, hope, or thought of it have anything to do with the matter.

The apostle speaks of the members of the Christian church as those who made a **profession of godliness**. 2 Corinthians 9:13: **They glorified God for your professed subjection to the Gospel of Christ.** 1 Timothy 2:10: **In like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel -- not with costly array; but, which becomes women professing godliness, with good works.** The apostle is speaking of the women who were members of the great church of **Ephesus**, which **Timothy** was currently overseeing. He speaks of them as though they all **professed godliness**. Everyone agrees that **profession** is one element of the visibility of Christianity or holiness that exists in the members of the visible church. Visible holiness is an appearance or display of holiness through things that are external and therefore fall under our notice and observation. These external things are two: namely, **profession** and outward **behavior** consistent with that profession. The profession that belongs to visible sainthood must be a profession of **godliness**, or real sainthood, because a profession makes nothing visible beyond what is professed. What is it to be a saint by profession except to profess being a true saint? To profess being a false saint is to profess being no saint at all. And to profess only something that, even if completely true, is nothing distinctive to a saint is not to be a professing saint.

In order for a person to be properly a **professing Christian**, he must profess the **religion of Jesus Christ**. He surely does not profess the religion taught by Jesus Christ if he leaves out of his profession the most essential elements of that religion. Whatever

is most essential to a thing in order for it to be truly called that thing -- that same element must be essentially expressed or communicated in any presentation or declaration of that thing in order for it to be truly called a presentation or declaration of that thing. If we take a less important part of Christ's religion and leave out the main and most essential part, what we have surely cannot properly be called the religion of Jesus Christ. So if we profess only a less important part and remain silent about the most important and essential part, it cannot properly be said that we profess the religion of Jesus Christ. Therefore we cannot properly be said to profess the Christian religion unless we profess those things that constitute piety of heart, which is by far the most important and essential part of the religion that Christ came to teach and establish in the world. It is in effect the whole of it, since without it all the rest that belongs to that religion is nothing and entirely in vain. But those who are admitted to the Lord's Supper on the principles of those who consider it a **converting** ordinance do not in any way profess Christian piety -- neither in whole nor in part, neither explicitly nor implicitly, neither directly nor indirectly. Therefore they are not professing Christians, or saints by profession. I mean that although they may be godly persons, yet since they come to the ordinance without **professing godliness**, they cannot properly be called **professing saints**.

Here it may be said that although no **explicit** and **formal** profession of those things that belong to true piety is required of them, there are many things they do that amount to a **virtual** and **implicit** profession of these things. For example, their affirming the Christian covenant, their acknowledging God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as their God -- and by visibly joining in public

prayers and singing God's praises, there is a show and implicit profession of supreme respect for God and love for Him. By joining in public confessions, they make a show of repentance. By keeping the Sabbath and hearing the Word, they make a show of a spirit of obedience. By presenting themselves for the sacraments, they make a show of love for Christ and dependence on His sacrifice.

I answer: it is a great mistake if anyone imagines that all these external activities amount to a **profession** of anything at all that belongs to **saving grace**, as they are commonly used and understood. None of them are so, especially not according to the doctrines taught and embraced and the customs established in churches that operate on the principles I mentioned. For what is **professing** but presenting, speaking, or declaring something, either through intelligible words or through other established signs that serve the same purpose? But in such churches, neither their publicly saying that they **acknowledge God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as their God**, that they **give themselves up to Him**, and that they **promise to obey all His commands**, nor their coming to the Lord's Supper or any other ordinance, are taken as expressions or signs of anything belonging to the essence of Christian piety. On the contrary, the public doctrine, principle, and custom in such churches establishes a **different** use of these words and signs. People are taught that they may use all of these words and signs without even claiming to have the least degree of **sanctifying grace**. This is the established custom: this is how they are used, and this is how they are understood. Therefore, whatever some of these words and signs may **in themselves** most properly and naturally convey or signify, they entirely cease to signify any such thing among people accustomed to understanding

and using them otherwise. They cease to function as a profession of Christian piety. There can be no such thing among such a people as either an explicit or implicit **profession of godliness** through anything that, by their established doctrine and custom, an **unregenerate** person may and ought to say and do while knowing himself to be unregenerate. For whatever the words and actions might otherwise signify, the people have in effect agreed among themselves that those who use them need not intend them that way, and that others need not understand them that way. As a result, they cease to function as any claim to grace. And surely it is absurd to say that people openly and solemnly profess grace and yet do not even claim to have it. If a group of people agreed, and it became an established principle among them, that people could and should use certain words to their neighbors -- words that by their proper meaning were a profession of complete love and devoted friendship toward the person addressed -- and yet not think that the speaker has any love in his heart for him, and even know at the same time that the speaker had a ruling hostility against him -- and if this was known to be the established principle of the people -- would not these words, whatever their proper meaning, entirely cease to be any profession or evidence of friendship toward that neighbor? Surely there could be no visibility of it to the eye of reason.

It is therefore evident that those who are admitted to the church on the principles I oppose are not **professing saints** or **visible saints**. The thing that alone is truly sainthood is not what they profess or make any claim to, nor does it have any visibility to the eye of Christian judgment. Or if they do in fact happen to be

visible and professing saints, they are at least not admitted **as such**. No profession of true sainthood, nor any kind of visibility of it, has anything to do with the matter.

There is one way to avoid these conclusions that some have taken and argued for. They say: although it is true that Scripture describes the members of the visible church of Christ as professors of **godliness**, and they are abundantly called **saints** in Scripture - - undoubtedly because they **were saints by profession, visibility, and the acceptance of others** -- this does not refer to **saving** holiness but to a completely different kind of **sainthood**, namely **moral sincerity**. They claim that this is the real sainthood, discipleship, and godliness that is professed and visible in them, and that it is with regard to this -- as having an appearance of it to the eye of reason -- that they are called **saints, disciples**, and so on in Scripture.

It must be noted that in this objection, the visibility is assumed to be of **real** sainthood, discipleship, and godliness -- only a different kind of **real godliness** than that which belongs to those who will finally be acknowledged by Christ as His people at the Day of Judgment.

I answer: this is a mere **evasion** -- the only one I have ever seen or heard of, and I believe the only one possible. For it is certain they are not professors of sanctifying grace or true sainthood. The principle they operate on is that they need make no claim to that, nor does any visibility of saving holiness have anything to do with the matter. If then they have any holiness at all, it must be of a different kind. And if this evasion fails, the entire matter in debate must be conceded. Therefore I want this matter to be impartially considered and examined to the very bottom. Let it be thor-

oroughly investigated whether this distinction between two kinds of **real Christianity, godliness, and holiness** is a distinction that Christ teaches in His Word, or whether it is a human invention of something the New Testament knows nothing about, devised to support and maintain a theory. And here I ask that the following things be observed.

1. According to this theory, the words **saints, disciples, and Christians** are used **four** ways in the New Testament, as applied to four kinds of persons. (1) Those who in **truth** and **reality** are the **heirs of eternal life** and who shall judge the world -- those who truly possess saving sainthood. (2) Those who **profess** this, who claim and present an outward show of supreme regard for Christ and of renouncing the world for His sake, but who have no real basis for these claims and appearances. (3) Those who, although they do not have saving grace, still have that other kind of **real godliness** or **sainthood**, namely **moral sincerity** in religion. These would be properly a kind of **real saints, true Christians, sincerely godly persons, and disciples indeed**, even though they have no saving grace. And (4) those who make a **profession** and have a **visibility** of this **latter** kind of sincere Christianity and are nominally this type of saint, but are not so in reality. So we would have two kinds of **real** Christians and two kinds of **visible** Christians -- two kinds of **invisible** and real churches of Christ, and two kinds of **visible** churches. Now will anyone who is well acquainted with the New Testament say there is the least appearance or hint of such a fourfold use of the words **saints, disciples**, and so on? It is clear from what I observed before that these words are used in only **two** ways in the New Testament, and that the people to whom these names are applied

are distinguished into only **two** groups: those who **really** have a saving interest in Christ, with spiritual conformity and union to Him, and those who have only a **name** for it, possessing a profession and appearance of it. This is further confirmed by various depictions of the visible church that we find in Scripture. In the company of **virgins** who went out to meet the bridegroom, we find only **two** groups distinguished: the wise, who had both **lamps** and **oil**, and those who had **lamps** like the wise virgins -- thus having an outward show of the same thing, namely oil -- but actually had no **oil**. This signifies that they had the same profession and outward show of the same kind of religion and held the same hopes as the wise virgins. So when the visible church is represented by the farmer's threshing floor, we find only two groups distinguished: the **wheat** and the **chaff**. Likewise, when the church is compared to the farmer's field, we find only two groups: the **wheat** and the **tares**. Naturalists observe that tares look exactly like wheat until it comes time to produce fruit. This represents the fact that those who are only visible Christians have a visibility or appearance of the nature of that **wheat** that will be gathered into Christ's barn -- and that **nature** is saving grace.

2. It is evident that those who bore the name of **disciples** in New Testament times had that name with reference to a visibility and claim of the **same relationship** to Christ that belongs to those who will be **finally acknowledged as His**. This is clear from John 8:30-31: **As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed in Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are My disciples indeed."** (Compare Luke 14:25-27 and John 15:8.) The phrase **disciples indeed** is relative. It refers to and stands in

contrast with a mere **visibility, claim, or name**. It refers to the name and visibility that those who then bore the **name of disciples** had. This makes it clear that those who bore the name of **disciples** had a visibility and claim of the same **discipleship** Christ speaks of, which He calls **true discipleship** or **discipleship indeed**. For true discipleship is not properly set in contrast with anything except a pretense of the **same thing** that is not true. The phrase **gold indeed** refers to and contrasts with something that has the appearance of the **same metal**, not an appearance of **brass**. If there were another kind of real discipleship in those days besides saving discipleship, people could be Christ's **disciples indeed** or **truly** (as the original word reads) without **continuing in His word**, without selling all they had, and without hating father and mother and their own lives for His sake. From this it is clear that those who bore the name of disciples in those times were distinguished into only two groups: **disciples in name** or visibility, and **disciples indeed**. The visibility and profession of the former was of the discipleship of the latter.

3. The same point is confirmed 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**. These words naturally suggest and imply that those professing Christians who ultimately proved **false** did, before they **went out**, appear to belong to the company of **true** saints -- those endowed with persevering grace and holiness. They appeared to be of their number; that is, they were so in claim and visibility, and were accepted as such in the judgment of charity.

4. The name and visibility that nominal or visible Christians had in the days of the New Testament was of **saving Christianity**, not of **moral sincerity**. For they had a **name to live**, though many of them were **dead**. Revelation 3:1. Now it is very plain what that thing is in religion called by the name of **life** throughout the New Testament, namely saving grace. I do not know of anything else of a religious nature that is ever called by that name.

5. The visibility that visible Christians had of sainthood in the apostles' days was not of **moral sincerity** but of **gracious sincerity**, or saving sainthood. For they are spoken of as being visibly of the number of those saints who shall judge the world and judge angels. 1 Corinthians 6:1-3: **Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that** we will judge angels? These things clearly imply that if the Christian **Corinthians** were what they supposed themselves to be, what they professed to be, and what they were accepted as being, they were some of those saints who at the Day of Judgment would judge angels and men.

6. The visibility was not only of moral sincerity but of saving grace. This is clear 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 Spirit**. Ephesians 5:30 and 1 Corinthians 6:16, 19. And the apostle **Peter** speaks of visible **Christians** as those who were visibly the kind of **righteous** persons who would be **saved** -- distinguished

from the **ungodly** and **those who do not obey the Gospel, who shall perish**. 1 Peter 4:16-18: **Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it first begins with us** (us Christians, including himself and those he wrote to, and all of that kind) **what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the Gospel of God? And if the righteous is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and sinner appear?**

7. The visibility was not merely of moral sincerity but of the kind of sainthood that the saints in **heaven** have. This is clear because they are often spoken of as visibly **belonging to heaven** and as part of the **society** of the saints in heaven. So the apostle in his epistle to the **Ephesians** speaks of them as visibly part of the same **household** or **family of God**, part of which is in **heaven**. Ephesians 2:19: **So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household**. Together with Ephesians 3:15: **From whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name**. The context and flow of the argument show that he is still speaking of the same **family** or **household** he spoke of at the end of the preceding chapter. Likewise, all visible Christians are spoken of as visibly the children of the church that is in **heaven**. Galatians 4:26: **But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother**. The same apostle speaks of visible Christians as having 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 firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect**. Hebrews

12:22-23. Elsewhere they are spoken of as being visibly among those who have their **names written in the Book of Life**. Revelation 3:5 and 22:19. Those who truly have their names written in the Book of Life are God's true saints who have saving grace, as is evident from Revelation 13:8: **All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life of the Lamb who has been slain.** And Revelation 20:12: **And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life.** Revelation 20:15: **And if anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.** We are told at the conclusion of this chapter what happened to those whose names were not written in the Book of Life. Then the prophet proceeds in the next chapter to tell us what happened to those whose names were found written there -- namely, they were admitted into the **New Jerusalem**. Revelation 21:27: **And nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names 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 who would finally perish, were visibly among those who had both a **place** in the **New Jerusalem** and their **names** written in the **Book of Life**. Revelation 22:19: **And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the Book of Life and from the holy city.**

8. **Baptism**, by which the early converts were admitted into the church, was used as a display and sign of their being visibly **re-generated, dead to sin, alive to God, having the old self**

crucified, delivered from the ruling power of sin, made free from sin, and having become servants of righteousness -- those servants of God whose fruit leads to that holiness whose end is everlasting life. This is evident from Romans 6 throughout. In the earlier part of the chapter, he speaks of the Christian **Romans** as **dead to sin**, being **buried with Christ in baptism, having their old self crucified with Christ**, and so on. He does not mean only that their baptism placed them under special **obligations** to these things and was a mark and sign of their commitment to become this way **in the future**. Rather, it was designed as a mark, sign, and display of their being **visibly** this way **already**. This is most clearly shown by the apostle's development of his argument in the rest of the chapter. Romans 6:14: **For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.** Romans 6:17-18: **But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed. And having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.** Romans 6:22: **But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.**

9. It is evident that the Scripture qualification for admission to the Christian church is not merely a visibility of moral sincerity in religion but a visibility of regeneration and renewal of heart. This is because it was **prophesied** that God's people and the ministers of His house in the days of the **Messiah** should not admit anyone into the Christian church who was not visibly **circumcised in heart**. Ezekiel 44:6-9: And you shall say to the rebellious, even to

the house of **Israel**, "Thus says the Lord God, O house of **Israel**, let all your abominations be enough for you, in that you have brought into My sanctuary foreigners **uncircumcised in heart** and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary to profane it, **even My house**, when you offer My bread, the fat and the blood; and they have broken My covenant because of all your abominations. And you have not kept charge of My holy things yourselves, but you have set foreigners to keep charge of My sanctuary for you." "Thus says the Lord God, no foreigner **uncircumcised in heart or uncircumcised in flesh** shall enter My sanctuary, of any foreigner who is among the sons of **Israel**."

The respected author of the **Appeal to the Learned** says on page 10: **That this Scripture has no particular reference to the Lord's Supper**. I answer: although I do not believe this passage refers merely to that ordinance, I do think it clearly refers to admitting persons into the **Christian church** and to **external church privileges**. It would be easy to prove that these last nine 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 assume this will not be denied, since theologians so generally agree on it. And I assume no one will dispute that the **house of God** and **His sanctuary**, into which it is foretold the **uncircumcised in heart** should not be admitted in the days of the Gospel, is the same **house, sanctuary, or temple** of God that the prophet had been speaking about in the earlier part of the same chapter and had been describing throughout the four preceding chapters. But we all know that the New Testament **house of God** is His **church**. Hebrews 3:3: For this man was counted worthy of more glory than **Moses**, since he who built the **house** has more honor

than the **house**. Hebrews 3:6: But Christ was faithful as a Son over His own **house**, whose **house** we are, etc. 2 Timothy 2:20: In a large **house** there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth, etc. 1 Timothy 3:15: That you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the **household of God**, which is the **church** of the living God. Ephesians 2:20-21: Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy **temple** in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 3:9: You are God's building. 1 Corinthians 3:16: Do you not know that you are a **temple** of God? 1 Peter 2:5: You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual **house**. 1 Peter 4:17: For it is time for judgment to begin with the **household** of God; and if it begins with **us**, what will the outcome be, etc.? Hebrews 10:21: And having a great priest over the **house** of God. **Ezekiel's** temple is undoubtedly the same one the **Messiah** was prophesied to build. Zechariah 6:12-13: The man whose name is the Branch -- He will build the **temple** of the Lord; even He will build the **temple** of the Lord. And what the temple that Christ builds is, the apostle tells us in Hebrews 3:3, 6. The temple that **Ezekiel** in his vision was told to observe the measurements of, as it was **measured with a reed** (Ezekiel 40:3-4), we have reason to think was the same one the apostle **John** in his vision was told to **measure with a reed** in Revelation 11:1. And when it is prophesied here that the **uncircumcised in heart** should not enter the Christian **sanctuary** or church, nor have communion in the offerings of **God's bread, the fat and the blood** made there, I think at least this much is implied: that they should not have communion in those ordinances of the Christian sanctuary in

which the **body** and **blood of Christ** were symbolically represented -- the same things that used to be symbolically represented by the fat and the blood. For the admission into the Christian church spoken of here is an admission into the **visible** church, not the **mystical** church, since the admission described is one carried out by the officers of the church. And I assume no one will doubt that **circumcision of heart** means the spiritual renewal of the heart -- not any common virtues that do not in the least change the nature or put to death the corruption of the heart. This is held by all orthodox theologians, and Mr. **Stoddard** in particular insisted on it at length. However, if anyone disputes this, I ask that Scripture be allowed to speak for itself. For it very often speaks of **circumcision of heart**, and everywhere -- in both the Old Testament and the New -- this clearly refers to that great change of heart that was symbolized by the ceremony of **circumcision of the flesh**. This is the same thing that was later symbolized by **baptism**, namely **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 symbolized by both circumcision and baptism in Colossians 2:11-12: "In Him you were also **circumcised** with a **circumcision** made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the **circumcision** of Christ, having been buried with Him in **baptism**, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God." I would note in passing that he speaks of all the members of the church of **Colosse** as visibly **circumcised with this circumcision** -- consistent with **Ezekiel's** prophecy that the members of the Christian church shall visibly have this **circumcision**. The apostle speaks in the same way of the members of the church of

Philippi as being **spiritually circumcised** (that is, in profession and visibility) and tells what this circumcision looked like. Philippians 3:3: For we are **the circumcision**, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. And in Romans 2:28-29, the apostle speaks of this **Christian** circumcision and **Jewish** circumcision together, calling the former the **circumcision of the heart. For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.** And where this prophecy of **Ezekiel** foretells that no one should enter the Christian sanctuary or church unless they are **circumcised in heart and circumcised in flesh**, I believe this means that no one should be admitted unless they were visibly **regenerated** and also **baptized** with outward baptism.

From everything I have observed, I think it is abundantly clear that the **sainthood, godliness, and holiness** that, according to Scripture, professing Christians and visible saints profess and display is not any religion and virtue resulting from common grace or moral sincerity (as it is called) but saving grace. Yet there are many other clear evidences of this same point, which will to some extent appear throughout the rest of this discourse. Therefore:

2. I now come to another reason why I answer the original question in the negative: **it is a duty that, in the ordinary course of things, is required of all who are capable of it, to make an explicit, open profession of the true religion**

by affirming God's covenant. In other words, they must publicly and verbally unite themselves to God in His covenant by their own public act.

Here I will (**first**) prove this point and then (**second**) draw out the implications and show how this demonstrates the matter in question.

First, I will work to establish this point: that it is the duty of God's people to publicly **affirm the covenant** in this way. This was not only a duty in **Israel** of old but is also a duty in the **Christian** church and will remain so to the end of the world. It is a duty required of **adult** persons before they come to the sacraments. Since this is a point of great importance in this controversy, yet a matter seldom discussed (though it seems to be generally taken for granted), I will be more detailed in my consideration of it.

This not only appears in itself to be most consistent with reason and is a duty generally acknowledged in **New England**, but is clearly a major institution of the Word of God, appointed as a very important part of the public worship by which God's people should honor His name. This institution is found in Deuteronomy 6:13: **You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall** swear by His name. It is repeated in Deuteronomy 10:20: **You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall** swear by His name. In both places it could have been translated: **You shall swear in His name, or into His name.** In the original Hebrew, **Bishmo**, with the prefix **Beth**, which means **in** or **into** as well as **by**. And in the latter passage, where our translation says **to Him you shall cling, and swear by His name**, the Hebrew words are

Ubho Thidhbak Ubhishmo Tisshabheanq. The literal translation is: **To Him shall you cling (or unite) and into His name shall you swear.** The same prefix, **Beth**, appears before **Him** when it says **you shall cling to Him** as before **His name** when it says **you shall swear by His name.** **Swearing into God's name** is a very emphatic and meaningful way of expressing a person's taking upon 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 are called by His name.** This figure of speech is similar to the one by which Christians in the New Testament are said to be baptized **into the name** of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So Christians are said to **be baptized into Christ** in Galatians 3:17. This swearing by the name, or into the name of the Lord, is spoken of so often and in such a way 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 as referring only or mainly to occasionally taking an oath before a court of law, something that perhaps one-tenth of the people never had occasion to do in their entire lives. If we carefully consider the matter, we will find ample reason to be satisfied that what this institution intended was publicly covenanting with God. Covenanting in Scripture is very often called **swearing**, and a **covenant** is called an **oath.** In particular, **God's covenant** is called **His oath.** Deuteronomy 29:12: **That you may enter into the covenant with the Lord your God, and into His oath.** Deuteronomy 29:14: **Not with you alone do I make this covenant and this oath.** 1 Chronicles 16:15-16: **Remember His covenant forever -- the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to**

Isaac. 2 Chronicles 15:12: **And they entered into the covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers.** 2 Chronicles 15:14-15: **And they swore to the Lord with a loud voice. And all Judah rejoiced over the oath. Swearing to the Lord and swearing in or into the name of the Lord** are equivalent expressions in the Bible. The prefixes **Beth** and **Lamed** are clearly used interchangeably in this case to mean the same thing. Zephaniah 1:5: **Those who swear to the Lord, and yet swear by Malcham.** The word translated **to the Lord** is **Laihovah** with the prefix **Lamed**, but **by Malcham** is **Bemalcham** with the prefix **Beth**, **into Malcham.** In 1 Kings 18:32: It says **Elijah built an altar in the name of the Lord; Beshem.** Here the prefix **Beth** clearly carries the same force as **Lamed** in 1 Kings 8:44: "The house I have built **for Your name or to Your name, Leshem.**"

God's people, in swearing to His name or into His name according to the institution, solemnly professed two things: their **faith** and their **obedience.** The first part of this profession of religion was called **saying, "The Lord lives."** Jeremiah 5:2: **And though they say, "The Lord lives," surely they swear falsely.** Jeremiah 5:7: **They have sworn by those who are not gods.** That is, they had openly professed idol worship. Jeremiah 4:2: **And you will swear, "As the Lord lives," in truth, in justice, and in righteousness; then the nations will bless themselves in Him, and in Him they will glory.** (Compare this with Isaiah 45:23-25.) Jeremiah 44:26: **Behold, I have sworn by My great name, says the Lord, that My name shall no longer be invoked by any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, "As the Lord lives."** That is, they shall never again make any profession of the true God and the

true religion, but shall be entirely given over to paganism. See also Jeremiah 12:16 and 16:14-15 and 23:7-8. Hosea 4:15. Amos 8:14 and 5:5.

These words CHAI JEHOVAH -- "Jehovah lives" -- briefly expressed a profession of faith in the all-sufficiency and unchangeableness of God, which is implied in the name JEHOVAH. These attributes are very often represented in Scripture by God being the LIVING GOD, as is very clear from Joshua 3:10, 1 Samuel 17:26, 36, 2 Kings 19:4, 16, Daniel 6:26, Psalms 18:46, and countless 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 the peoples walk each in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever.** Again with the prefix **Beth. Beshem**, just 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 oneself to Him in covenant -- was not prescribed as an extraordinary duty or a duty to be performed only on special occasions such as a return from a general falling away. Rather, it is clearly presented in the institution as a part of the public worship of God that properly belongs to all of God's visible worshipers. The prophets mention it very often in this way, as I noted earlier and could demonstrate at length if there were need for it and if doing so would not make this discourse too long.

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. God declares concerning the Gentile nations in Jeremiah 12:16: **If they will diligently learn the ways of My people, to swear by My name, "The Lord lives," as they taught My people to swear by Baal, then they will be built up in the midst of My people.** That is, they will be added to My church -- or as the apostle **Paul** puts it in Ephesians 2:19-22: **They are no longer strangers and foreigners, but are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of the household of God, and have been built on the foundation of Christ; in whom the whole building, being fitted together, etc. In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.** Likewise it is prophesied that public covenanting would be the way the Gentiles would join the church in the days of the Gospel. Isaiah 44:3-5: **I will pour out water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, and My blessing on your descendants; and they will spring up among the grass like willows by the streams of water. One will say, "I am the Lord's," and another will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, "Belonging to the Lord" -- as though subscribing a document by which 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 the Deuteronomy texts mentioned earlier. Likewise, **taking hold of God's covenant** is prophesied as the way the sons of the foreigner in the days of the Gospel would be joined to God's church and brought into God's**

sanctuary to share in its worship and ordinances, in Isaiah 56:3, 6-7. So in Isaiah 19:18: The future conversion of the Gentiles in the days of the Gospel and their coming to profess the true religion is expressed by saying they would swear to the Lord of Hosts. **In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will be speaking the language of Canaan and swearing allegiance to the Lord of Hosts.** And in Jeremiah 23:5-8: It appears to be clearly prophesied that after Christ has come and accomplished His great redemption, the same way of publicly professing faith in the all-sufficient and unchangeable God by **swearing, "The Lord lives,"** should continue, which was established of old -- but with this difference: whereas formerly they covenanted with God as their Redeemer out of **Egypt**, now they would in effect forget that event and focus on a far greater redemption. **"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch -- Therefore they will no longer say, 'As the Lord lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,' but, 'As the Lord lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel from the north country,'" etc.** Another remarkable passage that clearly prophesies the continuation of this same practice of professing religion through swearing or public covenanting in the days of the Gospel, as it was instituted in **Israel**, is Isaiah 45:22-25: **"Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. They will say of Me, 'Only in the Lord are righteousness and**

strength.' Men will come to Him -- **In the Lord all the offspring of Israel will be justified and will glory.**" This prophecy will have its ultimate fulfillment 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 quoting this passage on two occasions, calls **confessing**. Romans 14:11: **Every tongue shall confess to God.** Philippians 2:10: **That every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.** This is the word commonly used in the New Testament for making a public profession of religion. So in Romans 10:9-10: **If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.** Here a public **profession of religion** with the mouth is clearly spoken of as a great duty of all Christ's people, as much as **believing in Him**, and ordinarily necessary for salvation -- not that it is necessary in the same way that faith is, but in the same way that baptism is. **Faith** and verbal **profession** are spoken of together here as necessary for salvation in the same way as **faith** and **baptism** in Mark 16:16: **He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved.** And I know of no good reason why we should not regard oral profession and covenanting with Christ, for those who are capable of it, as just as much a regular duty in the Christian church and an institution universally belonging to the followers of Christ as baptism.

And if it is true that explicit, open covenanting with God is a great duty required of all, as I have argued, then it should be expected of persons before they are admitted to the privileges of adult members in the church of Christ. Surely it is appropriate, if this explicit covenanting takes place at all, that it should take place before persons come to those ordinances in which they by their own act publicly confirm and seal this covenant. This public act of covenanting, which God has appointed, should exist before we publicly confirm and seal it. It was the means by which the **Israelites** of old were introduced into the communion of God's nominal or visible church and **holy city**, as appears from Isaiah 48:1-2: **Hear this, O house of Jacob, you who are called by the name of Israel and have come forth from the loins of Judah, who swear by the name of the Lord and invoke the God of Israel, but not in truth or in righteousness;** for they call themselves after the holy city, etc. When and in exactly what manner the **Israelites** ordinarily performed this explicit covenanting, I do not think we can be certain. But since it was first done when God first proclaimed His law or covenant at Mount **Sinai**, and was done again when it was repeated and reproclaimed on the plains of **Moab**, and was done when the law was publicly read in **Josiah's** time (2 Kings 23:3), and was done after the return from captivity when it was publicly read at the Feast of Tabernacles (Nehemiah chapters 8, 9, and 10) -- it seems most likely to me that it was done every seventh year, when the law or covenant of God was, by divine appointment, read in the hearing of all the people at the Feast of Tabernacles. At least it was done then by all who heard the law read for the first time and had never before publicly affirmed the covenant of God. There is good evidence that they never partici-

pated in the ordinances God had appointed as seals of His covenant -- those in which they themselves were to be active, such as their sacrifices -- until they had done this. It is clearly implied in Psalm 50 that it was the custom in **Israel** to verbally affirm **God's covenant**, or to **take it into their mouths**, before they sealed that **covenant** in their **sacrifices**. See verse 16 taken together with the earlier part of the Psalm from verse 5. And that they did this before they partook of the Passover (which was indeed one of their sacrifices) or entered the sanctuary for communion in the temple worship is confirmed by the words of **Hezekiah** when he proclaimed a Passover, in 2 Chronicles 30:8: "**Do not be stiff-necked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the Lord** (in the Hebrew, **give the hand to the Lord**) **and enter His sanctuary which He has consecrated forever, and serve the Lord your God.**" To **give the hand** seems to be a Hebrew phrase for entering into covenant or obligating oneself by covenant. Ezra 10:19: **And they gave their hands** in pledge **that they would put away their wives**. And, as I have already noted, it was prophesied that Christians would be admitted to communion in the privileges of the church of Christ in this same way.

Having established the premises of the argument I intend, I now proceed:

Second, I come to what I believe must be the **consequence**, namely: **no one should be admitted to the privileges of adult members in the church of Christ except those who make a profession of real piety**. For the covenant to be affirmed or professed is **God's covenant**, which He has revealed as the means of our spiritual union with Him and our acceptance as

the objects of His eternal favor. This is none other than the **covenant of grace** -- at least it is so, without dispute, in these days of the Gospel. To affirm this covenant is to profess the consent of our **hearts** to it, and that is the sum and substance of true piety. This is not merely professing the agreement of our understanding -- that we understand such a covenant exists, or that we understand we are obligated to comply with it. Rather, it is professing the consent of our wills. It is declaring **that we do comply with it**. There is a mutual profession in this matter -- a profession on Christ's part and a profession on our part, just as there is in **marriage**. And it is the same kind of profession on both sides, in this respect: each professes a consent of **heart**. Christ in His Word declares a complete consent of heart regarding what He offers. The visible Christian, in the response he makes through his Christian profession, declares a consent and compliance of heart to Christ's proposal. **Affirming the covenant** is professing to make the transaction of that **covenant our own**. The transaction of that covenant is one of betrothal to Christ. On our part, it is giving our souls to Christ as His bride. There is nothing in Scripture to which the covenant of grace is more often compared than the marriage covenant. And the visible transaction, or mutual profession, between Christ and the visible church is abundantly compared to the mutual profession in marriage. In marriage, the bride professes to accept the bridegroom's proposal and take him as her husband, renouncing all others, and to give herself to him to be entirely and forever his wife. But anyone who professes this toward Christ professes saving faith. Those who openly covenanted with God according to the terms of the institution in Deuteronomy 10:20 visibly united themselves to God in the union of that

covenant. They professed on their part the union of the covenant of God, which was the covenant of grace. It is said in the institution, "**You shall cling to the Lord and swear by His name,**" or more literally, "**You shall unite into the Lord and swear into His name.**" So in Isaiah 56 it is called a **joining themselves to the Lord**. But the union, clinging, or joining of that covenant is saving faith -- the great condition of the covenant of Christ, by which we are in Christ. This is what brings us **into the Lord**. For a person explicitly or by profession to enter into the union or relationship of the covenant of grace with Christ is the same as professedly performing the act that on our part is the uniting act, which is the act of faith. To profess the covenant of grace is to profess the covenant not as an observer, but as one directly involved in the matter -- as a party in the covenant professed. This is to profess **what** in the covenant belongs to us **as a party**, or to profess **our part** in the covenant. And that is the soul's believing acceptance of the Savior. Christ's part is salvation; our part is saving faith in Him -- not a pretended but a genuine faith, not a common but a special and saving faith. No other faith than this is the condition of the covenant of grace.

I am aware of the distinction that some make between the **internal** and **external** covenant. But I hope the theologians who make this distinction would not be understood as saying there are really and properly **two** covenants of grace. They mean only that those who profess the one covenant of grace are of two kinds: those who comply with it **internally** and truly, and others who do so only **externally** -- that is, in profession and visibility. But anyone who externally and visibly complies with the covenant of grace appears and professes to do so truly. There is also this distinction

regarding the covenant of grace: the one covenant of grace is presented in two ways -- one **externally** through the preaching of the Word, the other **internally** and spiritually through enlightening the mind to rightly understand the Word. But it is with the **covenant** as it is with the **call** of the Gospel. The person who truly complies with the **external** call has the **internal** call. So the person who truly complies with the **external** proposal of God's covenant, as visible Christians profess to do, does indeed fulfill the **inward** condition of it. But the New Testament gives no more basis for supposing two real and properly distinct covenants of grace than it does for supposing two kinds of real Christians -- the unscripturalness of which latter theory I pointed out earlier.

When persons who were baptized in infancy properly **affirm** their baptismal covenant, they mean that, now being capable of acting for themselves, they explicitly and professionally make their parents' act of giving them up to God their own, by expressly giving themselves up to God. But no person can do this without either being deceived or lying and professing what he himself considers to be false, unless he believes that in his **heart** he consents to be God's. A child of Christian parents never does for himself what his parents did for him in infancy until he gives himself wholly to God. But surely he does not do this if he not only holds back a part, but the chief part: his heart and soul. Anyone who holds back his heart effectively holds back everything. Therefore, if he is aware of it, he is guilty of solemn, deliberate mockery if he at the same time solemnly and publicly professes that he gives himself up to God. If there are any words used by such people that by their proper meaning imply that they give themselves up to God, and if these words -- as they intend them to be understood and as they are un-

derstood by those who hear them, according to their established use and custom among that people -- do not imply that they do it truly but actually involve reserving or holding back the chief part, then it ceases to be a profession of giving themselves up to God. It therefore ceases to be a professed covenanting with God or affirming God's covenant. For what they profess belongs to no covenant of God in existence. God has revealed no such covenant, and no such covenant of God exists, in which our part of the covenant transaction is giving ourselves up to Him with reservations -- holding back a part, especially holding back our souls, our chief part, and in effect our all. There is no covenant of God at all that has these for its terms. This is certainly not the covenant of grace. Therefore, although such public and solemn professing may be a very unjustifiable and serious misuse of words and taking God's name in vain, it is not a professed covenanting with God.

One thing, as I have already noted, that belonged to **Israel's swearing into the name of the Lord** was **saying, "The Lord lives,"** by which they professed their faith in God's all-sufficiency, unchangeableness, and faithfulness. But if they truly had such a faith, it was a saving grace. Those who genuinely trust in the all-sufficiency of God will surely find Him to be their all-sufficient portion. Those who trust in God's unchangeableness and faithfulness will surely never be left or forsaken by Him. There were two ways of swearing "Jehovah lives" that we read about in Scripture. One we read of in Jeremiah 4:2: **"You will swear, 'As the Lord lives,' in truth, in justice, and in righteousness."** And the other way is **swearing falsely**, which we read of in the next chapter, Jeremiah 5:2-3: **"And though they say, 'As the Lord lives,' surely they swear falsely."** (And certainly no one ought

to do this.) It follows: **"O Lord, do not Your eyes look for truth?"** That is, God desires sincerity of heart in those who profess religion. Here gracious sincerity is contrasted with a false profession. For when it says, **"O Lord, do not Your eyes look for truth?"** the expression parallels these passages -- Psalm 51:6: **"Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being."** 1 Samuel 16:7: **"Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."** Psalm 11:7: **"His eyes behold the upright."** But these texts speak of gracious sincerity. Those spoken of in Jeremiah 4:2, who swore, **"As the Lord lives," in truth, in justice, and in righteousness,** were gracious persons who had undergone a thorough conversion to God, as the preceding verse shows: **"If you will return, O Israel," declares the Lord, "return to Me."** That is, do not do as you or Judah was charged with doing in the preceding chapter, verse 10: **Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but in pretense.** Do not do this, but **"if you will return, return to Me."** And then in the second verse it is added: **"And you will swear, 'As the Lord lives,' in truth,"** etc. That is, then your profession of religion will be worth regarding. You will truly be what you claim to be -- **Israelites** indeed, in whose profession there is no deception. Those who said, **"The Lord lives," in truth, in justice, and in righteousness** -- they said, "The Lord lives" as David did in Psalm 18:46: **"The Lord lives, and blessed be my Rock."** And they did as the apostle says he did in 1 Timothy 4:10: **"We have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers."** And as he would have Timothy urge rich men to do, in 1 Timothy 6:17: **"Instruct them not to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God,**

who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy." When the apostle speaks of a profession of our faith in Christ as one duty that all Christians ought to perform as they seek salvation, it is the profession of a **saving faith** that he speaks of. His words plainly imply this: "**If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**" The faith to be **professed with the mouth** was the same as what the apostle describes **as in the heart**, and that is saving faith. This is even plainer in the following words: "**For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.**" Believing resulting in righteousness is saving faith. But it is clearly the same faith spoken of as **professed with the mouth** in the next words of the same sentence. And that the **Gentiles**, in professing the Christian religion or swearing allegiance to Christ, should profess saving faith is implied in Isaiah 45:23-24: "**Every tongue will swear allegiance. They will say of Me, 'Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength.'**" That is, they should profess their entire dependence on Christ's righteousness and strength.

For persons merely to promise that they **will** believe in Christ, or that they **will at some future time** comply with the conditions and duties of the covenant of grace, is not to affirm that covenant. Such persons do not profess to **presently** enter into the covenant of grace with Christ, or into the relationship of that covenant with Christ. All they do **at present** is merely speak fair words. They say they will do it **later**. They profess that they will at some point in the future obey God's command to **believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ**. But what good is such a profes-

sion, and what credit should be given to such promises of **future obedience**, when at the same time they claim nothing more at present than to live and continue in rebellion against those great commands -- commands that give no permission or allowance for delay? Those who do this, instead of properly affirming the covenant, are actually visibly rejecting it for the present. It is not unusual in some churches where the doctrine I oppose has been established, for persons at the very time they join the church and claim to affirm the covenant to freely tell their neighbors that they have no thought of having any true faith in Christ or love for Him. Such persons, instead of being professedly united to Christ in the union of the covenant of grace, are rather visibly lacking in love for Christ. So instead of being qualified for admission to the Lord's Supper, they are rather exposed to the apostle's declaration in 1 Corinthians 16:22: **If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. Maranatha.**

The outward covenanting that agrees with the institution of Scripture is not only a promise of something future (though that is not excluded) but a profession of something **present**, just as it is in the marriage covenant. (Though it is true that it was chiefly on account of the promise or vow contained in the covenant that it is called **swearing**.) For a woman to promise that she will at some future time renounce all other men for the sake of the one who proposes to her, and that she will someday accept him as her husband, is not for her to enter into the marriage covenant with him now. The woman who does enter into marriage with a man professes to accept him now, renouncing all others -- though promises of future behavior toward him as a wife are also included in the transaction. It seems as though the early converts to Christianity,

in the profession they made of religion in order to be admitted to the Christian church, and in their visibly entering into covenant in order to receive the initiating seal of the covenant in baptism, did not **explicitly** make any promises about the future. They only professed the present convictions and disposition of their minds. They professed that they **believed in Christ** and were thus admitted into the church by baptism. And yet undoubtedly they were, according to the prophecies I mentioned, admitted by way of public covenanting. As the covenant people of God, they affirmed the covenant before the seal of the covenant was applied. Their profession of faith in Christ was a visible affirmation of the covenant of grace, because faith in Christ was the great condition of that covenant. Indeed, if the faith they professed in order to receive baptism was only a 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 matter. 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 further respect: it implied a commitment to future obedience. For true faith in Christ includes in its nature an acceptance of Him as our Lord and King and a devotion of ourselves to His service. But a profession of merely historical faith implies no profession of accepting Christ as our King and no commitment 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 **declared Jehovah to be their God** and also promised to keep His

commands. This was the pattern in that solemn covenant transaction between God and the people on the plains of **Moab**, which is summarized in Deuteronomy 26:17-18: "**You have today declared the Lord to be your God, and that you would walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His ordinances, and listen to His voice. The Lord has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments.**" The people, in declaring God to be their God, professed their compliance with the terms of the covenant of grace -- as the covenant of grace is summarized in these words: "**I will be your God, and you shall be My people.**" Those who declare the Lord to be their God profess to accept Jehovah as their God, which is to accept Him as the object of their highest regard and trust. For whatever we choose as the object of our highest regard -- that alone do we take **as our God**. Therefore no one who values and loves the world more than Jehovah can, without lying or being deceived, declare Jehovah to be their God. And no one who does not trust in Christ but trusts more in their own strength or righteousness can declare Christ to be their Savior. To declare God to be our God is to profess that He is our God **by our own act** -- that is, that we choose Him as our chief good and ultimate purpose, the supreme object of our esteem and regard, the one we devote ourselves to and depend upon. And if we are aware that we do not do this **sincerely**, we cannot profess that we actually do it. For the person who does not do it sincerely does not do it at all. There is no room for a distinction between **moral** sincerity and **gracious** sincerity in this case. A **supreme** regard of the heart for God, or a **supreme** love for Him that is real, is of only **one** kind.

It would be absurd to speak of a morally sincere supreme love for God in those who actually love worthless things more than Him. 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 regard with a **gracious** sincerity certainly does not do it with **any** sincerity. I fear that by leading people in many of our congregations -- people who have no thought of having the least spark of true love for God in their hearts -- to publicly and solemnly say that **they declare God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to be their God** and that **they give themselves up to Him**, we have led them to say things they do not understand. These are certainly very unclear expressions if they mean anything that an unregenerate person does while under the ruling power of sin and hostility toward God.

Here it may be objected that it is unreasonable to suppose any such thing was intended in the profession of the congregation in the wilderness as a **gracious respect** for God -- which is the condition of God's covenant -- when we have reason to think so few of them were truly gracious. But I believe, upon careful consideration, this will not appear unreasonable at all. It is no more unreasonable to suppose this people made a profession of respect for God that they did not have in their hearts than it is at other times when we are told they did the same thing, as in Ezekiel 33:31: **"They come to you as the people come, and they sit before you as My people** (that is, as though they were My saints, as they profess to be), **for they hear your words, but they do not do them; with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goes after their greed."** So in the apostles' time, that people professed that their hearts held something toward God

that was not actually there. The apostle is speaking of them when he says in Titus 1:16: **"They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him."** This was common among that people. God declares them to be a **hypocritical nation** in Isaiah 10:6. And it is certain this was the case with them in the wilderness. They professed a respect for God that they did not have, as is evident from Psalm 78:36-37: **"They deceived Him with their mouth, and lied to Him with their tongue; for their heart was not steadfast toward Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant."** In affirming the covenant with God, they professed that **their heart was right with Him**. This is clear because the evidence offered of their having **lied** or dealt falsely in their profession was that **their heart was not right with Him**, and so they proved unfaithful to God's covenant, which they had affirmed. If their **heart** had been **right with God**, they would have been truly devout persons -- which demonstrates that what they professed was true piety. It also appears that if they had possessed the kind of **heart** they claimed to have, they would have been truly devout persons. This is clear from Deuteronomy 5, where we have an account of their covenanting at Mount **Sinai**. Concerning this, verses 28-29 say: **"The Lord heard the words which you spoke to me, and the Lord said to me, 'They have done well in all that they have spoken.'" "Oh, that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!"** The people were mistaken about the disposition and readiness of their hearts to carry through the work of God's service, like the man in the parable who undertook to build a tower without counting the cost.

Nor should it seem incredible that the generation who covenanted at Mount **Sinai** should, for the most part, be deceived into thinking their **hearts** were thoroughly disposed to give themselves forever to God, if we consider how many things strongly stirred their **emotions**. There were the wonders performed in **Egypt** and at the Red Sea, where they were led through on dry ground and the **Egyptians** were so miraculously destroyed. These events greatly stirred their emotions, and they **sang God's praises**. And there was especially what they now witnessed at Mount **Sinai** -- the astonishing displays of God's majesty. Probably the majority of the sinners among them were deceived by false emotions. And if there were others who were less affected and who were not deceived, it is not incredible that they, in those circumstances, would deliberately lie in their profession and so in a more blatant way **deceive God with their lips and lie to Him with their tongues**. These things are all the more believable about that generation, since it was a generation especially given over to hardness and blindness of mind in divine matters and especially noted in the book of **Psalms** for hypocrisy. As for the generation of their children who affirmed the covenant on the plains of **Moab**, they similarly had much to stir their emotions: the terrible judgments of God they had seen on their fathers, God having brought them through the wilderness and having defeated **Sihon** king of the **Amorites** and **Og** the king of **Bashan** before them, and **Moses'** moving rehearsal of the whole series of God's wonderful dealings with them along with his most passionate appeals. But it was also a time of great revival of religion and powerful influence of the Spirit of God. That generation was probably the most excellent generation that ever existed in **Israel**. There is certainly more good and

less bad spoken of them than of any other generation we have any account of in Scripture. A very large part of them **swore in truth, in justice, and in righteousness**. And it is no wonder that others at such a time went along with it, either **deceiving or being deceived** by common emotions -- 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 mere formality and ceremony -- just as subscribing to religious articles seems to have done in the Church of **England**, and as, I fear, affirming the covenant (as it is called) has too much become in **New England**. It is clearly a prevailing custom for people to neglect this until they are about to get married and then to do it for the sake of their reputation and so that their children may be baptized. And I suppose there was commonly a great laxness in **Israel** among the priests who oversaw this matter. There were many things in the nature of that comparatively worldly dispensation that indirectly allowed for such things -- meaning that it was by no means as effective at preventing such irregularities (though they were very wrong in themselves) as the more excellent dispensation introduced by Christ and His apostles. And though these things were spoken against by the prophets before the **Babylonian** captivity, God, who alone is wise, deliberately overlooked these and many other great irregularities in the church to a large degree, until **the time of reformation** should come, which the **Messiah** was to have the honor of introducing. But I may perhaps have occasion to say more about these things when I come to answer the objection concerning the Passover.

Now to return to the argument from the nature of covenanting with God, or affirming God's covenant: as to the **promises** that are either explicitly or implicitly made in this act, making these promises implies a profession of true piety. For in the covenant of grace, universal obedience is pledged -- obedience to all the commands of God. The performance of inward spiritual duties is engaged in the covenant of grace just as much as external duties, and in some respects much more. Therefore the person who visibly makes the covenant of grace his own promises to perform those internal duties and to perform all 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 we have no warrant 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 neighbor as ourselves**. Anyone who leaves these out effectively leaves out all, for these are the summary of our whole duty and of all God's commands. If we leave these out of our profession, what we profess is surely not the covenant of grace. The **Israelites**, when they covenanted with God at Mount **Sinai** and said after God declared the Ten Commandments to them, "**All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient**" -- their promise implied that, as they **professed to know God**, they would **in their actions** not **deny** but acknowledge and honor Him and would be careful to keep those **two great commandments** that summarize all ten, the commandments concerning which God said, "**These words which I am commanding you today shall be on your heart.**" Deuteronomy 6:7. Likewise, when they covenanted on the plains of **Moab**, they promised to keep and

obey God's commands **with all their heart and with all their soul**, as is very clear from Deuteronomy 26:16-17. The same was true when the people affirmed their covenant in **Asa's** time, in 2 Chronicles 15:12: "**And they entered into the covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul.**" We have another remarkable example in 2 Kings 23:3 and 2 Chronicles 34:31.

Now a person who is entirely under the power of a **carnal mind**, which is **not subject to the law of God, and indeed cannot be**, cannot promise these things without either great deception or the most obvious and blatant absurdity. Promising assumes that the person is aware of or persuaded about himself that he has **such a heart in him**, for his lips claim to declare his heart. The nature of a promise implies intention or purpose. And proper, real intention implies will, disposition, and compliance of heart. But no unregenerate person is properly willing to perform these duties, nor does his heart comply with them. Leading unregenerate people to believe otherwise tends greatly to their harm. An unregenerate person may be willing, out of self-interest and self-serving motives, to use means and take pains so that he might gain a willingness or disposition toward these duties. But that is a very different thing from actually being willing or truly having a disposition toward them. So he may promise that he will, for one reason or another, take great pains to obtain such a heart. But if he does so, this is not the promise of the covenant of grace. People may make many religious promises to God and many promises that in some way relate to the covenant of grace, yet these are not the promises **of** that covenant. There is nothing of the nature of covenanting in such cases, because even if they actually fulfilled

their promises, God is not obligated by any promise to them. If an unregenerate person promises to do everything it is possible for an unregenerate person to do in religion, and he fulfills his promises, God is not obligated by any covenant He has made with man to do anything at all for him regarding His saving benefits. Therefore anyone who promises only these things enters into no covenant with God. For the very idea of entering into a covenant with any being is entering into a mutual agreement -- doing or pledging something that, if done, obliges the other party on his part. The New Testament tells us of only **one** covenant God enters into with mankind through Christ, and that is the covenant of grace. In that covenant, God obligates Himself to nothing apart from **genuine faith** and the spiritual duties that accompany it. Therefore, if an unregenerate person makes ever so many vows that he will perform all external duties, will pray for help to do spiritual duties, and will strive to comply with the covenant of grace from whatever resources he has -- he does not **lay hold of God's covenant** or properly enter into any covenant with God. For we have no opportunity to covenant with God in any covenant other than the one He has revealed; He becomes a covenant party in no other covenant. It is true that every unregenerate person living under the Gospel is obligated to comply with the terms of the covenant of grace. And if he promises to do so, his promise may increase his obligation, even though he **deceived God with his mouth and lied to Him with his tongue**, as the children of **Israel** did in their promising. But it does not follow that they should knowingly make a lying promise, or that ministers and churches should encourage them in doing so.

Indeed, there is no unregenerate person who is not deceiving himself if he thinks he is truly willing to practice external obedience to God universally and persistently through the various trials of life that he can expect. Therefore in promising it, he is either very deceptive or is like the foolish, deceived man who undertook to **build** when he did not have the resources to **finish**. And if the church knows -- before whom he promises to **build** and **finish** -- that at the same time he does not even claim to have the **heart** to finish, his promise is worthy of no credit or regard from them and can make nothing **visible** to them except his presumption.

A strong confirmation of what I have said about covenanting is Psalm 50:16: "**But to the wicked God says, 'What right have you to declare My statutes, or to take My covenant in your mouth?'**" The term **the wicked**, in its more general use in Scripture, is applied broadly enough to include all ungodly or graceless persons -- all who are under the ruling power of sin and are objects of God's anger, or exposed to His eternal judgment. This could easily be shown by listing texts throughout the entire Bible. All such people are called in Scripture **workers of iniquity** and **the children of the wicked one**. Matthew 13:38. All such are said to be **of the devil** in 1 John 3:8. And to be **children of the devil** in 1 John 3:10. **The righteous** and **the wicked** are contrasted in a great many places in Scripture. They are clearly set in opposition to one another and distinguished from each other as **saints** and **sinners**, **holy** and **unholy**, those who **fear God** and those who **do not fear Him**, those who **love Him** and those who **hate Him**. All of humanity is divided in Scripture by these distinctions, and the Bible recognizes no **neutrals** or third category. Indeed, those who are **truly wicked** may be **visibly righteous** --

righteous in profession and outward appearance. But a category of people who have no **saving grace** yet are not truly **wicked** is a human invention that Scripture knows nothing about. It is reasonable to suppose that **wicked men** in Psalm 50 means all who **hate instruction** and **reject God's Word** (verse 17), not merely those guilty of the particular crimes mentioned in verses 17-20: stealing, adultery, fraud, and slander. Although only some particular forms of wickedness are mentioned, we should not understand this to mean all others are excluded. Indeed, the words at the conclusion of the passage are expressly applied to all who **forget God** in such a way as to expose themselves to being **torn in pieces** by God's wrath in hell, verse 22: "**Now consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you in pieces, and there will be none to deliver.**" We can no more justly argue that because some gross sins are specified here, no sinners are meant except those who practice those or other gross sins, than we can argue from Revelation 22:14-15 that no one will be shut out of heaven except those who have lived in the gross sins mentioned there: "**Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.**" Nothing is more common in Scripture than for its descriptions of both the godly and the ungodly to include, alongside their general character, some particular excellent practices of the one that grace leads to, and some specific gross sins of the other for which there is a basis in the ruling corruption of their hearts. So **lying** is mentioned as part of the character of all unregenerate

people in Psalm 58:3-4 (who are there called **wicked men**, as in Psalm 50): **"The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies; their venom is like the venom of a serpent,"** etc. So it is said of the wicked in Psalm 10:2-4, 7: **"His mouth is full of curses and deceit and oppression."** The apostle in Romans 3 cites this as a description of all unregenerate people. So it is said of the wicked in Psalm 140:3: **"They sharpen their tongues as a serpent; poison of a viper is under their lips."** The same apostle in the same place also cites this as what is said of all unregenerate people. The very same gross sins mentioned here in Psalm 50 are repeatedly included in **Solomon's** descriptions of the **wicked man** as opposed to the **righteous** in the book of Proverbs -- particularly the sins mentioned in verse 19 of that Psalm, **"You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit."** These are mentioned as belonging to the character of the **wicked** man in Proverbs 12: **"The thoughts of the righteous are just, but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful." "The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the mouth of the upright delivers them."** Nevertheless it is clear that the wise man in this book, in his distinction between the **righteous** and the **wicked**, means the same as **godly** and **ungodly**. Simply reading the two preceding chapters will be enough to satisfy anyone of this. See Proverbs 10:3, 7, 16, 20, 21, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32. Proverbs 11:3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 30, 31. Besides countless other similar texts throughout the book. In Proverbs 1:16 it is said of sinners: **"Their feet run to evil and they hasten to shed blood."** The apostle in Romans 3:15 cites this as part of the description of all unregenerate people. So in the description of the **wicked** in

Proverbs 4:14-19, it is said that **"they cannot sleep unless they do evil,"** that **"they drink the wine of violence,"** etc. Yet by **the wicked** there is meant the same as the graceless person, as is clear from the **contrast** made there between him and **the just or righteous, whose path is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day.**

As further evidence that **the wicked** in Psalm 50:16 means the same as the ungodly or graceless, observe that there is a fairly clear **contrast** or opposition here between **the wicked** and the **saints** who will be gathered to Christ at the Day of Judgment, spoken of in verse 5. There, God speaking of His coming to judgment says: **"Gather My saints together, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."** Then, after showing the insufficiency of animal sacrifices -- implying that the greater sacrifice by which these **saints** make a covenant with Him is something else -- it is added: **"But to the wicked (who are not among My saints), God says, 'What right have you to take My covenant into your mouth?'"** He approves of the **covenanting** of the former but disapproves of the **covenanting** of the latter. As for the **gathering of God's saints** spoken of there, if we consider the preceding and following verses, it is clearly the same as the **gathering of His elect** when Christ comes in the clouds of heaven, spoken of in Matthew 24:30-31. And the same as the **gathering of the righteous, as His wheat into His barn,** at the Day of Judgment, spoken of in Matthew 13. Therefore there is as much reason to suppose that **the wicked** who are contrasted with them refers to all **graceless** persons as there is to understand the **evildoers** spoken of in Matthew 13, who are contrasted with the **righteous** who will then **shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their**

Father (verse 43), in the same way. There is one more thing that further confirms my interpretation of Psalm 50:16. It is this: the plain reason given here against **wicked** people taking God's covenant into their mouths holds true for all **graceless** people -- namely, that they do not comply with but reject the very covenant that they profess with their mouths to affirm and consent to. Verse 17: "**For you hate discipline, and you cast My words behind you.**" This is as much as to say: you reject and have a ruling hostility against My statutes, which you declare and profess to comply with. 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 entirely inconsistent with the covenant of grace. For the sum and substance of the condition and obligation of that covenant is what every unregenerate person is under the ruling power of hostility against and lives in contradiction to. Therefore, I believe it follows that those who know this is their condition **have nothing to do with taking God's covenant into their mouths** -- or in other words, have no warrant to do this until their condition changes.

3. The **nature of things** seems to provide no strong reason why the people of Christ should not openly **profess** a proper respect for Him in their **hearts** as well as a correct understanding of Him in their **minds**, or a right opinion of Him in their **judgment**.

I can think of nothing that could reasonably be considered the purpose or goal of a public profession of religion that does not equally require a profession of honor, esteem, and friendship of **heart** toward Christ, as much as an orthodox opinion about Him. I cannot see why the former should not be expected and required for admission into the company of His friends and followers just as

much as the latter. It cannot be because the former is not in itself as important or as much to be considered as the latter, since the very essence of religion itself consists in the former. Without it, the latter is entirely useless and makes us no better -- neither happier in ourselves nor more acceptable to God. One purpose of a public profession of religion is giving public honor to God. But surely professing inward esteem and a supreme respect of **heart** toward God is as fitting for this purpose and more directly tends toward it than declaring correct theoretical views about Him. We consider it especially and directly honoring when our friends, on appropriate occasions, stand ready not only to acknowledge the truth of certain facts about us but also to testify to their high esteem and whole-hearted and complete regard for us. When people merely display their doctrinal knowledge of religious matters and express the agreement of their minds, but at the same time make no claim to anything other than being entirely lacking in all true love for God and being under the dominion of hostility toward Him, their profession is in some ways very greatly to God's dishonor. For they leave the public with strong reason to suspect that they **hold the truth in unrighteousness** and that they are some of those who **have both seen and hated both Christ and His Father** (John 15:24), who of all people have the greatest sin and bring the most dishonor to God.

I am at a loss to see how the **visibility** of **sainthood** that the honored author of **the Appeal to the Learned** considers sufficient for admission to the Lord's Supper can bring much honor to God -- namely, a visibility that leaves reason to believe the **majority** of those who have it are enemies of God in their hearts and inwardly servants of sin. Such a visibility of religion seems more

likely to increase the visibility of wickedness in the world, and thus of God's dishonor, than anything else. That is, it makes more wickedness visible to the eye of human judgment and gives people reason to think there is more wickedness in the world than would otherwise be apparent to them. This is because we have reason to think that those who live in rejection of Christ under the light of the Gospel and with knowledge and common belief of its doctrine have vastly greater sin and guilt than other people. And that respected theologian himself taught this very thing at length.

Christ came into the world to wage a war against God's enemies, **sin** and **Satan**. A great war rages between them, and this war concerns us -- the contest is over who will have possession of our hearts. Now it is reasonable, under these circumstances, that we should declare whose side we are on -- whether we are on Christ's side or on the side of His enemies. If we want to 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 (which the contest is about) to Him, not to His rivals. And this seems clearly to be the purpose and nature of a public profession of Christ. If **this** profession is not made, no profession is made that is worth regarding or worth making in a case like this, and certainly not for such a purpose as being admitted among His visible friends. There is no other way of being on Christ's side in this case than being so with an **undivided heart** -- preferring Him above all His rivals and renouncing them all for His sake. The situation allows for no neutrality, no lukewarmness, and no middle category of persons with merely a **moral sincerity** or a common faith that is compatible with loving sin and the world more than Christ. **"He who is not with Me"** (says Christ) **"is against**

Me." Therefore no one professes to be on Christ's side except those who profess to renounce His rivals. For those who would be called **Christians** to profess no higher regard for **Christ** than what allows for a greater regard for the **world** is more absurd than if a woman pretending to marry a man and take him as her husband should profess to take him in some sense, but not claim to take him in a way that is incompatible with 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 essential here than a similar profession in any other case. The profession of some in-between state of mind is very inconsistent with the nature of Christ's mission, work, and kingdom in the world and everything that belongs to the purposes and goals of His administration. For ministers and churches to openly establish such a kind of profession of Christ as part of His public service -- one that does not even claim anything more than lukewarmness -- is, I fear, to make a mockery of a solemn public profession of Christianity. It seems to be entirely without warrant from the Word of God and greatly to God's dishonor.

It cannot fairly be argued here, as a reason why **doctrinal opinion** should be professed but not **friendship** or **respect of heart**, that the former is more **easily recognized** and known by us than the latter. For though it is true that people may be uncertain about the latter, it is equally true that they may be uncertain about the former. They may be uncertain in many cases about the full extent of their inclination and choice, and they may equally be uncertain about the full extent of their judgment. I know of noth-

ing in human nature that prevents the acts of people's wills from being properly subject to their own awareness any more than the acts of their judgment, nor any reason to suppose that people cannot recognize their own **consent** as well as their **assent**. Scripture clearly assumes that gracious dispositions and acts are things properly under the eye of conscience. 2 Corinthians 13:5: **"Do you not recognize this about yourselves?"** John 21:15: **"Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?"** And many other passages. Nor is the nature of godliness less clearly revealed than the true doctrines of religion. Piety of heart, in its most essential elements, is as clearly revealed as the doctrines concerning the nature of God, the person of the **Messiah**, and the method of His redemption.

4. We find in Scripture that all of God's professing people or visible saints who are not **truly devout** are described as **counterfeits** -- as having **deceit, disguise, and a false appearance**, as making **false claims**, and as being **deceptive and hypocrites**. Thus Christ says of **Nathanael** in John 1:47: **"Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit."** That is, a truly gracious person. This implies that those of God's professing people who are not gracious are **deceitful** in their profession. So sinners in **Zion**, or in God's visible church, are called **hypocrites** in Isaiah 33:14: **"Sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling has seized the hypocrites."** Isaiah 9:17: **"For every one of them is a hypocrite and an evildoer."** So they are called **lying children** in Isaiah 30:9 and Isaiah 59:13, and are described as **lying** in claiming to belong to **the temple** or church of God. Jeremiah 7:2, 4: **"Hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who enter by these gates to worship the Lord -- Do**

not trust in deceptive words, saying, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.'" They are spoken of as falsely calling themselves part of the **holy city** in Isaiah 48:1-2. They are called **silver dross** and **rejected** or **worthless silver** (Ezekiel 22:18; Jeremiah 6:30), which glitters and looks like genuine silver but lacks its true value. So they are compared to **watered-down wine** in Isaiah 1:22, and to **trees** full of **leaves** that look promising for fruit in Matthew 21:19. **Clouds** that appear full of rain yet bring nothing but **wind** in Jude 12. **Wells without water** that disappoint the thirsty traveler in 2 Peter 2:13. **A treacherous bow** that looks good but fails the archer in Psalm 78:57 and Hosea 7:16. Mr. **Stoddard**, in his **Appeal to the Learned**, repeatedly assumes that all **visible saints** who are not truly devout are **hypocrites**, as on pages 15, 17, and 18.

Now what basis or reason can there be for describing those who are not **truly devout** as **visible saints** or members of God's visible church, if their profession does not imply any claim to **true piety**? What if they never claimed anything more than **common grace** or **moral sincerity**, which many of them actually possess? In that case they are not at all **hypocritical** or deceptive in their claims, and they are just as **without guile** in what they profess as **Nathanael** was. The psalmist, speaking of sincere piety, calls it **the truth in the inward parts**. Psalm 51: "**Behold, You desire 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 theory I oppose, **common grace** is just as properly **the truth in the inward parts**, in this regard, as saving grace. God says concerning **Israel** in Deuteronomy 32:5:

"Their blemish is not the blemish of His children." God here speaks as though He were disappointed. The words refer to some **profession** they had made. For why would this observation be made in this way -- that **blemishes** appeared on them, telltale signs that they were not **His children** -- if they had never claimed to be His children and were never accepted under any such idea for any of the privileges of His people?

God is pleased to present Himself in His Word as though He **trusted** the profession of His visible people and was **disappointed** when they did not prove to be His faithful, steadfast, and thorough friends. Isaiah 63:8-10: **"For He said, 'Surely, they are My people, children who will not deal falsely.'" "So He became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted." "But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy."** The same is described in many other places. I suppose God speaks in this way because in His present outward dealings with His visible people, He does not act in the capacity of the searcher of hearts. Instead, He accommodates Himself to their nature and the present state and circumstances of His church. He speaks to them and treats them in a human way, dealing with them on their own terms. But even supposing this to be the case, there would be no basis for such descriptions if there were no profession of true godliness. When God is described as trusting that people will be His faithful friends, we must understand that He trusts their claims. But how inappropriate would it be to portray the matter this way if there were no claims to trust, no claims of any real and thorough friendship? Even if there is a profession of some common affection that is morally sincere, there is still no claim of loving Him more

than -- indeed, not even as much as -- His enemies love Him. What reason is there to trust that they will be faithful to God as their Master, when the religion they profess amounts to nothing more than serving two masters? What reason is there to trust they will be stable in their ways, when they do not even claim to be single-hearted, and everyone knows that double-minded people are unstable in all their ways? Those who profess only **moral sincerity** or common grace do not claim to love God above the world. And such grace is the kind that both God and people know is likely to **pass away like the morning dew and the early cloud**. If what people profess amounts to nothing beyond **lukewarmness**, they cannot be expected to be **faithful unto death**. If they do not even claim to have any **oil** in their vessels, what reason is there to trust that their lamps will not **go out**? If they do not claim to have any **root** in them, what reason is there for any disappointment when they **wither away**?

When God in the passage from Isaiah 63 just mentioned represents Himself as trusting **Israel's** profession and saying, "**Surely they are My people, children who will not deal falsely**," it cannot be understood as though He trusted that they were **His people** in the same sense as the ten tribes were called **God's people** even after they had given themselves over to idolatry for two or three hundred years straight without once repenting. Rather, the meaning is: "**Surely they are My sincere saints and children**," as they profess to be -- **Israelites indeed, without guile**. For surely they would not do anything so wicked as to make a **lying profession**. This seems to be the plain meaning of the words. It therefore shows that the profession they made was of real, vital godliness.

5. The first eight verses of Isaiah chapter 56, I believe, provide good evidence that the **qualifications** I have insisted on are required for properly coming to the privileges of visible church membership. In the four preceding chapters we have a prophecy of Gospel times -- the blessed state of things that the **Messiah** would introduce. The prophecy of the same times continues in the first 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 groups of people out from the ordinances of the church or congregation of the Lord (for the words **congregation** and **church** are the same): namely, **eunuchs** and **Gentiles**. The place of their meeting was **in God's house, within God's walls** (verse 5) and **on God's holy mountain** (verse 7). The part of the ceremonial law that especially excluded the Gentiles was the law of circumcision. And the law that the eunuch shall not enter into the congregation or church of the Lord is found in Deuteronomy 23:1. Now here it is prophesied that in the days when **God's salvation shall come and His righteousness be revealed** through the coming of the **Messiah**, this **wall of separation** would be broken down and this ceremonial law removed (though carefully noting that **the law of the Sabbath** would continue, since it is not one of those ceremonial observances to be abolished). Then it declares what the great qualification would be in those blessed days when these external ceremonial requirements of circumcision and physical soundness would no longer be enforced -- namely, piety of heart and practice, joining themselves to the Lord, loving the name of the Lord, being His servants, choosing the things that please Him, and so on (verse 3 and following). "Let not the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, 'The Lord will surely sepa-

rate me from His people.' Nor let the eunuch say, 'Behold, I am a dry tree.' For thus says the Lord, 'To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths and choose what pleases Me and hold fast My covenant, to them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial and a name better than that of sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.'" "Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath and holds fast My covenant; even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples." "The Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of **Israel**, declares, 'Yet others I will gather to them, besides those already gathered.'"

6. The **descriptions** that Christ gives of His **visible church** from time to time in His **discourses** and **parables** make the point I have laid down very clear.

Consider particularly the description Christ gives at the end of Matthew 7 of the final outcome for the different kinds of members of His visible church: those who only say "**Lord, Lord**" and those who **do the will of His Father who is in heaven**; those who **build their house on a rock** and those who **build on the sand**. They are all (of both kinds) clearly people who have claimed a high honor and regard for Christ, have claimed an **interest in Him**, and have accordingly hoped to be finally acknowledged and received as some of His own. Those visible Christians who are not true Christians presently cry "**Lord, Lord**" -- that is, they are eager to profess respect and claim a relationship with Him, and will

be greatly disappointed in the future when He does not acknowledge them. They will then come and cry, "**Lord, Lord.**" This title **Lord** is commonly given to Jesus Christ in the New Testament to signify the special relationship Christ had to His **disciples**, rather than His universal dominion. They will then come and earnestly claim a relationship, just as **Israel** of old did in the day of their distress and God's terrible judgments on them. Hosea 8:2: **Israel** shall cry to Me, "**My God, we know You.**" **To know** here does not mean theoretical knowledge, but knowing in the way one **knows his own** -- having a special regard for, acknowledging, and having an interest in someone. These false disciples will not only claim an interest in Christ, but will plead and present arguments to support their claim: "**Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?**" This is clearly the language of those who are terribly disappointed. "**Then**" (says Christ) "**I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'**" As if to say: Though they profess a relationship with Me, I will profess none with them. Though they plead that they know Me and have an interest in Me, I will declare to them that I never acknowledged them as any of Mine and will tell them to depart from Me as those I will never own or have anything to do with in the relationship they claim. Thus all the hopes they had lived with of being received and owned by Christ as among His friends and favorites are shattered. 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 will stand in the day of

testing -- and **the foolish man who built his house on the sand** -- representing those professed disciples or hearers of His Word who build their belief and hope of an interest in Him on a false foundation, whose house in the great time of trial will suffer a terrible fall. Their empty hope will end in terrible disappointment and confusion.

On the whole, it is clear that all visible Christians or saints -- all Christ's professing disciples or hearers who profess Him to be **their Lord**, according to the scriptural understanding of professing Christ -- are those who profess a **saving interest in Him and relationship with Him, and live in the hope of being one day acknowledged as having such an interest and relationship**. By **those who hear Christ's sayings** in this passage, I do not mean merely listeners of the Word preached. For there are many such who make no claim to an interest in Christ and have no such hope or belief built on any foundation at all. Rather, I mean those who profess to listen to, believe, and submit to the Word of Christ. This is confirmed by the way the matter is expressed in Luke 6: "**Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like**" -- that is, whoever visibly comes to Me and is one of My professed disciples, and so on.

This is confirmed by the parallel description Christ gives in Luke 13:25-29 of His final disposal of the two different kinds of people who are **in the kingdom** or church of God -- those who will be allowed in His church or kingdom when it reaches its state of glory, and those who, though they have visibly been in it, will be **thrust out of it**. The latter are described as coming then to claim relationship and interest, crying, "**Lord, Lord, open up for**

us." Christ shall answer and say, "I do not know where you are from." As if to say: "Why do you claim a relationship and acquaintance with Me? You are strangers to Me; I do not acknowledge you." "Then" (it says) "they will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.'" As if to say: "This is a strange thing, that You do not acknowledge us! We are extremely surprised that You would consider us strangers who have no part in You, when we ate and drank in Your presence," and so on. And when He finally insists that He does not acknowledge them and will have nothing to do with them as His own, "then there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." They will be filled with terrible disappointment, confusion, and despair when they see **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God -- with whom they expected to dwell forever -- and they themselves **thrust out**. From this it is clear that the visible members of the kingdom of God who will one day be cast out are those who presently consider themselves **interested** in Christ and the eternal blessings of His kingdom and **make that profession**.**

The same is shown by the parable of the **ten virgins** in Matthew 25. In the first verse it says, "**The kingdom of heaven** (that is, the church of Christ) **will be comparable to ten virgins**." The two kinds of **virgins** clearly represent the two kinds of members of the visible church of Christ: the **wise**, who are true Christians, and the **foolish**, who are apparent but not true Christians. The **foolish** virgins were to all appearances the **guests of the bridegroom**. They appeared to have accepted the invitation to the wedding, which represents the invitations of the Gospel, in which the bridegroom and bride **say, "Come."** In this they had

shown the same respect to the bridegroom and bride as the wise had. The parable naturally leads us to suppose that they were in **appearance** part of the same company as the wise in every way, claimed to be the same kind of people, were similarly interested in the bridegroom, and were accepted by the wise under this understanding. They made a profession of the very same kind of honor and regard for the bridegroom by going out to meet him with their lamps, as his friends to show him respect, and they had the same hope of enjoying the privileges and celebrations of the wedding. There was a difference regarding **oil in their vessels**, but there was no difference regarding their lamps. One thing represented by their **lamps**, as I believe everyone agrees, is their **profession**. This profession is the same in both groups, and in both it is a profession of **grace**, just as a **lamp** (from its known purpose and use) is a display or show of **oil**. Another thing signified by the blaze of their lamps seems to be the light of **hope**. Their lamps represent in general the appearance of grace or godliness, including both the appearance of it to the view or judgment of others and also their own view and the judgment they form about themselves. Their lamps shone not only in the eyes of others but also in their own eyes. This is confirmed because when they hear the midnight cry, they find their **lamps have gone out**. This seems most naturally to represent that however hypocrites may maintain their hopes while they live and while their Judge is far away, when they come to be alarmed by the sound of the last trumpet, their **hopes** will immediately expire and vanish. Very often these hopes fail them when death visibly approaches. **"Where is the hope of the hypocrite when God takes away his soul?"** But until the midnight cry, the **foolish virgins** seem to hold the same hopes as

the wise. When they first went out with the wise virgins, their lamps shone in their own eyes and in the eyes of others in the same way as the lamps of the wise virgins. So this parable also shows that all visible members of the Christian church or kingdom of heaven are those who profess to be **gracious** persons -- viewing themselves as such, and appearing or at least claiming to be such.

And that true piety is what persons ought to look at in themselves as the qualification that provides a proper basis for them to proceed on in coming into the visible church of Christ and receiving the privileges of its members, I think, is also evident from the parable of the **wedding feast** that the king made for his son in Matthew 22. Particularly verses 11-12: "**But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes; and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?'**" "**And the man was speechless.**" Mr. **Stoddard** says (**Appeal**, pages 4-5): Here is a representation of the Day of **Judgment**, and any persons who come for salvation without a **wedding garment** will be rejected on that day. Since nothing is said about the **Lord's Supper**, all argument from this Scripture falls to the ground. To which I observe: that the **king's coming in to see the guests** represents Christ visiting His professing church at the Day of Judgment, I have no doubt. But I am not convinced that the **guests coming into the king's house** represents people coming for salvation at the Day of Judgment. If it can properly be said that any of the lost will come for salvation at the Day of Judgment, they will not do so **before** the King appears. Christ will appear **first**, and **then** they will come and cry to Him for salvation. But in this parable, the guests are described as gath-

ered together in the king's house **before** the king appears. The king comes in and finds them already there, having entered while the day of grace lasted, while the door was kept open and invitations were being given. They are not like those who come for salvation at the Day of Judgment in Luke 13:25, who come **after the door is shut and stand outside knocking**. I think it is beyond all contradiction that the guests coming into **the king's house** at the invitation of the servants represents Jews and Gentiles coming into the **Christian church** through the preaching of Christ's apostles and others, making a profession of godliness and expecting to share in the eternal marriage supper. I showed earlier that what is called the **house of God** in the New Testament is His **church**. In this parable, the king first sends out his servants to **call those who had been invited**, and they would not come. After they repeatedly rejected the invitation and mistreated the servants, the king sent out his armies and burned their city -- representing the **Jews** being first invited, rejecting the invitations of the Gospel, persecuting Christ's ministers, and so provoking God to give up **Jerusalem** and the nation to destruction. Then the king sends his servants out into the **highways** to call in all kinds of people, and many flocked into the **king's house**. This most clearly represents the preaching of the Gospel to the **Gentiles** and their flocking into the **Christian church**. This gathering of the **Gentiles** into the king's house takes place before the Day of Judgment, and **the man without the wedding garment** is among them. It fittingly represents the coming into the Christian church that would happen during the day of grace through all ages, but it by no means signifies people coming for salvation **after** the day of grace has ended, at Christ's appearing in the clouds of

heaven. Let this parable be compared with the parallel passage in Luke 14:16-24. The company gathered to the wedding in this parable clearly represents the same thing as the company of **virgins** gathered to the wedding in the other parable of Matthew 25 -- namely, the company of visible saints, or the company belonging to the visible **kingdom of heaven**. Therefore both parables are introduced alike with the words, "**The kingdom of heaven is like,**" etc. As for the man being **cast out** of the king's house when the **king comes in to see his guests**, this is consistent with other descriptions of false Christians being **thrust out of God's kingdom** at the Day of Judgment -- the **servant not remaining in the house forever, though the son remains forever; God taking away their share from the holy city and blotting their names out of the Book of Life**, etc.

Mr. **Stoddard** says: "This person who did not have a **wedding garment** was a **reprobate**. But not everyone who partakes of the **Lord's Supper** without grace is a reprobate." I answer: all who will be found in the king's house without grace **when the king comes in to see the guests** are undoubtedly reprobates.

If it is questioned whether the **wedding garment** represents true piety or whether it might mean **moral sincerity**, let Scripture interpret itself. It tells us plainly elsewhere what the wedding garment is at the marriage of the Son of God. Revelation 19:7-8: "**The marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.**" "**It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**" No one, I think, would say that this righteousness, which is so pure, is the common grace of lukewarm professors who try to serve both God and **mammon**.

The same wedding garment is described in Psalm 45:13-14: "**The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is interwoven with gold. She will be led to the King in embroidered work.**" But we need look no further than the parable itself, for it alone settles 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 intended wedding garment, the King would not only cast out those found **without** a wedding garment but also many **with** one. For all who are found then with no better garment than **moral sincerity** will be bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness. Such a wedding garment will not save them. So true piety, genuine faith, or the righteousness of Christ that is upon everyone who believes, is undoubtedly the wedding garment intended. But if a person has good and proper grounds to proceed in **coming into the king's house** while knowing he is **without** this wedding garment, why should the king rebuke him, saying, "**How did you get in here without wedding clothes?**" And why should he be **speechless** when asked such a question? Would he not have had a good answer to give? Namely: "You Yourself gave me permission to come in here **without a wedding garment.**" Or this: "Your own Word is my warrant, which invited those who had only common grace or **moral sincerity** to come in."

7. If we consider what actually took place in the manner and circumstances of **admitting** members into the **early** Christian church and the **profession** they made in order to be admitted, as recorded in the **Acts of the Apostles**, this will further confirm the point I have tried to prove.

We read account after account of people first being awakened by the preaching of the apostles and other ministers and earnestly asking **what they should do to be saved**. They were directed to **repent** and **believe on the Lord Jesus** as the way to have their sins blotted out and to be saved. Then, upon their **professing** that they did believe, they were baptized and admitted into the Christian church. Now can anyone reasonably imagine that these early converts, when they made their profession in order to be admitted, had in view any such **distinction** as some now make between **two kinds** of real Christianity, **two kinds** of sincere faith and repentance -- one with a **moral** and another with a **gracious** sincerity? Or that the apostles who taught and baptized them had instructed them in any such distinction? The historical record tells us of their teaching them only **one** faith and repentance: **believing in Christ so that they might be saved** and **repentance for the forgiveness of sins**. It would be unreasonable to suppose that any thought of a lower or different kind entered the minds of these converts when, immediately upon receiving such instruction, they professed **faith** and **repentance**. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that those who admitted them understood them as meaning any lower or different kind in what they professed.

Let us particularly consider what we are told about the large numbers whose admission is recorded in Acts. We are told about the **3,000** first converts: how they were greatly awakened by the preaching of the apostles, **pierced to the heart**, made aware of their guilt and misery, and **said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"** That is: what shall we do to be **saved** and that our **sins may be forgiven?** The

apostles then directed them what to do: **"Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."** They are directed here into the way of salvation -- namely, faith and repentance, with a proper profession of these. **Then**, we are told, **"those who had received his word were baptized"** -- that is, those who appeared to gladly receive the word, or who demonstrated and professed a heartfelt and joyful compliance with the calls of the Word and the directions the apostles had given them. This demonstration was undoubtedly through some profession, and the profession was of **that repentance for the forgiveness of sins** and **that faith in Christ** which the apostles had directed them to in answer to their question about **what they should do to be saved**. I can see no reason to suppose they had anything lower or different in mind. And it is evident from what follows that these people now considered that they had complied with these directions and were therefore at peace with God. Their daily activity is to rejoice and praise God. **"They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship -- day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God."** The description of them now is not of persons under conviction, weary and heavy-laden sinners conscious of guilt and wrath, **pierced in their hearts** as before, but of people whose sorrow had turned to joy, seeing themselves as now in a good state. And in the last verse it says, "The Lord was adding to the church daily **those who were being saved**." In the original Greek it says **the saved**, which was a common name given to Christians, or to all members

of the visible Christian church. It is the same as saying **the converted** or **the regenerated**. Being converted is called in Scripture being **saved** because it effectively is so. They had **passed out of death into life** (John 5:24). Titus 3:5: "**He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.**" 2 Timothy 1:9: "**Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling.**" Not that all who were added to the visible church were truly regenerated, but they were so in profession and reputation, and therefore were so in name. 1 Corinthians 1:18: "**For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us (that is, us Christians) who are being saved it is the power of God.**" So those who were added to the early church from time to time were all called **the saved**. Previously, while under conviction, they used to ask their teachers what they should do to be **saved**. The directions typically given were to **repent and believe in Christ**. Before they were admitted to the church, they professed that they did so. From then on, having visibly complied with the terms proposed, they were called the saved -- it being assumed that they had now obtained what they were asking about when they inquired what they should do to be **saved**. Accordingly we find that from that point on, Christ's ministers treated them no longer as miserable, perishing sinners. Instead of setting before them their sin and misery to awaken them and convince them of their need for a Savior, or urging them to flee from the wrath to come and seek conversion to God, they treated them as true converts. They urged them to **hold fast the profession of their faith, to continue in the grace of God**, and to persevere in ho-

liness, working by all means to **confirm and strengthen them** in grace. So when a great number believed and turned to the Lord at **Antioch**, **Barnabas** was sent to them. When he arrived and had seen the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with resolute hearts. Acts 11:23. See also Acts 13:43, 14:22, 15:32, 41, and 20:32. And when the apostles heard of the conversion of the Gentiles to the Christian faith -- visible through their profession when they joined the Christian church -- they charitably assumed and believed that God had given them saving repentance and a heart-purifying faith. Acts 11:18: **"When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, 'Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.'" Acts 15:9: "And He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith."**

If anyone objects that when such large numbers were converted from **Judaism** and **paganism** and received into the Christian church in so short a time, it was impossible for each person to say enough in a public profession to provide any credible display of true godliness to the church -- I answer: this objection will quickly vanish if we carefully consider the circumstances of those early converts and how their teachers dealt with them. It was apparently the practice of the first preachers of the Gospel, when their hearers were awakened and began earnestly asking what they should do to be saved, to then give them specific instruction in the way of salvation. They would explain what qualifications they needed to have, or what they must do in order to be saved, in keeping with Christ's direction. Mark 16:15-16. We find this was the method they used with the **3,000** in Acts chapter 2, verses 37-40.

And it seems they were thorough and detailed about it. They said much more to them than what is recorded. It says in verse 40: **"And with many other words Peter solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them."** We find this was also the approach **Paul** and **Silas** took with the **jailer** in chapter 16. They also gave more extensive and detailed instruction than what is recorded in the narrative. And when they had finished instructing them, they undoubtedly made sure, either personally or through assistants, that their instruction was **understood** before proceeding to baptize them. (For I assume no one I am dealing with in this controversy will argue, from the apostles' example, that we should not require a good degree of doctrinal knowledge about the way and terms of salvation as necessary for admitting members into the church.) And after they were satisfied that the converts thoroughly understood these things, it did not take much time to make a profession of them -- or to declare that they possessed or found in themselves those things they had been told were necessary for their salvation. Certainly, after they had been well informed about what saving faith and repentance were, it took no more time to profess **that** faith and repentance than any other kind. 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 included in their profession. For persons who are known to be of honest character and who clearly possess good doctrinal knowledge of the nature of true godliness in its more essential aspects, to solemnly profess that they have or practice those things -- this is as credible a profession of godliness as I am calling for. We may also reasonably suppose that more words were spoken by the professors, and with other circumstances that made them credible, than

are recorded in the very brief summary history of the early church in the **Acts of the Apostles**. And we may further suppose that in those extraordinary circumstances, as detailed a profession was not required for the church's satisfaction -- either of doctrines **agreed** to or of the **consent** and disposition of the heart -- as may be appropriate in more ordinary times. There are various reasons for this that I could give, but doing so would make this discourse too long.

One thing that makes it very clear that the inspired ministers of the early Christian church regarded **saving faith** as the proper substance of the **profession** required for admission into the church is the story of **Philip** and the **eunuch** in Acts 8. For when the **eunuch** asks to be baptized, **Philip** answers in verse 37: "**If you believe with all your heart, you may.**" These words certainly imply that **believing with all his heart** was required for coming to this ordinance properly and in a fitting manner. I cannot imagine what would have prompted **Philip** to say these words, or what he was aiming at in them, if he at the same time thought that the **eunuch** had no need whatsoever to look for any such qualification in himself, or to inquire at all whether he had such a faith, in order to determine whether he could present himself as a proper candidate for **baptism** -- if many without it were just as properly qualified for this as those who had it.

Some say that **Philip** intended nothing more by **believing with all his heart** than that he believed the doctrine that **Jesus Christ was the Son of God** with a **morally sincere** conviction. But here again I ask that Scripture be allowed to be its own interpreter. Scripture is filled with phrases like **with all the heart** or **with the whole heart** when speaking of religious matters. And

their clear intent is to signify a gracious **simplicity and godly sincerity**. For example, 1 Samuel 12:20: "Do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart." And verse 24: "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart." 1 Kings 8:23: "You who keep covenant and lovingkindness for Your servants who walk before You with all their heart." 1 Kings 14:8: "My servant **David**, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart." 2 Kings 10:31: "But **Jehu** was not careful to walk in the law of the Lord, the God of **Israel**, with all his heart." 2 Chronicles 22:9: **Jehoshaphat** sought the Lord with all his heart. 2 Chronicles 31:20-21: **Hezekiah** did what was good, right, and true before the Lord his God. In everything that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandments, seeking his God, he did it with all his heart. Psalm 9:1: "I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart." Psalm 86:12: "I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and will glorify Your name." Psalm 111:1: "I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright." Psalm 119:2: "How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart." Psalm 119:10: "With all my heart I have sought You." Psalm 119:34: "Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law and keep it with all my heart." Psalm 119:69: "The arrogant have forged a lie against me; with all my heart I will observe Your precepts." Jeremiah 24:7: "I will give them a heart to know Me -- for they will return to Me with their whole heart." Joel 2:12-13: "Return to Me with all your heart -- and rend your heart and not your garments." And we have similar phrases in countless other places. I believe not a single passage can be produced where there is the slightest evidence or appearance of these phrases being

used to signify anything other than a **gracious sincerity**. And indeed it must be a very improper use of language to speak of people as performing religious acts **with all their hearts** when Scripture abundantly describes their hearts as under the ruling power of sin and unbelief, as people who do not give God their hearts but give them to other things, as those who try to **serve two masters**, as those who indeed **draw near to God with their lips** but whose hearts are at the same time **far from Him** and running after other things, and who do not have a **single eye** or **single heart**. The word **believe** in the New Testament corresponds to the word **trust** in the Old. Therefore **Philip's** phrase, **believing with all the heart**, parallels the one in Proverbs 3: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart." And **believing with the heart** is a phrase used in the New Testament to signify **saving faith**. Romans 10:9-10: "If you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness." The same is signified by **obeying from the heart that form of teaching** in Romans 6:17-18: "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed; and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." Here it is clear that **saving faith** is what is meant by obeying the form of teaching **from the heart**. And it means the same as if it had said, **you have believed with the heart** the form of teaching. But **Philip** uses an even stronger expression. He does not merely say, **if you believe with the heart** or from the heart, but **with all your heart**. Furthermore, to suppose that the very same people whom Scripture describes in some places as under the power of an **evil heart of unbelief**, as

double-minded in their faith (James 1:6-8), and as those who though they **believe for a while** yet have hearts like a **rock** in which faith has **no root** (Luke 8) -- to suppose that these same people are described in other Scriptures as **believing with all their hearts** -- would make the voice of God's Word sound very discordant and inconsistent with itself. One more thing I would observe on this point. There is good reason to think that **Philip**, while riding in the chariot with the **eunuch** and (as we are told) **preaching Jesus to him**, had shown him the way of salvation and explained to him how to gain an interest in Christ or obtain salvation through Him -- namely, **believing in Him** -- in keeping with Christ's own direction in Mark 16:15-16. This also fits what we find to be the practice of the first preachers of the Gospel. Therefore when, after this conversation, Philip asks the **eunuch** whether he **believed with all his heart**, it is natural to suppose he was asking whether the eunuch found his **heart** accepting the Gospel way of salvation, or whether he sincerely exercised that **belief in Christ** which Philip had been teaching him. And it would be natural for the **eunuch** to understand him that way.

Here if it is objected that the eunuch's answer and his profession (in which he says nothing about his **heart** but merely says, "**I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God**") show that he understood the question as asking nothing more than whether he gave his **assent** to that **doctrine** -- I answer: we must take the **eunuch's** confession together with **Philip's** words, to which they were a reply, and interpret each in light of the other. And there is no reason not to understand it in the same sense as the words of similar confessions elsewhere in the New Testament and as such words of confession were customarily used in those days -- partic-

ularly the words of **Peter's** confession in Matthew 16:16: **Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."** This was a profession of saving faith, as is clear from what Christ says in response. And we read in 1 Corinthians 12:3: **"No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."** Not that a person could not say these words without the Holy Spirit, but he could not say them sincerely, or **with all his heart**. So 1 John 4:15: **"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."** That is, whoever makes this Christian confession (this profession that all Christians customarily made) sincerely, or **with his whole heart**, God dwells in him, and so on. But it was **in this way** that the **eunuch** was prompted to make this confession.

8. It is clear from the **epistles** of the apostles to the early **Christian churches** -- their **manner of addressing and treating** them throughout all those epistles, and what they say **to** them and **about** them -- that all those churches were **made up** of members **with such qualifications** as I have described, having the kind of **visibility of godliness** I have insisted on. Those who were considered to be **real saints** were received into the church under the understanding that they were truly devout persons. They made that **profession** and held this **hope** about themselves. No **unregenerate or graceless** persons were admitted deliberately, but only **unknowingly** and contrary to the aim of the early churches and ministers -- it happened **without their knowledge**. And those who remained in good standing, free from offensive behavior, continued to have the reputation and esteem of real saints, both with the apostles and with one another.

There were certainly numbers in these churches who, after their admission, fell into offensive behavior. The apostles speak doubtfully about some of them in their epistles. Others who had behaved very scandalously they speak of in language that seems to consider them wicked people. The apostle **Paul**, in his epistles to the **Corinthians**, repeatedly speaks of some among them who had embraced heretical opinions and had behaved in a very disorderly and divisive manner. He describes them as deserving of censure and threatens them with excommunication. And because so many offenses of this kind had appeared among those who had for a time been well thought of, he puts them all to the test of **examining** themselves about whether they were truly **in the faith** and whether **Christ** was truly **in them**, as they and others had assumed (2 Corinthians 13). The same apostle speaks of great numbers among the **Galatians** who had made a high profession and whom he had thought well of when they were first admitted into the church, but who had since given him reason to **doubt** their spiritual condition by following deceivers who denied the great Gospel doctrine of **justification by faith alone**. Yet the apostle speaks of them in language that shows surprise and disappointment, implying that he had regarded them as true Christians and hoped that his work among them had had a saving effect on them. Galatians 1:6: "**I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel.**" Galatians 4:11: "**I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.**" And verse 20: "**I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.**" As if to say: I have until now spoken to you with a voice of love and charity, as supposing you to be dear

children of God, but now I am beginning to think of speaking to you differently. In the same chapter, to show them how little reason he had had to expect this outcome, he reminds them of the **great profession** they had made and the extraordinary appearances of fervent piety that had formerly been in them. Galatians 4:15: "**Where then is that sense of blessing you had?**" "**For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.**" The apostle **James**, in his epistle, speaks of scandalous persons among the **twelve tribes scattered abroad** -- some with **unbridled tongues**, some who seem to have been a kind of **antinomians** in their beliefs and of a very bitter and violent spirit, who reproached, condemned, and **cursed** their brothers, raised **wars** and **conflicts** among professing Christians, and were also very immoral in their conduct -- **adulterers and adulteresses** (James 4:4). And in the fifth chapter of his epistle, he seems to address the unbelieving **Jews** who persecuted the Christians (verse 6). The apostles also often speak of some who had once been admitted into the church but **crept in unnoticed**, who had abandoned Christianity and ultimately proved to be notoriously wicked people. But otherwise, and regarding those members of the visible church who continued in the same good standing and visibility of Christianity in which they were admitted, it is clear from the apostles' epistles that they were all, in the eyes of Christian judgment, **truly devout or gracious** persons. And here I ask that the following things be carefully observed.

The apostles continually speak **to** and **about** the members of these churches as though they supposed and judged them to be gracious persons. For example, the apostle **Paul** in his epistle to

the church of the Romans, in Romans 1:7, speaks of the members of that church as **beloved of God**. In Romans 6:17-18 and following, he thanks God that they had obeyed from the heart that form of teaching to which they were committed, had been made free from sin, and had become servants of righteousness, etc. The apostle, in giving thanks to God for this, must have had more than a kind of **negative charity** toward them -- more than simply not knowing whether they were gracious persons and so **charitably hoping** (as we say) that it was so. He seems to have formed a **positive judgment** that they were such. His thanksgiving must at least have been founded on rational probability, since it would be mockery of God to give Him **thanks** for bestowing a mercy that he did not see reason to positively believe was bestowed. In Romans 7:4-6, the apostle speaks of them as those who once **were in the flesh** and **were under the law**, but are now **delivered from the law and dead to it**. In Romans 8:15 and the 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 children of God, heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Christ**. And everything he says through the end of the chapter implies that he considered them truly gracious persons. In Romans 9:23-24, he speaks of the **Christian Romans**, together with all other Christians, both **Jews** and **Gentiles**, as **vessels of mercy**. In Romans 14:6-8, speaking of the difference that existed among professing Christians regarding ceremonial institutions of the law, he speaks of both parties as acting from a gracious principle, as those who lived to the Lord and would die to the Lord. "He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord," etc. "For not one of us lives for himself, and not one (that is, not one of us) dies for

himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." In Romans 15:14, he says, "I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness." His being thus **convinced** implies a positive judgment of charity. And the same apostle directs his first epistle to the Corinthians to the church at **Corinth** that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ -- that is, to all visible Christians throughout the world, or all members of Christ's visible church everywhere. Continuing to speak of them in 1 Corinthians 1:8, he speaks of them as those whom God would confirm to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ -- plainly speaking of them all as persons who, in Christian esteem, were savingly converted. In the next verse, he speaks of the **faithfulness of God** as pledged to preserve them to salvation, **having called them into fellowship with His Son**. And in verse 30 he speaks of them as having a saving interest in Christ: "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." In 1 Corinthians 3:21-23, he says to the members of the church of **Corinth**: "All things belong to you, whether **Paul** or **Apollos** or **Cephas** or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ." In 1 Corinthians 4:15, he tells them **he had fathered them through the Gospel**. In 1 Corinthians 6:1-3, he speaks of them as those who will judge the world and will judge angels. And in verse 11, he says to them, "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." And in 1 Corinthians 15:49 to the end, he speaks of them as

sharing, with him and other Christians, in the happiness and glory of the **resurrection of the righteous**. And in his second epistle, 2 Corinthians 1:7, he says to them, "Our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort." This firm hope implies a positive judgment. We must understand the apostle here as speaking of those members of the church of **Corinth** who had not visibly backslidden, unlike those he elsewhere speaks doubtfully about. Again, in verses 14-15, he speaks of a **confidence** he had that they **would be his reason for boasting in the day of the Lord Jesus**. In all reason we must conclude that there was a visibility of grace, carrying with it an apparent probability in the apostle's eyes, which was the basis of this **confidence**. Both the apparent probability and his confidence based on it are expressed in 2 Corinthians 3:3-4: "**You are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence we have through Christ toward God.**" And in verse 18, the apostle speaks of them along with himself and other Christians as "**all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.**" And in his epistle to the churches of Galatia, Galatians 4:26, the apostle speaks of visible Christians as visibly belonging to heaven, the **Jerusalem that is above**. And in verses 28-29, he describes them as **children of the promise, as Isaac was, and born according to the Spirit**. In verse 6 of the same chapter, he says to the Christian **Galatians**: "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" And in Galatians

6:1, he speaks of those who had not fallen into scandal as **spiritual** persons. In his epistle to the great church of Ephesus, at the beginning, he **blesses God** on behalf of the members of that church 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 blameless before Him in love, predestined to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on them in the Beloved. In Him they had redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. In Ephesians 1:13-14, he writes to them: "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth -- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession." And in Ephesians 2, at the beginning: "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins -- He made you alive." Much more could be cited showing that they were, in charitable estimation, regenerated persons and heirs of salvation. Likewise in his epistle to the members of the church of Philippi, the apostle in his opening greeting 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 who began a good work in them would perfect it until the day of Christ**. He adds, "It is only right for me to feel this way about you all." If it was right for him to think this of them and to be confident of it, he had at least some apparent rational probability on which to base his judgment and confidence. For surely it is not **right** for reasonable people to **think** at random and be **confident** without reason. In Philippians 1:25-26, he speaks of his confidence that he would come to them for their

progress and joy of faith, so that their proud confidence in Christ Jesus might overflow. These words certainly presume that they were persons who had already received Christ and comfort in Him -- who had already obtained faith and joy in Christ and only needed to have it increased. In his epistle to the members of the church of **Colosse**, the apostle in his opening greeting gives thanks for their faith in Christ Jesus and love for all the saints and the hope stored up for them in heaven. He speaks of the Gospel bearing fruit among them since the day they came to know the grace of God in truth -- that is, since the day of their saving conversion. In Colossians 1:8, he speaks of "their love in the Spirit." In Colossians 1:12-14, he speaks of them as qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in light, as delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son, as having redemption and the forgiveness of sins. In Colossians 3, at the beginning, he speaks of them as risen with Christ, as dead (that is, to the law, to sin, and the world), as having their life hidden with Christ in God, and as being such that when Christ their life is revealed, they too will be revealed with Him in glory. In Colossians 3:7 and following, he speaks of them as having once walked and lived in sinful desires, but having now laid aside the old self with its evil practices and put on the new self, which is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created it. In his **first** epistle to the members of the church of **Thessalonica**, in the words following his greeting in chapter 1, he declares what kind of visibility there was of their **election by God** -- visible in the appearance of true and saving conversion and their resulting holy life, verses 3-7. And at the beginning of his **second** epistle, he speaks of their **faith and love greatly increasing**. In

verse 7, he expresses his **confidence** of meeting them in eternal **rest** when **the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels**. And in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, he **gives thanks to God that from the beginning He had chosen them for salvation**. In his epistle to the Christian **Hebrews**, though the apostle speaks of some who had once belonged to their churches but had fallen away and proved themselves hypocrites, yet concerning the rest who remained in good standing he says in Hebrews 6:9: **"But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation."** (Note again: his being thus **convinced** clearly implies a positive judgment.) And in Hebrews 12:22 and following, he speaks of them as visibly belonging to the glorious company of **heaven**. And in Hebrews 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 scattered abroad**, speaks of them as regenerated persons (meaning, as I noted before, those in good standing), in James 1:18: **"In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures."** The apostle **Peter**, writing to the **Jewish** Christians scattered throughout **Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia** (large regions, so they must in total have been a great multitude of people) -- to all of these the apostle in the opening of his first epistle gives the title of **elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood**. And in the next verse, he speaks of them as born again to a living hope, to an inheritance imperishable, etc. And as protected by the power of

God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed. And he says to them in 1 Peter 1:8-9: "And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls." And in verses 18 through the end of the chapter, the apostle speaks of them as redeemed from their futile way of life by the precious blood of Christ, as having purified their souls in obedience to the truth through the Spirit, and as born again of imperishable seed, etc. And in the early part of 1 Peter chapter 2, he speaks of them as living stones coming to Christ and being built up as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ -- as those who believe, to whom Christ is precious, as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, called out of darkness into His marvelous light. The church at **Babylon**, mentioned in passing in 1 Peter 5:13, is said to be **chosen together with them**. And in his second epistle (which 2 Peter 3:1 shows was written to the same persons), the opening is addressed: "**To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours**," that is, the same as the apostles' and servants of Christ. And in the third chapter, he tells them that both his epistles were designed to **stir up their pure minds**. In the first epistle of **John**, written (as far as we can tell) to professing Christians in general, 1 John 2:12 and following, the apostle tells them he writes to them because their sins have been forgiven, because they have known Him who has been from the beginning, because they have overcome the evil one, etc. In 1 John 2:20-21, he tells them they have an anointing from the Holy One and know all things. He says he wrote to them not

because they did **not** know the truth but because they **did** know it, etc. And in verse 27, he says, "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him." And at the beginning of the third chapter, he addresses them as those who are the children of God, who when He appears will be like Him, because they will see Him as He is. In 1 John 4:4, he says, "You are from God, little children, and have overcome," etc. The apostle **Jude** in his general epistle speaks much about apostates and their wickedness. But to other professing Christians who had not fallen away, he says in verses 20-21: "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life." He plainly assumes they had professed faith with love for God our Savior and were regarded by the apostle as His friends and lovers. Many other passages to the same effect could be noted from the epistles, but these are sufficient.

Now how unaccountable would all of this be if the situation were that members of the early Christian churches were not admitted under any understanding that they were truly godly people and heirs of eternal life, and not with any regard to such a character appearing in them -- and that they themselves joined these churches without any such claim, having no such opinion of themselves!

But it is particularly evident that they did have such an opinion of themselves, as well as the apostles having it of them, from many things the apostles say in their epistles. In Romans 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 in Romans 5:2: of **their rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.** In 1 Corinthians 1:7, he speaks of them as **eagerly awaiting the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** In 1 Corinthians 15:17, the apostle says to the members of the church of **Corinth: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins."** He clearly assumes they hoped their sins were forgiven. In Philippians 1:25-26, the apostle speaks of his coming to **Philippi to increase their joy of faith and that their confident rejoicing in Christ might overflow.** This implies (as I noted before) that they had already received some comfort as a result of believing themselves to have a saving interest in Christ. In 1 Thessalonians 1:10, he speaks of the members of the church of **Thessalonica as waiting for His Son from heaven, as one who rescues us from the wrath to come.** In Hebrews 6:9, 19, he speaks of the Christian **Hebrews** as having that **hope which is an anchor of the soul.** The apostle **Peter**, in 1 Peter 1:3, 6, 8-9, speaks of the visible Christians he wrote to as being **born again to a living hope, to an inheritance that is imperishable,** etc., in which **they greatly rejoice,** etc. And even the members of the church of **Laodicea**, the very worst of all the seven churches of **Asia**, regarded themselves as truly gracious persons and made that profession. They **said they were rich and had become wealthy and had need of nothing,** not knowing that they were wretched and miserable, etc. Revelation 3:17.

It is also evident that the members of these early churches held this judgment about one another and about the members of the visible church of Christ in general. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13 and following, the apostle urges the Christian **Thessalonians**, in mourning for their deceased friends who were visible Christians, **not to grieve** as the hopeless **pagans** were accustomed to do for their departed friends. His reason is that they had cause to expect to meet them again in glorious circumstances at the Day of Judgment, never to be separated again. The basis of **comfort** concerning their dead friends that the apostle speaks of here is clearly something **more** than the kind of **hope** we might be expected to have for all who profess Christian **doctrines** and are not **scandalous** in life, whom we must refrain from judging because we do not know that they are not true saints. The members of the church of **Sardis**, which after **Laodicea** was the worst of the seven churches of **Asia**, yet **had a reputation of being alive**. But Christ, who speaks to these seven churches from heaven in the capacity of the searcher of hearts (see Revelation 2:23), explicitly tells them that **they were dead** -- perhaps all in a spiritually dead condition, and most in a spiritually dead state.

These things clearly show how all the Christian churches throughout the world were **constituted** in those days, what kind of **holiness** or **sainthood** all visible Christians in good standing had a **visibility** and **profession** of in that apostolic age, and also what kind of visibility they had. It was not merely a visibility that gave them a right to a kind of **negative charity** or freedom from censure, but one that could rightly lead to a **positive judgment** in their favor. The churches these epistles were written to were all the principal churches in the world. Some of them were very large,

such as the churches of **Corinth** and **Ephesus**. Some of the epistles were directed to all the churches throughout large regions where the Gospel had had great success, such as the epistle to the **Galatians**. The epistle to the **Hebrews** was written to all the **Jewish** Christians in the land of **Canaan**, as distinct from the **Jews** who lived in other countries and were called **Hellenists** or **Greeks** because they generally spoke the **Greek** language. The epistles of **Peter** were written to all the Christian **Jews** throughout many regions: **Pontus**, **Galatia**, **Cappadocia**, **Asia**, and **Bithynia**, where there were greater numbers of **Jews** than in any other Gentile lands. The epistle of **James** was directed to all Christian **Jews** scattered throughout the whole world. The epistles of **John** and **Jude**, as far as appears from those epistles, were directed to all visible Christians throughout the whole world. And the apostle **Paul** directs his first epistle to the **Corinthians** not only to the members of that church but to all professing Christians across the face of the earth. 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 1 Corinthians 14:33. Speaking of the churches in general, he calls them all **churches of the saints**. And from what Christ says to the churches of **Sardis** and **Laodicea** in the book of **Revelation** -- about whom more negative things are said than about any other Christian churches mentioned in the New Testament -- it is clear that even the members of those churches considered themselves in a state of salvation and had such a reputation with others.

Here some may object and say: it does not follow from the apostles' speaking to and about the members of the early church in this way -- as though they considered them **gracious** persons -- that a **profession** and **appearance** of this was regarded in those days as a required **qualification** for admission to the visible

church. Another reason can be given for it, namely: the **extraordinary** state of affairs at that time happened to make it so that the **majority** of those converted from paganism and Judaism to Christianity were **hopefully gracious persons**. This was because it was a time of such large outpourings of divine grace and such great and unavoidable sufferings for believers, etc. And the apostles, knowing these facts, might properly have spoken to and about the churches as if they were societies of truly gracious persons, because there was good reason, on such grounds, to **think** the majority of them were so. This would be true even if no profession or visibility of grace was required of their members by the **constitution** of those churches and the door of admission was as open for **others** as for such.

But this explanation cannot be a satisfactory or true account of the matter, if we consider the following things.

(1.) The apostles, in the very **superscriptions** or directions of their letters to these churches, and in their **salutations** at the beginning of their epistles, speak of them as gracious persons. For example, the apostle **Peter**, in the direction of his first letter to all professing **Jewish** Christians throughout many countries, writes: **To the strangers scattered through Pontus**, and so on, **elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood**. And in directing his second epistle to the same people, he writes: **Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours**, and so on. The apostle **Paul** directs his epistle to the **Romans** like this: **To those who are in Rome, beloved of God**. He directs his first epistle to the

Corinthians like this: **To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus.** What he means by **sanctified** is shown by his following words in verses 4, 7, 8, and 9. The same thing was previously observed about words **attached** to the apostle's salutations at the beginning of several of the epistles. This shows that the apostles extend this **character** as far as they extend the **epistles** themselves. This would surely be very improper and not consistent with truth if the apostles knew very well that such a character did not belong to church members as such, and that they were not received into those churches with any regard to such a character or based on any right to be considered such persons. In the superscriptions of letters to societies of people, we normally give them the **title** or **designation** that properly belongs to them as members of that body. For example, if someone were to 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**. Whether every one of the members truly deserves the label or not, the title fits their **profession** and is known to be aimed at and formally required in the admission of members. But if someone were to 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 poorly judged. That character does not belong to their profession **as** members of that body, and **learning** is not a qualification considered or required in their admission of members. Nor would it excuse the impropriety even if the writer happened to know from personal acquaintance that the majority of them were men of learning. If one person were to inscribe a letter to them this way once, it would be

somewhat strange. But it would be even stranger if he did it repeatedly, or if it appeared from various instances to be a custom to address letters to such societies this way. Yet it seems to be the regular practice of the apostles, in their epistles to Christian churches, to address them with titles that imply a profession and visible evidence of **true holiness**.

(2.) The apostle **John**, in his general epistle, very plainly shows that all those he wrote to were **supposed** to have true grace. He declares this is the qualification he has in view when writing to them, and lets them know he writes to them for that reason -- because they are supposed to be people who **have known God, overcome the evil one, and have had their sins forgiven**. 1 John 2:12-14, 21.

(3.) When the apostles speak of those they write to -- namely, visible Christians -- as a **society**, and describe what belongs to the kind of society the visible church is, they speak of it as visibly (that is, in profession and reputation) a **society** of gracious persons. So the apostle **Peter** speaks of them as a spiritual **house**, a holy and royal **priesthood**, a holy **nation**, a special **people**, a chosen or elect **generation**, called out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 Peter 2. The apostle **Paul** also speaks of them as the **family** of God. Ephesians 2:19. And in the next chapter, he explains himself to mean that family of which a part is **in heaven** -- that is, they were by profession and in visible appearance a part of that heavenly and divine family.

(4.) The apostle **Paul** speaks expressly and repeatedly of the members of the churches he wrote to as **all** of them being, in esteem and visible appearance, truly gracious persons. Philippians 1:6. **Being confident of this very thing, that He who began**

a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus -- even as it is right for me to think this of **you all** (that is, all taken individually, not collectively, according to the distinction noted before). So Galatians 4:26. **Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all.** Romans 6. **As many of us as have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into His death.** Here he speaks of **all** who have been baptized. And in the continuation of this discussion, explaining what is said here, he speaks of their being dead to sin, no longer under the law but under grace, having obeyed the form of teaching from the heart, being made free from sin and becoming servants of righteousness, and so on. Romans 14:7-8. **None of us lives for himself, and no one** (that is, none of us) **dies for himself** (taken together with the context). 2 Corinthians 3:18. **We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror,** and so on. And Galatians 3: **You are all children of God through faith.**

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

(6.) Even if we suppose that the extraordinary circumstances of that day gave the apostles reason to think the majority of church members were true Christians, still -- unless a profession and appearance of true Christianity was their proper qualification and the ground of their admission, and unless it was understood that all of them regarded themselves as true Christians -- it is entirely inexplicable that the apostles in their epistles never make any express

distinction between these different kinds of members. If the churches were made up of people whom the apostles knew held radically different views of their own spiritual condition -- some seeing themselves as children of God, others as children of the devil; some as the high favorites of heaven and heirs of eternal glory, others as children of wrath under condemnation to eternal death and every moment in danger of dropping into hell -- then why do the apostles make no **distinction** in what they say to them or about them, in their manner of addressing them, in the things they set before them, and in the counsels, reproofs, and warnings they give them? Why do the apostles in their epistles never address their words specifically to the **unconverted** members of the churches, in a manner designed to awaken them and make them aware of the miserable condition they were in, and urge them to seek the converting grace of God? Consider that the apostle **Paul** was very personally acquainted with the circumstances of most of the churches he wrote to. 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 instruction and direction about Christianity and the concerns of their souls from him. We can be sure that many of them had opened the state of their souls to him. If he was aware that there were a number among them who made no claim to being in a regenerate state, and that he and others had no reason to judge them to be in such a state, then he knew that the sin of such people -- living in the rejection of a Savior, in the very house of God, in the midst of Gospel light, and in violation of the most sacred vows -- was especially aggravated, and their guilt and condition especially dreadful. Why then would he never specifically and distinctly direct his words to

such people, addressing them with deep compassion for their souls and reminding them of their terrible circumstances? Instead, he continually groups everyone together, addressing the whole body without distinction as if they were all in happy circumstances, expressing his love toward them all and congratulating them all on their glorious and eternal privileges. Instead of speaking to them in a way that would tend to alarm them with a sense of danger, he calls on all of them without distinction, time and again, to rejoice. Philippians 3:1: **Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.** So 2 Corinthians 13:11: **Finally, brethren, be of good comfort.** Philippians 4:4: **Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!** He insists on this as though rejoicing were a duty especially fitting for them, and something they had the highest reason for. The apostle not only did not preach terror to those he wrote to, but is careful to guard them against fears of God's wrath. For instance, in 1 Thessalonians 5 at the beginning, when the apostle observes how Christ will come upon ungodly people **as a thief in the night, and when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction will come upon them like labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape** -- he immediately takes care that the members of the church of **Thessalonica** should not apply this to themselves and be terrified, as though they were in danger. He says in the very next words: **But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; you are all children of light and children of the day.** And he says in verses 9-11: **For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live to-**

gether with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. And in verse 16 he says: **Rejoice always.** How different is this way of treating churches from the method faithful ministers typically use with their congregations, where many make no claim to true piety! And how different from the way Mr. **Stoddard** was accustomed to dealing with his congregation! He would undoubtedly have judged such a way of treating them as the surest course in the world to eternally ruin them. And shall we conclude that the apostle **Paul** was one of those **prophets** who **plastered over with white-wash, and sewed pillows under all arms, and healed the wound** of immortal souls **carelessly, crying, 'Peace, peace,' when there was no peace?** These things make it abundantly clear that the early churches were not organized the way those modern churches are where persons who know and acknowledge themselves to be **unregenerate** are admitted on principle.

If it is objected here that the apostle sometimes urges those he writes to, to **put off the old self** and **put on the new self** and to be **renewed in the spirit of their minds**, and so on -- as though he were urging them to seek conversion -- I answer that the meaning is clearly this: they should put to death the **remaining** corruption or the old self, and turn more and more from sin to God. He urges the **Ephesians** to be **renewed**, and so on, in Ephesians 4:22-23 -- yet he had previously in the same epistle abundantly described them as already savingly renewed, as was observed before. The same could be shown regarding other similar instances.

(7.) It is clear evidence -- not only that the majority of members of the early churches happened to appear to be true Christians, but that they were admitted **with that understanding** and because there appeared in them grounds for such an **estimation** -- and when anyone who was otherwise happened to be admitted, it was **contrary to the intent**. This is clear because when such others were admitted, they are described as **brought** or **crept in unnoticed**. This is how the apostles describe the matter. Jude 4: **For certain people have crept in unnoticed - - ungodly people, turning the grace of God into sensuality.** Galatians 2:4: **False brethren secretly brought in.** If it is said that those spoken of here were openly scandalous persons and heretics, I answer: they were not openly scandalous when they were first brought in, nor is there any reason to think they were heretics when admitted, even though they later became apostates. Mr. **Stoddard** says it does not follow that **all** hypocrites crept in unnoticed just because **some** did. (Appeal, page 17.) To which I would humbly say: it must certainly be true of all hypocrites who were admitted that the church which admitted them was either **aware** they were hypocrites or was not. If there were some whom the church **knew** to be hypocrites at the time they were taken in, then the church in admitting them was not following the **rule** that Mr. **Stoddard** himself often declares should be followed in admitting members -- namely, to admit none except those who **in a judgment of rational charity are true Christians.** (Appeal, pages 2, 3, 10, 28, 33, 67, 73, 93, 94.) But that not only heretics and deliberate deceivers **crept in unnoticed**, but that all **false brethren** -- all church members who were not truly gracious -- did so, is clear from the fact that such people are described as **ille-**

gitimate children in a family, who are false children and false heirs, brought into it **unnoticed** and imposed on those who manage those privileges **by stealth**. Hebrews 12:8: **But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.**

It is abundantly clear from the apostolic writings how the visible church of Christ throughout the whole world was first organized and ordered, 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 as the Christian church was organized **then**, so it ought to be organized **now**. What better **rule** do we have for our church governance in other matters than what was practiced in the **early** churches under the **apostles'** own direction -- such as the standing officers of the church (presbyters and deacons), the method of installing ministers through ordination, and so on? In this matter I have been discussing, I believe Scripture is far more detailed than in those other matters.

9. Another piece of evidence that those admitted to the church should be, in the eyes of Christian judgment, truly **gracious** or **godly** people is this: Scripture portrays the **visible church** of Christ as a society whose members are united by the bond of **Christian brotherly love**.

Beyond the general goodwill or love that the saints have toward all people, which they show equally to both the evil and the good, there is a **special** and very **distinctive** kind of affection that every true Christian **experiences** toward those he considers truly **gracious** persons. Through this affection, the soul is at times very deeply and sweetly bound to such people, and there is an indescribable **oneness of heart** with them. To use the Scripture

phrase (Acts 4:32), **they are of one heart and one soul**. This holy affection is directed toward others because of the spiritual image of God seen in them, their supposed relationship to God as His children and to Christ as His members, and to the saints as their spiritual brothers in Christ. This sacred affection is an excellent and distinctive mark of true grace, frequently discussed as such in Scripture under the name of **the love of the brethren** or **brotherly love**. Christ calls it **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** (Matthew 10:41-42; Mark 9:41). It is also described as **loving one another as Christ has loved them** (John 13:34; 15:13-15), having a special reflection of that **oneness** which exists between Christ Himself and His saints. (Compare John 17:20 to the end.)

This **love** is what the apostles are often directing Christians to exercise toward fellow members of the visible church. As in Romans 12:10: **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love**. The words are much more emphatic in the original Greek and more vividly convey the special **endearment** that exists between **gracious** persons, or those who regard one another as such. The expression properly means **clinging to one another with a brotherly, natural, strong endearment**. The apostle **Peter** expresses himself with similar emphasis and force in 1 Peter 1:22: **Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart**. Again, 1 Peter 3:8: **To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit**. The words in the Greek are much more

vivid, elegant, and forceful. The same special endearment is doubtless what the apostle has in mind in 1 Peter 4:8: **Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another.** The apostle **Paul**, in his epistles, repeatedly speaks of the visible saints he writes to as being united to one another with this affection, and considers it a mark of their godliness. Colossians 1:4: **We heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love which you have for all the saints.** 1 Thessalonians 4:9: **Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.** So Philemon 5: **Hearing of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints.** And this is what he urges in Hebrews 13:1: **Let brotherly love continue.** 1 Thessalonians 5:26: **Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.** Compare 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; and 1 Peter 5:14.

This **love of the brethren** is the virtue that the apostle **John** so strongly emphasizes in his first epistle as one of the most distinctive **marks** of true grace, and a special evidence that **God dwells in us and we in God.** By this he must mean a love for saints **as** saints, or on account of the spiritual image of God believed to be in them and their spiritual relationship to God -- as orthodox theologians have always understood it. There can be no reasonable doubt that the apostle **John** in this epistle is referring to the same kind of **love** that Christ prescribed to His disciples, the love He called by way of distinction His commandment and His new commandment, which He gave as a great **mark** of their being truly His **disciples** -- as this same apostle records in his Gospel. John plainly refers to this love when speaking of **the love**

of the brethren in his epistle, in 1 John 2:7-8 and 3:23. But the **love** that Christ speaks of in His **new commandment** is spoken of as being between those whom **Christ loves** or is supposed to love. His love for them is the foundation and pattern of this love. And if this **love of the brethren**, so much discussed by Christ and by the apostles **Paul** and **John**, is not the **special** affection that gracious persons or true saints have for one another -- which is so great a part and so remarkable an exercise of true grace -- then **where** is it spoken of at all in the New Testament?

We have seen how often the apostles urge visible Christians to exercise this affection toward all other members of the visible church of Christ, and how often they speak of the members of the visible church as actually **united** in this way, in the passages already mentioned. In 2 Corinthians 9:14, the apostle speaks of the members of **other** churches **loving** the members of the church of **Corinth** with this special endearment and oneness of heart, because of **the grace of God** in them: **And by their prayer on your behalf, they long for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.** The word translated **long for** properly means to love with an **exceeding and dear** love. And this is presented as the **bond** that unites all the members of the visible church. Acts 4:32: **And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and one soul.** This is the same thing that is elsewhere called being of **one mind**. 1 Peter 3:8: **To sum up, all of you be harmonious.** And being of **the same mind**. 1 Corinthians 1:10: **That you be made complete in the same mind.** And being of the **same** mind. Philippians 4:2: **I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.** And being **like-minded** (the word is the same in the

Greek). Romans 15:5-6: **Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another, so that with one accord and one voice you may glorify the God and 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**, that is meant by the **love** that the apostle calls the **bond of perfection** in Colossians 3:14. And he presents it as the bond of union between all the **members** of the **body** in Ephesians 4:15-16: **But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.**

This seems to be very much the nature of **scandal** among church members -- namely, an offense that wounds and interrupts this kind of **affection**, being a stumbling block to Christian judgment in its regard for the offender as a **real Christian**, and something that greatly diminishes the visible evidence of his Christian character. This is why, when scandal is removed through visible **repentance**, the church is directed to **confirm their love** for the offender. 2 Corinthians 2:8.

Now this intimate affection toward others as **brethren in Christ** and **fellow members** of Him must have some understanding or judgment of the mind as its foundation. To say that we must **love** others as visible members of Christ -- if that means anything other than that we must love them **because** they visibly appear, or **as** they appear to our judgment, to be real members of

Christ -- is in effect to say that we must love them with no foundation at all. In order to have a real and fervent affection toward another person based on some admirable quality or relationship, the mind must first judge that the object actually has that admirable quality. Our affections are not so much under our control that we can make them go out strongly toward someone **as** having a certain loveliness when at the same time we do not positively **judge** any such thing about them, but only **hope** it may be the case because we see no sufficient reason to conclude otherwise. There must be a **positive** judgment of the understanding, some degree of satisfaction in the mind, to serve as a foundation for that **oneness of heart and soul** that fits with Scripture's descriptions of **brotherly love**. A mere assumption of **moral sincerity and virtue** or **common grace** -- which some insist upon -- may be a sufficient foundation for **neighborly** and **civil** affection. But it cannot be a sufficient foundation for this intimate affection toward them as **brethren** in the family of a heavenly Father, this fervent love for them **in the heart of Jesus Christ**. Such a supposition implies nothing inconsistent with being **Gospel sinners** and domestic **enemies** in the house of God -- and Christians know these are the most hateful enemies to Christ of all the enemies He has.

It fits well with the wisdom of Christ, and with the special favor He has shown to His saints and His dealings with them in many other respects, to suppose that He has made provision in His institutions for them to have the comfort of uniting with those their hearts are united with in that holy, intimate affection we have been discussing. He has provided for them to share in certain special religious exercises and duties of worship, and in visible interaction with their Redeemer, joining with those about whom they can have

some confidence that they are cordially united with them in adoring and expressing their **love** to their common Lord and Savior. In this way they may **with one mind, one heart, and one soul**, as well as **with one mouth, glorify Him** -- as in the previously mentioned Romans 15:5-6, compared with Acts 4:32. This seems to be what this heavenly affection naturally leads to. And how eminently fitting and proper for this purpose is the sacrament of the **Lord's Supper** -- the Christian church's great feast of love! In it, 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. They commemorate His sufferings for them and His dying love toward them, and they seal **their** love to Him and to one another. It is hard to believe that Christ has arranged things so that there are no instituted corporate acts of worship in which **His saints** can show their devotion to Him -- except those in which they are ordinarily obliged (if the rule for admissions is carefully followed) to join with a body of fellow worshippers about whom they have no reason to think anything other than that the **majority** of them are **unconverted** (and are more provoking enemies to the Lord they love and adore than most of the very heathen). Yet this is what Mr. **Stoddard** supposes to be the case with the members of the visible church. **Appeal**, page 16.

10. It is necessary that those who partake of the **Lord's Supper** should judge themselves to truly and sincerely **accept** Christ as their only Savior and chief good. This is because the **actions** communicants perform at the Lord's table are a solemn **profession** of exactly that.

In the Lord's Supper there is a mutual solemn **profession** made by the two parties entering into the covenant of grace and visibly united in that covenant: the Lord Christ through His minister on the one hand, and the communicants (who are professing believers) on the other. The one who administers the ordinance acts in the role 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, through the words and actions of the minister, makes a solemn profession of His part in the covenant of grace. He presents the sacrifice of His body broken and His blood shed. In the minister's offering of the sacramental bread and wine to the communicants, Christ presents Himself to the believing communicants as their propitiation and bread of life. Through these outward signs He confirms and seals His sincere promises to be their Savior and food, and to give them all the benefits of His propitiation and salvation. The communicants, 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 on Him in their hearts by faith. Indeed, what is professed on both sides is the **heart**. Christ, in offering Himself, professes the willingness of **His heart** to belong to those who truly receive Him. The communicants, for their part, profess the willingness of **their hearts** to receive Him, which they declare through meaningful actions. They profess to accept Christ as their spiritual food and bread of life. To accept Christ as our **bread of life** is to accept Him **as our Savior and portion**. Food is both the means

of preserving life and the refreshment and comfort of life. The meaning of the word **manna** -- that great foreshadowing of this bread of life -- is a **portion**. What God offers to us as our food, He offers as our portion. And what we accept as our food, we accept as our portion. The Lord's Supper is therefore plainly a **mutual** renewal, confirmation, and seal of the covenant of grace. Both covenant parties **profess** their consent to their respective parts in the covenant, and each affixes his **seal** to his profession. In this ordinance, the very same thing is acted out in profession and visible signs that is spiritually carried out between Christ and His bride in the covenant that unites them. Here we have the glorious **Bridegroom** again and again presenting Himself with His great love that is stronger than death, appearing clothed in robes of grace, and pledging Himself with all His glory and love and its infinite benefits to those who receive Him. And here we have His **bride** accepting this Bridegroom, choosing Him as her beloved, her only Savior and portion, and relying on Him for all His benefits. And so the covenant transaction of this spiritual marriage is confirmed and sealed again and again. The **actions** of the communicants at the Lord's table speak as expressively and meaningfully as the most solemn words. When a person in this ordinance **takes** and **eats** and **drinks** the things that represent Christ, the plain meaning and implied profession of these actions is this: I take this crucified Jesus as my Savior, my sweetest food, my chief portion, and the life of my soul, consenting to find my satisfaction in Him as such, and to hunger and thirst after Him alone, renouncing all other saviors and all other portions for His sake. The actions, **understood this way**, are a proper renewal and ratification of the

covenant of grace -- and not otherwise. And those who take, eat, and drink the sacramental elements at the Lord's table with any **other** meaning, I fear, **do not know what they are doing**.

Since the **actions** at the Lord's Supper by their very nature and meaning imply a renewing and confirming of the covenant, there is an explicit, verbal covenant assumed to **precede** it -- which is the **profession** of faith spoken of earlier that qualifies a person for admission to the Lord's Supper. There should surely be as much explicitly professed in **words** as is implicitly professed in these **actions**. For through these meaningful actions, the communicant sets his seal on his **profession**. The established signs in the Lord's Supper are fully equivalent to words. They are a renewal and repetition of the same thing that was done **before** -- only with this difference: now it is done through **speaking signs**, whereas before it was done through **spoken words**. Our taking the bread and wine is as much a **profession** of accepting Christ as a woman's taking a **ring** from the bridegroom at her wedding is a profession and seal of her accepting him as her husband. The sacramental elements in the Lord's Supper represent Christ as a party in the covenant just as truly as a **proxy** represents a prince to a foreign lady in her marriage. And our taking those elements is as truly a profession of accepting Christ as, in the other case, the lady's accepting the proxy is her profession of accepting the prince as her husband. Or the matter may be illustrated more fittingly this way: Imagine a prince sending an ambassador to a woman in a foreign land with a marriage proposal, and through his ambassador sending her his portrait. He asks her to show her acceptance of his proposal not only by expressing it in words to his ambas-

sador, but also as a sign of her sincerity to openly accept the portrait and thus seal her profession by acting out the matter again through a symbolic action.

To suppose that people should solemnly **profess** something they do not at all believe they experience in themselves, and do not actually claim to have, is a very great absurdity. For someone to sacramentally make **such a profession of faith** while proceeding openly on the basis of **such a doctrine** is to profess what he does **not** profess. His actions are not established **signs** of the **thing** supposed to be professed, nor do they carry the slightest claim to it. Therefore doing this cannot be anyone's duty -- unless it is people's duty to make a solemn profession of that which they in fact make **no** profession of. The Lord's Supper is most clearly a **professing** ordinance. The communicant's **profession** must be suited to the nature and purpose of the ordinance, and nothing less than **faith in the blood of Christ** will meet that standard -- specifically, **sincere faith that works through love**. A profession that falls short of this is fundamentally defective and entirely unsuitable to the character of a **communicant**.

11. When the apostle says in 1 Corinthians 11:28, **Let a man examine himself, and in so doing let him eat** -- it seems far more reasonable to understand this as **testing himself** regarding the **truth** of his **Christianity** or the reality of his grace. This is the same thing the same apostle directs the same **Corinthians** to do in his other epistle, 2 Corinthians 13:5, where the same Greek word is used. The Greek word will not support what some have supposed to be the apostle's meaning -- namely, that a person should consider and inquire into his **circumstances** and the needs of his case, so that he may know what he should go to the

Lord's table to receive. The word properly means **proving** or **testing** a thing with regard to its **quality** and **genuineness**, or in order to determine whether it is **true** and **of the right kind**. This is how the word is always used in the New Testament -- except that sometimes it is used in a related sense and in such places is variously translated as **discerning**, **approving**, **accepting**, and so on, these being the results of testing. Nor is this word used more frequently in the New Testament for any kind of testing than for the testing of professing Christians with regard to their **grace** or **godliness**. The word (as Dr. **Ames** in his **Catecheseos Sciagraphia** and Mr. **Willard** in his *Body of Divinity* observe) is borrowed from goldsmiths and properly means the **test** they perform on silver and gold to determine whether it is **genuine** or **counterfeit**. With a clear allusion to this original use of the word, it is often employed in the New Testament for **testing** the godliness of professing Christians. It is used with this meaning in all the following texts. 1 Peter 1:7: **So that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise,** and so on. 1 Corinthians 3:13: **The fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.** James 1:3: **The testing of your faith produces endurance.** 1 Thessalonians 2:4: **God, who examines our hearts.** The same word is used in 2 Corinthians 8:8: **To prove the sincerity of your love.** So also Galatians 6:3-4: **For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But each one must examine his own work.** In all these passages, the same Greek word appears as in the text now under consideration.

When the apostle directs professing Christians to **test themselves** -- using this word that essentially means examining or proving something to see whether it is **genuine or counterfeit** - - the most natural interpretation of his advice is that they should **test themselves** regarding their spiritual condition and religious profession: whether they are **disciples indeed**, real and genuine Christians, or whether they are false and hypocritical professors. It is as if a man brought a piece of metal with the color of gold and the stamp of the king's coin to a goldsmith and asked him to **test** that money, without adding any words to limit his meaning. Would not the goldsmith naturally understand that he was to test whether it was true gold or true money, or not?

But some say here that the **context** of the passage under discussion (1 Corinthians 11:28) clearly **limits** the meaning of the word in that place. The apostle there speaks of things that had appeared among the communicants at **Corinth** that were **scandalous** in nature and therefore surely unfitting for the Lord's Supper. So when the apostle tells them to **examine** or test themselves, it is only fair to suppose he means they should test whether they are disqualified by **scandal**. To this I answer: although the apostle's urging the **Corinthians** to test themselves was **prompted by** mentioning some scandalous practices found among them, this is by no means an argument that his only meaning was for them to test whether they were **scandalous** people, rather than to test whether they were **true, genuine Christians**. The very nature of **scandal** (as was observed before) is that which tends to obscure the visible evidence of a professor's godliness and wound others' charitable opinion of them by casting doubt on the reality of their grace. What could be more natural, then, than for

the apostle -- when mentioning such scandals among the **Corinthians** -- to urge them to test the state of their souls and prove their sincerity! This is certainly the case in the apostle's directing the same people to **test themselves** in 2 Corinthians 13:5, using the same word there that he uses here and giving this direction on a similar occasion. For in the second epistle (just as in the first), his urging them to **examine** and **test themselves** was prompted by mentioning some **scandals** found among them, as is clear from the preceding context. And yet there he explicitly says the thing they are to **test** themselves about is whether they are **in the faith** and whether **Christ is in them**. Nor is there anything more in the preceding context of one passage than in the other that compels us to understand the apostle as meaning only a test of whether they were **scandalous**, rather than whether they were sincere Christians.

As for the words that follow in the next verse -- **For he who eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body** -- these words by no means prove (as some claim) that what the apostle wants them to examine themselves about is whether they have enough **doctrinal knowledge** to understand that the bread and wine in the sacrament signify the body and blood of Christ. On the contrary, interpreting the apostle this way is unreasonable for several reasons. (1) No one can even begin such an **examination** without **already knowing** that the Lord's body and blood are signified by these elements. For the mere act of asking oneself, "Do I understand that this bread and wine signify the body and blood of Christ?" assumes he already knows it from prior instruction. Therefore, urging people to conduct such an examination would be absurd. (2) It is un-

believable that there would be such **gross ignorance** among a number of the communicants in the **Corinthian** church, if we consider what Scripture tells us about that church. Think about the able and thorough instructor and spiritual father they had -- the apostle **Paul** himself -- who founded that church, brought them out of their pagan darkness, introduced them to the Christian faith, instructed them in the nature and purposes of Gospel ordinances, and stayed at **Corinth** continually laboring in the word and doctrine for no less than **a year and six months**. We may well suppose he administered the Lord's Supper among them every Lord's Day. For the apostle speaks of it as the practice of that church to commune at the Lord's table with such frequency. 1 Corinthians 16:2. And the **Corinthian** church at the time the apostle wrote this epistle was known for excelling in **doctrinal knowledge**, as is evident from 1 Corinthians 1:5-7 and several other passages in the epistle. Besides, the communicants were explicitly told at every communion, every week, when the bread and wine were given to them in the administration, that the bread signified the body and the wine signified the blood of Christ. And then (3) the apostle, by his argument in 1 Corinthians 10:16, assumes the **Corinthians** are already doctrinally acquainted with this subject. It therefore seems much more reasonable to me to understand the situation this way: The offensive behavior 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 signified there. They had no habitual hunger or appetite for the spiritual food represented there, no inward, vital, experiential taste of the **flesh of the Son of Man** which is **true food**. The word translated **dis-**

cerning means to **distinguish** or **discriminate**. **Taste** is the sense by which we properly discern or distinguish food. Job 34:3. And it is a spiritual **sense** or **taste** by which we discern or distinguish spiritual food. Hebrews 5:14: **Those who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil**, and so on. A word from the same root as the one rendered **discerning** in 1 Corinthians 11:29. A person who has no habitual appetite for or relish of the spiritual food represented and offered at the Lord's table -- who has no spiritual taste to perceive anything more at the Lord's Supper than in ordinary food -- or who has no higher purpose than to eat bread with a little surface devotion in the manner of an ordinance, without truly considering in his heart the spiritual meaning and purpose of it, and without being at all suitably moved by the dying love of Christ commemorated there -- such a person may most truly and properly be said **not to discern the Lord's body**. When the apostle urges **self-examination** as a preparation for the sacramental supper, he may well be understood as telling professors to inquire whether they have a principle of **faith** by which they are habitually able and disposed to **discern the Lord's body** in a practical and spiritual way (not just speculatively and theoretically) in their communion at the Lord's table. No one can do this who has only common grace, or a faith that falls short of justifying and saving faith. It is only a living faith that enables people to **discern the Lord's body** in the sacrament with that spiritual perception or spiritual taste suited to the nature and purpose of the ordinance, and which the apostle seems primarily to have in mind.

PART 3



OBJECTION 1. Scripture calls the members of the visible church by the name of **disciples, students, or learners.**

This suggests the following idea of the visible church: it is the school of Christ, where people are admitted in order to **learn from Christ** and reach spiritual growth through the means of teaching, discipline, and training established in the school. Now if this is a correct view of the visible church, then reason shows that no qualifications are needed for membership in this **school** other than the kind of **faith** and **attitude** required for people to place themselves under Christ as their **Master** and **Teacher** and to submit to the **rules** of the school. But a **common faith** and **moral sincerity** are enough for this. Therefore, Scripture leads us to suppose that the visible church is **properly made up** of those who have these qualifications, even though they do not have **saving faith** and **true godliness.**

ANSWER. I grant that Scripture calls the members of the visible church by the name of **disciples.** But I deny that it follows from this that the church they belong to is properly made up of people who do not have true godliness. If this conclusion were valid, it would equally follow that not only the **visible** church but also the **invisible** or **mystical** church is properly made up of peo-

ple who lack sincere faith and true godliness. For the members of the mystical church **as such**, and to describe their special character, are called **disciples** -- in Luke 14:26-27, 33 and in John 8:31. Also 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. The force of the objection rests entirely on this: that the members of the visible church are called **disciples** in Scripture. This is the sum total of the premises. And if there is any connection between the premises and the conclusion, it must depend on the truth of this proposition: **The church whose members are called disciples -- as a description of their state and quality as members of that society -- is properly made up not only of truly godly people but also of others who merely have common faith and virtue.** But this proposition, as we have seen, is not true. So there is no connection between its first and second parts, which are the same as the premises and conclusion of this argument.

2. Although I do not deny that the visible church of Christ may fittingly be pictured as a school of Christ, where people are trained through the use of means toward **some** spiritual growth, it does not necessarily follow that this training is aimed at **all** good attainments. It may well be that certain good attainments are **prerequisites** for having a **place** in the school. The church of Christ is a school established for training up Christ's **little children** to greater degrees of knowledge, higher privileges, greater usefulness in this world, and greater readiness to possess their eternal inheritance. But we do not need to suppose that its purpose is to make them fit to become Christ's children or to be brought into His family. That would be like saying that because a prince puts his chil-

dren under tutors, the tutoring must be designed to make them members of the royal family. If it were necessary to have a church of Christ established as a school of instruction and discipline to bring people to **all** good attainments whatsoever, then it would follow that there must be a visible church made up of **scandalous** and **ungodly** people and **heretics**, and all in general who claim the Christian name. This would allow means to be used with them to bring them to **moral sincerity** and an acknowledgment of the Christian faith.

3. I grant that no other qualifications are needed for membership in the school of Christ that is His visible church than those required for **submitting to Christ as their Master and Teacher** and **submitting to the laws and rules of His school**. Nevertheless, I deny that a **common faith** and **moral sincerity** are enough for this. No one truly submits to Christ **as their Master** except those whose **hearts have been purified by faith** and who are delivered from the ruling power of **sin**. We cannot submit to obey **two** opposing **masters** at the same time. No one truly submits to Christ as **their Teacher** except those who genuinely receive Him as their Prophet, to teach them by His Word and Spirit. They give themselves up to His teaching, **sitting with Mary** as little children **at Jesus' feet to hear His word**. They listen to His instruction more than to their blind and deceitful desires, and they rely on His wisdom more than their own. Scripture knows nothing of a church school made up of **enemies of the cross of Christ**, established to bring such people to be reconciled to Him and submit to Him as their Master. Nor do those who are not truly godly have any genuine willingness of heart to submit to the **laws** and **rules** of Christ's school -- the

standards His Word prescribes for all His students. These include: **to love their Master** above all else; **to love one another as brothers**; and **to love their Book** (that is, their Bible) more than worthless distractions and amusements, yes, more than gold and silver; **to be faithful to the interests of the Master and of the school**; **to depend on His teaching**; **to cry out to Him for knowledge**; and **above all their efforts, to gain understanding**, and so on.

4. Whatever ways of organizing the church may seem fitting, proper, and reasonable to us, the **question** is not what structure of Christ's church seems convenient to **human** wisdom, but what structure has actually been established by **Christ's** infinite wisdom. No doubt, if people were to rely on their own ingenuity and proceed according to what seems good to them, they would greatly alter Christ's design for His church to make it more convenient and attractive. They would adorn it with a vast variety of clever inventions, just as the church of **Rome** has done. The question is whether this **school** of Christ they talk about -- made up largely of those who claim no experiences or attainments beyond what is consistent with being **enemies** of Christ in their hearts, and who in reality love the vilest sin more than Him -- is truly the church of Christ that in the New Testament is called **His city, His temple, His family, His body**, and so on, names by which the visible church of Christ is frequently described there.

I acknowledge that means appointed by Christ are to be used with those who are Christ's enemies and do not claim to be anything else, in order to change their **hearts** and bring them to be Christ's **friends** and **disciples**. Such means are to be used with all kinds of people -- with Jews, Muslims, pagans, with nominal

Christians who are heretical or immoral, the profane, the intemperate, the impure, and all other enemies of Christ -- and these means should be used constantly and diligently. Scandalous persons need to go to **school** to learn to be Christians as much as anyone else. And there are many people who are not **morally sincere** but who, from selfish and ulterior motives, regularly agree to go to church and so place themselves in the path of the means of grace. No one should forbid them from going to Christ's **school** so they may be taught by Him through the ministry of the Gospel. But it still does not follow that such a **school** is the **church** of Christ. Human laws can place people, even very immoral ones, into the **school** of Christ in that sense. Laws can require them to be constantly present at public teaching and to attend the means of grace appointed by Christ and administered in His name. But human laws cannot join people to the **church** of Christ and make them members of His body.

OBJECTION 2. **Visible sainthood** in the scriptural sense cannot be the same as what has been supposed and insisted on -- namely, being regarded by rational charity as truly godly -- because **Israel** in ancient times was repeatedly called **God's people** when it is certain that the majority of them were far from having any **such** visible holiness. For example, the **ten tribes** were called God's people in Hosea 4:6, after they had revolted from the true worship of God and had stubbornly continued in their idolatrous worship at **Bethel** and **Dan** for about two hundred and fifty years. At that time, especially just before their captivity, they were at the height of their wickedness. Likewise, the **Jews** are called **God's people** in Ezekiel 36:20 and other places during the time of their captivity in **Babylon** -- a time when most of them had abandoned

themselves to all kinds of the most terrible and open sins, as the prophets frequently describe. Now it is certain that the people at that time were not called **God's people** because of any visible evidence of true godliness to the eye of reason or rational charity, since most of them were grossly wicked and **declared their sin like Sodom**. And the members of the visible Christian **Gentile** church are God's people in the same way the **Jews** of old were God's people. For they are described as **grafted into the same olive tree** from which the former were **broken off by unbelief**.

ANSWER. This argument proves too much and therefore proves nothing at all. If those I oppose in this controversy bring this objection, they will in effect oppose themselves as much as they oppose me. The objection, if it has any force, works equally against their view of visible sainthood and mine. For those **Jews** who are alleged to be God's people, yet were so notoriously, openly, and grossly wicked, had neither any visible evidence of true godliness nor of the **moral sincerity** in the profession and duties of true religion that my opponents themselves consider necessary for proper visible holiness and rightful admission to the privileges and ordinances of the church of God. No one will claim that these stubborn idolaters and wicked people had the qualifications now required for admission to the **Christian** sacraments. So what is the point of bringing this objection? If it proves anything, it overthrows my position and theirs together, and both equally effectively. Not only that, but it would thoroughly destroy the views of all **Protestants** throughout the world concerning the qualifications of those who may receive Christian ordinances. Therefore, defending what I have laid down against those I oppose in this

controversy requires no further answer to this objection. Nevertheless, for greater satisfaction, I would observe the following.

Terms like God's **people**, God's **Israel**, and other similar phrases are used and applied in Scripture with considerable **variety** of meaning. For example, we have a clear distinction between the **house of Israel** and the **house of Israel** in Ezekiel 20:38-40. By the house of **Israel** in verse 39, the literal nation or family of **Israel** is meant. But by the house of **Israel** in verse 40, the **spiritual house** seems to be intended -- the body of God's visible saints who would attend the ordinances of His public worship in Gospel times. Similarly, a distinction is made between the **house of Israel** and God's **disciples** who would profess and visibly hold to **His law and testimony** in Isaiah 8:14-17. And although the whole nation of the **Jews** is often called **God's people** during those corrupt periods when the prophets were sent to reprove them, at the same time they are charged with **falsely calling themselves of the holy city**. Isaiah 48:2. And God often tells them they should rather be counted among foreigners and viewed as children of the **Ethiopians** or descendants of the ancient **Canaanites**, on account of their grossly wicked and scandalous behavior. See Amos 9:7-8, and so on. Ezekiel 16:2-3, and so on; verse 45-46, and so on. Isaiah 1:10.

It is evident that God sometimes, in keeping with His marvelous mercy and patience toward mankind, shows merciful regard to a degenerate church that has become extremely corrupt because it is made up of members who lack the qualifications that ought to be required. God continues to show regard for them to the extent that He does not utterly abandon them or entirely withhold His

confirmation of and blessing on their ministrations. And since God has not completely rejected them, their ministrations are to be considered in some respect valid, and the society is in some sense a people or church **of** God. This was the case with the church of **Rome**, at least until the Reformation and the Council of **Trent**. For until then we must acknowledge their baptisms and ordinations as valid. The church in which the Pope sits is called **the temple of God**. 2 Thessalonians 2:4.

With regard to the people of **Israel**, it is very clear that something different is often meant by that nation's being called **God's people** than their being visible saints or visibly holy, or having the qualifications needed for proper admission to the ecclesiastical privileges of such. That **nation**, that **family of Israel according to the flesh** and **with regard to that external and physical qualification**, were in some sense adopted by God to be His **special people** and His **covenant people**. This is not only evident from what has already been observed, but is also unmistakably clear from Romans 9:3-5. **I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh.** Note that the privileges mentioned here are spoken of as belonging to the **Jews** not as visible saints, not as professors of the true religion, not as members of the visible church of Christ -- but only as a people of **such a nation**, such a bloodline, such an external and

physical relationship to their ancestor patriarchs, **Israelites** according to the flesh. For the apostle is speaking here of the **unbelieving Jews** -- professed unbelievers who were outside the Christian church and open, visible enemies of it, people who had no right to the external privileges of Christ's people. So in Romans 11:28-29, this apostle speaks of the same **unbelieving Jews** as in some respect an **elect people**, with a share in the **calling, promises, and covenants** God formerly gave to their forefathers, and as still **beloved** for their sakes. **From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.** These things are spoken of in these passages not as privileges belonging to the **Jews** as a people of the right religion or in the true church of visible worshippers of God, but as a people of a certain ancestry or bloodline -- and this even after the end of the **Mosaic** administration. But these were privileges that especially belonged to them under the Old Testament. They were a **family** God had chosen, set apart from all others, to show special favor to above all other **nations**. It was clearly in keeping with God's design to arrange things under the Old Testament so that the means of grace and spiritual privileges and blessings would be -- though not entirely, yet in large measure -- confined to a **particular family**, much more so than those privileges and blessings are confined to any ancestry or bloodline now under the Gospel. God deliberately arranged things so that **that nation** would be distinguished by these favors not only from those who did not profess the worship of the true God, but also in large measure **from other nations** by a wall of separation that He built. This was not merely a

wall of separation between professors and non-professors (that kind of wall of separation still exists in the days of the Gospel) but between **nation** and **nations**. God, if He pleases, may in His sovereignty attach His blessing and in some measure fix it, for His own reasons, to a particular bloodline, just as He may attach it to a particular place or piece of ground, to a certain building, to a particular pile of stones or altar of bronze, to particular garments, and other external things. And it is evident that He actually did attach His blessing to that particular external family of **Jacob** in much the same way He did to the city of **Jerusalem** -- which He chose to place His name there -- and to Mount **Zion, where He commanded the blessing**. God did not attach His blessing to **Jerusalem** or Mount **Zion** in a way that limited Himself -- either by confining the blessing entirely to that place, never bestowing it elsewhere; or by obligating Himself to always bestow it on those who sought Him there; or by obligating Himself never to withdraw His blessing from there, by forsaking His dwelling place and leaving it to become a common or ordinary place. But He was pleased to attach His blessing to that place so as to make it the seat of His blessing in a special way, in great distinction from other places. He attached His blessing to the bloodline and descendants of **Jacob** in the same way. It was a family in which He delighted and which He blessed in a special way, and to which He largely confined the blessing. But He did not limit Himself -- He was not obligated to bestow it on everyone of that bloodline, or to withhold it from others who were not of that bloodline. He attached His blessing to both of these -- both to the place and to the nation -- by sovereign election. Psalm 132:13-15. He 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 heart of the covenant God made with **Abraham** and the other patriarchs, was the **covenant of grace**, which continues in these Gospel days and extends to all His spiritual descendants among the Gentiles as well as the **Jews**. But the covenant with the patriarchs also contained other things that were like attachments to that great everlasting covenant of grace -- promises of lesser matters that served the grand promise of the future seed and were symbolic of things relating to Him. Such were the promises that attached the blessing to a particular country, namely the land of **Canaan**, and a particular **bloodline**, namely the descendants of **Isaac** and **Jacob**. It was the same with the covenant God made with **David**, which we read about in 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 132. If we consider that covenant in terms of what its soul and heart was, it was the covenant of grace. But there were other promises that were like attachments of things serving the grand covenant and symbolic of its benefits -- such as promises of blessing to the nation of the literal **Israel**, of continuing the earthly crown of **Israel** to **David's** descendants, and of fixing the blessing to **Jerusalem** or Mount **Zion** as the place He chose to set His name. And it was in this sense that the **very family** of **Jacob** were **God's people by covenant**, or His **covenant people** and His **chosen people** -- yes, even when they were not visible saints, when they were raised in and 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 descendants** of **Jacob according to the flesh** -- were in some respect a **chosen people**, a

people of God, a covenant people, a holy nation. This is just as **Jerusalem** was a **chosen city**, the **city of God**, a **holy city**, and a city where God had pledged **by covenant** to dwell.

This is how a sovereign and all-wise God was pleased to arrange things with respect to **the nation of Israel**. We may not be able to give all the reasons for such an arrangement, but some of them seem fairly clear, such as the following.

1. The great and primary purpose of separating one particular nation from all others, as God did with **the nation of Israel**, was to prepare the way for the coming of the **Messiah**, who was to come from **that bloodline**. God's covenant with **Abraham** and the other patriarchs implied that the Messiah would be **of their seed according to the flesh**. Therefore it was necessary that **their descendants according to the flesh** should be enclosed by a wall of separation and made **God's people**. If the Messiah had been born from some of the **professors of Abraham's** religion but from some other nation -- that religion having spread from nation to nation as it does now under the Gospel -- it would not have fulfilled the covenant with **Abraham** for the Messiah to have been born of **Abraham's** seed only in that sense. Since the **Messiah** was by covenant so connected to **Jacob's descendants according to the flesh**, God was pleased, in keeping with the nature of such a covenant, to show great regard to that people on account of that external, physical relationship. The apostle therefore mentions it as one great privilege that from them **according to the flesh** Christ came. Romans 9:5. Since introducing the **Messiah** and His salvation and kingdom was the special design of

all God's dealings and unique arrangements toward that people, the natural result was that great importance should be placed on their being **of that nation** in God's covenant dealings with them.

2. That nation was a **typical nation** -- a nation that served as a symbol. There was then literally a **land** that was the dwelling place of God, which was a type of heaven, the true dwelling place of God. There was an **external city of God**, which was a type of the spiritual city of God. There was an **external temple of God**, which was a type of His spiritual temple. So too there was an **external people and family of God** by physical descent, which was a type of His spiritual descendants. The covenant by which they were made a people of God was a type of the covenant of grace, and so is sometimes portrayed as a marriage covenant. In keeping with the nature of that dispensation, God showed great regard for external and physical things in those days as types of spiritual things. How much regard God showed then for external, physical qualifications for privileges and services is seen in this: there is ten times as 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 symbolic qualifications insisted upon that even under the law of **Moses**, the congregation of the Lord -- the public congregation or church (for the word is the same) of visible worshippers of God -- and the number of public professors of the true religion who were visible saints were not the same. Some belonged to the latter but not the former -- particularly the **eunuchs**, who were excluded from the congregation no matter how outwardly religious or even truly godly they were. The same applied to those born out of wedlock, and so on.

3. It was the sovereign pleasure of God to choose **that family**, the descendants of **Jacob** according to the flesh, and to reserve them for special favors until the end of time. This is why they are still kept as a distinct nation, being still reserved for distinguishing mercy in the latter days when they will be restored to the church of God. God is pleased in this way to show His regard for their holy ancestors and His regard for their external relationship to Christ. The apostle therefore still speaks of them as an **elect nation** and **beloved for the fathers' sakes**, even after they were broken off from the good olive tree by unbelief. God's covenant with **Abraham** is in some sense still in force with respect to that people and reaches them even to this day. Yet surely they are not God's covenant people in the same sense that visible Christians are. See Leviticus 26:42.

If it is said here that it was often foretold by the prophets that in the days of the Gospel, other **nations** would be the people of God as well as the **nation** of the **Jews** -- and that when Christ sent out His apostles, He told them to go and **make disciples of all nations** --

I answer: By a common figure of speech, the prevailing part of a nation is called **the nation**. 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** the nation. And it is to be hoped that the time is coming when the prevailing part of many nations -- yes, of every nation under heaven -- will be properly brought into the visible church of Christ. And if by **nations** in these prophecies we understand anything other than the prevailing part, and if it is insisted that we must understand it as meaning all the people belonging to those nations, then there has never yet been any nation in this sense properly

brought into the visible church of Christ -- even according to the position of those I oppose. For there has never yet been a whole nation that was outwardly moral. 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 (he says) about the glory of the New Testament era are expressed in Old Testament phrases, by way of allusion to the worship of those times. In Revelation 21:24, **nations** are spoken of as having a share in the **New Jerusalem**, which yet is described as perfectly pure, without the least degree of pollution or defilement. Verse 27. As for the command to the apostles to **make disciples of all nations**, it was a direction about what they should attempt or do as much toward as they could -- not a prediction of what they would accomplish in their day. For they never brought even half of any single nation into the visible Christian church, nor any people at all in half the nations of the world, in all probability.

If it is further objected that **Gentile** Christians are visible saints according to the New Testament understanding of visible sainthood in the very same way that the whole **Jewish** nation was until they were broken off by their stubborn rejection of the **Messiah** -- and that the **Gentile** Christians are described as being **grafted into the same olive tree** from which the **Jews** were **broken off by unbelief** (Romans 11:17, and so on) --

I would ask: What could anyone mean by this objection? Is it this -- that we should require no higher or better qualifications for admitting people as members of the **Christian** church and to all its privileges than what the whole nation of the **Jews** in the generation that lived in **Christ's** time possessed, until they had stubbornly persisted in rejecting Him? If this is **not** the intended

meaning, the objection is beside the point. And if this **is** the intended meaning, it is still beside the point for those with whom I am chiefly dealing in this controversy. They hold that **orthodoxy**, **knowledge** of the fundamental doctrines of religion, **moral sincerity**, and a **good way of life** are qualifications that should be required for visible church membership. But a very large part of those **Jews** lacked these qualifications. Many of them were **Sadducees** who denied a future state. Others were **Herodians** who occasionally conformed with the **Romans** in their idolatries. The dominant sect among them was the **Pharisees**, who openly professed the false doctrine of justification by works of the law and external privileges -- that **leaven of the Pharisees** that 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 **immoral**, for it was a generation in which every kind of sin and wickedness prevailed.

I believe that text in Romans 11 can be understood no other way, in any consistency with plain fact, than this: the **Gentile** Christians succeeded the **Jews** -- who had been, either in themselves or through their ancestors, the children of **Abraham** -- with respect to a visible share in the covenant of grace (which, as has been observed, was the substance and heart of the covenant made with **Abraham**). This lasted until they were broken off from the church and ceased to be visible saints by their open and stubborn unbelief. (Indeed, either they or their ancestors had all been broken off from the church of visible saints in this way, for every branch or family of the stock of **Jacob** had 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 it carried the greatest privileges. But there was another sense in which the whole nation -- including even those who were not visible saints -- were his children. This (as has been shown) carried great privileges, but in this respect Christian **Gentiles** do not succeed them, even though they have additional ecclesiastical privileges vastly beyond those of the **Jews**.

Whether I have succeeded in correctly explaining these matters or not, my failing in the attempt is of no great importance with respect to the strength of the objection that prompted it -- which was that scandalously **wicked** men among the **Jews** are called **God's people**, and so on. As I observed, the objection works as much against the position of those I oppose as against my own. Therefore it is just as much their responsibility to find an explanation showing that something other than having the qualifications of visible saints is meant by it, as it is mine. And a failure in such an attempt hurts their cause as much as it does mine.

OBJECTION 3. Those in **Israel** who made no profession of heartfelt godliness did, according to divine institution, partake of the **Passover** -- a **Jewish sacrament** representing the same things and sealing the very same covenant of grace as the **Lord's Supper**. In particular, it would be unreasonable to suppose that everyone who participated made a profession of godliness when God commanded the whole congregation to keep the first **Passover** in **Egypt**. There is no hint of their all first making a solemn public profession of the things in which true godliness consists. And so the people in general partook of the **Passover** from generation to generation. But it would be hard to suppose they all professed a supreme regard for God in their hearts.

ANSWER 1. The matter of the **Israelites'** participation in the **Passover** -- and particularly the first **Passover** in **Egypt** -- presents just as much difficulty regarding the qualifications that my **opponents** themselves consider necessary for communicants at the Lord's table as it does regarding the qualifications I insist upon. If there is any argument in this case, it is fully as strong an argument against **their** position as against mine. **One** thing they insist on as a required qualification for the Lord's Supper is a public profession of religion regarding its essential **doctrines**. But there is no more hint of a public profession of this kind preceding the Passover in **Egypt** than there is of a profession of godliness. Without even pressing the great doctrines of the **fall of man**, our **ruined condition by nature**, the **Trinity**, or our **dependence on the free grace of God for justification**, and so on -- let us take just two doctrines: a **future state of rewards and punishments** and the doctrine of **the Messiah to come**, the Messiah who was represented in the **Passover**. Is there any more evidence in the sacred record of the people making a public profession in **Egypt** of these doctrines before they partook of the Passover than there is of their professing love for God? And is there any more probability of the former than of the latter? **Another** thing that those on the other side consider necessary for proper attendance at the Lord's Supper is that when anyone has openly been guilty of serious sins, they should, before coming to this sacrament, openly **confess** and **humble** themselves for their faults. Now it is evident from many Scriptures that a large part of the children of **Israel** in **Egypt** had been guilty of joining the **Egyptians** in worshipping their false gods and had lived in **idolatry**. But the account in **Exodus** gives us no record of any public, solemn confes-

sion of, or humiliation for, this great sin before they came to the Passover. Mr. **Stoddard** observes (**Appeal**, pages 58-59) that in the church of **Israel** there was a way appointed by God for the removal of scandals: men were required in such cases 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, to remove the scandal of the most serious sin of **idolatry** they had been living in? Or is there any more probability that they publicly professed their repentance and humiliation for their sin before celebrating the Passover than that they publicly professed loving God above all? **Another** thing they consider necessary for admission to the Lord's table, and about which they would have particular care taken, is that every person admitted give evidence of adequate **knowledge** of the doctrines of religion, and that no one be allowed to partake who is grossly ignorant. Now there is no more evidence of this regarding the congregation in **Egypt** than of a **profession of godliness**, and it is just as difficult to suppose. There is abundant reason to suppose that vast numbers in that nation -- consisting of more than a million adults -- had been raised in a great degree of ignorance during their slavery in **Egypt**, where the people seem to have almost forgotten the true God and the true religion. And though **Moses** had made efforts for a short time to instruct the people better, we must consider that it is a very great task to take a whole nation under such degrees of ignorance and prejudice and bring every one of them to an adequate knowledge of religion. It is an even greater task for **Moses** both to instruct

them in this way and also, by examination or other means, to arrive at a fair confidence that all had indeed attained such knowledge.

Mr. **Stoddard** insists that if grace is required for the Lord's Supper, it would have been equally required for the **Passover**, since the chief thing the Passover (like the Lord's Supper) relates to and represents is Christ's sufferings. But if the same qualifications are therefore required for both ordinances, then it would be just as necessary for the participants to have knowledge to **discern the Lord's body** (in Mr. **Stoddard's** sense of 1 Corinthians 11:29) in the **Passover** as in the Lord's Supper. But this is certainly as hard to suppose as that they professed godliness. For how does it appear that the people in general who partook of the **Passover** knew it signified the death of the **Messiah** and the way He would make atonement for sin by His blood? Does it seem very likely that they would know this, when Christ's own disciples did not have knowledge to **discern the Lord's body** in the **Passover**, which they shared year after year with their Master? Can we suppose they actually knew that Christ's death and its purpose were signified by it, when they did not even realize the fact itself -- that Christ was to die -- at least not until the year before the last Passover? And besides, how unreasonable would it be to suppose that the **Jews** understood what was signified concerning Christ and salvation through Him in all the many kinds of sacrifices they attended and partook of, and all the vast variety of ceremonies belonging to them? All these sacrifices were sacramental representations of Christ's death, just as the sacrifice of the Passover was. The apostle tells us that all these things had **a shadow of the good things to come** -- the things concerning

Christ. Yet there are many of them that the church of Christ to this day does not understand, even though we have a thousand times greater advantage to understand them than they did. We have the **New Testament**, in which God uses **great plainness of speech** to guide us. We live in days when the **veil** that **Moses** put over his face has been taken away in Christ and the veil of the temple has been torn. We have the substance and fulfillment clearly displayed and so have the opportunity to compare these with those shadows.

If it is objected that a difficulty lies against our supposing a profession of godliness was required for participating in the **Passover** -- namely, that the **uncircumcised** were expressly forbidden to partake, and if conversion was an equally important or more important qualification than circumcision, why were the **unregenerate** not just as expressly forbidden? I answer: Why were not **scandalous** sinners just as expressly forbidden? And why was not **moral sincerity** as expressly required as circumcision?

If it is objected that **all** were expressly and strictly required to keep the Passover, but that if grace was necessary and God knew many of the participants would have no grace, why would He give such universal commands?

I answer: When God gave those commands, He knew that the commands in all their strictness would apply to many people who, at the time of the **Passover**, would lack even **moral sincerity** in religion. Every man in the nation, of every generation, who would be alive each year from the first institution until the death of Christ, was (except those who were ceremonially unclean or on a journey) strictly required to keep the feast of **Passover**. Yet God knew that multitudes would lack the qualification of **moral seri-**

ousness 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 the nation ever experienced -- or that there was ever such a happy day for that nation, or any other nation under heaven, when all were morally sincere in religion. How much more was this otherwise during the many periods when that nation, so prone to corruption, was generally involved in gross wickedness? But the strict command of God to keep the **Passover** applied to the morally **insincere** as well as to others. They are nowhere exempted, any more than the **unconverted** are. And as for any general commands of God's Word, these no more required people to turn from a state of moral insincerity before coming 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. If God could strictly command this, He could also strictly command them to keep the ordinance in which they were especially to profess and seal their profession of it. That **evil generation** was not expressly forbidden from keeping the **Passover** in the following years, throughout the whole **forty years** during which they went on provoking God, very often by gross sinning and open rebellion. Yet the express and strict commands for the whole congregation to keep the **Passover** still applied to them, and they were not released from their obligation.

If it is said that we must suppose multitudes in **Israel** attended the **Passover** from age to age without the kind of **visible evidence** of **godliness** I have insisted on, and yet we do not find their attendance at this ordinance charged against them as a **sin** in

Scripture -- I answer: We must also suppose that multitudes in **Israel** from age to age attended the Passover while living in **moral insincerity**, and even **scandalous wickedness**. For the people in general very often notoriously corrupted themselves and turned to ways of open and great transgression. Yet there is reason to think that during these times of corruption, they mostly continued to practice **circumcision** and the **Passover**. We do not find their attendance at these ordinances under such circumstances any more expressly charged against them as a sin than their attendance without heartfelt godliness. The **ten tribes** continued constantly in **idolatry** for about 250 years, and there are grounds to suppose that during this time they ordinarily kept up circumcision and the Passover. For although they worshipped God through images, they maintained most of the ceremonial observances of the law of **Moses** -- called **the customs of the God of the land** -- which their priests taught the **Samaritans** who were settled in their place. 2 Kings 17:26-27. Nevertheless, we do not find **Elijah**, **Elisha**, or other prophets who were sent among them reproving them for attending these ordinances without the required moral qualifications. Indeed there are some things in the writings of the prophets that might be interpreted as a reproof of this. But they are no more a reproof of this than of attending God's ordinances without a gracious sincerity and true godliness of heart and life.

How many periods were there when the people in general fell into and lived in **idolatry** -- that scandal of scandals -- during the times of the judges, and during the times of the kings in both **Judah** and **Israel**? But throughout all this wickedness, they continued to practice the sacrament of **circumcision**. We have every bit as much evidence of this as that they attended the **Passover**

without a profession of godliness. We have no account of their ever discontinuing it during such periods, nor any hint of its being renewed (as something that had ceased) when they undertook reforms. Though we have such a detailed account of the particulars of **Josiah's** reformation after the long, scandalous reign of **Manasseh**, there is no hint of any revival of **circumcision** or return to it after a period of disuse. And where do we have an account of the people being even once reprov'd for attending this holy sacrament while involved in **scandalous** sin, anywhere in the Old Testament? Where is this even once charged against them as a sin, any more than in the case of unconverted persons attending the sacrament of the **Passover**?

Answer 2. Whatever the case may have been regarding qualifications for the sacraments of the Old Testament dispensation, I humbly suggest it has no bearing on the present argument and is not needed to settle the question of qualifications for the sacraments of the **Christian** dispensation, which is a matter of such plain fact in the **New Testament**. I am far from thinking the Old Testament is like an old almanac that is no longer useful. Indeed, I think the New Testament makes clear that some things first instituted under the Old Testament continue under the New. For example, the acceptance of the infant children of believers as children of the covenant along with their parents. And probably some things belonging to the order and discipline of Christian churches had their beginning in the **Jewish** synagogue. But everyone agrees that the Old Testament **dispensation** has passed away along with its ordinances. And I think that in a matter related to the organization and order of the **New Testament church** -- a matter of fact on which the **New Testament** itself is clear, full, and abundant --

to go back to the **Mosaic** dispensation for rules or precedents to guide our judgment is entirely unnecessary and unreasonable. There is perhaps no area of theology that involves so much complexity, and in which orthodox theologians differ so much, as defining the precise agreement and difference between the two dispensations of **Moses** and of **Christ**. And probably the reason God has left it so complex is that our understanding the ancient dispensation and God's design in it is not of such great importance and does not concern us as closely. Since God uses great plainness of speech in the New Testament -- which is the charter and governing law of the Christian church -- what need is there to go back to the ceremonial and symbolic institutions of an outdated dispensation, in which God's declared design was to present divine things in comparative obscurity, hidden under a veil and wrapped in clouds?

We have no more reason to search among the types, obscure revelations, and physical ordinances of the Old Testament to find out whether this matter of fact concerning the structure and order of the New Testament church is true, than we have to go there to verify any other matter of fact that the New Testament records. For instance, whether there were such officers in the early church as **bishops and deacons**, whether **miraculous** gifts of the Spirit were common in the apostles' day, whether the believing **Gentiles** were received into the early Christian church, and the like.

Answer 3. I believe nothing can be cited from holy Scripture that is sufficient to prove a **profession of godliness** is not a qualification required for a proper and regular participation in the **Passover**.

Although none of the required moral qualifications for this **Jewish** sacrament, of either kind, are nearly as clearly stated in the Old Testament as the qualifications for the **Christian** sacraments are in the New -- and although the supposition that visible evidence of either moral sincerity or sanctifying grace was required involves some obscurity and difficulty in both cases -- yet I would humbly offer what appears to me to be the truth about this matter in the points 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 their **present devotion of heart to God** -- since this was before any specific institution of an express public profession, either of godliness or of repentance in cases of scandal: Yet I think there was some kind of **public display** or **implicit profession** of both. They probably professed implicitly in **Egypt** the same things they later professed more expressly and solemnly in the **wilderness**. The **Israelites** in **Egypt** had much to stir their hearts before the last plague, through the great things God had done for them -- especially in some of the later plagues, where they were so remarkably set apart from the **Egyptians**. They seem to have been brought to a tender frame of mind and a readiness to show much respect to God (see Exodus 12:27), and they were probably now very willing to declare themselves devoted to Him and truly repentant.

(2) After the institution of an **explicit public profession** of devotion to God -- or (which is the same thing) of true godliness of heart -- this was customarily required in order to participate in the **Passover** and other sacrifices and sacraments that adult persons

were admitted to. Accordingly, all the adult persons who were circumcised at **Gilgal** had made this profession a little earlier on the plains of **Moab**, as has already been observed. Not that all of them were truly gracious; but since they all had a profession and visible appearance, Christ in His dealings with His church regarding external matters did not act as the searcher of hearts but as the head of the visible church, accommodating Himself to the present state of mankind. This is why 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** about covenanting with God and professing devotion to Him. These professions were used, as public professions commonly still are in corrupt times, merely as matters of **form** and **ceremony** -- at least by great multitudes.

(4.) The nature of the **Levitical** dispensation was such that it had nowhere near as great a tendency to prevent **hypocritical professions** as the **New Testament** dispensation does -- particularly because of its vastly greater **darkness**. For the covenant of grace was not yet so fully revealed, and consequently the nature of the conditions of that covenant was not so well known. There was then a far more obscure revelation of the great duties of repentance toward God and faith in the Mediator, and of the things in which true holiness consists and by which it is distinguished from other things. People then did not have equal opportunity to know their own hearts, since they were viewing themselves in the comparatively dim light of **Moses'** law rather than in the clear sunshine of the Gospel. In that stage of the church's infancy, the nature of true godliness -- as consisting in the **spirit of adoption**, or genuine, childlike love for God, and as distinguished from a

spirit of bondage, slavish fear, and self-love -- was not so clearly revealed. The **Israelites** were therefore more likely to mistake for true godliness that moral seriousness and those warm emotions and resolutions that resulted from the **spirit of bondage** -- which showed itself remarkably in **Israel** at Mount **Sinai** and which they were especially prone to throughout all the Old Testament era.

(5.) God was pleased in large measure to **overlook and tolerate** (though He did not properly approve) the **laxness** among the people regarding the visible evidence of holiness and the moral qualifications required for attending their sacraments. He did the same in many other cases of great irregularity under that dark, imperfect, and comparatively earthly dispensation -- such as polygamy, divorcing their wives at will, the avenger of blood killing the manslayer, and so on. He overlooked the worshipping at high places in **Solomon's** time (1 Kings 3:4-5) and the neglect of keeping the Feast of Tabernacles according to the law, from **Joshua's** time until after the captivity (Nehemiah 8:17). He also overlooked the neglect of synagogue worship, or the public service of God in particular congregations, until after the captivity -- even though the light of nature, together with the general rules of the law of **Moses**, sufficiently taught and required it.

(6.) It seems to be repeatedly foretold in the prophecies of the Old Testament that there would be a great **change** in this respect in the days of the **Gospel** -- that under the new dispensation there would be far **greater purity** in the church. In the previously mentioned passage in **Ezekiel**, it is foretold that **those who are visibly uncircumcised in heart should no more enter into God's sanctuary**. Again, Ezekiel 20:37-38. **And I will make**

you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; and I will purge from among you the rebels and those who transgress against Me. This seems to be a prophecy of the greater purity of those who are visibly in **covenant with God.** Isaiah 4:3. **It will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy -- everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem.** Isaiah 52:1. **Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for the uncircumcised and the unclean will no more come into you.** Zechariah 14:21. **And in that day there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord.**

(7.) This is exactly the kind of change that would reasonably be expected from what we are taught about the whole **nature** of the **two dispensations.** The one had **physical ordinances** (as they are called in Hebrews 9:10), the other a **spiritual** service (John 4:24). The one had an **earthly** Canaan, the other a **heavenly**; the one an **external** Jerusalem, the other a **spiritual**; the one an **earthly** high priest, 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 recognized or understood in the **Passover**), the other a **spiritual and eternal.** And in keeping with these things, it was so ordered in God's providence that **Israel** -- the congregation that entered this **worldly** sanctuary and attended these **physical** ordinances -- would be a much more **worldly, earthly** congregation than the New Testament congregation. One reason why God's providence ordered such a difference seems to be this: so that the **Messiah** might have the honor of introducing a state of greater purity and spiritual glory.

This is why God is said to find **fault** with that ancient dispensation of the covenant. Hebrews 8:7-8. And the time of introducing the new dispensation is called the time of **reformation**. Hebrews 9:10. One thing in which the improvement over what God found fault with in the former dispensation would consist, the apostle indicates, is the greater **purity** and **spirituality** of the church. Hebrews 8:7-8, 11.

OBJECTION 4. It is not reasonable to suppose that the multitudes whom **John** the **Baptist** baptized made a **profession** of saving grace, or had any such **visible evidence** of true godliness as has been insisted on.

ANSWER. Those whom **John** baptized **came to him confessing their sins**, making a profession of some kind of **repentance**. It is not reasonable to suppose that the repentance they professed was specifically or essentially **different** from what he had taught them and called them to, which is called **repentance for the forgiveness of sins** -- and that is saving repentance. **John's** baptism is called **the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**. I do not know how such a phrase can reasonably be understood in any other way than as implying that his **baptism** was a display of that **repentance** and a seal of the profession of it. Baptism is a seal of some kind 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 forgiveness of sins**. It is said in Luke 3:3: **John preached the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**. What can be understood by this except that he preached that people should quickly **turn to God** through true **repentance** and **faith** in the promised Savior, **come and confess their sins**, openly declare

this repentance toward God and faith in the Lamb of God, and confirm and seal this profession through **baptism**? In baptism they would also receive the seal of God's willingness to **forgive the sins** of those who had this faith and repentance. Accordingly, we are told that the **people came and were baptized by him, confessing their sins** -- displaying and professing the kind of **repentance** and **faith** that he **preached**. They had no idea of any **other kind** of repentance that they could suppose **John called** them to profess in **baptism** besides this, accompanied by **faith** in the Lamb whom he called them to look to. For he **preached** no other kind to them. The people that **John** baptized professed both **repentance for the forgiveness of sins** and **faith in the Messiah**, as is evident from Acts 19:4-5. **John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Christ Jesus. When they heard this (John's preaching), they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**

If it is objected here that we are told in Matthew 3:5-6: **Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins** -- and that it is not to be imagined that **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 way Scripture uses language, than that there was a very large turnout of people from these places to **John**. Nor is any more to be understood by the similar universal term in John 3:26: **They came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, be-**

hold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him.' That is, there was a great turnout from all directions. It is not at all unreasonable to suppose that there was indeed a very large number of people who came to **John** from the places mentioned. Being deeply moved by his preaching during that time of extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit, they made profession of the faith and repentance that **John** preached. No doubt there were many more professors than genuine converts. But still, in the great crowds coming to **John**, there were many of the latter kind, as we may gather from the prophecy. This is clear from Luke 1:16-17: **And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.** And from the factual account in Matthew 11:12: **From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.** And in Luke 16:16: **The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.** Here the expression is no less universal than the one cited in Matthew 3:5-6. As for those wicked **Pharisees** who so strongly opposed Christ, some of them I suppose had been baptized by **John** and at the time made a great show of repentance and faith. But they afterward fell away and became much worse than before. This is why Christ speaks of them as being like a **house** from which **the unclean spirit** has visibly been driven out for a **while** and is **left empty, swept, and put**

in order, but is afterward **repossessed** and has many demons instead of one. Luke 11:24, and so on. Yet the greater part of these **Pharisees** were not baptized by **John**, as is clear from Luke 7:29-30.

If it is further objected that **John**, in baptizing such multitudes, could not have had **time** to be adequately informed about those he baptized -- whether their profession of godliness was **credible** or not -- I answer that we are not specifically informed about the circumstances of his teaching, the assistance he was blessed with, or the means he had of learning about those he baptized. But we can be certain of one thing: he had as much opportunity to inquire into the credibility of their profession as he had to inquire into their **doctrinal** knowledge and **moral** character, which my opponents consider just as necessary as I do. And this is enough to silence the present objection.

OBJECTION 5. Christ says in Matthew 20:16, and again in Matthew 22:14, that **many are called, but few are chosen**. By this it is evident that there are **many** who belong to the **visible church** and yet only **few** real and true **saints**. This is ordinarily the case even under the **New Testament** and in days of Gospel light. Therefore, the **visible evidence** of **sainthood** by which people are visible saints in the scriptural sense cannot imply an apparent probability of their being **real** saints or truly gracious persons.

ANSWER. In these texts, by those who are **called** is not meant those who are **visible saints** and have the required qualifications for Christian sacraments, but all who receive the **external call** of the word of God and have its offers and invitations made to them. It is undoubtedly true, and has been the case for the most part,

that among those **called** in this sense, **many** have been merely called and never truly obedient to the call, while **few** have been true saints. So it was in the **Jewish** nation, which the parable in Matthew 20 especially relates to. They generally had the **external call** of God's word and generally observed many religious duties in hopes of God's favor and reward -- which is called **laboring in God's vineyard**. Yet only **few** of them ultimately obtained salvation. Indeed, great multitudes of those who were **called** in this sense were **scandalous** persons and outright hypocrites. The **Pharisees** and **Sadducees** were **called**, and they **labored in the vineyard** in the sense of the parable -- for which they expected great rewards above the **Gentile** converts or proselytes. This is why they looked with an **evil eye** on them and could not stand that they should be made **equal** to them. But still, these **Pharisees** and **Sadducees** generally did not have the intellectual and moral qualifications that my opponents consider necessary for **Christian** sacraments, since they were generally scandalous persons who denied some fundamental principles of religion and explained away some of its most important commands. In the same way, **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 the **sacraments**.

That by those who are **called** in this saying of our Savior is meant those who receive the **Gospel offer**, and not those who belong to the society of **visible saints**, is evident beyond all dispute in Matthew 22:14. By the **many that are called** is plainly meant the many who are **invited to the wedding**. In the preceding parable, we have an account of those who from time to time were

invited or called -- for the word is the same in the original. Verse 3: **And he sent out his servants to call those who had been invited; and they were unwilling to come.** This refers to the **Jews**, who refused not only to come savingly to Christ but refused even to enter the visible church of Christ. Verse 4: **Again he sent out other servants saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, behold, I have prepared my dinner,'** and so on. Verse 8: **Those who had been invited were not worthy.** Verse 9: **Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.** This represents the preaching of the Gospel to the **Gentiles**, who upon hearing it came into the **king's house** -- that is, the visible church. Among them was **one who did not have on wedding clothes, who was bound hand and foot and cast out when the king came.** Then at the conclusion, Christ adds this remark, verse 14: **For many are called, but few are chosen.** This must refer not only to the **man** just mentioned who came into the wedding hall -- the Christian visible church -- **without wedding clothes**, but also to those mentioned before who were **called** but were unwilling even to **come into the king's house** or join the visible Christian church. To suppose this saying refers only to the **one man** who came without **wedding clothes** (representing someone who enters the visible church but is not a true saint) would make the introduction of this saying and its connection with what preceded it very strange and unintelligible. For then it would amount to saying: **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 6. When the servants of the householder in the parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13) unexpectedly found **tares** among the wheat, they said to their master, **Do you want us to go and gather them up? But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest.'** This shows Christ's intent that we should not try to make a **distinction** between true saints and mere professors in this world, or aim at anything like admitting true saints **only** into the visible church. Instead, we should let **both** remain **together** in the church until the day of **judgment**.

ANSWER 1. Nothing in this parable has any reference to **introduction** into the field or **admission** into the visible church, as though no care or measures should be taken to prevent **tares** from being **sown**. Nor does it suggest that the servants in charge of the field would have done well to have taken **tares**, appearing to be such, and **planted** them in the field among the wheat. No, the parable plainly implies the opposite. Rather, the words cited refer entirely to **casting out** and purging the field **after** the tares had been introduced **unknowingly** and **contrary to the design**, through human weakness and **Satan's** scheming. On the matter of purging **tares** from the field, or casting people out of the church, there is no disagreement between me and those I oppose in this controversy. Therefore it is impossible that anything Christ says here about this master could be an objection against **me** that is not equally an objection against **them**, since we both hold the same thing. It is agreed on all sides that adult persons actually admitted to communion in the visible church, however their behavior may cast suspicion on their spiritual state, should not be **cast out**

unless they are obstinate in **heresy** or **scandal** -- lest while we try to root out the **tares**, we root out the **wheat** as well. It is also agreed on all sides that when those represented as **tares** produce such evil fruit -- such scandalous and persistent wickedness as is plainly and visibly incompatible with the existence of true grace -- they should be **cast out**. Therefore it is impossible that this objection could serve any purpose.

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

(1) The parable plainly shows that if any are introduced into the householder's field, or church of Christ, who prove not to be **wheat** (that is, not true saints), they are brought in **unknowingly** or contrary to the design -- and they are what do not properly belong there. If **tares** are just as properly to be **sown** in the field as **wheat** -- which would have to be the case if the Lord's Supper were a **converting** ordinance -- then surely no care should be taken to introduce **wheat** only, and no more regard should be given to the qualities of **wheat** in sowing the field than to the qualities of **tares**. There would be no more impropriety in the **tares** being there than in the **wheat**. But this is surely altogether inconsistent with the thrust of the parable.

(2) This parable plainly shows that those who are in the visible church all have at first a **visible appearance**, to human sight, of **true grace** or of the nature of true saints. For it is noted that **tares** have this property: when they first appear, and until the plants in the field reach some maturity, they so closely resemble **wheat** that it is nearly impossible to **distinguish** them.

OBJECTION 7. Christ Himself administered the Lord's Supper to **Judas**, whom He knew at the time to be **graceless**. This is full evidence that grace is not **in itself** a required qualification for coming to the Lord's Supper. And if it is **not** required in itself, a **profession** of it cannot be required.

ANSWER 1. It appears to me 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 Passover dish**. The first three Evangelists differ in the order of their accounts 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**. (Matthew 26:23; Mark 14:20.) Similar things can be shown in many instances of these three Evangelists differing from one another in the **order** of their narratives. One places events in his account after others that another places first. These sacred historians did not undertake to state precisely the **date** of every incident but paid more attention to the truth of the facts than to the order of time. However, in the present case, the nature of the thing speaks for itself and shows that **Judas's dipping with Christ in the dish, or his hand being with Christ on the table, or receiving a morsel dipped in the dish**, must have occurred in the order in which **Matthew** and **Mark** place it in their accounts -- namely, at the **Passover**, before the Lord's Supper. For there is no such thing in the Lord's Supper as **dipping morsels** and **dipping together in the dish**. But there was such a thing at the Passover, where all put their hands together in the dish and dipped their morsels 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 detailed about what happened that night and is everywhere more precise about the order of time than the other Evangelists, gives us an account and is very specific about the timing -- namely, that **Jesus, when He gave him the morsel**, at the same time sent him away, telling him to **do quickly what he intended to do**. Accordingly, **when he had received the morsel, he went out immediately**. John 13:27-30. Now since this morsel was at the **Passover**, it is evident that he was not present at the **Lord's Supper** that followed. Many of the best commentators hold this view, such as **Van Mastricht**, Dr. **Doddridge**, and others.

ANSWER 2. Even if **Judas** was present, I deny the conclusion. As I have observed repeatedly concerning the Lord's dealings with His people under the Old Testament, so under the New the same principle applies: Christ did not come to **judge the secrets of man**, nor did He ordinarily act in His external dealings with His disciples and in the administration of ordinances as the **searcher of hearts**. Rather, He acted as the head of the visible church, proceeding according to what was exhibited in profession and visible appearance -- setting an example for His ministers who would stand in His place after He was gone and act in His name in the administration of ordinances. **Judas** had made the same profession of loyalty to his Master and of forsaking all for Him as the other disciples. Therefore Christ did not openly reject him until he himself had destroyed his profession and visible evidence of sainthood through public, scandalous apostasy. Even assuming **Judas** was present at the Lord's Supper, this provides no support for the position I oppose.

ANSWER 3. If those with whom I am dealing in this controversy are not satisfied with the answers already given and think there is a remaining difficulty in this matter that weighs against **my position**, I will venture to tell them that the difficulty weighs just as heavily against **their own position**. If there is any strength at all in the argument, it works in every respect with the same force against the need for the **qualifications** they themselves consider necessary for approaching the Lord's table as against those I believe are necessary. For although they do not think renewing saving grace is necessary, they do consider **moral seriousness** or (as they variously put it) **moral sincerity** in religion to be necessary. They consider it essential that people should have some kind of serious principle and purpose in coming to the Lord's table -- some sort of intention to submit to Christ and to seek and serve Him in general -- and in particular some religious purpose in coming to the sacramental supper, some religious regard for Christ in it. But did not Christ at that time know perfectly well that **Judas** had none of these things? He knew he had nothing of **sincerity** in the Christian religion or of regard for **Christ** in that ordinance of any kind whatsoever. He knew that **Satan** had **entered into him** and filled his heart, and that he was then cherishing a spiteful, hateful spirit against his Master, stirred up by the reproof Christ had recently given him. (Compare John 12:8 with Matthew 26:8-16 and Mark 14:4-11.) He knew Judas had already formed a treacherous, murderous plan against Him and was now carrying out that bloody scheme, having actually just before gone to the chief priests and agreed with them to **betray** Him for thirty pieces of silver. (See Matthew 26:14-16; 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 this had not yet been made known to the church or the disciples. Therefore it is just as much the responsibility of those on the other side of this controversy to find some solution to this difficulty as it is mine. They will find they have as much need to take refuge in the solution already given in one or the 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 even **moral sincerity**, and so on - - is another thing that completely undermines all the force of the objection from the **Passover** against my position. For **Judas** not only fell under God's strict command in the law of **Moses** to keep this feast, just like everyone else and without any exception of his case to be found there. **Christ** Himself with His own hand gave him the **morsel**, a part of the Passover feast, even though at that very moment He had in view the man's secret wickedness and hypocrisy, the treacherous plan then in his heart, and the terrible conspiracy with the chief priests that he had already entered into and was now carrying out. This was on Christ's mind at the time, and He indicated it to him at the very moment He gave him the morsel, saying, **What you do, do quickly**. This demonstrates that the objection from the **Passover** is no stronger an argument against my position than against the position of those I oppose. It is no stronger against the necessity of **sanctifying grace** -- the qualification for Christian sacraments that I insist on -- than it is against the necessity of **moral seriousness or sincerity** -- the qualification they insist on.

OBJECTION 8. If **sanctifying grace** is a required qualification for people's proper access to Christian sacraments, God would have given some **certain rule** by which those who admit them could know whether they have such grace or not.

This objection was dealt with when I first posed the question. However, I will say something further about it here. I would observe that if there is any strength in this objection, it rests on the truth of this proposition: **Whatever qualifications are required for people's proper access to Christian sacraments, God has given some certain rule by which those who admit them can 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 am confident there is not a theologian or a Christian of common sense anywhere on earth who will assert and maintain that this proposition is true. For no one will deny that some kind of belief in the existence of God, some kind 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 required for people's proper access to Christian sacraments. Yet God has given those who admit people no **certain rule** by which they can know whether they **believe** any one of these things. Nor has He given His ministers or churches any **certain rule** by which they can know whether any person who presents himself for admission to the sacrament has any degree of **moral sincerity, moral seriousness** of spirit, or any inward moral qualification whatsoever. All these things exist within the soul, which is beyond our neighbor's view. Therefore, not **certainty** but a **profession** and **visible evidence** of these things must be the rule the church follows. And it is just as good

and reasonable a rule of judgment concerning **saving grace** as it is concerning any other internal, invisible qualification that no one can certainly know except the person himself.

OBJECTION 9. If **sanctifying grace** is required for a proper approach to the Lord's table, then no one may come unless he **knows** he has such grace. A person must not merely **think** he has a right to the Lord's Supper in order to partake of it lawfully; he must **know** he has a right. If nothing but **sanctification** gives him a **real right** to the Lord's Supper, then nothing less than **knowledge** of sanctification gives him a **known right** to it. A mere **opinion** and **probable hope** of a right will not justify his coming.

Answer 1. I urge those who insist on this as an unanswerable argument to consider calmly whether they themselves ever **did** or ever **will** maintain it. For here two things are to be observed.

(1) If no one may justifiably come to the Lord's Supper unless he **knows** he has a **right**, then no **unconverted** person may come unless he not only **thinks** but **knows** it is the **mind of God** that unconverted persons should come, and **knows** that He does not require **grace** as a condition for their coming. For unless they know that people may come **without grace**, they cannot **know** that they themselves have a **right** to come **while being without grace**. Will anyone assert and stand by the claim that every adult person, of every age, rank, and condition of life, must necessarily be so versed in this controversy as to have certainty on this matter before coming to the Lord's Supper? It would be utterly absurd to claim this is a point so easily proven, with evidence so clear and obvious to everyone of every ability, that there is no need for them to study theology in order to be certain of its truth -- that people

may come to the sacred table of the Lord even though they **know** themselves to be **unconverted!** This is especially so considering that it appears to be a matter of plain fact that the opposite of this opinion has generally been the judgment of Protestant theologians and churches from the Reformation to this day, and that the greater part of the greatest theologians who have ever lived -- men who spent their lives in diligent, prayerful study of theology -- have been firmly committed to the reverse of that opinion. This is enough at least to show that this opinion is not so plain as to be beyond dispute, and that its evidence is not so obvious to persons of the lowest ability and little inquiry that all can arrive at certainty on the matter without difficulty and without study. I would humbly ask here: What has been the actual case in **our** churches, which have operated on this principle for so many years? Can it be claimed, or was it ever supposed, that the communicants in general -- even persons of limited intellect and little education, not excepting the very boys and girls of sixteen years old who have been taken into the church -- had so studied theology as not only to **think** but to **know** that our godly forefathers and almost all the Protestant and Christian theologians in the world had been in **error** on this matter? And have people ever been taught the **necessity** of this prior knowledge? Has it ever been insisted that before coming to the Lord's Supper, people must look so far into the question of a **right** to the Lord's Supper as to arrive not only at a fully settled opinion but even **certainty** on this point? And has any minister or church in their admissions ever proceeded on the assumption that everyone they received into communion was this well versed in the controversy? Has it ever been the practice, when examining them for the adequacy of their **knowledge**, to examine

them on their thorough familiarity with this particular controversy? Has it been the practice to turn away those who had only an opinion and not certainty -- just as the **priests** who could not find their **genealogical record** were set aside until the matter could be determined by **Urim and Thummim**? And I dare appeal to every minister and every church member who has been involved in admitting communicants: did they ever imagine, or did it ever enter their minds, that each person whose admission they approved had looked so deeply into this matter as to have arrived not merely at a settled **opinion** but at genuine **certainty**?

(2) I would like it remembered that the respected author of the **Appeal to the Learned** taught in his ministry a doctrine from which it unavoidably follows that no **unconverted** man in the world can **know** he has warrant to come to the Lord's Supper. For if any unconverted man has warrant to worship his Maker in this way, it must be because God has given him warrant through the revelation of His will in the holy Scriptures. Therefore, if any unconverted man not only **thinks** but **knows** he has warrant from God, he must not only **think** but **know** that the Scriptures are the Word of God. But I believe all who survive as regular hearers of that eminent minister, and all who were acquainted with him, well remember that it was a doctrine he often taught and strongly insisted on -- that no natural man **knows** the Scripture to be the Word of God; that although such a person may **think** so, he does not **know** it; and that at best he has only a **doubtful opinion**. He would often express himself this way: **No natural man is thoroughly convinced that the Scriptures are the Word of God; if they were convinced, they would be won over.** Now if this is true, it is impossible for any natural man in the world ever

to **know** that 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 cannot **know** it -- and so he must not come, according to this argument. For it is only the **Word of God** in the holy Scriptures that gives a person a **right** to worship the supreme Being in this sacramental manner and to approach Him in this way, or any other way, as one in covenant with Him. The Lord's Supper is not a form of natural worship. Reason without divine institution provides no basis for duty or right in this matter. It is therefore plainly impossible for those who do not even **know** the Scriptures are the Word of God to **know** they have any valid ground of duty or right in this matter. Therefore, even supposing unconverted men have a real right, since they have no **known** right, they have no warrant (according to the argument before us) to claim and use their right. What good then can their right do them? Or how can they excuse themselves from presumption in claiming a **right** that they do not **know** belongs to them? It is said that a **probable hope** that a person is regenerate will not justify him in coming -- that if he comes, he is taking the liberty to do something he does not **know** God gives him permission to do, which is terrible presumption. But if this is good reasoning, I may just as well say: a **probable opinion** that unregenerate men may take communion will not justify them in doing it. They must have **certain knowledge** of this; otherwise, since their **right** is uncertain, they take a dreadful risk in coming.

ANSWER 2. People are just as liable to doubt their **moral sincerity** as they are to doubt saving grace. If an unconverted man, aware that he is under the ruling power of sin, were about to solemnly **own the covenant** (as it is commonly called) and pro-

fess to give himself entirely and permanently to the service of God -- and if he knew at the same time that doing this and sealing this profession at the Lord's Supper without **moral sincerity** (assuming he understood the meaning of that phrase) would cause him to **eat and drink judgment** on himself -- and if, accordingly, his conscience were awakened and he became **afraid of God's judgment** -- in that case, I believe, the man would be every bit as liable to doubts about his **moral sincerity** as godly people are about their gracious sincerity. If it is not actually the case that natural men are as often troubled with doubts about their **moral sincerity** as godly men are about their regeneration, I believe it is only because godly men, having 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 theologians on the other side of the question suppose 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 such a weak and poor kind of faith in these mysteries -- would, if they were indeed as afraid of the terrible consequences of being deceived in this matter, or of not being **morally sincere** in their profession of the truth, as truly gracious men tend to be of delusion concerning their experience of a work of grace or whether they are genuinely sincere in choosing God as their portion -- the former would be troubled with doubts in the one case just as frequently as the latter in the other. I very much question whether any theologian on the other side of the controversy would think it necessary for natural men, when professing these things, to mean that they **know** they are **morally sincere**,

or to intend anything more than that they trust they have that sincerity as far as they know their own hearts. If a man came to them proposing to join the church and told them that although he was somewhat afraid about whether he believed the doctrine of the Trinity **with all his heart** (meaning in a moral sense), yet he had often **examined** himself on the matter with the utmost impartiality and strictness he was capable of, and on the whole he found reasons for probable hope, and his predominant assessment of himself was that he was **sincere** in it -- would they think such a person should be rejected? Or would they advise him not to come 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 to be required in order to be properly qualified, according to God's Word, for attending the Lord's Supper, it still does not follow that a person must **know** he has this qualification in order to **conscientiously** attend. If he **judges** that he has it, according to the best light he can obtain, after the most careful examination, with the use of whatever helps he can get -- the advice of his pastor, and so on -- he may be **obligated in conscience** to attend. The reason is this: Christians partaking of the Lord's Supper is not merely a matter of **claim** or **right** and **privilege**, but a matter of **duty** and **obligation** -- an affair in which another (namely God) has a **claim** and **demand** on us. Just as we should be careful on the one hand to proceed on good grounds when claiming 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 withhold from Him what is His due and what He rightfully demands from us. Therefore, in a case of this com-

plex nature -- where something is both a matter of **right** or **privilege** for 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. Consequently, if we cannot be absolutely sure either way, our best judgment, formed after all proper efforts to know the truth, must govern and determine us. Otherwise we would deliberately do the thing that, according to our own judgment, carries the greatest risk -- which is certainly contrary to reason. If the question were only what a person has a **right** to, he could refrain until he was certain. But the question is not only whether **he** has a right to attend the Supper, but whether **God** also has a right to his attendance there. Suppose it were merely a privilege allowed in a certain specified case, and there were no command to take the Lord's Supper even in **that case**, but at the same time there was a command **not** to take it **unless that be the case** in fact. Then, if I am uncertain **whether that is my case or not**, it will be safest to abstain. But suppose I am not only forbidden to take it unless that is my case, but also positively commanded and required to take it if that is my case in fact. Then it is equally dangerous to **neglect** on uncertainties as to **take** on uncertainties. In such a critical situation, a person must act according to the best of his judgment about his case. Otherwise he willfully runs into what he himself thinks is the greater danger of the two.

This is true in countless areas of human life. I will give one clear example. A man should not take up the work of the **ministry** unless **called** to it in the providence of God. A person has no right to **take this honor upon himself unless called by God**. Now suppose a young man of good education and strong abilities is uncertain whether it is the will of God that he should pursue the work

of the ministry. He examines himself and his circumstances with great seriousness and solemn prayer, and carefully considers and weighs the indications in divine providence. Yet when he has done everything, he has not arrived at proper certainty that God is calling him to this work. However, it does look that way to him, according to the best light he can obtain and the most careful judgment he can form. Now such a person appears **obligated in conscience** to give himself to this work. He must by no means neglect it on the notion that he must not **take this honor upon himself** until he **knows** he has a **right** to it. For although it is indeed a **privilege**, it is not a matter of **mere** privilege but a matter of duty as well. If he neglects it **under these circumstances**, he is neglecting what, according to his own best judgment, he **believes** God requires of him and calls him to -- which is to sin against his **conscience**.

As for the case of the **priests** who could not find their **genealogical record** (Ezra 2), cited in the **Appeal to the Learned** (page 64), it seems to me to carry no weight in this argument. For even if those **priests** had the greatest personal **assurance** that their ancestry was legitimate and that they were descended from **priests**, and had **professed** such assurance, it still would not have been accepted. They did not refrain from the **priesthood** because they themselves lacked confidence, but because they were subject to the judgment of the **Sanhedrin**. The rule by which the Sanhedrin judged the qualification in question was not based on any profession by the individuals themselves, but on the visible evidence of the fact as seen with their own eyes -- the matter of **ancestry** being an external reality, ordinarily within human view, and not a qualification of the heart. But this is not the

case with the qualifications required for the **Lord's Supper**. Since many of these are internal, invisible things located in the mind and heart -- such as **belief** in a supreme Being, and so on -- God has made a credible **profession** of these things the rule to guide admission to the ordinance. In making this profession, people are governed by their own judgment of themselves, not by anything within the church's view.

OBJECTION 10. The natural consequence of the doctrine that has been maintained is to bring multitudes of people with a **tender conscience** and true godliness into great **perplexity**. Being uncertain about the state of their souls, they must inevitably be just as uncertain about their duty. It is not reasonable to suppose that God would arrange things in the revelations of His will so as to **bring His own people into such perplexities**.

ANSWER 1. It is only for **lack** of the same tenderness of conscience that the godly have, that the other doctrine -- the one insisting on **moral sincerity** -- does not naturally bring those who are received into communion on those principles into the same **perplexities** through their doubting of their **moral sincerity**, their believing mysteries **with all their heart**, and so on, as has already been observed. Being **free** from perplexity only through **numbness** and hardness of heart is **worse** than being in the greatest perplexity through tenderness of conscience.

ANSWER 2. Suppose the doctrine I have maintained is indeed the doctrine of **God's Word**. It still does not follow that the **perplexities** true saints experience through doubting their spiritual state are caused by the **revelations of God's Word**. Perplexity and distress of mind -- not only regarding the Lord's Supper but on countless other occasions -- is the natural and unavoidable con-

sequence of true Christians **doubting their spiritual state**. But shall we therefore say that all these perplexities are caused by the **Word of God**? No. It is not owing to God, nor to any of His revelations, that true saints ever doubt their state. His revelations are plain and clear, and His rules are sufficient for people to determine their own condition by. For the most part, it is owing to their own **laziness** and giving way to their **sinful** tendencies. Must God's institutions and revelations be held accountable for all the perplexities people bring on themselves through their own negligence and lack of watchfulness? It is wisely ordered that the saints should escape perplexity in no other way than through great strictness, diligence, and maintaining the lively, hard-working, and self-denying exercises of religion.

It might as well be said that it is unreasonable to suppose God should arrange things so as to bring His own people into such perplexities as doubting saints commonly experience when **death** visibly approaches. In that case their doubts tend to produce vastly greater **perplexity** than when they approach the Lord's table. If Christians would more thoroughly **discipline themselves for godliness** and always labor to **keep a conscience free from offense both toward God and toward man**, it would be the way to have comfort and taste the sweetness of religion. If they would **run in such a way as not uncertainly, and fight in such a way as not beating the air**, it would be the way for them to escape perplexity in both ordinances and providences, and to rejoice and enjoy God in both. Not that doubting their spiritual state sometimes arises only from lack of watchfulness. It may arise from depression and some other particular disadvantages. But

however, it is not owing to God's revelations or institutions. Whatever we may suppose those institutions to be, they will not prevent the perplexities of **such** persons.

Answer 3. It seems reasonable to me to suppose that the doctrine I maintain, if **universally** embraced by God's people, would -- even though it might on occasion cause **perplexity** in many cases through their own weakness and sin -- on the whole bring far more **comfort** to the saints than trouble. It would have a tendency, at every return of the Lord's Supper, to prompt them to the strictest examination and testing of the state of their souls, in keeping with the apostle's rule in 1 Corinthians 11:28. The **neglect** of this 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 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 could know it if they would -- that is, if they would use proper means and efforts to reach it. If so, then certainly it is not fair to blame **God's institutions** for perplexities that arise from **people's negligence**. Nor would it be fair even on the supposition that God's institutions are such as I suppose them to be.

OBJECTION 11. You might as well say that unsanctified persons may not attend **any** duty of divine worship whatsoever as say they may not attend the Lord's Supper. For all duties of worship are **holy** and **require holiness** for acceptable performance, just as the Lord's Supper does.

Answer. If this argument has any foundation at all, it rests on the supposed truth of the following **proposition: Whoever is qualified for admission to one duty of divine worship is**

qualified for admission to all; and whoever is unqualified for one and may be forbidden from one is unqualified for all and should not be allowed to attend any. But these propositions are certainly not true. There are many who are **qualified** for some duties of worship and may be **allowed** -- and should by no means be **forbidden** -- to attend them, yet who are **not** qualified for some others and should by no means be admitted to them. As everyone grants, the unbaptized, the excommunicated, heretics, scandalous sinners, and so on may be admitted to hear the **Word** preached. Nevertheless, they are not to be allowed to come to the Lord's Supper. Even excommunicated persons remain under the law of the Sabbath and are not to be forbidden from observing the Lord's Day. Ignorant persons who do not have enough knowledge for an approach to the Lord's table are still not excused from the duty of prayer. They may pray to God to instruct them and assist them in obtaining knowledge. Those who have been raised in **Arianism** and **Socinianism** and have not yet been brought away from these fundamental errors -- and so are by no means to be admitted to the Lord's Supper -- may still pray to God to assist them in their studies, guide them into the truth, and grant them all other mercies they need. **Socrates**, that great Gentile philosopher who worshipped the true God as he was led by the light of nature, was able to pray to God, and he was doing his duty when he did so -- even though he did not know the revelation God had made of Himself in His Word. That great philosopher who was a contemporary of the apostle **Paul** -- I mean **Seneca** -- who held that there was one supreme Being and had in many respects correct ideas about the divine perfections and providence, even though he did not embrace the Gospel that was being preached in

the world at that time, could still pray to the supreme Being 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 so he might know whether the doctrine **Paul** preached was true, he would have been acting in a way very fitting for a reasonable creature, and anyone would have been unreasonable to forbid him. But surely neither of these men was qualified for the Christian sacraments. So it is clear that there is and ought to be a **distinction** made between duties of worship with respect to qualifications for them. What is a sufficient qualification for admission to one duty is not sufficient for all. Therefore, the proposition that is the entire foundation on which this argument rests is not true. To say that although a distinction should indeed be made in admission to duties of worship regarding some qualifications, yet sanctifying grace is not one of the qualifications that makes the difference -- this would be simply giving up the argument and perfectly begging the question.

It is said that **no reason** can be given why unsanctified persons may attend **other** duties of worship but not the **Lord's Supper**. But I humbly suggest this must be an oversight. For there is a very obvious reason, found in a necessary and very notable **distinction** among duties of worship, which is as follows.

1. There are **some duties** of worship that imply a **profession of God's covenant**. Their very nature and purpose is an exhibition of those vital, active principles and inward exercises that make up the **condition of the covenant of grace** -- that union of the soul to God which is the union between Christ and His bride, entered into by an inward, heartfelt consent to that covenant. Such are the Christian **sacraments**, whose very purpose is to make and

confirm a **profession** of agreement with that covenant, and whose very nature is to express the uniting acts of the soul. Therefore, these sacramental duties cannot be attended by anyone whose heart does not truly consent to that covenant and whose soul does not truly embrace Christ, without their either being self-deceived or else willfully making a false profession and lying in a very serious manner.

2. There are **other duties** that 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**. Instead, they are the expression of **general virtues** -- virtues in their broadest sense, including both special and common. For example, **prayer**, or asking mercy from God, is in its own nature **not** a profession of compliance with the **covenant** of grace. It is an expression of some belief in the existence of God, some sense of our needs, some sense of our need for help and for God's help in particular, some sense of our dependence, and so on -- but not necessarily a saving or spiritual sense of these things. Indeed, there are some prayers that are proper only for **saints** to make, and many things proper for them to express in prayer, which imply the profession of a spiritual union of heart to God through Christ -- prayers that no pagan, no heretic, and no natural man can or should make. But 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 **Muslim** may ask for mercy just as well as he may listen to instruction. And any natural man may express his desires to God just as well as he may listen when God declares His will to him. It is true that when an unconverted man prays, the

manner of his doing it is sinful. But when a natural man, knowing himself to be such, comes to the Lord's Supper, the very **substance** of what he does -- in terms of the profession he makes there and his claim to take hold of God's covenant -- is a **lie**, and a lie told in the most solemn manner.

In a word, the respected 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 heading of moral duty and considers **common** to all. But the **sacraments**, according to what he says there, being **instituted**, are of **special** administration and must be limited in accordance with the institution.

OBJECTION 12. The Lord's Supper has a natural **tendency** to promote people's **conversion**, being a moving representation of the greatest and most important things of God's Word. It has a natural **tendency** to awaken and humble sinners, since it reveals the terrible anger of God against sin through the infliction of the curse upon Christ when sin was charged to Him. And the representation made here of the dying love of Christ has a **tendency** to draw the hearts of sinners from sin to God, and so on.

Answer. Unless it is an obvious truth that **whatever the Lord's Supper may have a tendency to promote, that is what it was appointed to promote**, nothing follows from this argument. If the argument proves anything, its conclusion is built on the **tendency** of the Lord's Supper. If the conclusion is sound and strong on this foundation, drawn from such premises, then wherever the **premises hold**, the **conclusion** holds. Otherwise it must be shown that the **premises** and **conclusion** are not connected. Now let us see how it works in **fact**. Do not **scandalous**

persons need to have these very effects produced in their hearts that have been mentioned? Yes, certainly. They need them in a special way. They need to be awakened. They need a stirring disclosure of that terrible wrath of God against sin that was displayed in a unique way through the terrible effects of God's wrath in the sufferings of His own incarnate Son. Gross sinners need this in some respects more than others. They need to have their hearts broken by a moving view of the great and important things of God's Word. They especially need to flee to Christ for refuge and therefore need to have their hearts drawn. Since the **Lord's Supper** has such a great **tendency** to promote these things, if the reasoning from the **tendency** of the Lord's Supper to the **purpose** of its appointment is valid, then it must also be a valid conclusion that the Lord's Supper was appointed for reclaiming and bringing to repentance **scandalous** persons.

For anyone to dismiss this by saying, **Scandalous persons are expressly forbidden**, is simply giving up the argument and begging the question. It gives up the argument because it admits the **conclusion** is not valid -- since it concedes that despite the Lord's Supper's natural **tendency** to promote a particular end, it may still be the case that the Lord's Supper was not appointed with a view to promoting that end. And it begs the question because it assumes that **unconverted men are not clearly forbidden**, just as scandalous persons are -- which is the very thing under debate. If they are **clearly** forbidden, that is as good to reasonable people (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 for orderly members** and that **there is another ordinance appointed for bringing scan-**

dalous persons to repentance -- this is no solution to the difficulty. It is only another instance of giving up the argument and begging the question. For it plainly concedes that the **tendency** of an ordinance does not prove it was **appointed** for all the ends it seems to have a tendency to promote. And it also assumes that there is no **other** ordinance appointed for the conversion of sinners who are moral and orderly in their lives, **apart from this one** -- which is the very thing in question.

It is at best very shaky reasoning to argue from the apparent **tendency** of things to the **divine appointment**, or God's will and intention regarding the **use** of those things. It looks as though it would have had a great **tendency** to convince the **scribes** and **Pharisees** and to promote their conversion, if they had been admitted to the mountain when Christ was **transfigured**. But it was not the will of Christ that they should be admitted there, or anyone else but **Peter, James, and John**. It seems as though it would have had a very great **tendency** to convince and bring to repentance the unbelieving **Jews** if they had been allowed to see and freely interact with Christ after His **resurrection** and to see Him **ascend** into heaven. But it was the will of God that no one but **disciples** should be admitted to these privileges. Similarly, it seems as though it might have had a good **tendency** if **all** sincere followers of Christ -- women as well as men -- had been allowed to be **present** at the institution of the **Lord's Supper**. But it is commonly believed that no one was admitted besides the **apostles**.

Indeed the ever-honored author of the **Appeal to the Learned** has provided me with the true and proper answer to this objection in the following words, pages 27-28. The effectiveness of

the Lord's Supper depends on the blessing of God. **Whatever tendency ordinances have in their own nature to be useful to people, they will not accomplish anything beyond what God blesses them to accomplish. The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God.** 2 Corinthians 10:4. It is God who teaches people to profit, and who makes ordinances profitable and useful to people's souls. There is reason to hope for a divine blessing on the **Lord's Supper** when it is administered to those it **ought** to be administered to. God's **blessing** is to be expected in God's **way**. If people act according to their own whims and fancies, and do not keep in the way of **obedience**, it is presumption to expect God's blessing. Matthew 15:9: **But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.** But when **those** are admitted to the Lord's Supper **whom God intends** to be admitted, there is ground to hope that He will make it profitable.

OBJECTION 13. All who are members of the **visible church** and in the **external covenant**, and who are neither ignorant nor scandalous, are commanded to perform all **external covenant duties**. In particular, they are commanded to attend the **Lord's Supper** by those words of Christ: **This do in remembrance of Me.**

ANSWER. This argument carries no weight without first taking for granted the very thing in question. For what is plainly assumed in it is this: although these commands are given to those in the **external covenant**, yet they are not given **without qualification**. They come with exceptions and limitations, and do not directly apply to **all** such people. They do not apply to those who are **unqualified**, even though they are in the **external covenant**. Now

the question is: **who** are these **unqualified** people? The objection assumes that only ignorant and **scandalous** persons are unqualified. But **why** are they alone supposed to be unqualified, and not **unconverted** persons too? **Because** it is taken for granted that unconverted persons are **not** unqualified. And so the very point at issue is assumed instead of being proven. Why are these limitations alone singled out -- **neither ignorant nor scandalous** -- and not others as well? The answer must be: because these are **all** the limitations Scripture makes. But this is the very thing under debate. The purpose of an argument, however, is to **prove**, not to assume or take for granted, the very thing that needs to be proven.

If it is said here that it is with good reason that only the **ignorant** or **scandalous** are supposed to be excepted from God's command and the obligations of the **covenant** -- because the covenant spoken of in the objection is the **external covenant**, and this requires only **external duties**, which alone are within the reach of man's **natural ability** and so within the reach of his **legal obligation** -- since God does not command or require what men have no natural power to perform, and which cannot be performed before something else, some prior duty, is performed, which prior duty is itself not within their natural power --

I reply: Things are still only **assumed** that should be proven and that need confirmation.

(1) It is **assumed** that those who have **externally** (that is, by verbal profession and promise) entered into God's covenant are thereby obligated to nothing more than the external duties of that covenant. This is not proven, and I humbly suggest it is certainly not the true state of the case. Those who have **externally** entered into God's covenant have, by external profession and commitment,

entered into that one and only **covenant of grace** that Scripture tells us about. Therefore they are obligated to fulfill the duties of **that** covenant, which are mainly **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 on tablets of stone, which were therefore called **the tablets of the covenant**. The sum of these ten commands was to **love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul, and to love their neighbor as themselves** -- which are primarily, at the very least, **internal** duties. In particular, they promised **not to covet** -- which is an **internal** duty. They promised to **have no other gods before the Lord** -- which implied that they would in their hearts regard no other being or object above God or as equal with Him, but would give Him their supreme devotion.

(2) It is **assumed** that God does not **require impossibilities** of people -- in the sense that He does not require things that are beyond their **natural** ability, and in particular that He does not require them to be **converted**. But this is not proven, nor can I reconcile it with the tenor of Scripture's revelation. The chief advocates for the doctrine I oppose have themselves abundantly asserted the contrary. The respected author previously mentioned, as everyone who knew him well knows, always taught that God justly requires people to be **converted**, to repent of their sins and turn to the Lord, to embrace Christ and savingly believe in Him. He taught that in refusing to accept Christ and turn to God, they disobeyed the divine **commands** and were guilty of the most serious sin, and that their moral **inability** was no excuse.

(3) It is **assumed** that God does not command people to do things that cannot be done until **something else** is done first that is not within the reach of man's **natural ability**. This also is not proven, nor do I see how it can be true, even according to the principles of those who press this objection. The previously mentioned distinguished minister always taught that God commands natural men to **believe** in Christ without delay. Yet he always held that it was impossible for them to believe until they had by a **preceding** act submitted to the **sovereignty** of God -- which, he held, people could never do **on their own**, not until they were humbled and broken by powerful convictions from God's Spirit. Again, he taught that God commands natural men to **love** Him with all their heart. Yet he held that this could not happen until people had first **believed** in Christ, since the exercise of love is a fruit of faith. And he supposed that believing in Christ was not within the reach of man's **natural ability**. Further, he held that God requires of all people holy, spiritual, and acceptable **obedience**. Yet he said such obedience was not within the reach of their **natural ability**. Not only that, but there must first be **love** for God before there could be new obedience, and this love for God was not within the reach of man's **natural ability**. Nor was that all -- before this love there must be **faith**, which was not within the reach of man's **natural power**. And still further, before faith there must be the **knowledge** of God, which was not within **natural** man's reach. And yet again, even before the knowledge of God there must be thorough **humiliation**, which people could not produce in themselves by any natural power of their own. Now, must it really be thought, notwithstanding all these things, **unreasonable** to suppose that God should **command** those whom He has nourished and

brought up to honor Him by giving an open testimony of **love** for Him -- only because wicked men cannot **testify** to love until they **have** love, and love is not within their **natural power**? Is it any good **excuse** in the sight of God for someone who is under the highest obligations to Him, yet refuses to give Him suitable honor by openly **testifying** to love for 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 for Him. And yet it may also be reasonable to suppose, at the same time, that He forbids people to lie -- or to declare they have love when they have none. For although we suppose God requires people to testify their love for Him, He requires them to do it in the right way and in the right order -- namely, first **loving** Him, and then **testifying** to their love.

(4) I do not see how it can be true that a man, as he naturally is, does not have a **legal** power to be converted, accept Christ, love God, and so on. By **legal power** to do a thing is plainly meant such power as brings a person properly within the reach of a **legal obligation** -- the obligation of a law or command to do that thing. But someone who has natural faculties that make him a proper subject of moral government, and that make it fitting and proper for him to love God, and that give him a natural capacity for it -- such a person may properly be placed under the obligation of a **law** to do things so reasonable. This is true regardless of any native aversion and moral inability to do his duty arising from the power of sin. This also, I must note, was a well-known doctrine of Mr. **Stoddard's** and something he always taught.

OBJECTION 14. Either **unsanctified** persons may lawfully come to the Lord's Supper, or it is unlawful for them to **conduct themselves as saints**. But it is not unlawful for them to conduct themselves as saints.

ANSWER. It is the duty of unconverted people both to **become** saints and to behave as saints. The Scripture rule is: **Make the tree good, so that its fruit may be good**. Mr. **Stoddard** himself never supposed that the fruit of **saints** was to be expected from people, or could possibly be genuinely produced by them, until they actually **were** saints.

And I do not see how it is true that unconverted people ought, in **every** respect, to do those **external** things that it is the duty of a godly person to do. It is the duty of a godly person, conscious of having given his heart to the Lord, to profess his love for God and his esteem of Him above all, his sincere faith in Christ, and so on -- and in his private devotions to thank God for these graces as the fruit of the Spirit in him. But it is not the duty of another person who genuinely has no faith or love for God to do this. Nor is it any more a natural man's duty to profess these things in the **Lord's Supper**. Mr. **Stoddard** taught that it was the duty of converts on many occasions to profess their faith and love and other graces **before others** by relating their **experiences** in conversation. But it would be great wickedness for those who know themselves not to be **saints** to do this, because they would be speaking falsely and uttering lies in doing so. For the same reason, it would be very sinful for people 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 and their **hearts** are not at all in the matter.

OBJECTION 15. This approach will **keep out** of the church some **true saints**, for there are some such who judge against themselves, and their prevailing opinion is that they are **not** saints. It is better to let in several hypocrites than to exclude one true child of God.

ANSWER. I believe it is much better to insist on some reasonable **visible evidence** of **true sainthood** in admitting members -- even if this, through people's weakness and spiritual darkness and **Satan's** temptations, causes some true saints to hold back -- than to throw open the door by express permission to as many as please of those who have **no visible evidence** of real sainthood, make no profession of it, and lay no claim to it. The reason is that this open approach tends to the ruin and great disgrace of the Christian church, and also to the ruin of the persons admitted.

1. It tends to the **disgrace** and **ruin** of the Christian **church**. For **by the rule God has given for admissions, if carefully followed** (it is said), **more** unconverted than converted persons will be admitted. So it is **admittedly** the way to have the greater part of the members of the Christian church be **ungodly** people -- yes, so much the greater part that the godly will be only **few** in comparison with the ungodly, in keeping with their interpretation of Christ's saying, **Many are called, but few are chosen**. Now if this is an accurate description of the situation, it can be demonstrated on scriptural principles that opening the door so wide has a direct tendency to bring things to the point where the far greater part of the members of Christian churches will not even be persons of a serious, conscientious character, but people without even **moral sincerity** who do not make religion their concern at all. They will neglect and abandon private prayer and other duties, liv-

ing a life of worldliness and vanity as far as they can while avoiding **church discipline** -- which may sometimes be to a great degree. Ungodly people may be morally sober, serious, and conscientious, and may have what is called **moral sincerity** for a while. They may have these things in 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 lasting long. Scripture has told us that **their goodness** tends to vanish **like the morning cloud and the early dew**. How can it be expected that religion should last long when it **has no root**? How can it be expected that the **lamp** should burn long without **oil in the vessel** to feed it? If **sin** is left unchecked and in ruling power in the heart, it will sooner or later prevail. Eventually it will sweep away **common grace** and **moral sincerity**, however much these were stirred up and maintained for a while by conviction and passing emotions. What will happen to them is described in the **true proverb: The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire**. It is said of the hypocrite: **Will he take delight in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?** And so our churches will likely become such congregations as the **psalmist said he hated and refused to sit with**. Psalm 26:4-5. **I do not sit with deceitful men, nor will I go with pretenders; I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked**. This will be the way to have the Lord's table ordinarily furnished with such guests as permit themselves to live in known sin, coming together time after time 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 be people who

are not even conscientious and are careless about the honor and welfare of religion. The direct tendency of that, over time, is to introduce a prevailing negligence in discipline and carelessness in seeking ministers of godly and worthy character. The next step will be the churches being filled with persons openly immoral in conduct or scandalously wrong in their beliefs. It would be surprising if this is not already the case in fact with some churches that have long professed and practiced the principles I oppose. And if these principles were professed and acted on by Christian churches everywhere, the natural tendency would be for the greater part of what is called the church of Christ throughout the world to be made up of immoral and doctrinally corrupt persons. How greatly this would disgrace the Christian church and the holy name and religion of Jesus Christ in the sight of all nations!

Now is it not better to have a few genuine living Christians held back through spiritual darkness and scruples, than to open a door for such universal ruin as this? To illustrate with 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 grant permission for as many treacherous Frenchmen to come in as please?

2. This approach tends to the eternal ruin of the **persons admitted**. For it lets in -- yes, it persuades -- people who **know themselves to be unrepentant and unbelieving** to take **God's name in vain** in a dreadful manner, to **worship Him in vain** and abuse sacred things by solemnly performing external acts and rites in the name of God that are instituted as declarative signs and professions of repentance toward God, faith in Christ, and love for Him -- at the same time that **they know** themselves

to be without the things they profess to have. 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 them out of heaven -- than to voluntarily bring in multitudes of **false professors** to partake unworthily and in effect to seal their own condemnation?

OBJECTION 16. You **cannot keep out hypocrites** when all is said and done. Just **as many** graceless persons will likely get into the church through a **profession of godliness** as would if nothing were required except freedom from public **scandal**.

ANSWER. This may possibly be the case in some places through the poor conduct of ministers and people -- by carelessness in their inquiries, inattention to the proper content of a profession, or the adoption of mistaken standards of judgment. They may neglect the things that Scripture emphasizes as the most essential marks in the character of a **real saint** and substitute other things in their place -- such as impressions on the imagination instead of renewing influences on the heart, sudden surges of emotion instead of the habitual disposition of the mind, a certain pattern and order of impressions and ideas instead of the nature of the things actually experienced, and so on. But to say that in churches where the nature, marks, and evidences of **true Christianity** as described in the Scriptures are well understood, taught, and observed, just **as many hypocrites** are likely to get in -- or to suppose that just as many of those honest persons who are well instructed in these rules, well guided by them, and judging themselves by these rules do think themselves true saints and accordingly make a profession of godliness and are admitted as saints in a judgment of rational charity -- to suppose, I say, that **as**

many of these are likely to be unregenerate, unconverted people as those who make no such claim, have no such hope, and display no such evidence to the eye of a discerning charity -- this is not so much an objection against the doctrine I am defending as a reflection on **Scripture itself**, with regard to the rules it gives either for people to judge their own spiritual state or for others to form a charitable judgment by, as if those rules were of little or no use at all. We are in miserable circumstances indeed if the rules of God's holy Word on matters of such infinite importance are so vague and uncertain, like the pagan oracles. 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 complete -- it should ordinarily be the case that those who have a correct doctrinal understanding of Scripture and judge themselves by its rules, and who probably conclude or seriously hope that they are real saints, are **just as many** of them in a state of sin and condemnation as others who have no such rational hope about their spiritual condition and claim no special religious experiences.

OBJECTION 17. If a **profession of godliness** is required for admission to the church, then since there are some **true saints** who **doubt** their spiritual state and from a **tender conscience** will not dare to make such a profession -- while there are **others** who have no grace and not much tenderness of conscience, but great **presumption and boldness**, who will confidently make the highest profession of religion and so gain admission -- the result will be that the very thing that in effect secures admission for the **latter** rather than the former will be their **presumption and wickedness**.

ANSWER 1. It is not a sufficient objection against the **soundness** of a rule established for regulating the **civil** affairs of mankind that in **some** cases people's **wickedness** may take **advantage** of that **rule**, so that their very **wickedness** becomes the thing that, by an abuse of that rule, gains them earthly **honors** and **privileges**. For such is the present state of mankind in this evil world that good rules in many cases are liable to be abused and corrupted in this way. For example, there are many human laws or rules considered sound and necessary, by which an accused or suspected person's own solemn profession of **innocence** -- his asserting it under **oath** -- is the condition of acquittal and freedom from punishment. The lack of such an assertion or profession exposes him to the penalty. And yet by an abuse of these rules, in some cases, nothing but the terrible sin of **perjury**, or that most presumptuous wickedness of false swearing, is the very thing that acquits a person -- while another of a more tender conscience, who **fears an oath**, must suffer the penalty of the law.

2. Those rules are considered sound by all wise lawmakers that prove to have a **generally** good tendency, regardless of any bad consequences arising in some particular cases. As for the ecclesiastical rule now in question -- admission to the sacraments on a **profession of godliness**, when accompanied by the proper circumstances -- although this rule in particular cases may cause some **tender-hearted** Christians to **hold back** and some **presumptuous** sinners to be **admitted**, yet this does not prevent a proper **visible evidence** of holiness to the eye of reason, or a **probability** of it in a judgment of rational Christian charity, from being maintained as the proper qualification of candidates for admission. Nor does it prevent it from being reasonable and whole-

some for people in their outward conduct to regulate themselves by such probability, and for this to be a reasonable and good rule for the church to follow in their admissions -- even though it happens in particular cases that things are **actually** different from, and even the very reverse of, what they **appear** to be. Such a **profession** as has been insisted on, when accompanied by **proper circumstances**, carries rational credibility in the judgment of Christian charity. For it should be accompanied by an honest and sober character, by evidence of good doctrinal knowledge, and by all proper, careful, and diligent instruction from a wise pastor. And though the pastor is not to act as a **searcher of hearts** or a **lord of conscience** in this matter, this does not prevent him from inquiring in detail into the spiritual experiences of the souls committed to his care and charge. This way he can be in the best position to instruct and advise them, to apply the teachings and rules of God's Word to them for their self-examination, to be a **helper of their joy**, and a promoter of their salvation. However, in the end, it is not any supposed special 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 -- that must govern public conduct toward him, when there is no other external visible thing to contradict and overrule it. And a serious profession of godliness under these circumstances carries visible evidence to the eye of the church's rational and Christian judgment.

3. If it is still insisted that a **rule** of admission to the church cannot be **good** if it is liable to such a kind of **abuse** as that described above, I must point out that this will overthrow the rules that the **objectors** themselves follow in their admissions. For they insist that a person 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 honor of being in the church, having children baptized, and voting in church affairs, may well be the very thing that brings some people into the church by this rule -- while greater **tenderness of conscience** may be the very thing that keeps others out. For example, a man who secretly in his mind gives no credit to the commonly received doctrine of the **Trinity** may, by pretending to agree with it and hypocritically making a public profession of it, get into the church. Meanwhile, another man who equally disbelieves it but has a more tender conscience that will not allow him to tell a solemn lie may by that very means be kept out of communion and remain outside the church.

OBJECTION 18. It seems hardly reasonable to suppose that the all-wise God has made people's **opinion of themselves** and a **profession** of it the basis for their admission to church privileges, when we know that very often the **worst** people have the **highest** opinion of themselves.

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

ANSWER 2. If **some** things, by everyone's admission, must be **professed** precisely **because** they are **good** and of great importance, then it must certainly be acknowledged as very unreasonable to say that the things in which true **holiness** consists are **not** to be professed, or that a profession of them should **not** be re-

quired. The same reason applies: because they are **good** -- indeed, good in the highest degree, and infinitely the most important and most necessary things in all the world. It is unreasonable to say that we should be less expected to profess sincere friendship with Christ **because** friendship with Christ is the most **excellent** qualification of all, and the opposite is the most hateful. How absurd it is to say this merely on the basis that for a person to **profess** what is so good and so reasonable is to profess a **high opinion of himself!**

ANSWER 3. Though some of the **worst** people tend to have the **highest opinion of themselves**, yet their self-conceit is no **rule** for the church. Rather, the apparent **credibility** of people's **profession** is to be the basis of the church's actions.

OBJECTION 19. If it is necessary for **adult** persons to make a profession of godliness in order to be admitted to **baptism** themselves, then it is undoubtedly necessary for their **children** to be baptized on their account. For parents cannot convey to their children a right to this sacrament by virtue of any qualifications **lower** than those required for their own right, since children are admitted to baptism only as being, as it were, parts and members of their parents. Besides, the act of parents in offering up their **children** in a sacrament that is a seal of the **covenant of grace** is itself a solemn participation in that sacrament **as** persons who have an **interest** in the covenant. It is a public display of their approval and consent to it, just as truly as if they were then offering up **themselves** to God in that ordinance. Indeed, it implies a renewed offering up of themselves along with their children, devoting both jointly to God in covenant -- **themselves** together with their children as **parts of themselves**. But now what terrible

consequences will such a doctrine create among us! We will have multitudes **unbaptized**, going about without the external badge of Christianity, and in that respect will be like **pagans**. This is the way to have the land full of people who lack what Scripture speaks of as ordinarily necessary for people's **salvation**. It will bring **disgrace** on vast multitudes along with the families they belong to. Not only that, but it will tend to make them ungodly and pagan. For by treating our children as though **they had no share in the Lord**, we will **cause them to stop fearing the Lord**, in keeping with Joshua 22:24-25.

ANSWER 1. As for children being **deprived** of what Scripture speaks of as one thing ordinarily **necessary for salvation**, I would observe that **baptism** can do their souls no good in any way other than through God's **blessing** attending it. But we have no reason to expect His blessing on baptism if it is administered to those it does **not** belong to according to **His institution**.

ANSWER 2. As for the **disgrace** that will be brought on parents and children by children going without baptism because the parents neglect a profession of godliness and so visibly remain among the unconverted -- if anyone insists on this objection, I think it will show a great deal of **unreasonableness** and even **foolishness**.

It will show an **unreasonable** spirit. Is it not enough that God freely offers to claim people's children and give them the honor of baptism, provided the parents will turn from sin, give up their hostility toward Him, sincerely hand over themselves and their children to Him, and take on the profession of godliness? If people 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 we not openly argue that they are? And why do we not teach sinners that they are **not to blame** for remaining among the enemies of Christ and neglecting and despising His great salvation? If they are not at all excusable in this, and it is entirely due to their own indulged sinful desires that they refuse to sincerely give up themselves and their children to God, then how unreasonable is it for them to complain that their children are denied the honor of having God's mark placed on them as some of His own? If parents are angry about this, such an attitude shows them to be very unaware of their own terrible treatment of the blessed God. Suppose a prince sent word to a traitor in prison, and upon opening the prison doors made him the offer that if he would come out and submit to him, he would not only be pardoned himself, but both he and his children would have certain badges of honor bestowed on them. Yet if the rebel's hostility and stubbornness of spirit against his prince is such that he cannot find it in his heart to accept the gracious offer, will he have any right to be angry that his children do not receive those badges of honor? Besides, it is very much the fault of **parents** that there are so many **young** people who can make no profession of godliness. They have themselves to blame, then, if -- proceeding on the principles I have maintained -- there is likely to arise a generation of unbaptized persons. If previous generations had thoroughly done their duty to their descendants in instructing, praying for, and governing their children and setting them good examples, there is reason to think the situation would have been far different.

Insisting on this objection would also show much **foolishness**. For the objection seems to assume that the country is full of people who are **unconverted** and therefore exposed every mo-

ment to eternal damnation. Yet we apparently do not hear great and widespread complaints and sorrowful outcries about this. Now why is it considered so dreadful to have great numbers going without the **name** and honorable **badge** of Christianity, prompting loud and widespread protests about such a calamity -- when at the same time it is no more resented or taken to heart that such multitudes go without the **reality**, which is infinitely more dreadful? Why are we so silent about this? What is the **name** good for without the **reality**? Can parents bear to have their children go about the world in the most hateful and dangerous state of soul, in reality children of the devil and condemned to eternal punishment -- while at the same time they cannot bear to have them disgraced by going without the honor of being **baptized**? A high honor and privilege this certainly is. Yet how can parents be content with the **sign** while excluding the **reality** signified? Why should they desire the outward honor for their children while being so careless about the spiritual blessing? Does not this reveal an insensitivity to their own misery, as well as their children's, in being in a **Christless** state? If a man and his child were both bitten by a poisonous snake, dreadfully swollen and likely to die, would it not show **foolishness** in the parent to be anxiously concerned only about his child wearing a dirty garment in such circumstances, and angry at others for not putting some outward ornament on it? But the difference in the 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 favors or honors for themselves or their children. No religious honors obtained in any other way than

through genuine religion are worth much contending for. And in truth, it is no honor at all to a person to have merely the outward **badges** of a Christian without actually **being** a Christian. This is no more an honor than it would be for a man who has no learning but is completely ignorant to have a college degree, or for a man who has no courage but is a great coward to have an honorable military commission -- which only serves, by raising him up, to expose him to deeper disgrace and make him a more conspicuous object of contempt.

ANSWER 3. Concerning the **tendency** of confining baptism to professors of godliness and their children to promote **irreligion** and **ungodliness**, I would observe: **First**, Christ is best able to **judge** the tendency of His own **institutions**. **Second**, I am bold to say that the supposition that this principle and practice has such a tendency is a great **mistake**, contrary to Scripture, plain reason, and experience. Indeed it would have such a tendency to shut people out from **having any share in the Lord** (in the sense of the two and a half tribes in Joshua 22:25), or to fence them out by a dividing wall like the one formerly between **Jews** and **Gentiles**, and so to shut them out by telling them that no matter how much they wanted to serve God, He was not ready to accept them -- according to the view the **Jews** seem to have had of the uncircumcised **Gentiles**. But merely refraining from giving people honors they have no right to, and not flattering them with the name and badge of God's people and children while they claim nothing inconsistent with being His enemies -- this has no such tendency. Rather, the opposite practice very much has this tendency. For is it not found by constant experience throughout all ages that blind, corrupt humanity, in matters of religion, is strongly disposed to

settle for a **name** instead of the **reality**, for the shadow instead of the substance, and to make themselves comfortable with the former while neglecting the latter? This overvaluing of common grace and so-called **moral sincerity** -- building so much upon them, making them the conditions for enjoying the seals of God's covenant and the appointed privileges and honorable, sacred badges of God's children -- this, I cannot help but think, naturally tends to soothe and flatter the pride of vain humanity. It tends to magnify in people's eyes the very things they are already strongly inclined to magnify and trust in without such encouragement to prompt them -- indeed, against all the discouragements and warnings that can possibly be given them.

This way of proceeding strongly tends to establish the negligence of **parents** and to confirm the insensitivity and false security of wicked **children**. If **baptism** were **denied** to all children whose parents did not **profess godliness** and appear in the judgment of rational charity to be **real saints**, it would tend to motivate godly heads of families to take more thorough care and effort in the religious education of their children, and to pray more fervently for them -- that they might be converted in **youth**, before they enter a married state, so that if they have children the line of the covenant would be secured. It would also tend to awaken **young** people themselves who are still unconverted, especially when they are about to establish themselves in the world. Their having no right to Christian privileges for their children, should they become parents, would tend to lead them at such a time to seriously reflect on their own terrible spiritual condition. If they do not get out of it, it must lay the foundation for so much hardship and disgrace for their families. If after becoming **parents** they still

remain unconverted, the sad thought of their children going about without so much as the external mark of Christians would continually tend to remind them of, and affect them with, their own sin and foolishness in neglecting to turn to God -- by which they bring such visible hardship and disgrace on themselves and their families. They would have this additional motivation to continually stir them up to seek grace for themselves and their children. The contrary practice, on the other hand, naturally tends to quiet people's minds about both their own and their children's unregenerate state. Indeed, may it not be suspected that the practice of baptizing the children of those who never make any proper profession of godliness is an arrangement originally invented for the very purpose of giving comfort to previous generations regarding their descendants in times of general decline and spiritual decay?

This way of proceeding strongly tends to establish the insensitivity and irreligion of **children** as well as the negligence of parents. It is certain that unconverted parents never truly give up their children to God, since they have not truly given up themselves to Him. If neither parent appears truly godly in the judgment of rational charity, there is in that case no ground to expect the children will be **brought up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord**, or that they will receive anything worthy of the name of a Christian education, however solemnly the parents may promise it. The faithfulness of **Abraham** was such that he could be trusted in this matter. See Genesis 18:19. But people who are not even visibly godly -- on what grounds can they be trusted? How can it reasonably be expected that those who were never sincerely willing that their children or themselves should be God's would faithfully raise their children for God? It will be mere pre-

sumption to expect that children who are never given up to God and never raised for Him should turn out religious and become God's children. There is absolutely no reason to expect anything other than that such children will ordinarily grow up in irreligion, whether they are baptized or not. For people to go about with the name and visible seal of God and the sacred badge of Christianity on them -- having had their bodies consecrated to God as His temples by a holy ordinance -- yet living in irreligion and ways of wickedness, this exceedingly tends to harden them and establish in them a habitual contempt for sacred things. Such persons, above all others, are likely to be the most hardened and abandoned and the hardest to reclaim -- just as the wicked **Jews** were far more confirmed in their wickedness than those pagan cities of **Tyre** and **Sidon**. To give what 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**, to increase in contempt for them, and even to **turn and tear us** and be more harmful enemies of what is good than they would otherwise have been.

OBJECTION 20. Some **ministers** have been greatly **blessed** in the other way of proceeding, and some people have been **converted at the Lord's Supper**.

Answer. Though we should pay attention to the providence of God and not disregard His **works**, yet to interpret them in a way or apply them to a purpose inconsistent with the direction of the **Word** of God is to misread and misuse them. God has not given us His **providence** but His **Word** to be our governing **rule**. God is sovereign in His dealings 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 Himself known to him and bless him in an extraordinary way while he was worshipping at a **high place**. He met with **Saul** while he was in a course of violent opposition to Him and as far from his duty as possible, going to **Damascus** to persecute Christ -- and even then bestowed on him the greatest blessing that has perhaps ever been given to a mere man. The ways of divine providence, with their reasons, are too little understood by us to serve as our rule. **God has His way in the sea, His path in the mighty waters, and His footsteps are not known. And He gives no account of any of His matters.** But God has given us His **Word** for this very purpose: that it might be our **rule**. He has therefore designed it to serve that purpose and arranged it so that we can understand it. Strictly speaking, this is our **only** rule. If we add anything else to it as our **rule**, we do something we have no warrant for -- indeed, something God Himself has forbidden. See Deuteronomy 4:2. Proverbs 30:6. And regarding God's blessing and prospering of ministers, have not some had remarkable experience of it in the way I am arguing for, as well as some who have supported the way I oppose? However, we cannot conclude that God sees nothing at all **wrong** in ministers just because He **blesses** them. In general, He may see things in them that are very right and excellent. These He approves and regards, while He overlooks and pardons their mistakes in opinion or practice, and despite these is pleased to crown their labors with His blessing.

As for the last two arguments in the **Appeal to the Learned** - - concerning the subjects of the Christian sacraments 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 properly admitted to the privileges of members of the **visible church**? This question has already been extensively considered, and I believe it has been demonstrated that they are those who present a credible profession and visible evidence of **Gospel holiness** or vital godliness, and not merely of **moral sincerity**. So there is no need for further debate on the point here.

I could mention here many things not yet addressed that some raise as **disadvantages** of the position I have maintained. If people were to set up their own cleverness and wisdom in opposition to God's revealed will, there would be no end to the objections of this kind that might be raised against any of God's institutions. Some have even found great fault with the **creation** of the world, considering it poorly done, and have imagined they could tell how it might be improved in a great many ways. But however plain God's altar may appear to us, if we lift our tool upon it to improve it, we will only defile it. Laws and institutions are given for the **general good** and not to avoid every particular disadvantage. However it may happen that disadvantages (real or imagined) sometimes accompany the position I have maintained, I believe they are not nearly equal to the clear benefits and happy tendencies of it, or to the obvious disadvantages and harmful consequences of the other. I have already mentioned some things along these lines, and here I would briefly note some others.

The practice of making such a difference between outward duties of **morality** and **worship** on the one hand, and those great inward duties of the **love of God** and **acceptance of Christ** on the other -- so that the former must be **visible**, but there need be

no display or **claim** of the latter for people to be admitted into the visible family of God; and this under the notion that the latter are **impossibilities** but the other is **within people's ability** -- this, I believe, has a direct tendency to confirm in people an **insensitivity** to the seriousness of those **sins of the heart**: unbelief and hostility toward God our Savior, which are the source and sum of all wickedness. It tends to prevent their coming under a humbling **conviction** of the greatness and utter inexcusability of these sins, which people must be brought to see if they are ever to obtain salvation. Indeed this is an approach that not only has this tendency, but actually and visibly produces this effect, and to a great degree.

The effect of this method of proceeding in the churches of **New England** that have adopted it is actually this. There are some who are received into these churches under the notion that in the judgment of rational charity they are **visible saints** or **professing saints**, who at the same time are actually open **professors** of serious **wickedness** -- I mean the wickedness of living in known impenitence and unbelief, the wickedness of living in hostility toward God and in the rejection of Christ under the Gospel. Or, which is the same thing, they are people who freely and frequently acknowledge that they do not claim to be **born again** yet, but regard themselves as truly **unconverted**, as having never sincerely accepted Christ. They either explicitly or implicitly count themselves among those who **do not love the Lord Jesus Christ** -- of whom the apostle says, let such be **accursed!** And accordingly, it is known throughout the whole town where they live that they make no claim to any **sanctifying grace** already received. Consequently, they are commonly regarded as nothing other than

unconverted persons. Now can this be judged the proper **order** of the Gospel? Or shall God be supposed the **author of such confusion?**

In this way of conducting church affairs, God's own children and the true disciples of Christ are required to receive as their **brethren**, admit to the **communion of saints**, and embrace in the highest acts of Christian fellowship -- even in their great **feast of love**, where they feed together on the body and blood of Christ -- people they have no reason to regard as anything other than **enemies of the cross of Christ** and haters of their heavenly Father and dear Redeemer. These people make no claim to anything at all inconsistent with those descriptions. Indeed, in many places, as I said before, they freely acknowledge this to be their actual condition.

Christ often forbids visible Christians to **judge one another**. But in this way of conducting church affairs, it is done continually and considered harmless. A large portion of those admitted into the church are judged by others in the same communion to be **unconverted, graceless** persons. And it is impossible to avoid this while remaining within the bounds of a **rational** charity.

This method of proceeding must inevitably have one of two consequences. Either there must be no **public notice** at all given when such a significant work of grace takes place as a sinner being brought to repentance, turning to God, and hopefully becoming the subject of saving conversion. Or else this notice must be given through **conversation**, by the **persons themselves** frequently, freely, and in all company declaring their own experiences. But surely either of these consequences must be very unfortunate. The first is unfortunate -- namely, the forbidding and preventing of any

public notice being given on earth of the **repentance of a sinner**, an event so much to the honor of God and so much noted 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 from experience that hardly anything has as great an influence to awaken sinners and motivate them to seek salvation, and to encourage and energize saints, as the news of a sinner's repentance or hopeful conversion. God clearly uses it as an outstanding means of advancing religion in a time of remarkable revival. To take a course that effectively prevents such an event from being publicly known on earth appears to me to be working against God in the very thing He consistently uses as a chief means for spreading true godliness, and which we have reason to believe He will use as one of the principal means for the conversion of the world in the glorious latter days. But as for the **other** approach -- giving public notice of this event through particular persons **themselves** publishing their own experiences from time to time and place to place, on all occasions and before all audiences -- I must confess that this practice appears to me to come with many problems, indeed to be filled with harmful effects. The extensive trial of this method recently made, and the large experience we have had of its harmful consequences, is enough to put all sober and thoughtful people permanently out of favor with it. I will not attempt to list all the harmful effects of it, which would be very tedious. I will mention only two things. One is the bad effect it has on the persons themselves who practice it, in its strong tendency toward spiritual **pride** -- gradually fostering and establishing a harmful habit of mind in that respect through the frequent return of the temptation, often when they are not on guard against it and

have no time to fortify their minds through reflection and prayer. Then it has a very bad effect on the minds of **others** who hear their accounts, and so on the state of religion in general, in this way: Since it is thus the custom for persons of all kinds -- young and old, wise and unwise, superiors and inferiors -- to freely tell their own experiences before all audiences, it is commonly done very **unwisely**, often very rashly and foolishly, at the wrong time, and in circumstances that tend to defeat any good purpose. Even sincere Christians too frequently focus in their conversation mainly on things that are no part of their **true spiritual experience** -- such as impressions on their imagination, suggestions of facts through passages of Scripture, and so on. In such cases, **young people** and weak persons who hear are inclined to form their ideas of religion and true godliness from such experiential accounts, and much more than from the most solid and careful instruction from the Word that they hear from the pulpit. This is found to be one of the strategies by which **Satan** gains an inexpressible advantage to ruin people's souls and utterly confound the cause of religion. This matter of making a public profession of godliness or heartfelt piety is certainly a very important affair and ought to be under some **public regulation** and the direction of **skilled guides**, not left to the management of every man, woman, and child according to their mood or fancy. When it is done, it should be done with great seriousness, preparation, and prayer, as a solemn act of public respect and honor to God, in His house and in the presence of His people. Not that I condemn -- but rather greatly approve of -- persons sometimes speaking of their religious experiences in private conversation, to appropriate persons and on

appropriate occasions, with modesty and discretion, when the glory of God and the benefit or just satisfaction of others require it of them.

In a word, the practice of indiscriminate admission -- that approach of taking everyone into the **church** without distinction as **visible saints** who are not either ignorant or scandalous -- combined with the custom of persons publishing their own **conversion** in ordinary **conversation** -- where these two things come together, they unavoidably create **two** distinct kinds of **visible churches**, or different bodies of professing saints, one within the other, openly distinguished from each other as if by a visible dividing line. One group consists of those who are **visibly gracious** Christians and open **professors of godliness**. The other consists of those who are **visibly moral** people who only profess common virtues without claiming any special and spiritual experiences in their hearts, and who are therefore not regarded as converts. I may appeal to those acquainted with the state of the churches as to whether this is not actually the case in some churches where this method of proceeding has long been established. But I leave the thoughtful reader to make his own observations about this situation and to determine whether there is a proper foundation in Scripture or reason for any such state of affairs -- which to me, I confess, has the appearance of glaring absurdity.

And now I commit this entire discussion (under God's blessing) to the reader's fair reflection and impartial judgment. I am aware it will be very difficult for many to be truly impartial in this matter, since their prejudices against the doctrine I have maintained are very strong. I believe I myself am the person who, above

all others on the face of the earth, has had the most in his circumstances to prejudice him against this doctrine and make him unwilling to be convinced of its truth. However, the clear evidence of God's mind in His Word, as things appear to me, has compelled me to think and act as I have now done. I dare not go against such texts as these: Leviticus 10:10. Jeremiah 15:19. Ezekiel 22:26 and Ezekiel 44:6-8. Having been fully persuaded in my own mind of what the scriptural rule is in this matter, after a most careful, painstaking, and lengthy search, I am willing, in the faithful pursuit of what appears to me to be of such importance and so plainly the mind and will of God, to submit to His providence and leave the outcome in His hand.

It may not be out of place to add here -- since the probability of my being **answered** in print has often been suggested to me -- that if anyone should see reason to undertake this, I have these reasonable requests to make of him. I ask that he avoid the ungenerous and unworthy tactics used by too many writers of controversy, who **turn aside to pointless wrangling by criticizing incidental passages** and displaying their cleverness on minor details or less important points in the author they oppose, with much **exclamation** if possible, to stir up the uninformed and unwary reader's dislike of the author and make him appear contemptible, so as to win the victory that way. Perhaps they dwell on and take pride in some supposed **inconsistencies** in some parts of the discussion, without ever thoroughly entering into the **merits of the case** or closely engaging any of the main arguments. If anyone opposes me in print, I ask that he attend to the true state of the question and make a fair attempt to disarm each argument by answering it directly and distinctly, with calm and close reasoning,

avoiding (as much as possible) both dogmatic assertions and emotional attacks. I am certain I will not begrudge him the applause of a victory over me, however decisive and complete, if it is only won by superior understanding and convincing evidence. I would also request him to put his **name** to his work, so that I may stand on equal ground with him before the world in a debate where the public must judge between us. This will be all the more reasonable should he mix any accusation with his arguments. It was **the custom** even of the pagan **Romans**, and considered by them only fair and right, **to bring 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.

THANKS FOR READING



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