



**AN APOLOGY
OF THE CHURCHES
IN NEW-ENGLAND
FOR CHURCH-COVENANT**





**An
Apology
of the Churches
in New-England
for Church-Covenant.**

by

Richard Mather



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AN
APOLOGY
OF THE CHURCHES
IN *NEW- ENGLAND*
FOR *CHURCH-COVENANT*.

OR,
A Discourse touching the Covenant
BETWEEN GOD AND MEN, AND ESPECIALLY CON-
CERNING *CHURCH-COVENANT*, THAT IS TO SAY, THE
COVENANT WHICH A COMPANY DO ENTER INTO WHEN
THEY BECOME A CHINCH; AND WHICH A PARTI-
CULAR PERSON ENTERS INTO WHEN HE BE-
COMES A MEMBER OF A, *CHURCH*.

**Sent over in Answer to Master Bernard,
in the Year 1643**

And now published for the satisfaction
of all who desire resolution in this point.

LONDON,
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1643.





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A
DISCOURSE

TOUCHING THE
COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND MEN,
and especially concerning *Church-*
Covenant, that is to say, the *Cove-*
nant which a Company do enter into
when they become a Churchi and
Which a particular person enters
into when he becomes a mem-
ber of a Church. 1639.

Jer. 50:5.

Come let us join our selves to the Lord, in a perpetual
Covenant that shall not be forgotten.

Although that which is foretold in these two Chapters, and namely in the fourth and fifth verses of this Chapter, was in part fulfilled when the people of God returned from Captivity in *Babylon* at the end of seventy years: yet we must not limit the place to that time only, but may extend it further to the days of the Gospel, and the spiritual return, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also, when men shall be converted from Pagan, Antichristian, Babylonish, or Jewish bondage and captivities or from slavery to sin, and self-righteousness; and shall be joined to God in the fellowship of his Church, in the days of the New Testament. For as some passages in this Scripture were never fully accomplished at the return from the captivity of the seventy years, and namely this, that the children of *Israel* and *Judah* should return both together: (for the ten tribes returned not

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at all:) so many things that literally concerned the Jews Were types and figures, signifying the like things concerning the people of God in these latter days: In which respect sincere converts



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are called Jews, *Rom.* 2:29. and Israelites, *Gal.* 6:16. *Joh.* 1:47. and our Sacraments are made strictly Antitypes of theirs, *1 Cor.* 10:1, 2, 3.

and Rome is called Babylon, *Rev.* 17:5. and Papists are called Gentiles. *Rev.* 11:2. and therefore the captivity of Babylon might well be a Type of the spiritual captivity of God's people to Antichristian bondage, and their return from Babylon to Sion, a type of the return of Christians from Romish slavery to the true Sion, the Christian Church. And this may be added further that this place seems not only to be meant of the private or personal conversion of this or that particular Christian, but also further, of the open and joint calling of a company, because it is said, they shall come, the children of *Israel* and the children of *Judah* together, and that their saying shall not be, *Let me join, &c.* but in the Plural number, *Let us join our selves unto the Lord*, so noting the joining of a company together in holy Covenant with God.

Concerning which Covenant with God, it will not be amiss for the better understanding of that which follows; first, briefly to shew how diversely Covenant is taken in the Scripture, which sometimes imports generally any firm appointment or promise of *God*, when man doth not promise into God any thing back again: Thus the preserving of *Noah* in the Ark, and of the world from being drowned any more by a flood; the interchangeable succession of day and night; the giving of the Priesthood unto *Phineas*; the setting forth of the Shew-bread every Sabbath before the Lord, and the giving of the heave-offering into the Priests, are said to be done by a Covenant, or an everlasting Covenant of God, *Gen.* 6:18 & 9:9, 10, 11. *Jer.* 33:20. *Num.* 25:12, 13. *Levit.* 24:8. *Num.* 18:19. But sometimes Covenant is taken more strictly and properly, for an agreement which God doth make with men, when he promiseth some blessing unto men, and binds them to perform some duty back again to him. Taken thus it hath two parts: first, a promise or stipulation of some blessing on God's part. secondly, Restipulation or promise, or binding if man unto duty back again on his part: both these are in those words of the Covenant, *I will be to thee a God, thou shalt be to me a people*; and so *Gen.* 17:1. & *v.* 7, 8, 9, 10. The Co-

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venant taken thus is either the Covenant of works, or the Covenant of grace: And again the Covenant may be considered, first as it is personal, private and particular, between God and one particular soul, making Covenant with God, and God with him, either at his first conversion, or at other times; of which we read *2 Sam.* 23:5. & *Psal.* 119:106. & 66:13, 14. & 27:8. & *Psal.* 119:7, 8 Secondly, it is general and public of a company jointly together, of which this Text *Jer.* 50:5. seems most properly to speak; as also that *Deut.* 29:9, 10, &c. and that *Exod.* 19:5, 6, and many others; A Covenant taken thus generally when it reflects spiritual blessings, and spiritual duties, in the Communion of Saints, is that which is called Church-covenant, which Church-Covenant differs not in substance of the things promised from that which is between the Lord and every particular soul, but only in some other respects; as first, the one is of one Christian in particular, the other of a company jointly together. Secondly, if right Order be observed, a man ought not to enter into Church-Covenant, till he be in Covenant with God before, in respect of his personal estate. Thirdly, The one is usually done in private, as in a man's Closet between the Lord and his soul, and the other in some public assembly. Fourthly, The one in these days is of such duties as the Gospel requires of every Christian as a Christian, the other of such duties as the Gospel requires of every Church and the members thereof.

Now concerning Church-covenant, two things are to be noted for the better understanding thereof: first, the description of it: secondly, the use of it, and the benefit and fruit thereof. For "the former it may be thus described, *viz. A solemn and public promise before the Lord, whereby a company of Christians, called by the power and mercy of God to fellowship with Christ, and by his providence to live together and by his grace to cleave together in the unity of faith, and brotherly love, and desirous to partake together in all the holy Ordinances of God, do in confidence of his gracious acceptance in Christ, bind themselves to the Lord, and one to another, to walk together by the assistance of his Spirit, in all such ways of holy worship in him and of edification one towards another, as the Gospel of Christ requireth of every Christian Church, and the members thereof.*

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In this description, there are comprised six things: First the general name of the thing: [*a solemn and public promise*] a pro-

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 mise it is, and therefore it is called, a joining in Covenant here: an entering into Covenant, *Deut.* 29:10. Solemn and public, and therefore it is by the children of *Israel* and the children of *Judah* together: and they say, *let us join*. Secondly, The object [*the Lord, and one another*] *join ourselves to the Lord*, it is not a promise only to man, but to the Lord himself, and likewise to one another; for, *come let us join*, implies mutual consent together. Thirdly, The Agents or the qualification of the persons; [*Christians*] not Turks, Indians, &c. Saints, *Psal.* 50:5, 16, 17. [*called to fellowship with Christ*] so *1 Cor.* 1:9. else if they be not united to Christ by faith, they are not fit materials for such a building as a Church of God, which is the house of the living God, *Ephes.* 1:1. *1 Cor.* 1:2. *Phil.* 1:1. *Rev.* 21:27. [*By his providence to live together*] else they cannot partake in the Lord's Ordinances together as Churches ought to do, *1 Cor.* 14:23. *Act.* 14:27. the whole Church comes together in one place [*cleaving together in faith and love*] so *Act.* 4:32. If they differ, namely, in opinion, or in their affection, and should join in this Covenant, breaches, factions, rents, and schisms, would be like to be the issue of such joining: things so unlike would not close nor long hold together, *Dan.* 2:43. [*Desirous to partake in all Ordinances*] this should be the ground of their joining in Covenant together, *Psal.* 110:3. willing: and not pride, nor gain, nor the like: Fourthly, The Act [*bind themselves*] that now they are bound by their own word and promise, that they may say now, as *Psal.* 56:12. *Thy vows are upon me*, or as *Num.* 30:2. if he bind his soul with a vow. Fifthly, The matter promised; [*To walk together in all such ways of worship and mutual edification, as the Gospel requireth of Churches and Church-members*] they bind not themselves to observe any devises of their own, nor inventions of men, but such things as the word of God requireth; neither is it perfect obedience to the Law, for that were impossible to perform, and presumption to promise; nor is it one-ly in general the duties of the *Gospel*, but specially such duties of worship to God, & edification of one another as concern Church-State, which now they enter into. Sixthly, The manner of perfor-



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ming [*Confidence of God's gracious acceptance and assistance through Christ*] for in all our ways God must be acknowledged, *Pro. 3:6.* and much more in such special matters of weight: if men in entering into this Covenant look for acceptance, through any worth

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of their own, or promise duty in their own strength, they shew themselves like to the Pharisees, *Luk. 18:10, 11,* and turn the Church-Covenant into a Covenant of works: and as many as are of the works of the Law, are under the curse, *Gal. 3:10.*

The use and benefit of this Church-Covenant, and the fruit thereof, may be seen in two particulars; first, That this is that whereby a company of Christians do become a Church: It is the Conflicting form of a Church. Secondly, This is that by taking hold whereof a particular person becomes a member of a Church, which was constituted afore. For the former of these; every Christian Church must have in it both matter and form, and as the matter by God's appointment are visible Saints, or visible believers, *Ephes. 1:1. 1 Cor. 1:2.* and in the New Testament, only so many as may meet together in one Congregation: So the form is a uniting, or combining, or knitting of those Saints together into one visible body, by the band of this holy Covenant. Some union or band there must be amongst them, whereby they come to stand in a new relation to God, and one towards another, other then they were in before: or else they are not yet a Church, though they be fit materials for a Church; even as soul and body are not a man, unless they be united; nor stones and timber an house, till they be compacted and conjoined.

Now that a company becomes a Church, by joining in Covenant, may be made good sundry ways; first, By plain Texts of Scripture; as from *Deut. 29:1,10, 11, 12, 13. Ye stand this day all you before the Lord your God, your Captains of your Tribes; your Elders, your Officers, with all the men of Israel, ver. 10. That thou shouldest enter into Covenant with the Lord thy God, ver. 12. and he may establish thee for a people unto himself, ver. 13.* So that here is plainly shewed, that here was a company, *ver. 10.* and this company were to be established to be a people unto the Lord, that is to say, a Church, *ver. 13.* And this is done by the peoples entering into solemn Co-



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venant with God, *ver.* 12. And therefore a company of people do become a Church by entering into Covenant with God.

Object. 1. “*This Covenant was not like our Church-Covenants, for it was of all the Nation together; whereas the Church-Covenant with us, is of some select persons, leaving out others.*”

Answer. 1. This Objection concerns the matter of a Church, but the Covenant is not the material cause of a Church, but the formal

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cause thereof: and for this the Text is plain and express, that by entering into Covenant with God, a people come to be the Lord’s people, that is to say, his Church.

2. If it was of all the people together, the reason was because that Church was a national Church: now if a national Church becomes a Church by entering into solemn Covenant with God, then a Congregational Church becomes a Church by the same means; for there is no difference between them in this point.

3. Though it was of all the people, we may not say it proves that when we looks at the material cause of a Church, there may be a promiscuous taking in of all Comers without distinction or separation of the precious from the vile; for, first, when God took in this Nation to be his people, he separated them from all the Nations of the earth besides: so that there was a distinction and separation of some from others. Secondly, this generation was generally a generation of believers; for it was they that were to enter into the land within a while after; for they were forty years in the Wilderness, & this Covenant was made in the last month save one of the last of those forty years, *Deut.* 1:3. And their car-casses fell not in the Wilderness through unbelief, as their Fa-thers did, *Num.* 14. *Heb.* 3. but entered by faith, and when they were entered, subdued Kingdoms by their faith, *Heb.* 11:33. and served the Lord all the days of *Joshua*, and of the Elders that outlived *Joshua*, *Josh.* 24:31. As for that which is said of them, *ver.* 4, 5. of this Chap. that the Lord had not given them eyes to see, &c. that proves not that they were wholly hardened in a carnal estate, but only that they were dull and slow of heart to consider of sundry dispensations of God towards them; for as much is said of the disc-

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ciples of Christ, *Mar.* 8:17, 18. when doubtless they were not mere carnal or natural persons.

Object. 2. “*This people Deut.* 29. *could not become the Lord’s people by entering, into solemn Covenant with God, for they were the Lord’s Church and people already before this.*

Answer. 1. If they were, yet that was by entering into solemn Covenant with God on Mount *Sinai*, when the Lord had brought them up out of the Land of *Egypt*; for then they entered into solemn Covenant with God, and God with them, and so they became the Lord’s peculiar people, *Exod.* 19:4, 5, 6, 8. &c. If they were his people before that, yes that also was by Covenant made with them in

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the loins of *Abraham*, when God took him and his seed to be his Church and people, yet separating *Ishmael* from *Isaac* and *Esau* from *Jacob*, that the inheritance of the Covenant of God, and of being the Church of God, might rest in the house of *Jacob*.

2. Yet it was not without great reason that the Lord should now establish them by solemn Covenant to be a people to himself, because the Nation had been much degenerated from the spirit and ways of *Abraham* in *Egypt*, and had broken that Covenant by their Idolatries there, *Ezek.* 20:7, 8. And the Covenant made in *Sinai* or *Horeb* when they were come out of *Egypt*, they had also broken by their Idolatries in the Wilderness, *Ezek.* 20:13, 16. for which causes, and the like, the Lord consumed that generation, that they never entered into the Land, *Josh.* 5:4, 6. And therefore now when their posterity and children were ready to enter in, the Lord entered into Covenant with them and thereby established them to be his people, their Fathers being cut off for breaking the Covenant. But still it was by Covenant that both Fathers first, and children afterward became a Church and people unto God; and when this generation were entered into the Land, their Covenant made before between God and them, was confirmed by Circumcision, *Josh.* 5:3, 7. they being not Circumcised before.

Object. 3. “*But this Covenant was of the whole Church with God, and therefore*

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not like our Church-Covenants, which are between the Church and the members concerning watchfulness over one another, and the like.

Answer. Our Church Covenants are with the Lord himself, as was shewed before in the description thereof. For watchfulness and duties of edification one towards another, are but branches of the Lord's Covenant, being duties commanded by the Law: and so it was with that people of *Israel*, who when they promised and Covenanted to walk in all the ways of God; in all his statutes and commandements and judgements, they promised these duties of love and watchfulness and edification one towards another, because these were duties commanded and required of God, *Lev. 19: 17. Deut. 29:18.* the neglect whereof in the matter of *Achan* was the sin of all the Congregation, and brought judgement upon them all, *Josh. 7:11, 12.* Yea by this Covenant they were bound to duties towards them that were not then present, but children afterward to be born, and proselytes, that afterward should be ad-

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ded to them, *ver. 14, 15.* Like as our Church-Covenants are with them that now are, and that hereafter shall become members of the same Church. When *Jehoiada* made a Covenant between the King and the people, *2 King. 11:17.* that Covenant was but a branch or the Lord's Covenant with them all, both King and people: for the King promised but to Rule the people righteously, according to the will of God: and the people to be subject to the King so Ruling. Now these duties of the King to them, and of them to the King, were such as God required in his Covenant, both of him and them: and so it is in Church-Covenant, the duties of the Church to the members, and the members to the Church, and one another, are no other but such as the Gospel and the Covenant of grace requireth both of the Church and the members of it in their several places.

Object. 4. "*But this place of Deut. 29. is not sufficient to prove a Church-Covenant in these days: because it is in the Scriptures of the old Testament for whatsoever must be used in the days of the New Testament, must be proved from the Scriptures of the New Testament, or else it is to be laid aside.*"

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Answer 1. The Church Covenant may be proved from the New Testament also, as will afterwards appear.

2. But suppose there were not pregnant places for it in the New Testament, yet it is not enough to prove the same unlawful: for whatsoever Ordinance of the old Testament is not repealed in the New Testament, as peculiar to the Jewish Pædagog, but was of moral and perpetual equity, the same binds us in these days, and is to be accounted the revealed will of God in all ages, though it be not particularly and expressly mentioned in the writings of the New Testament, else how shall we prove it unlawful for a man to marry his Sister, or his Aunt? How shall we prove it warrantable and necessary for Magistrates to punish Sabbath-breaking, blasphemy, and Idolatry? How shall we prove it lawful to apply the least of God's Covenant unto Infants? or to admit women to eat of the holy things; for the Scriptures of the New Testament do speak little in these cases; only the Scriptures of the Old Testament do give direction, and light about them, *Lev.* 18. & 19. *Neh.* 13:15. &c. 2 *Chron.* 15:16. & 2 *King.* 23. *Gen.* 17:2. & *Exod.* 12:4, 6. And the New Testament hath nothing to the contrary, and they are all according to moral equity and reason.

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and therefore they are to be observed from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, as the revealed will of God, though there were nothing expressly for them in the New. And the same we say of the particular in hand. For, that a company should be combined together into one body, in way of Government and subjection, by way of mutual free Covenant; as men do when they enter into Church Estate, nothing is more natural or agreeable to moral equity; nay, it implieth a contradiction in the very name of libertie or freedom, that free-men should take upon them authorise or power over free men without their free consent, and voluntary and mutual Covenant or Engagement. And therefore seeing this Covenant is not repealed in the Scriptures of the New Testament, the Scriptures of the Old are sufficient warrant for it.

Another Scripture to prove the same, is *Deut.* 26:16, 17, 18. with *Deut.* 27:9. *This day the Lord hath commanded thee to do these Statutes and Judgements, thou shalt therefore keep and do them, &c. Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to stalk in his*

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ways, and to keep his Statutes, &c. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people; Take heed and hearken, O Israel, this day thou art become the people of the Lord thy God, This Scripture plainly shews these things: 1. That here was the making of a Covenant between God and man; for that avouching of God to them, and them to God, was the making of Covenant, ver. 17, 18. 2. This was not of one person, but of a company together, the whole people of Israel, 26:18. & 27:9. 3. Here is the effect of this Covenant, that thereby they become the Lord's people, ver. 9. So that when a company do enter into holy Covenant with God, they become thereby the Lord's people, that is to say, his Church. So Ezek. 16:8. proves the same likewise: I entered into Covenant with thee, saith the Lord, and thou becamest mine. Here also is the making of Covenant between the Lord and men; and this Covenant was not personal, but of a company; for it was with Jerusalem, ver. 2. which was a whole City; it was with them that were multiplied as the bud of the field, ver. 7. and it was with them that did prosper into a kingdom, ver. 13. and therefore not meant only of any one particular person: And by this Covenant they became the Lords; that is, the Lord's Church and people; for it is expressly said, I entered into Covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine. So that when a company enter into Covenant with God, and God with

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them, they become thereby the Lords Church and people. Likewise Ezek. 20:37. *I will cause you to pass under the rod; and I will bring you into the bond of the Covenant.* In which place, there is first mention of an holy Covenant. Secondly, This was not of one person, but of a company, the whole house of Israel, ver. 30, 39. Thirdly, And this Covenant is called a *Bond*, because it is by Covenant that a people are bound, and tied, and knit together, as one Church, all of them unto the Lord, and one unto another, So that the Covenant is the bond of union, by which a company are so combined and united, as that they become a Church. It is also observable, how the Lord before he would bring them into this bond of the Covenant, he would *cause them to pass under the rod*; by which phrase, as *Junius* upon the place well observes, is meant trial and probation; drawn from the manner of Shepherds or owners of Cattle, who went amongst their sheep, or other cattle

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with a rod, and therewith pointed out such as were for the Lord's holy use, as *Lev. 27:32*. And so hereby is noted that God would not in the days of the Gospel have men to be brought into his Church hand over head, but he would first cause them to pass under the rod of due trial and probation; and then such as upon trial were found to be holy for God, or meet matter for his Church, should solemnly enter into Covenant with God, and that Covenant should be the bond that should combine them, and knit them together into one, that so they that were many particular persons, should all become one body, that is to say, a Church.

And so much of the first Argument drawn from plain Texts of Scripture.

Argu. 2. A second Argument may be taken from the Titles that are given to the Church; as first, that the Church is said to be married or espoused unto Christ, *Jer. 2:2. & 3:14. 2 Cor. 11:2*. From whence the Argument may be formed thus: If every Church becomes a Church by being married or espoused unto Christ, then a company becomes a Church by way of Covenant: But the former is true, therefore the latter is true also.

The Assumption, that a Church becomes a Church by being married unto Christ, is plain from the former Scriptures, where the Church of *Israel*, and the Church of *Corinth* in regard of their entering into Church Estate, are said to be espoused and married unto Christ, as a loving and chaste Virgin to one husband. Which

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spiritual marriage between Christ and his Church, is also taught in the type of the marriage between King *Solomon* and *Pharoah's* daughter, *Psal. 45*.

The Consequence of the Proposition is plain in reason; for there is no marriage but by way of Covenant; no woman becomes a man's wife, but by way of bestowing her self in Covenant upon such a man: neither doth a man become an husband, but by the same means, and therefore the Scripture speaking of the violation of marriage calls it a violation of Covenant, *Prov. 2:17*.

Object. 1. "*Christ hath but one wife or Spouse*, Cant. 6:9.

Answer. The Catholic Church indeed is but one; *viz.* the whole company of God's Elect in heaven, in earth, dead, now living, and not yet born: But as there is the Church-Catholic, which is but

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one; so there are particular and visible Churches? which are in number many; and therefore the Scripture speaks of Churches, *2 Cor.* 8:1. *19. Gal.* 1:2. Of the Churches of the Gentiles, *Rom.* 16:4. Of seven Churches, *Rev.* 1:4. Of all Churches, *1 Cor.* 14:33. & 7:17. *Rev.* 2:23.

Object. 2. “*But if every particular Church be the Wife of Christ, how many hundred wives should he have?*”

Answer. 1. If the Church of Israel, *Jer.* 2:2. the Church of *Corinth*, *2 Cor.* 11:2. The Jewish Church, *Rev.* 19:7. be the Spouse and wife of Christ, there is no reason but others should be the same also, especially seeing there is no particular Church, but in respect: of their Church estate, they may decline and go a whoring from Christ, and that shews that they were first espoused to him; for no woman can be said to got a Whoring from a man, if she were never married, nor espoused to him at all.

2. This that seems an absurdity, and were a sinful practise among men, in respect of Christ, is a certain truth, and no dishonour unto him at all, to have more Spouses then one upon earth, many spiritual Spouses. Men cannot give themselves wholly and entirely to many as Christ can. Every faithful soul is espoused and married unto Christ; and in that respect he hath not only many hundred but many thousand, yea many millions of spiritual Spouses.

Object. 3. “*But this spiritual marriage is between Christ and the Church, But the Church Covenant is between the Church and the members, and therefore this marriage doth not prove the Church-Covenant.*”

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Answer. 1. In some sort there may be said to be a marriage between the Church and the members, *viz.* in respect of that dear love and affection, that ought to be between them; and therefore it is said, *As a young man marrieth a Virgin, so shall the children of the Church be married to the Church*, *Isa.* 62:5.

2. But properly the marriage is between Christ & the Church, and so is the Covenant also, so far as therein they give up themselves to Christ as unto an head and Lord; as a woman in the Co-

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venant of marriage doth give up her self unto her husband; And the performance of such duties as the Church and the member owe one unto another, is a branch of that marriage-Covenant, wherein they are tied to Christ; for Christ himself in his Covenant requires, not only that they should give up themselves to him, but also that they should perform these duties one unto another. And accordingly it is said of the Churches in *Macedonia*, that *they gave up themselves first to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God*, 2 Cor. 8:5. True it is, they do also bind themselves by Covenant one unto another, but in that respect the Covenant is properly a brotherly Covenant; like that 1 *Sam.* 20:8. *Amos* 1:9. because there the engagement is to one another as brethren, fellow-members, and fellow-helpers, and not as to one head or Lord, as it is in respect of Christ, and therefore in that respect it is not so properly a marriage-Covenant as it is in respect of Christ: though duties to one another are promised in their Covenant with one another, and also in their Covenant with Christ. In brief thus: They promise unto Christ duties to him, and duties to one another according to him: and so their Covenant is a marriage-Covenant with Christ: They promise also to one another, duties to one another, and so it is a brotherly Covenant.

Another Title given to the Church (which also proves that a Church is made by Covenant) is the Title of a City or City of God, *Psal.* 87:3 & 48:1, 8. & 122:3. *Ephes.* 2:19. The Argument lieth thus. If a true Church be a City of God, then a Church becomes a Church by Covenant: But every true Church is a City of God, *Ergo*.

The Assumption is proved by the Scriptures forealleged. The Consequence of the Proposition is plain in reason, for every City is united by some Covenant amongst themselves, the Citizens are received *jus Civitatis*, or right of City privileges, by some

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Covenant or Oath; And therefore it is so likewise in this City of God the Church; and men become Citizens of the Church by solemn Covenant.

Argu. 3. The third Argument may be drawn from the means of reforming and restoring a Church when it is corrupted, which is by entering into Covenant a new with God, 2 *Chron.* 15:10. & 29:10.

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& *Neh.* 9:38. & 10:28, 29. *Jer.* 50:4, 5. The reason may be taken thus: If a Church decayed is to be restored and reformed by renewing Covenant with God, then it was instituted and erected at the first by way of Covenant: The reason of which Consequence is, because abuses and corruptions are to be reformed by bringing things back to the first Institution: Thus Christ reforms the abuses of marriage, by binging them to the first Institution of that Ordinance; *From the beginning it was not so*, *Mat.* 19:8. And thus *Paul* reformeth the Abuses of the Lord's Supper, by telling them what was the first Institution thereof, *1 Cor.* 11:23. &c. And thus the Lord Jesus calling on the declining Church of *Ephesus* for reformation, *bids her remember from whence she is fallen, and repent and do her first works*, *Rev.* 2:5.

Now the Assumption is plain from the Texts above alleged, that at the reforming of a Church, there is to be a renewing of Covenant; and thence it follows, that at the first erecting of a Church, there was the making of a Covenant with God, for else this renewing of Covenant would not have been the way to reform it.

Argu. 4. The fourth Argument is taken from that which doth dissolve a Church, which is the dissolving or breaking of the Covenant, *Zach.* 11:9, 10, 14. If dissolving the Covenant be that which doth dissolve the Church, then the making of Covenant is that which constuutes a Church. The reason of the Consequence is plain, because otherwise the Covenant might be dissolved & the Church stand still, if it were not the making of the Covenant that did constitute the Church: But if dissipating stones in a building do dissolveth house, then the compacting and conjoining of them is that which makes the house; If separation of soul and body be that which destroys the man, that then we say he is not: it must needs be the uniting ot them, that did constitute & make the man: and so it is in this case. And that dissolving the Covenant is that which dissolves a Church, is plain from the Text alleged, *Zach.* 11. where the breaking ot the two staves, of beauty and

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bands, that is, the unchurching of the Jews, is interpreted to be the breaking of the Covenant that God had made with that people, and the brotherhood that was between *Judah* and *Israel*.

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Argu. 5. The fifth Argument is taken from the distinction which God hath appointed amongst Churches, and the confounding of all Churches into one, if there be not this Covenant to distinguish them. If Churches be distinct Societies, and may not be confounded, then Churches are compacted and combined by Covenant: But the former is true. *Ergo*,

That Churches are distinct Societies, is plain in the Scripture, where we have mention of many Churches in one Country or Province, *Gal.* 1:1. 1 *Thes.* 2:14. Of seven Churches in Asia, *Rev.* 1:4. and of all the Churches, 1 *Cor.* 14:33. *Rev.* 2:23. *Ephesus* is not *Smyrna*, nor *Smyrna* is not *Thyatira*, nor either of them *Pergamus*, but each one distinct of themselves, having Officers of their own which did not belong to others: vertues of their own for which others are not praised, corruptions of their own, for which others are not blamed; If it were not thus, then when *Laodicea* is condemned for lukewarmness, or *Ephesus* for declining, all the rest should be reprov'd also: And when *Philadelphia* is praised, all the rest should be praised also, which we see is otherwise. Now from hence the Consequence is certain, that therefore they are combined by some Covenant each one amongst themselves; for there is nothing else without this that will sufficiently distinguish them. The Spirit of God and Faith in their hearts, is common to all Christians under heaven, and in heaven also, and therefore this is not the thing that makes distinction. Nor is it habitation in the same Town together, for that may be common to such Christians as are not of this Church, and usually is to many that are no Christians. As it is with Companies in *London*; as the Company of Goldsmiths, &c. that many others dwell in the same Town with them, yea it may be in the same street that are not of their Company: and therefore it is not merely habitation that doth distinguish them from others, but some combination and agreement amongst themselves; So it is not habitation in the same Town that distinguisheth Churches, and Church-members from other men, but their mutual agreement and combination and joining themselves together in an holy Covenant with God.

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Object. “If the Spirit of God and Faith in their hearts cannot distinguish one Church from another, because these are common to them all, then how can Covenant distinguish them, sith all Churches are joined by Covenant one as well as another?”

Answer. It is not a Covenant simply or a Covenant in general that doth constitute a Church, or distinguish one Church from another, but a Covenant with application and appropriation to these persons. Even as it is in marriage, though all married couples be united by Covenant and a Covenant wherein one couple promiseth the same duties that another couple doth yet a Covenant with application and appropriation of the duties covenanted to this man and this woman in particular, such a Covenant is the very thing that make a couple, man and wife together, and gives them mutual power over each other, as husband and wife, and puts a distinction between them and all other men and women in the world. And so it is in this case; a Covenant to perform Church-duties with application and appropriation to such persons, is the very thing that constitutes a Church, and distinguisheth one Church from another.

And thus much concerning the former of the two particulars, to shew the use of Church-Covenant, *viz.* that it is that whereby a company do become a Church.

The second particular is this, that taking hold of the Covenant, or joining in it, is that which makes a particular person a member of a Church. And this follows upon the former, and that may be the first Argument to prove it.

Argu. 1. If joining in Covenant be that which makes a company to become a Church, then taking hold of that Covenant is requisite to make a particular person become a member of the Church: But the first is true, as hath been shewed before; Therefore the second is true also: It compacting and conjoining of stones and pieces of Timber, be that that makes an house, then a particular stone cannot become a part of that house, till it be compared and conjoined to the rest: But the former is true, even in the Church of God, which is the spiritual Spouse and City of God, living stones, Christians, believers must be compacted together, and builded up together *Ephes. 2:21, 22. Psal. 122:3.* and therefore the latter is

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true also, that a particular Christian becomes a member of the Church, a part of that building by being combined with the rest.

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Argu. 2. A second Argument may be drawn from the Scripture, *Isa.* 56:

3, 6, 7. *Let not the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, the Lord hath utterly separated me from his people, &c. The sons of the strangers that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, &c. and take hold of my Covenant, even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joy full in my house of Prayer, &c.* Concerning which Scripture, note three things to the present purpose. First, That these strangers were members of Christ, true believers, joined to God by Faith; for it is said, *they have joined themselves to the Lord*, v. 3. & v. 6. that they loved the name of the Lord, served him, and kept his Sabbaths, v. 6. and yet for all this they were not as yet joined as members of the visible Church, for if they had been joined, there would have been no cause for such a complaint, *the Lord hath separated me from hts people*, v. 3. Besides, bringing them into the Church as members, and granting them the privilege of members, is promised as a reward and blessing upon this their joining to the Lord by faith and obedience, v. 7. And therefore it is not the same, but a distinct thing from it; the one being promised, as a reward and blessing upon the other. Secondly, the Lord promiseth that he will make them members of his Church: *Them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of Prayer.* Thirdly, That among other things requisite to make them members, this was one, *viz.* the taking hold of that Covenant which was between the Church of *Israel* and God, v. 6. So that hence we may gather, that men may be members or Christ, joined to the Lord by faith and love, and yet for the present not be members of the visible Church: And that when God is so gracious to true believers, as to make them members of his visible Church, it is requisite that they join in Covenant before.

Object. “*But might not faith in Christ, believing in heart on the God of Israel, be all the taking hold of the Covenant that is here meant.*”

Answer. Not so, but over and above that, here is also meant their open profession of their Faith in the God of *Israel*, and open binding of themselves by Covenant to all such duties of faith and obedience,

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as God required of the Church of *Israel*, and the members thereof. Now distinctly take the Answer to this Objection in three or four particular Propositions. First, There was a Covenant between the Church of *Israel* and God, *Exod.* 19:5, 6, 7, 8. *Ezek.* 16: 8. *Deut.* 29:10. &c. Secondly, This Covenant was mutual; not r

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only a promise on God's part to be their God, and to take them for his people, but also reciprocally on their part to give up themselves unto God to be his people, and to do the duty of people to their God; The Covenant is not merely to receive from God, and promise nothing back again to him; nor doth God bind himself therein, and leave men at liberty, but it is mutual on both parts, as these Scriptures declare; *Gen.* 17:1. *Exod.* 19:7, 8. *Deut.* 5: 27. & 6:16, 17. *Hos.* 2:23. & *Zach.* 13:9. Thirdly, Hereupon it follows, that if men had not promised, and also performed, in some measure of truth, the duties of Faith and obedience unto God, they had not taken hold of the Covenant, but had discovenanted themselves, notwithstanding all the promises of God unto their Fathers or others. Thus though God promised *Abraham* to be a God to him, and to his seed in their generations, *Gen.* 17:7. yet the *Ishmaelites* and *Edomites* descending from *Abraham*, were discovenanted by not promising nor performing those duties of Faith and obedience, which God required on the people's part: when a Covenant contains promises on God's part, and duties also on man's, he doth not take hold of the Covenant that takes one part, and leaves another. Fourthly, To believe what God promised in the Covenant for his part, and to promise in a private way the duties of obedience on man's part, was not sufficient to make these strangers members of the Church, but they must do it openly and in the view of the Church, else the Church could have had no warrant to have admitted such into their Fellowship, if their faith and obedience had not been visibly protected, *Exod.* 12:43, 48. 1 *Chron.* 23:9.

And in as much as the Covenant was mutual, when these strangers did manifest their taking hold of the Covenant, they manifested and professed both Faith and obedience, both that they believed what God promised, and that they would be obedient to what he required; If any should have claimed Church-fellowship, say-

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ing, I believe the promises, but would not bind himself to any duties of Evangelical obedience, this had been a taking hold of the Covenant by the halves, a taking of one part of it in forming and pretence, and a leaving of another; but it would not have been sufficient to have brought a man into the fellowship of the church: Such of the Congregation of *Israel* as would not come to *Jerusalem* to enter into Covenant, were to be separated from the Church

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in the days of *Ezra*, *Ezra* 10:8. And therefore such as being strangers should refuse to enter into it, could not be admitted into the Church; So that the taking hold of God's Covenant, which is there required to make these strangers members of the Church, is a believing in heart on the God of *Israel*, and an open profession that they did believe, and likewise a promise of obedience or subjection unto the God of *Israel*, and an open professing of such obedience and subjection; and that is the joining in Covenant which we stand for, before a man can be a member of a Church, even an open profession of Faith and of Obedience.

Argu. 3. A third Argument is taken from those Scriptures which shew that men become members by being added to the Church, or being joined to them, *Act.* 2:47. & 5:13. & 9:26. If men become members of the Church by being added or joined, then joining in Covenant (or professing of subjection to the Gospel or Covenant of God) is that whereby a man becomes a member of a Church: But the former is true, as appears by the Scriptures fore-mentioned) and therefore the latter is true also.

But all the doubt in this Argument will be concerning the consequence of the *Major* Proposition; but that may be made good by this reason, and the confirmation of it, *viz.* that a man cannot be added or joined to the Church by any other means without this joining in Covenant. The truth of which Assertion will appear by shewing the inefficiency of all other means, without this joining in Covenant, and that may be done in Answer to the Objections ensuing.

Object. 1. "When men were added to the Church, it may be, no more is meant

but that God did convert them and work Faith in their hearts, and that converting of them was the adding of them to the Church.



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Answer. This cannot be all; for, first, *Saul* was converted and had faith wrought in his heart, and yet he was not at the first received for a member of the Church at *Jerusalem* (though he assayed to be joined unto them,) till they were better satisfied in his spiritual estate by the testimony of *Barnabas*, Act. 9:26, 27, 28. And those strangers, *Isa.* 56. (as was said before) were joined to the Lord by being converted, and having Faith wrought in their hearts, and yet they do lament it with grief, that they were not joined as members to the Visible Church: *The Lord hath separated me from his people* say they, ver. 3. The old saying is true concerning the

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visible Church, *There are many wolves within, and many sheep without.* Secondly, Those that were joined were believers before they joined; for it is said, *divers were added*, ver. 14, Thirdly, Those that were added to the Church, were added and joined to them by such an act as others durst not put forth, *Act.* 5:13. *Of the rest durst no man join unto them*, and therefore it was not by the irresistible act of God in converting of them, but by some voluntary act of their own choice and consent; for God's converting grace depends not upon man's daring, or not daring to receive it. It to be joined be no more but to be converted, then when it is said, *Some durst not be joined*, the meaning should be, they durst not be converted, nor suffer Faith to be wrought in them; which is gross Arminianism, suspending the converting grace of God upon the free will of the creature. Fourthly, And as this joining which others durst not do, cannot be meant of being converted; So if it be well considered, what the thing was wherein they durst not join, it may appear that it was nothing else but this, that they durst not agree, and engage themselves to be of their body and society; that is, they durst not join in Covenant with them. For it cannot be meant of dwelling in the Town with them, for this they both durst do and did: nor is it only of joining to hear the Word in their assembly, for this also they durst do, and many did it in great multitudes, so that many by hearing the Word became believers, and were added to the Lord both of men and women, ver. 14. at this very time when it is said of some they durst not join unto them: Nor is it of joining to them in assembly or approbation of their way, for this they also durst do and



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did express so much in magnifying and commending them, when yet they durst not join unto them, *ver.* 13. Which magnifying of them doth imply that they heard their doctrine, and saw their practice, and approved it, and highly commended them for the same: Wherefore seeing this joining, which some durst not do, cannot be meant of being converted, nor of joining in habitation, nor of joining in affection, nor in hearing the Word in their Assembly, nor of approbation, and expressions that way, it remaineth that it must be meant of joining in that near relation of Church-fellowship amongst them, so as to be engaged by voluntary consent and agreement to be members of their Church. Fiftly, If joining to the Church, were no more but to be con-

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verted, then he that were converted were joined as a member of every visible Church throughout the world, which were a great confusion of that Order, and distinction of Churches, which the Lord hath appointed.

Obj. 2. Men may be joined to the Church, in hearty affection and love, and yet without any Covenant.

Answ. True, but this will not make them members of that Church, for then *Saul* was a member of the Church at *Jerusalem*, afore he was joined a member, for he was joined to them in hearty affection afore, and therefore assayed to join as a member; and so were they that durst not join, *Act.* 5:13. yea then a man should be a member of many Churches, yea of all Christian Churches in the world; for he is to love them, and bear hearty affection to them all; The true members of the Churches in *England* are united in hearty affection, to the Churches in *Scotland*, in *Holland*, in *France*, in *New-England*, &c. And yet they are not members of all these Churches, nor subject to their censures as members are.

Obj. 3. "But the reason of that is because they do not dwell among them in the same Town.

Answ. Neither would habitation with them in the same Town, make a man a member of the Church there, if there be no more then so. Suppose *Saul* to have dwelt in the same house afore his conversion in which he dwelt after, which is not impossible nor unlikely; yet we see he was no member of the Church at *Jerusalem*, afore his

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conversion, no nor of some time after, though he might have dwelt in an house in the midst of the Christians, and Church-members there. The members of the *Dutch* and *French* Churches in *London*, or other Towns in *England*, are not members of the *English* Congregations or Churches, no more then the *English* are of theirs, and yet they dwell promiscuously together in the same Street of the same Town. Town-dwelling would not make a man a free-man of a Company in *London*, or some other Corporation, for many others dwell in the Town with them; yea it may be in the same street, that are not free of their Company, and so it is in this case.

Object. 4. “*But the reason why such as dwell in Town with the Church, are not numbers thereof, may be, because they frequent not their Assem-*

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Answ. Idiots and Infidels might come into the public meetings among the *Corinthians*, 1 *Cor.* 14:23, 24, 25. yet Idiots and Infidells were not therefore members of the Church. And *Saul* after his conversion might have come in amongst the Church in time of public duties, and have seen and heard all that they had done: yet this would not have made him of one body with them. Some *Indians*, *Moors*, and other natural persons come into our meetings in *New England*, some of their own accord, and others by the Command or Counsel of their Matters and Governors, yet no man can say, that all these are hereby made Church-members. Wherefore seeing neither conversion, nor loving affection, nor cohabitation, nor coming into their meetings, doth join a man as a member of the visible Church (for some men have all these and yet are not members, and others are sometimes members of the visible Churches, and yet want some of these, are hypocrites and want sound conversion) it remaineth therefore that as sound conversion makes a man fit matter for a Church; So profession of his Faith, and of his subjection to the Gospel, and the Churches approbation, and acceptance of him (which is the sum of Church-Covenant) is the formal cause that gives him the being of a member.

Object. 5. “*But joining doth not always signify joining in Covenant; Philip joined to the Eunuch’s chariot, and dust to men’s feet, Act. 8:29. &*

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Luke 10, 11. *and yet there was no Covenant, and therefore men may join to the Church without any Covenant.*

Answ. The word indeed may express any close joining, whether natural, (as the branch is joined to the Vine, or an arm or other member to the body) or artificial, as when two sticks were joyned to become one in *Ezekiel's* hand, *Ezek.* 37. Or when Carpenters or Masons do join pieces of stone or Timber together, to make one house, *Neh.* 4:6. *Ezra* 4:12. but is not only the force of the word that is stood upon. But when joining is used to express such joining, wherein a man voluntarily takes on him a new relation, there it always implies a Covenant, whether the relation be moral and civil, or religious and Ecclesiastical: We speak of voluntary relation, for there are natural relations, as between parents and children: and these need no Covenant, there is no Covenant to make a man a Parent, or a child. There are also violent relations, as between Conqueror and Captives, and

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in these there is no Covenant neither; but others are voluntary, and these always imply a Covenant, and are founded therein, whether they be moral and civil (as between husband and wife, *Pro.* 2:17. between Master and servants, *Luk.* 15:15. between Prince and subject, between Partners in Trade, 2 *Chro.* 20:35, 36, 37. where the Covenant or agreement is, that men shall bare such a share or charges, and receive such a share of profits:) or religious, as between Minister and people, between the Church and the members: all these are done by way of Covenant. A man cannot join himself to a woman as her husband, but by way of Covenant: A man cannot join himself to another as a servant, or apprentice, but by way of Covenant; And so may we say of all the rest; nor into any body corporate, but by the same way and means, if men be united into a body politic or incorporate, a man cannot be said to be joined to them by mere hearty affection, unless withal he joins himself unto them by some Contract or Covenant. Now of this nature is every particular Church, a body incorporate, 1 *Cor.* 12:27. *Ye are the body of Christ, &c.* and hath power to cast out, 1 *Cor.* 5:13. and to forgive and receive in Penitents, 2 *Cor.* 2:7, 8 as a body incorporate; and therefore he that will join unto them, must do it

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by way of Covenant or Agreement; and so this Answer to this Objection, may be a fourth Argument to prove the point in hand, that joining in Covenant is that which makes a man, a member of a Church.

Argu. 4. All voluntary relations, all relations which are neither natural nor violent, are entered into by way of Covenant.

But he that joins into a Church as a member, or enters into a Church, doth take upon him such a relation; Therefore joining to a Church as a member, is by way of Covenant.

Argu. 5. A fifth Argument may be drawn from the power which all Churches, Officers and members, have over all their members in the Lord. If all Churches, Officers, and members, have power in the Lord over all their members, then joining in Covenant is necessary to make a man a member of a Church, but the former is true, therefore the latter is true also.

The Assumption in this Argument, that all Churches have power over their members, is proved from *1 Cor.* 5:4, 5, 13. where the Apostle reproveth the *Corinthians* for suffering the In-

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cestuous man amongst them, and commands them to deliver him to Satan, and call him out from amongst them. Now this he would not have done, if they had had no power over him, or if there had been any room for them to say, we have nothing to do with him, we have no power over him. And the same is proved in other Scriptures also; as, *Mat.* 18:17. *Psal.* 149:6, 7, 8, 9.

And the Consequence of the *Major Proposition*, *viz.* that then members do engage themselves by Covenant, is proved by this reason; That Churches have no power over such as have not engaged themselves by Covenant, and committed power unto them, by professing to be subject to all the Ordinances of Christ amongst them.

The truth whereof may appear by two Reasons:

First, Because all Christians have power and right, *jure divino*, to choose their own Officers to whom they commit their souls, *Act.* 6. & 1. & 14:23. where the word *χειροτονήσαντες*, imports choosing by Election: and so the word is used and translated, *2 Cor.* 8: 19. *he was chosen by the Churches, &c.* It is not ministerial gifts that

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makes a man a Minister to every Church, nor investeth him with spiritual power over them, nor though he dwell amongst them, unless they call him, and he accept of that call: And as they have power to choose their Officers, so likewise to choose their brethren according to God, *Rom. 14:1*. Now if they have power so choose their Officers and brethren, then none can have power over them as Officers and brethren, without their own consent, and whom they never chose, nor promised by any Covenant or Engagement to be subject to the Lord.

Secondly, If the Church should exercise any Act of Church-power over such a man as never entered into Covenant with them (suppose to Excommunicate him for whoredom or drunkenness or the like) the man might protest against their Act, and their Sentence, as *Coram non judice*, and they could not justify their proceedings, it indeed there have passed no Covenant or Engagement between him and them. If he shall say, you have nothing to do to pass Sentence or Censure upon me, I am none of your Church, but of another Church; Suppose in *Holland*, in *France*, &c. and I am only here now for Merchandise sake, or upon some other occasion: what shall they say to stop his mouth, it there never.

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ver passed any Covenant between him and them.

Object. “*But Ministers have power over the people by the word of God, Heb. 13:17. 1 Thes. 5:12. 1 Tim. 5:17. and not by men’s engaging themselves by Covenant.*”

Answer. But what is it that makes men Ministers to such a people, Officers to such a Church, or maketh them sheep of my flock? Is it not those Scriptures that makes every man a Pastor, of Teacher, or Ruler to a people, unless they call him to that Office; and then in so doing they Covenant and Engage themselves to be subject to him in the Lord, and then those Scriptures take hold on them. One might as well say, it is not the Covenanting of a wife to her husband that gives him power over her, but the Word of God; For as the Word of God commands people to obey their Ministers, so it commands *wives to be subject to their husbands*, *Ephes. 5:22*. And yet all men know, a man cannot take

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this woman for his wife but by Covenant. So that if she once makes her self a wife by her own voluntary Covenant, then the word of God takes hold on her, and binds her to do the duties of a wife: but if she hath made no Covenant, the man hath no power over her as her husband, neither is she his wife; So if men once make themselves members of such a Church, sheep of such a man's flock, by their own voluntary Covenant, then the word of God takes hold of them, and binds them to do the duties of members to their fellow-brethren, and of people to their Pastors or Ministers. But if they never chose such a man to be their Minister, nor Covenanted to be subject to him in the Lord, he then can have no power over them as a Minister unto them, because they have right to chose their own Ministers.

Argu. 6. A sixth Argument may be taken from the distinction that is between members, and not members. It there be by the word of God a distinction, between members of the Church and such as are no members, then joining in Covenant is necessary to the being of a member; but the former is true, as appears *1 Cor. 5: 12*. Some are within, and may be judged by the Church, and others are without, and may not: and therefore the latter is true also. And the reason of the Conference is because there is nothing else without this joining in Covenant, that can sufficiently distinguish them; It is not Faith and Grace in their hearts, for some men are members of the visible Church, and yet have no

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Grace, and others may have Grace, and yet be no members, and therefore this is not the thing that doth distinguish them, nor is it affection, nor cohabitation, nor every approbation of the Word of God, and the ways of his Church, not coming into their Assemblies to hear the Word; But these things were touched before, and therefore may be here the more briefly passed over.

And so much shall suffice to have spoken of the second particular, concerning the life of Church-Covenant, that it is by joining therein that a particular person becomes a member of a Church.

But here it will be needful to remove sundry Objections, which may seem to some to be of great weight against Church-Covenant, that so by the removing of them, the truth may be the more cleared, to fuller satisfaction, if it be the will of God.

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Object. 1. Church-Covenant is a Term that is not found in Scripture.

Answer. First, So is Sacrament, Trinity, &c. and yet those terms may be lawfully used, because the thing meant thereby is found.

Secondly, But seeing the Covenant is between the Lord and his Church, as the two parties that are confederate, it is all one whether it be called the Lord's Covenant, or the Church-Covenant: As when *Mamre, Aver, & Eschol* were confederate with *Abraham*, Gen. 14:13. might not one truly say, *Abraham* was confederate with them? Relatives do mutually put and establish one another.

Thirdly, The Scripture allows both the Lord's Covenant with the Church, *Eze. 16:8.* & the people's covenant or Saint's covenant, or Churches' Covenant with him, *Deut. 29:12. Psal. 50:5. Jer. 50:5.*

Fourthly, There is good reason for both the words; both the Lord's Covenant, and the Church-Covenant, because both are confederate; And for that of Church-Covenant, there is this reason also. *viz.* to distinguish it from other Covenants, as a marriage-Covenant, *Pro. 2:17.* and a brotherly Covenant, *1 Sam. 20:8.* The Church-Covenant being thus called not only because they are a Church, or members thereof that make it, but also because they enter into it in reference to Church-Estate and Church-duties: The duties which they bind themselves unto in this Covenant being such especially as concern a Church and the members thereof.

Object. 2. "But this Church Covenant puts some disparagement upon the Covenant of Grace, which every believer is already entered into with God, and seem to charge the same with insufficiency; for every second Covenant doth argue that the first was not faultless, Heb. 8:7.

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Answ. 1. A second Covenant doth argue that the first was not faultless, where the Covenants are contrary one to another, as the covenant of Grace, and the covenant of works are, and so it is most true, that the bringing in of the free Covenant of Grace did argue that righteousness and life could not be attained by the Law, or Covenant of works; for if there had been a Law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law. *Gal. 3:21. Rom. 8:3.*

2. But if it be the same Covenant that is renewed or made again, though upon a new occasion, no man can say that entering

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into the same the second time, or a third, or a fourth, doth disanul the first, or cast disparagement upon the same. The covenant of works given to *Adam* was not blamed or faulted, because it was renewed in *Sinai*. The Covenant of Grace was first given to *Adam* in Paradise after his fall, afterward to *Abraham*, then to the people of Israel under types and shadows; And again after the coming of Christ in the flesh; yet none of these doth disanul the former, or argue the same to be faulty; and the reason is because it is still the same Covenant though renewed upon new occasions; and in some particulars in some other manner. And the like we say concerning Church-Covenant, or the Covenant which a man makes when he enters into the Church, *viz.* that it is not another Covenant contrary to the Covenant of Grace, which every believer is brought into at his first conversion, but an open profession of a man's subjection to that very Covenant, specially in the things which concern Church estate, into which estate the man is now entering.

Obj. 3. "It is not lawful to make such a Covenant as the Church-Covenant, because it is not in our power to keep it, and we do not know whether God will give us power.

Answ. This ground is very true, that no man hath power of himself to any thing, that good is, but all a man's power and ability must come of God through Christ, *2 Cor.* 3:5. *Phil.* 2:13. *Joh.* 15:5. But the inference is not good, that therefore it should be unlawful to enter into Church Covenant: for 1. By the same reason, all promises are unlawful and all covenants whatsoever; as the covenant of marriage, the covenant of service; yea and the personal covenant of Grace, when a particular soul promiseth faith and new obedience; for there is none of these, no not the covenant of

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Marriage, which a man is able of himself to keep, as the adultery of *David* and *Bathsheba*, among others, doth plainly prove.

2. God hath promised to give power to them that in self-denial seek it of him, and trust to his promise for it. *Ezek.* 36:27. *Jer.* 31:33. *Rom.* 6:14. *Jer.* 32:40. The true inference therefore from this ground, from man's disability to perform were this, that therefore a man should not enter into Church Covenant in his own strength, for that was *Peter's* fault in promising not to deny

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Christ, but to die with him rather: but Church-Covenant, as also all other promises, should be entered into, in an humble looking up to Christ Jesus for help and assistance to perform. *Thou therefore my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. 2:1.*

Obj. 4. "God disalloweth covenants of man's making (and so our Church-Covenant) in those words, But not by thy Covenant. Ezek. 16:61.

Answ. God doth not reprove them there for making Covenant, for then he were contrary to himself, who elsewhere called them to do it, *Exod. 29. Deut. 29.* and commended them for it, *Psal. 50:5.* Yea and in that very place of *Ezek. 16.* acknowledgeth a Covenant between him and them, *ver. 60, 62.* But the meaning is, he would do them good, but not for their good keeping the Covenant of works, for they had very sinfully broken it, *ver. 59.* but even as he saith elsewhere, not for their sakes, or for their righteousness, *Ezek. 36:32 Deut. 9:4, 5, 6.* But what force is there in this arguing, *viz.* It God will do us good, but not for our good keeping the covenant of works, then it is not lawful to promise obedience to the covenant of Grace, in such things as concern Church estate; All men may easily see that here is a plain *non sequitur.*

Obj. 5. "This entering into Covenant may keep out many good men from joining to the Churches, because they are not satisfied about it: and therefore it is better laid aside.

Answ. It is not impossible, but good men may for a time be unsatisfied about it, till they understand the nature and use of it, and yet the thing be warrantable enough for all that in the sight of God; the Tribes were troubled at the Altar set up upon the banks of Jordan by the two Tribes and an half, till they understood the intent and use of it, and for what purpose it was erected: and then they were satisfied. *Josh. 22.* And the same may be said of *Peter's* eating with the Gentiles, which at the first was very offensive to them of the

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circumcision, till they understood what *Peter* had to say for his defence therein, and then they rested well satisfied, *Act. 11.*

But if men understand what the Church-Covenant is, there is no reason that good men should be troubled at it; it being nothing else but a promise of obedience unto the Gospel of Christ, or of

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such duties as the Gospel requireth of all Christians in Church-estate: For, will good men refuse to obey the Gospel, or submit to the ordinances of Christ? or will they refuse to profess and promise so much? If a man understand what it is, and what we mean by it, and yet refuse to enter into it when he hath opportunity thereto, such refusing is no part of his goodness, but is to be reckoned amongst his corruptions; It is ignorance at the best, and if not so, then it may be perverseness of will, or some want of will to perform obedience to the Gospel. And surely there is small hope that such would yield subjection and obedience to the Gospel, who do refuse to profess or promise it.

Obj. 6. "But the Scripture, Act. 2:41. tells of joining to the Church without any Covenant, For it was not possible that 3,000. should enter into covenant in one day.

Answ. Two things may be said in Answer to this Objection.

First, that 3,000. were not so many, but that joining in Covenant might easily be done by them all, in one day. For, 1. it was at Pentecost, at which time of the year the days were at the longest: And, 2. the Scripture tells us, that *David* made a Covenant with all the Tribes of Israel in one day, 2 *Sam. 5:1, 2, 3.* The Articles of the covenant between *David* and the Tribes, and so between this 3,000, and the Lord might be openly declared, and they both the one and the other might by some sign or other, express their consent thereunto in one day.

Secondly, as joining in Covenant is a thing that might be done, so it is more then probable that indeed it was done, by those 3,000. souls. For it is said, *ver. 41, that they gladly received the Word,* that is, they openly professed that they did with all their hearts receive it, for this receiving of the Word is noted as a condition, upon which they were admitted to baptism, and therefore it was nor only an inward receiving of it in their hearts, but also an open professing that they did receive it, for an inward receiving of it in their hearts, without an open professing thereof outwardly, would not have been sufficient for the admitting of them unto Baptism.

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Now this Word which they received was an exhortation to Repentance for sin, and to Faith in the promise, *ver. 38, 39.* and to obedience in severing themselves from others, and saving them-

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selves from that untoward generation, *ver.* 40. And therefore when they openly professed, that they gladly received this word, there was an open professing of their Repentance for sin, *ver.* 40. of their Faith in the promise, and of obedience to the Commandment, which is nothing else but the very sum of Church-Covenant: yea, and further, their very preparation to this repentance, faith and obedience, in that true compunction and sorrow of soul, was also openly made manifest, *ver.* 37.

Reply. “*But yet there would not be such long narrations, of every one severally as now are used, when men do enter into Church-Covenant, when each one makes a good long speech, in the profession of his Faith and Repentance.*”

Answ. When the thing is certain, as was shewed before, that they did openly profess repentance, faith and obedience, it is not difference in the length or largeness of their speeches in expressing of themselves, that can make any difference in the thing: *Majus & minus non diversiscant speciem.* And we deny not but they might be briefer, because there was not such need they should be long in regard of some difference between them and us, their time and ours: First there were the Apostles present to hear their confessions, and to judge thereof, who were men of very good discerning, and therefore briefer expressing of men’s selves might suffice; whereas the best Christians, yea the best Ministers amongst us are not to be compared to the Apostles; and therefore as we need more time for study, and for preparation for our Sermons then they did: so likewise we need more time to hear, and try the soundness of men’s repentance towards God, and faith towards out Lord Jesus Christ. Yet this we may add withal, that if the Apostles and those primitive Christians, men of such excellent discerning were sometimes deceived, and could not always so discern, but that some Hypocrites would creep into the Church: as the example of *Ananias* and *Saphira* doth witness; how much more need is there, that the Churches of God in these days (being far inferior to them) should be very watchful and circumspect in

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trying the spiritual estates of them that offer to come into the Church?

Secondly, their times also differed from ours: for their Christianity was a matter of reproach and danger of excommunication, *Joh.* 9:22. of imprisonment, *Act.* 4:3. and 5:18. and the like. And therefore to see men now to make open profession of their faith in Christ Jesus, whole servants and disciples were so hated, and who himself but a while before was crucified, this was not an ordinary matter: and therefore in words, men might be the briefer when they came to be received into the Church: But our times in *New England* do not persecute Christ, and Christians, and Christian Churches, but countenance them, and protect them; and therefore there is more need now to be more studious in examination of men's estates when they offer themselves for Church members: when the Jews were in favour, many of the people of the Land became Jews, *Esth.* 8:17.

Obj. 7. "*But why is there so little proof of this Church-Covenant in the New Testament?*"

Answ. 1. Suppose the New Testament said nothing of it, yet it might have ground sufficient from the Scriptures of the old Testament; for if it was God's revealed will in those days, that accompany should become a Church, and particular persons become members of that Church by way of Covenant, we maybe sure it is so now like wife, unless covenanting were peculiar to the Jewish Pædigo-gy; indeed if it had never been used in those times, but were some new ordinance, peculiar to the days of the New Testament, in such cases also a ground from the Scriptures of the New Testament were necessary, as there is in all such things wherein there is any change or variation, from what was used in those times afore Christ, as that there should not be National Churches, but congregational, and not one visible Church, but many, that there should be baptism, and the Lord's Supper: these are matters that are not found in the old Testament, nor were appointed to be used in those days, and therefore we must have warrant for them in the New, and so we have. But for the Covenant it is otherwise, it is no new ordinance peculiar to the days of the Gospel, nor any Levitical ordinance peculiar to the Jewish Pedagogy; and there-

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fore the Scriptures of the Old Testament that give warrant for it; may be sufficient as hath been shewed afore.

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2. And yet there is not wanting good warrant for it, that it ought to be used, in the days of the New Testament. For, 1. the Prophets do foretell it, *Isa.* 56:6, 7. and 44:5. and *Jer.* 50:5. *Ezek.* 20:37. and in sundry other places, to omit the rest at this time, because some of them have been spoken of before; Only let those words of *Isa.* 44:5. see well considered, and see if they do not plainly hold forth that in the days of the New Testament, men should openly profess their faith, and solemnly bind themselves by Covenant to be the Lord's people, one shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of *Jacob*, and another shall subscribe with his hand, and surname himself by the name of *Israel*. These words are so plain for open professing of faith in the Lord, and open binding of men's selves by Covenant unto him, as we conceive nothing need be more.

2. The Apostles do sufficiently testify, that such a thing was practiced in their days, else how should we understand that fellowship in the Gospel in its full latitude and breadth, *Phil.* 1:5. if this combining into Church fellowship be no part thereof; yea when it is said, *they continued steadfastly*, or as the word ἦσαν δὲ προσκαρτεροῦντες, may well be translated, *they strongly did cleave together*, or hold together in such a Fellowship, which was not preaching and hearing the doctrine of the Apostles, nor Sacraments, nor Prayer, but a thing distinct from all these. If this combining themselves into a spiritual fellowship and society of Church state be no part thereof, we know not how to understand it, nor what that fellowship should mean; If Doctrine, and Sacraments, and Prayer had not been particularly mentioned, in the same place, it might have been thought that the Fellowship in which they so steadfastly clave together had been no more, but their coming together to observe these said ordinances, and their communion therein. But when all these are particularly mentioned, and fellowship mentioned amongst them, as a thing distinct from the rest, we may not confound it with the rest. We might as well say, that by doctrine is meant Sacraments, and by Sacraments is meant Prayer; as to say that by Fellowship is meant nothing else but the exercise of do-

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ctrine, and Sacraments, and Prayer. And if these as they are distinctly named, be distinct ordinances, and may not be confounded, then Fellowship being named in the same manner imports something distinct from them all, and may not be confounded

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with them, nor with any of them, no more then the other may be confounded one with another. And if so, then as this Fellowship may import, the communion of their gift and goods one for the help of another, so it must first of all imply a combining of themselves into Church-state by mutual agreement, consent, or covenant.

Furthermore, when the Apostle writeth, that by experience of the *Corinthians* liberal contribution to the poor Saints, men glorified God for their professed subjection to the Gospel of Christ, *2 Cor.* 9:13. he plainly employs thereby, that the *Corinthians* had made a profession or promise of such subjection to the Gospel as did comprehend this particular of distributing to the necessity of the Saints, among other things. And their liberal distribution which he there speaks of, was looked at as one point or their real performance of that subjection to the Gospel, which they had before professed, and promised. Now the Church-Covenant is nothing else, but the professing or promising of such subjection, and therefore this place is another proof of Church-Covenant. Besides, it hath been shewed afore in *Argument* 3. that those places which speak of being added to the Church, of joining, or assaying to join unto the Church, *Act.* 2:47. and 5:13. and 9:26. are not expounded according to the full meaning of them, when they are understood of any other joining, if joining in Covenant be left out. And therefore the Scriptures of the New Testament do bear good witness unto Church-Covenant, though, as we said before, the Scriptures of the Old Testament might have been sufficient if the New Testament had spoken nothing of it.

Obj. 8. "But Baptism makes men members of the visible Church, and therefore the Covenant is needless.

Ans. This is answered in the Answer to the fourth of the 32. Questions, where it is shewed at large that Baptism is a seal of the Covenant between God and the Church, but neither makes the

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Church, nor members of the Church, nor always so much as proves men to be members.

Obj. 9. “*The Church-Covenant is a late devise, and was not known in ancient time, and therefore is to be rejected.*”

Ans. First, True Antiquity is that of the Scriptures. Now sith Church Covenant is warranted by the Scripture, as hath been

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shewed before in this discourse, it cannot be charged to want true Antiquity. When the Papists are wont to charge the doctrine of Protestants with Novelty, and such as was never heard of before *Luther*, the Orthodox are wont to answer, that if the doctrine do not agree with the Scripture, then let it be condemned for Novelty; and if it do, it is warranted by the best Antiquity, even the testimony of God himself who is the Antient of days: Our Faith, saith Doctor *White*, is in all points the same that is contained in the Scripture, and so consequently of the same Antiquity: and therefore all they that say it came up but of late, must first prove it contrary to the Word of God, or else hold their peace, *White, Way*, 44. 1. And the same we say in this particular of the Church-Covenant.

Secondly, And yet they that search the Stories and Writers of the times and ages next after the Apostles, may find some testimony of Church-Covenant in those days: For instance, *Justine Martyr* in his *Apol.* 2. makes mention of three things which were required of all that were admitted into the Church as members, [[?????]] καινποοξησις πιστις, καὶ ὑπ’χρσις, that is regeneration, and soundness in the Faith, and a promise to walk in obedience to the Gospel. And generally this was the practise of all those times, that never any man was admitted to Baptism, nor his children neither, but they put him to answer three questions, *Abrenuntios?* whereto he answered, *Abrenuntio. Credis?* whereto his answer was, *Credo:* and *Spondes?* to which he answered, *Spondeo.* So that here was an open declaration of his Repentance from dead works, and of the soundnes of his Faith, in the two first particulars, and an open binding himself by covenant or promise to walk according to the Gospel, in the third. But much needs not to be said in this point, unto them that do acknowledge Scripture Antiquity to be

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sufficient, though after times should be found to swerve from the Rules and Patterns that are therein contained.

Obj. 10. “If Church-Covenant be so necessary then all the Reformed Churches are to be condemned as no Churches; for they have no such Covenant.”

Answ. They that have known those Churches, not only by their writings, and confessions of their faith, in Synods and otherwise; but also by living amongst them, and being eye-witnesses of their Order, do report otherwise of them, *viz.* that they are combined

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together by solemn Covenant with God and one another, *Zep- perus*, speaking of the manner, used in the reformed Churches, in admitting the children of Church-members to the Lord’s Table, when they came to age, and have been sufficiently catechised, and instructed in the doctrine of Religion, tells us, that such children are admitted to the Lord’s table, by public profession of Faith, and entering into Covenant. “*Consuetum est, saith he, ut qui per ætatemque Doctrinâ Cateheticâ profectum ad sacram Cœnam primum a limittuntur, fidei confessionem coram totâ Ecclesiâ publicè edant per parentes aut qui parentum loco sunt, jussû ministri, in Ecclesiæ const. Elam productii: quòdque in illa confessione, per Dei gratiam per- [[?????]], ac, juxta illam, vitam instituere, insuper etiam disciplinæ Ecclesiasticæ ultrò ac sponte suâ subjicere sese velint, spondeant atque stipulentur, Polit. Eccles. lib. 1. cap. 14. p. 158.* that is, The manner is, that they who by reason of age and proficiency in the doctrine of Catechism are first admitted to the Lord’s Supper, should publicly before the whole Church make confession of their faith, being brought forth into the sight of the Church by their parents, or them that are instead of parents, at the appointment of the Ministers and like wise should promise and covenant by the grace of God to continue in that Faith which they have confessed, and to lead their lives according to it; yea, and moreover to subject themselves freely and willingly to the discipline of the Church. These words we see are full and plain, that children are not in those Churches received to the Lord’s Supper, without personal confession of Faith, and entering into Covenant before; And if they took this course with children come to age, there is as much reason, or more, that the same



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course should be holden with men of years, when they are admitted members. And so the same *Zipperus*, speaking of the consociation of Churches amongst themselves by mutual confederation, hath these words, which as they may be applied to the combining of many Churches, so may they be combining of many members of the same Church, “*Κοινωνία illa τῶν ἁγίων, quam in Symbolo prosite nunc Apostolico, nihil aliud hic requirit, & vult, quam obligationem omnium Ecclesiæ, membrorum & confæderationem, &c.* that is, that communion of Saints which we profess in the Creed, doth require and mean nothing else but an obligation of all the members of the Church, and a binding of them to-

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“gether by Covenant. *Polit. Eccles. li. 3. c. 8. p. 721.*

To these testimonies of *Zepperus*, those words may be added of Mr *Parker* our own countryman, a man of singular note for learning and holiness, who also himself lived sometimes beyond Sea in the reformed Churches, and there ended his days, so that we may safely give the more credit to his testimony, he having so good means fully to know the state and order of those Churches. Now he speakth of a “*Solemn formâ absque quâ in Ecclesiæ alicujus communionem nullus ritè recipitur: of a solemn form, without which no man is rightly received into the communion of the Church, hath these words. Hic mos ille est reformatarum Ecclesiarum non solum in lapsis restituendis, sed in extraneis, into quibuscunque recipiendis qui ad habitandum alicubi consistunt, etsi fortè in Ecclesiâ illius loci quo ante commorabantur, juxta hanc formam admissi prim fuerant. Examinat Presbyterium, plebs consentit, quisque testes vitæ suæ secum adfert, vel testimonia saltem: publicatur nomen cujusque competentis pro concione, admonetur quisque siquid habeat quod excipiat, ut denunciaret presbyteris. Si nihil contrè adseratur, admittitur quidem, sed non nisi solerni pactione cum Deo & cum Ecclesiâ. Spondet verò Ecclesiæ, se ambulaturum prout sanctam illam communionem decet: Disciplinæ illius Ecclesiæ subjacere velle, se fratribus illius communionis invigilaturum juxta Christi præceptum, Matth. 18:17. ut præveniantur sanenturque scandala, & illi ad studium bonorum operum provchantur.* That is, This is the manner of the reformed Churches, not only in restoring such as have fallen, but in admitting of strangers, yea of all whoever



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they be, who do sit down in any place for habitation, though perhaps they have been formerly admitted after the same manner in the Church where they have formerly dwelt; The Presbytery doth examine, the people do consent, every man brings with him witnesses of his life, or at least-wise testimonies: The name of each one that desires to be a member, is published in the Assembly, every one is admonished if he have any exception against the party, to bring it to the Presbytery. If nothing be brought against him, then indeed he is admitted; but yet no otherwise then by a solemn covenant with God and the Church; And to the Church he promiseth that he will walk as becometh that holy Fellowship, that he will be subject to the discipline of that Church, that he will watch over the brethren

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of that Communion, according to the Command of Christ, *Mat. 18:17.* that offences may be prevented and healed, &c. *Polit. Eccles. lib. 3. cap. 16. § 4. Pag. 171, 172.* Much more he hath to the same purpose in that place, alleging sundry Canons and Decrees of Synods of reformed Churches, wherein they have determined that none should be received into their Churches, but by this way of solemn Covenant, And others that have lived amongst them may have been eye-witnesses that this is their usual practice.

Obj. 11. "But what shall be said of the Congregations in England, if Churches must be combined by Covenant? Doth not this doctrine blot out all those Congregations out of the Catalogue of Churches? For what ever Covenant may be found in the reformed Churches in other parts, yet it is plain that the English have none.

Answ. Though we deny not but the Covenant in many of those Congregations is more implicit and not so plain as were to be desired; (and what is amiss in them, in their materials, or in want of explicit combining of pure matter, or in any of their ways, we will not take upon us to defend) yet we hope we may say of them with *Master Parker, Polit. Eccles. lib. 3. cap. 16. § 1. pag. 167.* *Non abest ea realis & substantialis (quanquam magis quàm par erat implicita) coitio in fœdus, caque voluntaria professio fidei substantialis: quâ (Deo gratia) essentiam Ecclesiæ idque visibilis hacisque sartam tectam in Angliâ conservavit;* That is, there wants not that

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real and substantial coming together, (or agreeing in Covenant, though more implicate then were meet) and that substantial profession of Faith, which (thanks be to God) hath preserved the essence of visible Churches in *England* unto this day.

The reasons why we are loathe to say, that the Congregations in *England* are utterly without a Covenant, are these:

First, Because there were many Christian Churches in *England* in the Apostles' time, or within a while after, as Master *Fox* sheweth at large, *Act. & Mon. lib. 2.* beginning pag. 137 where he reporteth out of *Gildas*, that *England* received the Gospel in the time of *Tiberius* the Emperor, under whom Christ suffered, and that *Joseph of Arimathea* was sent of *Philip* the Apostle from *France* to *England* about the year of Christ 63. and remained in *England* all his time, and so he with his fellows laid the first foundation

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of Christian Faith amongst the Britain people and other Preachers and Teachers coming afterward, confirmed the same and increased it. Also the said Master *Fox* reporteth out of *Tertullian*, that the Gospel was dispersed abroad by the sound of the Apostles into many Nations, and amongst the rest into *Britain*, yea into the wildest places of *Britain*, which the *Romans* could never attain unto: and allegeth also out of *Nicophorus*, that *Simon Zelotes* did spread the Gospel to the West Ocean, and brought the same into the Isles of *Britain*: and sundry other proofs he there hath for the same point. Now if the Gospel and Christian Religion were brought into *England* in the Apostles' times, and by their means, it is like that the *English* Churches were then constituted by way of Covenant, because that was the manner of constituting Churches in the Apostles time, as also in the times afore Christ, as hath been shewed from the Scripture before in this discourse. And if Christian Congregations in *England* were in those times combined by Covenant, then eternity of God's Covenant is such, that it is not the interposition of many corruptions that may arise in after times that can disannul the same, except when men wilfully breaks Covenant and reject the offers of the Gospel through obduracy, which we persuade our selves they are not come unto: and consequently the Covenant remains which hath

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preserved the essence of Churches to this day; though the mixture of manifold corruptions, have made the Covenant more implicit then were meet.

Secondly, Because there want no good Records (as may be seen in *Selden's History of Tithes*) to prove that in former times in *England* it was free for men to pay their Tithes and Oblations where themselves pleased: Now this paying of Tithes was accounted as a duty of people to their Minister, or sheep to their Pastor: and therefore seeing this was by their own voluntary agreement and consent, their joining to the Church as members thereof, & to the Ministry thereof as sheep of such a man's flock, was also by their own voluntary agreement and consent: and this doth imply a Covenant. It was not the precincts of Parishes that did limit men in those days, but their own choice.

Thirdly, Those Questions and Answers ministered at Baptism, spoken of before, (*viz. Doest thou renounce? I do renounce: doest thou believe? I do believe: doest thou promise? I do promise*) as they

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were used in other places, so were they also in *England*, and are unto this day, though not without the mixture of sundry corruptions. Now this doth imply a Covenant. And when the children came to age, they were not to be admitted to the Lord's Supper, before they had made personal Confession of their own Faith, and ratified the Covenant which was made at their Baptism by their Parents, which course indeed afterward did grow into a Sacrament of Confirmation, but that was an abuse of a good Order.

If here it be said, that the Members of the Parishional Assemblies are not brought in by their own voluntary profession, but by the Authority and Proclamation of the Prince, and therefore they have no such Covenant.

The Answer is, that the Christian Prince doth but his duty when he doth not tolerate within his Dominions any open Idolatry, or the open worship of false Gods by baptized persons, but suppresseth the same: and likewise when he gives free liberty to the exercise of all the Ordinances of true Religion, according to the mind of Christ, with countenance also and encouragement unto all those whose hearts are willingly bent thereunto, *Ezra. 1:*

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13 & 7:13. And therefore this practice of his cannot overthrow the freeness of men's joining in Church-Communion, because one duty cannot oppose nor contradict another. And suppose that this course of the Magistrate should seem to be a forcing of some to come in for members who were unfit, (in which case it were not justifiable) yet this doth not hinder the voluntary subjection of others, who with all their hearts desired it. When the *Israelites* departed out of *Egypt*, there went a mixed multitude with them, many going with them that were not *Israelites* indeed, *Exod.* 12. And in the days of *Mordecai* and *Esther*, many of the people of the lands became *Jews*, when the *Jews* were in favour and respect *Est.* 8:17. and so joined to them not of their own voluntary mind, nor of any sincere heart towards God, but merely for the favour or fear of men; yet this forced or feined joining of some could not hinder those that were *Israelites* indeed from being *Israelites*, nor make the *Jews* to be no *Jews*, no Church-members.

And the same may be said in this case, Suppose the Magistrates Proclamation should be a cause, or an occasion rather, of bringing

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some into the Church, who came not of their own voluntary mind, but for fear, or for obtaining favour, yet this cannot hinder but others might voluntarily and freely Covenant to be subject to the Gospel of Christ: Such subjection and the promise of it being the thing which themselves did heartily desire, though the Magistrate should have said nothing in it.

If any shall hereupon infer, that if the Parishional Assemblies be Churches, then the members of them may be admitted to Church-priviledges in *New England*, before they join to our Churches: Such one may find his Answer in the Answer to the tenth of the thirty-two Questions; Whereunto we do refer the Reader for this point. Only adding this, that this were contrary to the judgement and practice of the Reformed Churches, who do not admit a man for member without personal profession of his Faith, and joining in Covenant, though he had formerly been a member of a Church in another place, as was shewed before out of Master *Parker*.

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Lastly, If any say, that if these reasons prove the *English* Congregations to have such a Covenant as proves them to be Churches, then why may not *Rome*, and the Assemblies of Papists go for true Churches also? For some man may think that the same things may be said for them that here in Answer to this eleventh Objection are said for the Parishes in *England*: Such one must remember two things: first, that we do not say simply, a Covenant makes a company a true Church, but (as was said before) a covenant to walk in such ways of worship to God and edification of one another, as the Gospel of Christ requireth. For who doubts, but there may be an agreement amongst thieves, *Pro.* 1. A confederation among God's enemies, *Psal.* 83. A conspiracy among the *Arabians*, the *Ammonites* and *Ashdodites*, to hinder the building of *Jerusalem*, *Neh.* 4:7, 8. And yet none of these are made true Churches by such kind of confederacies or agreements. And so we may say of the Assemblies of Papists, especially since the Counsel of *Trent*. If there be any agreement or confederacy amongst them, it is not to walk in the ways of the Gospel, but in ways contrary to the fundamental truths of the Gospel, as Idolatry in worship, Heresy in doctrine, and other Antichristian pollutions and corruptions: and therefore if they combined in these things, such combinations will never prove them true Churches.

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The Church is the Pillar and ground of truth, 1 *Tim.* 3:15. But the Religion of Papists is so far from truth, that whosoever liveth and believeth according to it, without repentance, cannot be saved. Witness their doctrine in the point of vilifying the Scriptures, and in point of free-will, and of Justification by works, of the Pope's Supremacy, of the Sacrifice of the Mass, of worshipping of Images, &c. In regard of which, and such like, the Holy Ghost saith, that their Religion is a Sea, *become as the blood of a dead man, and every soul in that Sea dieth*, *Rev.* 16:3. And therefore agreement in such a Religion will never prove them to be true Churches; nor any Assemblies of Arians, Antitrinitaries Anabaptists, or Familists, supposing them also to be combined by Covenant amongst themselves.

But now for the Assemblies in *England*, the case is far otherwise; for the Doctrine of the Articles of Religion which they

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profess, and which they promise to hold and observe (though some things are amiss in some of those Articles, and though many persons live contrary in their lives) yet the doctrine is such that whosoever believeth, and liveth according to it, shall undoubtedly be saved, and many thousands have been saved therein: and therefore Assemblies united by Covenant to observe this doctrine may be true Churches, when the Assemblies of Papists and others may be false, although they also were combined by Covenant: the reason or the difference rising from the difference that is in the doctrine and Religion which they severally profess, and by Covenant bind themselves to observe, the one being fundamentally corrupt, and consequently pernicious: The other in the fundamental points Orthodoxal and sound.

Secondly, It must be remembered also (which was intimated before) that if fundamental corruptions be professed in with impenitency and obstinacy, then God may disanul the Covenant on his part, and give a Bill of divorce to such a people, *Jere. 3:8*. Now experience and the Scripture also doth witness of the Jesuited and *Trent*-Papists, that they repented not of the works of their hands, of worshipping Devils, and Idols of Gold, &c neither repented they of their murthers, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornications, nor of their thefts, *Rev. 9:20, 21*.

But now for the Parish Assemblies in *England*, we hope that we may safely say, they do not sin of obstinacy, but of ignorance,

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having not been convinced (and many of them never having had means to be convinced) of the corruptions that are amongst them, in respect of their constitution, and worship, and Ministry, and so the Covenant remaining amongst them, may prove them to be Churches, when it cannot stand the Papists in like stead, they being impenitent and obstinate: Which we do not speak to justify the Parishes altogether, as if there were not dangerous corruptions found in them, nay rather (the Lord be merciful to the sins of his people) we may lament it with tears, that in respect of their members and Ministry, in respect of their worship and walkings, in many of those Assemblies there are found such apparent corruptions, as are justly grievous to a godly soul, that is enlightened to discern them, and greatly displeasing to the Lord,

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and indeed had need to be repented of betime, least otherwise the Lord remove the Candlestick and unchurch them, *Rev.* 2:5. In a word, the corruptions remaining are just causes of repentance and humiliation: but yet in as much as the Articles of Religion, which they profess, contain such wholesome doctrine, that whosoever believeth and walketh according thereunto, in sincerity, shall undoubtedly be saved, and in as much as the corruptions are not persisted in with obstinacy, therefore we deny not but they have the truth of Churches remaining.

Obj. 12. “*But this opinion of Church-Covenant, is holden by none but the Brownists, or those of the Separation, and therefore it is not to be received.*”

Answ. This ground cannot be made good, that none but they of the Separation are for Church-Covenant, for all the Reformed Churches generally, as was shewed before in Answer to Objection the tenth, are for it in their judgement & practise; and shall all they be condemned for Brownists,* or maintaining unlawful Separation from the Church? Also Master *Parker* and Doctor *Ames*, men of our own Nation, famous for holiness and learning, and moderation, both of them plead for Church-Covenant, and yet neither of them were Brownists, but bare witness against that rigid Separation. For Doctor *Ames*, his judgement of Church-Covenant may “be seen in his *Medulla, Theol. lib. 1. cap. 32. § 14, 15, 17. Fideles non constituent Ecclesiam particularem, quamvis simul forsitan plures in eodem loco convenient aut vivant, nisi speciali vinculo intersose conjunguntur, &c.* That is, believers do not make a particular

* By Brownists and Separatists you are to understand those of the rigid Separation.

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“Church, though perhaps there be many of them that meet together, and live in the same place, unless they be joined together by some special bond amongst themselves: for so one Church would many times be dissolved into many, and many Churches confounded into one. Now this bond is a Covenant, either expressed or implicit, whereby believers do bind themselves particularly to perform all such duties both towards God and mutually to one another, as pertain to the nature of a Church, and their edification. And thereupon no man is rightly

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admitted into the Church, but by confession of his Faith, and stipulation, or promise of obedience.

These words do plainly and fully shew his judgement of Church-Covenant, to be the very same that is held and practised in *New-England* at this day. And that he was not for that severity and rigidity of separation, may be cleared from sundry of his works, wherein he plainly and fully bears witness against the same, and namely, in his *Fresh suit against Ceremonies*, pag. 207. and in his second *Manuduction*, wherein he purposely and at large deals in this Argument of Separation. Sure it is Master *Canne* in his Book, wheicin he goes about to prove the necessity of separation from the Non-Conformists principles, doth professedly and expressly oppose himself against Doctor *Ames* in the point of Separation, which shews how far the good Doctor was from favouring that way, when they most zealously therein do count him to be a special opposite of theirs, as indeed he was. And for Master *Parker*, his judgement of Church-Covenant was heard before: in part; where he so much approveth the practise of the Reformed Churches in this point. And much more may be seen of his judgement herein, in the fifteenth Chap. of the third book of his *Polit. Ecclesiastica*. And yet in the same place, and likewise *lib. 1. cap. 13, 14.* of the same Treatise he plentifully and plainly shews his dislike of the ways of Separation, as is also acknowledged in an Admonition to the Reader, prefixed before that book, by *I.R. suo, suorumqne nomine*. So that this Assertion appears to be untrue, wherein it is said, that *none but Brownists and Separatists do approve of Church-Covenant*.

As for the Inference from this ground, that therefore Church-Covenant should not be received, because it is pleaded for and practised by the Separates. We Answer, that this will not follow,

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unless it could be proved, that the Separating hold no truth; or if they hold a truth we must not hold it, that so it may appear we differ from them; Either of which, it were unreasonable to affirm. If the Papists hold sundry Articles of Faith, as that there is a unity or the Divine Essence, and Trinity of Persons, that Jesus Christ is God and man, and that true Messiah that was promised, and the only Saviour of the world, and many such like, must

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we deny these things because they are holden by the Papists? This were as unreasonable as to condemn the doctrine of the Resurrection, because it was maintained by the Pharisees, *Act. 23: 8*. And so we say of Church-Covenant, holden and practised by them of the Separation; as also many other truths are maintained by them: No reason that truth should be refused, because the Separatists maintain it. When Doctor *Bancroft* in a Sermon at *Paul's-Cross*, had avouched that the Superiority of Bishops above other Ministers, is by God's own Ordinance, and to make the contrary opinion odious, affirmed that *Aerius* persisting in it, was condemned for an Heretic by the general consent of the whole Church, and that *Martin* and his Companions, do maintain the same opinion of *Aerius*; What saith learned Doctor *Reinolds* hereunto, in a Letter to Sir *Francis Knolls*, who required him "to shew his judgement herein: Touching *Martin*, saith he, if any man behave himself otherwise then in discretion and charity he ought, let the blame be hid where the fault is, and defend him not; but if by the way he utter a truth, mingled with whatsoever else, it is not reason that that which is of God should be condemned for that which is of man: no more then the doctrine of the Resurrection should be reprov'd, because it was maintained and held by the Pharisees: Wherefore removing the odious name of *Martin* from that which is sincerity and love, is to be dealt with, &c.

And the very same do we say to them that would make Church-Covenant to be odious, because it is held by those of the Separation, who are commonly called Brownists: If men behave themselves otherwise then they ought, we defend them not therein, but if they hold any truth mingled with whatsoever else, we would not have that which is of God to be condemned, for that which is of man: truth should not be refused, because of other corruptions that may be found in them that hold it.

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Reply. "If you with them hold Church-Covenant, you justify them in all their ways of seperation and erroneous opinions.

Answ. Not so, for many of them hold that there are no visible Christians that stand members of the Parishes in England, and that it is not lawful to hold any private Religious communion with

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such persons; and that the parishional Assemblies are none of them true Churches, and that it is not lawful to hear any of those Ministers to preach the Word, none of which are justified at all by holding Church-Covenant, though they do hold the same; There is no such necessary and inseparable connexion between these opinions, and that of Church-Covenant, that he that holds this, must needs hold the other also.

*Objc. 13. "But the time hath been, when your selves did not hold Church-Co-
venant, as now you do; when you were in England you were not of this mind, and therefore no marvel if your change since your coming to New England be suspected, and offensive. If you change your judgement and practise in this manner, God knows whether you may come at last, and therefore men may well be afraid of holding with you in this point, which your selves did not hold when you lived in your native Country.*

Answ. Some of us when we were in England, through the mercy of God, did see the necessity of Church-Covenant; and did also preach it to the people amongst whom we ministered, though neither so soon nor so fully as were meet, for which we have cause to be humbled, and to judge our selves before the Lord.

But suppose we had never known nor practised the same before our coming into this country, yet if it be a truth of God, there is no reason why we should shut our eyes against the light, when God holds it forth unto us, nor that others should be offended at us for receiving the same. For by the same reason men might still continue in their sins, and not make any progress in knowledge and holiness, that so they may not seem unconstant, which were contrary to the Scripture, wherein we are commanded nor to fashion our selves according to the former lusts of our ignorance. *1 Pet. 1:14.* But to be changed, *Rom. 12:2.* and renewed, *Ephes. 4:23.* and put off the old man, and put on the new, *Ephes. 4.* yea to grow in grace and holiness, *2 Pet. 3:18.* and be stronger and stronger, *Job 17:9.* that our good works may be more at the last, then at the first, *Revel. 2:19.* Sure it is, the Apostle tells the *Corinthians* and *Ephesians*, that the time had been

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when they were not the same men that now they are when he wrote unto them; and yet he doth not blame them for leaving

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their former opinions or practise, but commends them for it, 1 *Cor.* 6:11. *Ephes.* 2:3. &c. And it is said of *Apollo*s an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scripture, that when he came to *Ephesus* the way of God was expounded unto him more perfectly by *Aquila* and *Priscilla*, whereas before he was instructed in the way of the Lord, knowing only the Baptism of *John*: yet this was no dispraise at all to him, that now upon better information he would change his judgement to the better, nor unto them that were the means thereof: *Act.* 18:25, 26. *Nullus pisdor est ad maliura transire.*

The time hath been, (and we may be humbled for it) when we lived without God in the world, and some of us in many sinful courses: and shall any be offended, because we are not still the same? and when God called us from the ways of sin and death, to the Fellowship of his grace in Christ; yet some of us lived a long time in conformity to the ceremonies imposed in our native Country, and saw not the evil of them. But when God did open our eyes, and let us see the unlawfulness thereof, we cannot see but it would have been a with-holding the truth in unrighteousness, and a great unthankfulness to God for light revealed to us, if we should still have continued in that course through an inordinate desire of seeming constant: and therefore it is not any just cause of offence that we have changed our judgement and practise in those things, when we once perceived the Word of God to disallow them.

Indeed it hath been sometime objected against Mr *Cartwright*, and others, that desired the reformation of the Churches in *England*, in regard of Discipline and Church-Order, that they which stood so much for Reformation in Discipline, did in after times add and after some things, beyond what they saw at first, and what themselves had formerly desired; and that therefore being so mutable, and inconstant in their apprehensions, they were not to be regarded, nor hearkened unto: to which Objection Mr *Parker* makes full Answer in *Eccles. lib. 2. ca. 36. p. 307.* where he sheweth from the Scripture, and the testimony of Bishop *Jewel*, “Doctor *Reinolds*, and others, that in the Reformation of Religion God brings not his servants into perfection in knowledge and zeal at the first, but by degrees, so as they grow and make

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progress in these things in such wise; that their good works are more at the last then at the first, as was said of the Church of *Thyatira*, even as the man that had been blind, when Christ restored him to his sight, could at the first but see men like trees walking, and afterward saw every man clearly; and therefore it is no good arguing to say these men have altered and corrected such things from what their apprehensions were at first, and therefore they are not to be regarded.

Now if this be no good arguing against Mr *Cartwright*, and those that in *England* have been studious of Reformation (as indeed it is not) then it is no good Argument against us in this matter of Church Covenant, to say we now hold and practise otherwise then we have done in former time.

Reply.

If any shall here reply, that change from conformity to the ceremonies to Worship God more purely is warranted by the Word, and therefore not blame-worthy, and that the same may be said of the case of Apollos, of the Corinthians, and Ephesians forementioned, and of Cartwright, and the rest in his times.

Answer.

We answer, that this is true, and thereby it appears, that it is not simply the changing a man's opinion or practise that can be counted blame worthy, or offensive, but changing without warrant of the Word, and therefore in point of Church-Covenant, the issue must not be whether we or others have formerly known and practised it, but whether it have ground from God's Word; For if it have (as we hope have been proved before in this discourse) then the observing of it, can be no cause of just offence unto others, nor imputation of inconstancy to our selves, though in time past we had not had so much light as to discern the necessity and use thereof.

The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the Sanctuary: and grant unto all his Churches and servants, that then; love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgement, that they may discern the things that differ; and approve the things that are excellent, and by his Spirit of



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truth be led forward into all truth, till Antichrist be utterly consumed with the breath of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming, and the holy City new Jerusalem come down from God out of heaven, as a Bride adorned for her husband the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, to whom be all glory of affiance and service for ever.
Amen.

FINIS.





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Weston Rhyn

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