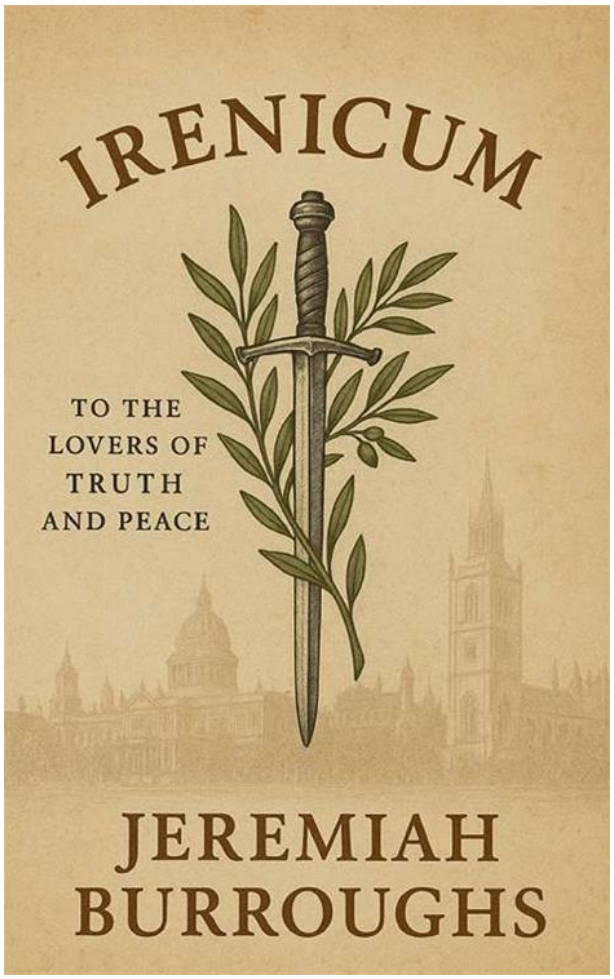
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TO THE
LOVERS OF
TRUTH
AND PEACE

JEREMIAH
BURROUGHS


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To the Lovers of Truth and Peace

Jeremiah Burroughs

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IRENICUM, TO THE LOVERS OF Truth and Peace
HEART-DIVISIONS OPENED
In the Causes and Evils of them:
WITH Cautions that we may not be hurt by them, and Endeavours to heal them

By Jeremiah Burroughs

Opinionum varietas & Opinantium unitas non sunt Ἀσύστατα

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To the Reader

Whether the fiery trial of contention or of persecution is greater is hard to determine; God has worked for us to free us from the one, we have brought upon ourselves the other. Every man is angry that others are not of his mind; we have been so divided that it is the infinite mercy of God that our enemies have not come in at our breaches and divided all among themselves before this time. Were our divisions only between the good and bad, they would not be so grievous. Chrysostome says,* It is better to be hated for Christ than to be beloved for him. How much better then is it to be hated for Christ than to be beloved for sin? The reason he gives for that strange assertion of his is, If thou be loved for God, it is an honor to thee, and thou art a debtor for that honor; If thou be hated for him, God is a debtor to thee, he owes honor to thee, for so he is pleased to be to his poor servants.

But our divisions have been and still are between good men; even God's diamonds do cut one another; good men cause afflictions to good men; every man is plotting, working, winding for himself. Every man strives like Apelles and Protogenes who shall draw the subtlest line to attain his own

ends, but few strive who shall draw the straightest, who shall in the most direct course work himself and all his ways to God and public good. Who can meddle with this fire that is kindled among us and not burn his fingers? A man's good affections may happily be approved, but his prudence will be questioned.

But what I find Luther writes in an Epistle to his friend Nicolas Gerbelius in a similar case shall satisfy me: Cupio ego inveniri Christi & Ecclesiæ suæ fidelis, si prudens esse non potuerim minister: I desire howsoever to be a faithful Minister of Christ and his Church if I cannot be a prudent one. Standing in the gap is more dangerous and troublesome than getting behind the hedge; there you may be more secure and under the wind, but it is best to be there where God looks for a man.* That which Pelopidas said to his wife taking her leave of him as he was going out of his house to the wars is a speech worthy of all men in public place: She comes weeping to him and prays him to look well to himself; he answers her, My good wife, it is for private soldiers to be careful of themselves, not for those in public place; they must have an eye to save other men's lives.

It may be when you are going about a work that has hazard and trouble in it, your wives or some friends of yours will with great affection desire you, beseech you, to have a care of yourselves, that you bring not yourselves into trouble or danger. Oh take heed of that, rather never meddle, let others do that work if they will; you should answer, It is for private men to take care of themselves, but men in public places are called to look to the public, that it suffers not through their neglect.

Some come into the gap not to make it up but to keep it open, yea to make it wider; the Lord deliver me from such a spirit: God knows I had rather die than be a cause of so great an evil. What this endeavor of mine may work in

men's hearts, God knows. If it meets with a son of peace, I hope it will speak peace, it will establish peace in such a heart: if with a son of strife, it may work ad modum recipientis. That which is intended to be an Irenicum may prove to be a Polemicum, a bone of contention.

Those things which God himself ordains for union (the Sacraments) are by man's corruption made the occasion of the greatest contention in the Christian world. No marvel then that what comes from man's sincerest intentions and best endeavors be turned quite cross.

It is likely enough these leaves may meet with some boisterous reader who may beat them one against another, who may pry and pick to find that in them which is not. Looking through the contradictions of his own spirit he may think he sees the like here. Let the lines be never so straight, yet he will wrest and pull them what he can to make them lie cross. I am so far from being solicitous that they are so indeed, that the special thing I desire of thee is the laying one thing to another, the comparing one thing with another.

Remember what the subject is: Divisions, Differences. I have in it to deal with various spirits, opinions, ways: remember the scope is to seek the composing of them what I can. If you see me now near to one side and by and by near to the other, which yet are very wide from one another, be not rash to judge that I am off my center; read on and see what the issue may come to.

This path of mine has been upon sharp stones, cutting shells, and pricking thorns; yet through the help of the shoe of the preparation of the Gospel of peace, I do not find my feet cut.

Peace is precious to me; I feel the sweetness of it. I am willing to do what I can to honor it. The public disputes, contentions, and disturbances abroad

in Church and Commonwealth are very grievous. They say there are such things in families as well. I have brought here some water; if my line had been longer, my bucket would have been fuller. You have here what I delivered; some things are added, especially quotations of authors and histories. When they grow to be many, I think them fitter for the press than the pulpit.

I was more willing for these things to come forth to public view because otherwise what other men apprehended to be my mind would be put into their own words and rendered in an evil appearance. But will printing help? The boldness of this age is such as not only to make a man's words sound different than when they came from him, and so traduce him, but confidently to aver that there are such things written in such books about such men, which never yet came into their thoughts, much less into their pen.

With what boldness has it been said and printed again and again that I, in that book entitled "The Glorious Name of God, The Lord of Hosts," did call the Earl of Essex the Lord of Hosts. Surely the sight of these men is extramittendo, not intramittendo; they send forth species of their own dyed with the evil of their hearts, and then they say they find them in such a book. No man can find that name given by me to him. I indeed endeavored to encourage him in his work because the Lord had made him the Lord of our Hosts, which is no more than the Lord of our Armies. The utmost that ever was said or written comes but to this: that God had put a name upon him that came near to His, but never mentioned without some difference from it.

An abuse of this kind, though not altogether so high, I have had from the Anti-Apologist; he quotes many places in my lectures upon Hosea, he sets

down the pages wherein he says I have, contrary to what is in the Apology, preached for that way you call Independent. Would any man but think, when he sees the book named in print, the lecture, the very page mentioned, but that the thing is true, it is to be found there? But to this day it has never come to my ears that ever any man has found such things there but himself. Are those the places? Let moderate and quiet-spirited men look into them, and they shall find nothing there but what the generality of Presbyterian brethren, yea I think I may say every one who is not either Prelatical or very violent, will acknowledge to be truth, and if so, I am free. But we shall have another time for this.

At this time I would gladly that this treatise might meet with no spirit exasperated, but in calmness and quietness let what is here be examined. That God who can create the fruit of the lips to be peace can make the fruit of the pen to be so. My aims are peace, which I shall never cease endeavoring and praying for, who am

Thy friend, glad of any opportunity for thy good,Jeremiah Burroughs.

Chapter One

The Text opened, and suitability of it to our Times shown.

No marvel though Israel be charged, ver. 1, to be an empty vine, seeing their heart is divided. Heart-division will cause emptiness of good both in men's spirits and in Church and State. The least dividing of the heart in any one part from another, if it be but by the prick of a pin, is deadly; a great gash in the head is curable. There may be much difference in men's opinions without any great hurt if this difference gets not to the heart; but if once it gets in there, the danger is great.

Now shall they be found faulty; now shall they be guilty, or as some say, Nunc delinquent—now they will offend—as if heart-division contracted the greatest guilt, and by it men were the greatest delinquents of any. The word signifies also to perish, to be made desolate, so Arias Montanus translates it as "Desolabuntur." Heart-division is a desolating sin; by the judgment of God upon them for it, they shall be convinced in their own consciences and in the sight of all men that they were guilty; that by such a sin as this, they had bound themselves over to the justice of God, and those desolating evils that came upon them were the righteous judgments of God upon them for those divisions that were amongst them.

Men will not be convinced of their sin until God's judgment is upon them for it; and then their consciences will, and others shall see that God is righteous and they are vile and sinful before Him, even in such things that before they pleaded for or at least could not be brought to own their own guiltiness in.

When thunder and rain came upon the men of Israel in their wheat harvest, and they were afraid they should die (1 Sam. 12:18-19), then they could say, "We have added unto all our sins this evil: to ask us a king."

The Lord convince us of and humble us for the sinfulness of our divisions by His Word so that desolating judgments be not upon us to convince and humble us.

Their heart is divided.

This heart-division is either from God or from one another.

Their heart is divided between God and their idols; they would not cast off the worship of God wholly—that was too much; they loved their idols, but they must not have all: to divide between God and them they thought was fair. Their hearts were also divided one from another; and just it is with God that those who divide from Him should divide one from another.

In 2 Kings 15 you may see what woeful divisions there were amongst them: king against people and people against king—civil wars. Their king comes upon one of their own towns and smites it and rips up all the women that were with child in it—all because they did not open to him. O the rage and cruelty of men of proud spirits when they get power into their hands! For then their pride swells, being blown up by the flatteries of those around them: as if they were such gods upon earth as they might do whatsoever they pleased, and the lives, estates, liberties, comforts of all must lie under their feet and must submit to their lusts and humors.

You shall find further in the whole chapter there was nothing but conspiring, mischief-making, and murdering one another. In their church state there was nothing but factions and divisions one from another; some were for the true worship, some for the false. And amongst the false worshippers there were divisions too; some were for the calves that Jeroboam set up at Dan and Bethel; some were for Baal: great contention there was between these. You know the story of Jehu an idolater yet destroying the worshippers of Baal and his idols.

The Jews of old understood this text as referring to divisions among themselves, as well as their divisions from God. This is evident from a notable tradition of theirs, which St. Jerome relates in his commentary on these words. The Scripture in 2 Kings 17 tells us that Hoshea was the last king of Israel, and during his reign, Israel was taken captive. Yet, in verse 2, it is said that he did not do evil in the sight of the Lord, as the kings of Israel before him had done. The Jews questioned why Israel was not taken captive with their worst king but rather when things seemed to improve. God chose this time.

The answer they give is that in former times, the people could claim they were forced into idolatry by their kings' tyranny. They worshipped the calves because they would lose everything if they did not. However, in Hoshea's days, there was more liberty. Those who wished could go up to Jerusalem to worship. This is why it is said that Hoshea did not do evil as other kings had done. But when they had more liberty, they began to quarrel among themselves—a common consequence of freedom. Their division became intense; some went to Jerusalem to worship, while others did not. Those who went criticized those who stayed, and vice versa. With their hearts thus divided, they were found guilty. The desolating judgment had to

come, and this was the time for their captivity. God was exceedingly provoked by their contentions against each other at this time.

God questioned why, when He showed them favor by easing their bondage and oppression, they chose to fall out, disdain, and wrangle with one another. As a result, He allowed them to go into captivity and let the enemy come upon them. God took no delight in such a crooked and perverse generation.

Our condition seems to parallel theirs very much. We were recently under severe and cruel bondage, where worshipping God in His own way was dangerous. We were under hard taskmasters and oppressive courts. The Lord has delivered us significantly, yet some ungrateful and sinful spirits claim nothing has changed. We have much ease and liberties that our forefathers would have marveled at and blessed God for. Instead, we waste our strength on siding, wrangling, contending, quarreling, vexing, and opposing one another instead of magnifying and praising God's name for the mercy we enjoy.

We are a divided people—our hearts, heads, and hands are divided. Peace and unity seem to have flown from us, replaced by a spirit of contention and division. The king and subjects are divided; Parliament is divided; the Assembly is divided; armies are divided; the Church is divided; the State is divided; cities are divided; the countryside is divided; towns are divided; families are divided; godly people are divided; ministers almost everywhere are divided. Indeed, what heart is not divided within itself? The thoughts, counsels, contrivances, and endeavors of men are all divided.

O blessed Savior! Are these the times you spoke of when five would be in one house divided—three against two and two against three; father against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against

mother? Oh woe to us! We find it so among us, yet there is no healing; we are broken with no binding up. It is with us as it was with Ezekiel 2:6: briars and thorns are with us, and we dwell among scorpions.

O Lord, is this your curse upon England at this time? Briars and thorns shall it bring forth. We are rending, tearing, and devouring one another while the adversary stands ready to devour us. Ephraim is against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim. A fire has come out from Abimelech and devours the men of Shechem; fire comes from the men of Shechem and devours Abimelech. Indeed, there is a fire kindled in our own bowels—it rises from ourselves. Ezekiel 19:14 says that fire has gone out from a rod of her branches, which has devoured her fruit so that she has no strong rod to be a scepter to rule. This is a lamentation and shall be for a lamentation.

This is our situation today, and only God knows how long it will continue. What this people were in their divided condition, we are now; what does this threaten but that we should be as they were shortly after this—a people given up to the rage and fury of the enemy? May the Lord forbid it.

There is a great outcry about our divisions, and while we cry out against them, we still increase them. We are angry with men more because they are divided from ourselves than because they are divided from the truth. We are upset because every man is not of our own mind and does not do as we do.

There was a great deal of concern in Luther's time about the seamless coat of Christ. Granvillan, the Emperor's Deputy, in a speech he made to the citizens of Worms, beseeches them for the death of Christ and for all love, that they would mend our Lord's coat, which is rent and torn on every side. When Luther labored to bring Reformation to the Rule, they warned him to take heed that he did not rend the seamless coat of Christ. Because they

talked so much of the tunica inconsutilis, they were called the Inconsutilistæ, the seamless men.

What a stir there has been in outcries against men who would not yield to everything that was enjoined! "Oh, they rent the seamless coat of Christ." I remember Musculus in a tract he wrote "De Schismate," has a witty and pious note on this: The soldiers (says he) would not divide the seamless coat of Christ; but what made them so careful of it? Was it out of respect to Christ that they were so unwilling it should be divided? No, but out of respect for their own advantage, each one hoping it might fall to his share. Therefore, they said, "Let us cast lots for it." So, he says, men would not have Christ's coat divided; they would have no division in the Church. But what do they aim at? Their own advantage, that they might enjoy quietly their own ease, honor, and means, that they might have none to contradict them, but that the stream may run smoothly and wholly with them. What a fine brave thing would this be! And because they see they cannot do this while their ways are looked into and crossed, they make such an outcry against dividing the seamless coat of Christ.

But certainly, until our hearts are otherwise than they are now, all our outcries will not serve our ends in stilling our divisions. If we divided less between God and our own ends, our own ways, we should not divide so much from one another. Therefore, let us first turn our thoughts to consider a little of this division between God and other things and the evil of it.

Chapter Two

The Evil of Dividing Between God and Anything Else

This people would give God something and their idols something and so think to please both. 2 Kings 17:33: "They feared the Lord and served their idols." Thus Judah in the days of Josiah, Zephaniah 1:5: "Swore by the Lord and by Malcham." Swearing is a part of God's worship; therefore, no human-instituted religious ceremony ought to be joined with it any more than with the Sacrament or any other divine worship. No creature should share in it, but they joined Malcham, that is their King. The worship and service proper to God have been too much divided between God and the kings of the earth; but here it's probable it means their idol, to which they gave a kingly power over them. Their idol Moloch had his name from hence.

I have read of Redwald, King of the East Saxons, the first prince of his nation that was baptized. In the same place, he worshipped Christ and set up an altar to worship his idols. Many men's spirits lie like that haven in Acts 27:12 towards the southwest and northwest, two opposite points. Surely their spirits must be very winding and crooked which lie towards such opposites.

This dividing with God is very wicked; what communion has God with Belial? How can you partake of the Table of the Lord and the table of devils? 1 Corinthians 10:21. And lest they should think it a light thing thus to divide with God, he adds in verse 22: "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" It is a great provocation to God and a fight against him to divide in his worship. To think that God should accept such dividing is to make him cruel, like that harlot in 1 Kings 3:26 who was content to have the child divided: "Let it be neither mine nor thine, but let it be divided." God's worship is as dear to him as any child can be to the most tender-hearted mother in the world.

When Darius would have divided with Alexander, Alexander said no; there can be but one sun in the firmament. If we will be dividing with God, he will cast off all. In 2 Kings 17:33 it is said they feared the Lord and served their idols; but verse 34 says they did not fear God. God accounted a divided fear as no fear at all. Verse 16 states: "They left all the commandments of the Lord their God and made themselves molten images." If they give any part of God's honor to molten images, he acknowledges no honor at all given to him; he accounts all his commandments as left. So Jeremiah 32:23: "They have done nothing of all that thou commandest them to do," and verse 30: "The children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me."

God is infinite and has all excellence in him; therefore, he must have the whole heart. Idols do not challenge so much because they do not have universal excellence; a piece of worship is enough for them. Our hearts, estates, liberties—all we are or have—are more God's than our own. Cyrus took Babylon by dividing the river; the devil soon surprises us if he can but divide our hearts.

The reason why heathen Rome rejected Christ from being among their gods when such a thing was tendered to their Senate was because (they say) if we receive him as a god, he will suffer none of our other gods. If we take in any other new god, we may yet retain our old ones; but if we take this Jesus, all our old ones must be abandoned. Many today reject Christ on this ground.

The Romanists since think they can take in Christ as a god and yet divide between him and other gods; their religion is made up of divisions between God and their graven images; between Christ the Mediator and saints and angels; between the Word and their own traditions; between divine institutions and human inventions.

1 Kings 18:21: "Why halt ye between two opinions?" We must not be voluntary cripples to halt between two. Why are you dismembered in your hearts and your opinions? So Josephus in his history mentions that place. That is observable when the prophet put that question to them; the text says: "The people held their peace," their mouths were stopped; they had not a word to say for themselves.

If anything is pretended for this dividing, it is that trouble may be prevented; exactness in religion through reformation—giving up ourselves wholly to God and his truth—has an appearance of bringing much trouble with it. Hence men wind and shift about and do what they do by halves.

It was a notable speech of Calvin to those who were offended with the troubles they met in the work of Reformation: "If we could be content with half a Christ," says he, "our work would more easily go on. We could soon bring about what we would have, and we should not meet with so much opposition, but nothing but a whole Christ will serve our turn."

Obj. 1. But is it necessary that all things be reformed at once?

Answ. No: Affirmative precepts do not bind at all times, but negative ones do; therefore, it is necessary at all times that there be no mixture of evil with any good we do. Our mediocrity should not be a medium of participation but a medium of renunciation between two extremes, which are evil, without partaking in any evil. No good thing is moderated by the mixture of evil but by removing from it something that is evil, which has already mingled itself with it.

Obj. 2. But must God have all our hearts, so that we may not let them out at all to anything else?

Answ. If we let out our hearts to anything but in subordination to God, then we divide between God and that thing sinfully. However, if we do let out our affections to other things, yet if it is in subordination to God, as far as God is in those things, and we may be led nearer to God by them, this is no dividing between God and other things but uniting all in God and enjoying God in all. The Saints are instructed in this mystery of godliness; they know how to give God the whole heart and yet enjoy the comfort of wives and children, estates, and callings as much as anyone in the world. They have that heavenly skill to unite all in God and enjoy God in all. God is all in all to them in their enjoyment of all good whatsoever. But if our hearts are let out to anything otherwise than this, they go astray from God and will certainly vanish in their own folly. This is contrary to that singleness, to that oneness of heart promised as a blessing of the Gospel.

Many of you complain of barrenness; here is the reason: your hearts are divided. Were the stream of your hearts wholly after God, it would run strongly and bear down opposition before it; you would be fruitful in all the ways of holiness.

How fruitful and gloriously useful would men in public places be if their hearts were single and one for God; if they only cared to honor God in their duty and left the care of protection and provision for themselves and their state to God? Let not men's hearts be cut or divided with their cares and fears about consequences and successes. Their wisdom should be how to work all about for God, not how handsomely to contrive that God may have part and themselves part. The more fully we give up ourselves, our ends, and designs to God, the more securely may we sit under God's protection, care, and blessing.

Many of the good Kings of Judah had their hearts for God, but yet they let the high places stand; their political wisdom divided their hearts between God and their fears of disturbance in the state. If they should raise their Reformation so high, by this division, their hearts lay flat, and the work was neglected. But in 2 Chronicles 17:6, Jehoshaphat's heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord; he took away the high places and groves. He sought the Lord God of his father and walked in his commandments, not after the doings of Israel (verse 4). But did he not bring disturbance to the kingdom by this zeal? No, verse 5: Therefore the Lord established the kingdom in his hand, and all Judah brought presents to Jehoshaphat, and he had riches and honor in abundance. And verse 10: The fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. Verse 12: Jehoshaphat grew exceedingly great.

Let our hearts be for God alone, for God alone is enough to satisfy our hearts and supply all good unto us forever.

There is infinite reason our whole hearts should be for him; he is willing his whole heart should be for us. Jeremiah 32:41: "Yea, I will rejoice over

them to do them good, and I will plant them with my whole heart and with my whole soul."

Chapter Three

Heart-Divisions: When We Separate from God, We Separate from His People

When people divided from God, they soon divided from His people. They refused to join His people in the way of worship. Only those whose hearts were set to seek the Lord God of Israel went to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices (2 Chron. 11:16). It was only those whose hearts the Lord had touched. Others, motivated by carnal ends and fearing the troubles that accompanied such devotion, would not join them. And as they separated themselves from God and His people, God's judgment upon them was that they would also be divided from one another.

If you depart from truth, what can hold you together? Truth is a single, plain, and stable thing—but error is diverse and wraps itself in endless contradictions. Those who stray from the straight path of truth wander aimlessly, entangled in briars and thorns, unable to free themselves. Consider the ten tribes that at first only separated from Judah in terms of political allegiance and temple worship. Later, they rejected all of Scripture except the five books of Moses. They became deeply involved in sorcery,

magic, and witchcraft, growing ever more notorious up until the time of Christ.

This is implied in the Jews' accusation against Jesus: "You are a Samaritan and have a demon"—charging Him with the reputation of a people known for witchcraft and familiar spirits. Otherwise, they knew well that He was not a Samaritan but a Galilean of Nazareth. These people were also greatly divided among themselves. Epiphanius names four distinct sects among them: the Offens, Sebuœans, Gorthenians, and Positheans.

Truth is the bond of unity; error is wild. Once you yield to it, you do not know where to find your footing—or yourself. Our present age will serve as a lasting witness to this: the wild and unruly divisions of our time.

I do not approach this subject lightly. I know well the difficulty, danger, and ungrateful nature of addressing divisions in such a time as this. One who engages the divisions of the age should expect to be torn apart himself —to have his name and reputation scattered in every direction. To deal with a divided people is like reaching into a hornet's nest.

When a learned man was once asked why he didn't write on the controversies of his time, he answered, "To what purpose? It will not help the cause and will only endanger the man who speaks." I recall what someone once said to Luther when he prepared to take up the cause of reformation: "O Luther, get you back to your cell and cry, 'Lord, have mercy upon us.'"

A minister must know how to rightly divide the Word of truth. But this skill is especially tested when that Word must be divided among a divided people. I would never have chosen such a topic on my own, but since Providence has brought it directly into my path, I will proceed, resting my

heart on that promise: "The integrity of the upright guides them" (Prov. 11:3).

Let us now consider:

1. The causes of our divisions.

2. The evils of them.

3. Cautions against misusing them.

4. Remedies for healing them.

The Causes of Our Divisions

The primary external cause is the devil. He strives to keep his own kingdom free from division but works tirelessly to sow division in Christ's kingdom. The followers of false religions—Muslims, who revere a false prophet; pagans, who worship the sun, moon, and stars; or Egyptians, who venerate onions, leeks, cats, and dogs—have seen less division among themselves than the worshipers of Jesus Christ.

All these groups belong to Satan's kingdom, which he seeks to keep united. But in Christ's kingdom, he sows envy, discord, and division. That is why those who spread division among Christians are, in Scripture, referred to as "devils" (1 Tim. 3:11). The Greek word for "slanderers" can be translated "devils."

Women, being more emotionally driven, are often more vulnerable to this temptation—to adopt opinions too quickly without careful examination. What better foments division than slander? Whoever plays a role in causing division in the Church plays the role of the devil himself.

Cajetan offers an insightful note about the demons cast out of the man who was possessed by a legion. They pleaded with Jesus not to be sent out of the region. Why? Cajetan explains: demons have regions assigned to

them, with specific tasks. These demons didn't want to be removed from their assigned territory. If that is so, then the demons responsible for division certainly favor churches, where their efforts to stir up strife can do the most damage.

Especially now, when Satan sees he cannot maintain his old superstitions, he changes tactics. Knowing that some form of reformation is inevitable, he now works to mingle a spirit of division among believers. He hopes to prevail here, since he has lost ground in other areas.

God has placed enmity between Satan and the saints—but it is the devil who plants enmity between saints and saints.

When we see frightening storms and thundering skies, some say, "Evil spirits are abroad." Certainly, these raging storms of contention among us are stirred and sustained by evil spirits.

*Yet the truth is: **all the devils in hell could do us no real harm in dividing us from God or one another—**if not for the corruption of our own hearts.*

As God once said to Israel: "Your destruction is from yourself" (Hos. 13:9). So we may now say to England: "Your division is from yourself."

The Internal Causes of Division

The internal causes of our divisions can be placed into three categories:

*1. **Dividing principles** — when false ideas descend from our heads to our hearts.*

*3. **Dividing distempers** — when sinful passions rise from our hearts to cloud our understanding.*

*3. **Dividing practices** — the outward behaviors that flow from both faulty thinking and corrupted affections. These fuel and multiply divisions.*

Let us begin with dividing principles. Unless we address the head, working on the heart is in vain. It is foolish to cry out against the heart's disease if the real source of sickness is in the mind.

It is like applying medicine to the stomach when the real affliction is in the brain. We must identify and correct these faulty principles if we hope to restore unity.

Chapter Four

Heart-divisions one from another.

When they separated from God, they also separated from His people. They would not join with His people in the way of His worship. Only those who set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel went to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord God of their fathers, as noted in 2 Chronicles 11:16. Only those whose hearts the Lord touched joined, but others, for their own carnal ends, would not join them. They saw trouble attended that way; and having separated themselves from God and His people, it was God's curse upon them that they should be divided from one another. If you are divided from the truth, what can hold you together? Truth is a single, simple, plain thing, but error is varied and ensnares itself with infinite contradictions. If people go out of the plain path of truth, they wander up and down, God knows where, entangling themselves in briars and thorns, so they cannot extricate themselves.

Consider the ten tribes that initially separated from Judah only in their subjection to the house of David and their worship at Jerusalem. Later, they denied all Scripture except the five books of Moses. They were exceedingly given to sorcery, magic, and witchcraft, growing more notorious until

Christ's time. This is hinted at in the blasphemy of the Jews against our Savior: "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil," accusing Him of practicing like those people who commonly had familiar spirits attending them. For otherwise, they knew He was no Samaritan but a Galilean of Nazareth. They were also exceedingly divided among themselves. Epiphanius recites four different sects: the Offens, Sebuœans, Gorthenians, and Positheans. Truth is the bond that keeps unity, but error is wild; you know not where to find it or yourselves if you give way to it.

Our present times will testify to this for all future generations. The wild and unruly divisions of our times are to be the subject of future discourse. I am not ignorant nor insensitive to the difficulty, trouble, and danger there is in meddling with such a subject at such a time as this. He who meddles with the divisions of the times may expect to be divided himself, to have his name and reputation cut asunder and thrown this way and that way. It is an unthankful work to meddle with a divided people; a man may with as much safety put his hand into a nest of hornets. A learned man once asked why he did not write his judgment about the controversy of his time answered: "To what purpose? It would not help the cause but much hazard him that should meddle." What one once said to Luther when he was about to involve himself in seeking reformation echoes in my ears when I first thought of engaging with this argument: "O Luther, rather get you into your cell and say, 'Lord have mercy upon us.'"

It is a great part of a minister's skill to divide the Word rightly; but this skill will be tested when he comes to divide the Word among a divided people, giving every part its portion. I would never have ventured to choose a text on purpose for such an argument, but seeing Providence has brought it so fully into my way, I shall now venture upon it with my heart cast and

fixed upon that promise in Proverbs 11:3: "The integrity of the upright shall guide them."

I shall cast what I intend into this structure:

1. The causes of our divisions.2. The evil of them.3. Cautions about them, so we may not misuse them.4. Remedies or cures for them.

The Causes of Our Divisions

The principal cause from without is the Devil. He seeks to keep his own kingdom free from divisions but seeks nothing more than to cause divisions in the Kingdom of Christ. The Mahometans who worship a cursed impostor; the pagans who worship the sun, moon, and stars; the Egyptians who worship onions, leeks, cats, and dogs never had such divisions among them as the worshippers of Jesus Christ have had and have today among themselves. For all the former are the Devil's kingdom, which he seeks to keep at peace; but he is that envious one who sows seeds of division in the Kingdom of Christ. Hence those who foment divisions among Christians are called devils in 1 Timothy 3:11: "The wives of deacons must not be slanderers." The word may be translated as devils: Women are most liable to the Devil's temptations this way because they are weak and are in danger of running away with sudden apprehensions without due examination; and what can foment division more than slandering? So far as anyone, especially in the Church, has a hand in causing or fomenting division, so far he or she is a devil in Scripture language; they act out the part of the Devil.

I remember Cajetan has a note upon that place in the Gospel where the devils being cast out of the man who had a legion in him prayed Christ that they might not go out of that region. Why would they not go out of that region? says Cajetan; he gives this answer: The devils have certain places to which they assign their work—such devils to such a place for such a service

and others for another service. Now these devils were loath to be displaced from their region, though they were cast out of the man, having further work to do in that place. If this is so, surely the devils appointed to cause and foment divisions and dissensions above all regions love to be in the region of churches, for nowhere do divisions cause such harm as there.

At this time especially, for now the devils see they cannot prevail to get men back to their old superstitious vanities—some reformation there will be—they now seek to mingle a perverse spirit of division among men, hoping they shall prevail here though they could not hold their own in the former. God put enmity between Satan and the saints, but it is the Devil who puts enmity between saints and saints.

When we hear fearful thundering and see terrible storms and tempests, many people say that ill spirits are abroad; surely these blustering storms of contention are raised and continued by evil spirits. But the truth is all the devils in hell could do us no great harm in dividing us from God or from one another were it not for the corruption of our own hearts. Wherefore as the Lord says to Israel: "Perditio tua ex te," thy destruction is from thyself; so may we now say of England: "Divisio tua ex te," thy division is from thyself.

The causes of our divisions from ourselves may be referred to three heads:

1. Dividing principles—sometimes our divisions come down from our heads to our hearts.2. Dividing distempers—sometimes they go up from our hearts to our heads.3. Dividing practices—and these come from head and heart; they foment and increase both.

We will begin with Dividing Principles: Unless some care is taken of the head, it will be in vain to meddle with the heart, to cry out against our

heart's distempers. The chief cause of many of our divisions lies here: It is of little purpose to purge or apply any medicine to the lower parts when the disease comes from distillations from the head.

Chapter Five

Dividing Principles

The first, There can be no Agreement without Uniformity.

This principle has long caused much division in the Church. Understanding where its weakness and falseness lie will help much to bring peace and join us sweetly together.

In the substantials of worship, unity is necessary; there, all are bound to go by the same rule and to do, to the utmost they are able, the same thing.

But the circumstantials of worship have a two-fold consideration: They are either such that, though merely circumstances to some other worship, yet have also in themselves some divine worship, some spiritual efficacy, something in them to commend our service unto God, or to cause some presence of God with us, or to work us nearer to God by an efficacy beyond what they have in them of their own natures. For instance, time is a circumstance, but the Lord's day has a worship in it commending our service to God and an efficacy to bring God to us and raise us to God; this is not from any natural efficacy of the time but from God's institution. Now, in such circumstances as these, there ought to be uniformity; for these have

institutions for their rule and are not at man's liberty to be altered as he thinks best in prudence.

But there are other circumstances that are only natural or civil, subservient to worship in a natural or civil way. They are conversant about worship but have nothing of worship in them and are merely natural or civil helps to it. When we worship God, we do something as men as well as worshippers; hence we need some natural or civil helps. For instance, when we meet to worship God, being men as well as Christians, we must have a convenient place to keep us from the weather and know where to resort; and a time to know when.

There must be order: Many cannot speak at once for edification; modest and grave carriage is required of us as a society of men meeting about matters of weight. In these circumstances and others of like nature, there is no worship at all; there is no spiritual efficacy; there are only natural or civil helps to us while we are worshipping. Therefore, for these circumstances, human prudence is sufficient to order them.

The right understanding of this takes away a great prejudice that many have against those who desire to keep to Divine Institutions not only in substantials but in the circumstantials of worship. They think it unreasonable that Divine Institution should be required for every circumstance in worship; this has bred a great quarrel in the Church. And well may it be thought unreasonable if we required institutions for circumstances in worship that are merely natural or civil helps and have no worship at all in them, for that indeed would be endless and mere vanity. Certainly, institutions are to be required only in things that are raised beyond what is in them naturally, in tendering my respects to God by them or expecting to draw my heart nearer to God or God nearer to me in their

use. The contention about uniformity is much increased for want of a right understanding of this difference in the circumstantials of worship; did we understand one another in this, we might soon have peace concerning this matter.

In these latter sorts of circumstances, we must also distinguish. There are some that must necessarily be determined, such as time and place; it is therefore necessary that there should be uniformity in these among all members of every society respectively so that they agree to meet in the same place at the same time; natural necessity requires this. But natural necessity does not require binding several churches to uniformity in things of this kind. The urging of uniformity beyond the rule in such things has caused woeful divisions in the Church throughout all ages. Eusebius tells of Victor, Bishop of Rome, about two hundred years after Christ, who broke off communion from all the Churches of Asia for not keeping Easter at the same time he did. The controversy was not about Easter but only about uniformity in the time. Never have there been greater breaches of unity in the Church than by violently urging uniformity.

Furthermore, there are other natural civil circumstances that need not be determined at all; though there is liberty and variety in them, order and edification are not hindered. For instance, in hearing the Word, one stands as Constantine was wont constantly to do; another sits; one is uncovered; another is covered; one has one kind of garment; another has another; yet no rules of modesty or gravity are broken. Now if any power should violently urge uniformity in such circumstances and not leave them as Christ has done, they make the necessity of uniformity a dividing principle upon these four grounds:

1. This restricts men's natural liberties without satisfying their reason.2. This has been the inlet to almost all superstitions in the Church; first, the plea has been for decency and order, then there has been stamped a human institution to raise things higher.3. The urging of such things when there is no reason seen in their nature why this rather than that makes men fear there is some religious respect put upon them already.4. Here is a stretching of the power of authority beyond its limits, which man naturally is very impatient of, not knowing how far it may yet further be extended.

As for the practice of Church Governors or civil authorities going beyond their bounds, we shall speak to this in the third head.

I have read of Solyman the Great Turk who, when advised by a Mufti to compel those of diverse religions in his dominions to Mahumetism, looked out of his window into his garden where there was great variety of flowers and herbs and said: "As the variety of flowers and herbs seems very delightful, so the diversity of religions in my kingdom is rather useful than burdensome, so long as those who profess them live peaceably." I am not of his mind regarding the variety of several religions—of which more will be said shortly—yet certainly in the variety of practices among brethren in such matters as we are discussing, tuned with brotherly love towards one another, there will be a sweet harmony when violent urging uniformity in such things will cause harsh discord in the Churches.

When the aforementioned Victor of Rome, along with those who joined him, caused woeful divisions in the Church by insisting on uniformity and claiming there could be no peace without it, they broke the peace of the Church. Irenaeus and others at the same time advocated for the peace of the Church, suggesting it could be achieved by allowing differences in practice in such matters. In the name of all the brethren in France under his charge,

he wrote to Victor and those who joined him, reminding them of the variety of practices among diverse brethren in times before them, which were very near the Apostles' times, who yet were united with one another.

He noted that the bishops before Soter, of that See which Victor now governed—such as Anicetus, Pius, Hyginus, Telesphorus, and Sixtus—were at unity with those of other churches, despite their varied observations. Polycarp, being in Rome during Anicetus's time, differed in various practices from him. Although Polycarp had received his practices from John, the disciple of our Lord with whom he conversed, he did not persuade Anicetus to adopt the same practices but left him to follow the way of his own church. They communicated lovingly with one another and parted in a brotherly manner.

Can people not walk peaceably on a broad path, even if they do not step exactly in each other's footsteps? Even if there is some distance in their walk—one towards one side and the other towards the opposite side of the path—must they necessarily fall out because they are not on the same path when the way is broad enough? Indeed, if they were crossing a narrow bridge, they must not take the liberty to walk abreast; if they do not keep close to each other's steps, they may fall into the river. Thus, in matters of divine worship, we must ensure we walk exactly in the same steps; if we presume to take liberty there, we may soon fall. But in circumstances of a lesser nature, there can be differences without division. We must not presume to be wiser than Christ.

Melanchthon, in an epistle to some brethren of differing minds (cited by Gersom Bucerus), persuades unity thus: "Seeing," he says, "we agree on the principal articles of faith, let us embrace one another with mutual love. The

dissimilarity and variety of rites and ceremonies (I will add," says Bucerus) "and of ecclesiastical government ought not to disjoin our minds."

Chapter Six

The Second Dividing Principle: All Religions Are to Be Tolerated

This is indeed a divider. There is a great outcry about this, but what is its scope? It is to exasperate men's spirits against the toleration of anything. Some believe there must be a necessary connection between tolerating some perceived errors and tolerating all things; and if it were not for fear of one, there would not be such ado about the other. But I hope to clearly show there is no such dependence; just as this is a dividing principle —that all things should be tolerated—so is the other as truly dividing and false: that nothing should be tolerated.

Nothing causes more stir among us today than this principle of absolute liberty in matters of religion. Conscience compels me to speak what I find to be God's mind on this matter: The wantonness of men's spirits and their extreme boldness about matters of God and Christ are such that they should cause our hearts to tremble. Such horrid blasphemous things are among us, owned and professed with so much impudence, and their practice strengthened by this principle: that there is to be absolute liberty in matters of religion. Our duty to God and our love for and care for the preservation

of religion call us to set ourselves against such a false, sinful, dangerous, disturbing principle as this.

This principle is strengthened by two positions; both are dividing as well as the principle itself.

First, that magistrates have nothing to do with men in matters of religion.

Second, that conscience is a tender thing and must have liberty; nothing must be done to men who plead their consciences for what they do.

First, we shall show the principle itself to be a dividing principle; then address the mistakes in those two assertions that uphold this principle: as they strengthen the principle, so they strengthen division.

The principle is dividing because:

First, it is abhorrent to nature. Is it not abhorrent to any man's heart in the world that men should allow God to be blasphemed, whom they honor? And that nothing should be done to restrain anyone but to ask them why they do so and persuade them to do otherwise? There has always been as much contention among people about religion as about anything else. In Exodus 8:25-26, Pharaoh told Moses to sacrifice in the land. But Moses said it was not right to do so because they would sacrifice what was an abomination to the Egyptians. "Lo," he said, "shall we sacrifice what is an abomination to the Egyptians before their eyes? Will they not stone us?" Even though they had leave from the king, the people would not endure it.

Second, it is against the light of Scripture. In Deuteronomy 13:6-9: "If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or daughter or the wife you cherish or your friend who is as your own soul entices you secretly saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which you have not known nor your fathers, you shall not consent to him or listen to him; nor shall your eye pity him nor shall you spare or conceal him. But you shall surely kill

him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death and afterwards the hand of all the people."

Let no one dismiss this Scripture by saying it is in the Old Testament and we find no such thing in the Gospel; for we find almost the same words used in a prophecy of Gospel times in Zechariah 13:3. At the end of Chapter 12, it is prophesied that those who pierced Christ shall look upon Him and mourn, having a spirit of grace and supplication poured upon them. In Chapter 13:1-3: "There shall be opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness." Verse 3 states: "It shall come to pass that if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who begot him will say to him, 'You shall not live because you have spoken lies in the name of the Lord.' And his father and mother who begot him shall thrust him through when he prophesies."

You must understand this by what is stated in Deuteronomy. The meaning is not that his father or mother should immediately run a knife into him but that although they begot him, they should be the means to bring him to just punishment—even taking away his life. Those who were instruments of his life should now be instruments of his death.

Thirdly, it is a dividing principle because it allows for unrestrained indulgence in all kinds of wantonness and a spirit of opposition in matters of religion. People are naturally more wanton in religious matters than in anything else, and corrupt spirits are inclined to and pleased with opposition in these matters above any other. Since religious matters are considered to have an inherent excellence and are beyond reason, they are susceptible to contradiction from people with corrupt minds. If there is nothing to restrain people from opposing one another in these matters, the wantonness and pride of people's hearts will lead to endless disputes, contentions, and divisions.

If it is said that Christ has left spiritual means to help with this, it is answered that Christ's spiritual means are intended to work in a spiritual way upon the heart to change it, and secondarily upon the outward person. While Christ's means are working thus, external means may prevent evil from manifesting in the outward person. Christ has not left the outward person at absolute liberty to do whatever they will until spiritual means are made effective in the heart, especially considering that if you grant this liberty, people may choose whether any of those spiritual means of Christ should come to them at all.

The first position that upholds this dividing principle is: Magistrates have nothing to do with matters of religion. It must be granted that a magistrate is not an officer of Jesus Christ the Mediator in his mediatory kingdom.

There is a two-fold government that Christ has:1. One as he is God equal with the Father, together with the Father ruling heaven and earth.2. Another as he is God and man, Mediator, in a peculiar kingdom of his that he has by way of dispensation from the Father.

Now, the magistrate is an officer of God, both the Father and the Son, in the general government of the world. But he is not an officer of Christ in that kingdom of his that he has by way of dispensation from the Father, that Regnum Mediatorium, as divines call it. No, even if he is a Christian magistrate, there are no officers of that kingdom but those who are by divine institution set down in the Word. His Christianity only adds further ability to execute the work of his office in a better manner; it adds no new authority to him. An infidel magistrate converted to Christian religion is thereby better enabled to perform the duty of his place than before, but he had the same authority before; it was his sin that he did not use his authority as he now can. Though he be a Christian who is a magistrate, yet the power

of his magistracy belongs to another kingdom, different from that which the second person has as he is Christ the Mediator.

Objection 2: But does not this then exclude him from exercising any power in matters of Christian religion?

Answer: No, for God, in exercising his power governing the world, has a special aim at promoting the kingdom of his Son Christ the Mediator. Therefore, magistrates exercising this power of God ought to aim at these ends that God himself aims at in exercising his own power—that is, to be useful to Christ's government in his Church and for the good of his Church. God, in all his ways from the beginning of the world, has aimed at setting up his Son to be King upon his holy hill and at promoting the glory of him who is God-man. If his ministers do not make use of their power to this end when this kingdom of his Son comes to be revealed to them, he will require it at their hands.

The power that God invested magistrates with in matters of religion in the Old Testament is so full and clear in what God gave to the kings of Judah and Israel that naming particulars would almost make a volume. I find many who write about this subject spend most of their strength here, but I wholly forbear mentioning instances because it is granted by all that they had power. However, the argument from there to the power of magistrates in the times of the Gospel prevails little with those who hold this dividing principle we are now speaking of. For they tell us that their power was typical; they were types of the kingly power of Christ because we find glorious promises of dominion and stability made to Christ in the persons of many of those kings.

2. They tell us that just as it is no argument because priests and Levites had power in temporal things during the time of the Law—ordering affairs

of the state—therefore ministers should have civil authority now; so neither is it an argument because magistrates had power then in spiritual things; therefore our magistrates should have similar power now.

3. They tell us that the Church and Commonwealth of the Jews were mixed into one; hence being a stranger from the Church is expressed by being a stranger from the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:12), and therefore their magistrates were church officers as well as civil.

4. That the people of the Jews were brought up in a more servile way than Christ would have his Church brought up in during Gospel times; compulsion in matters of religion was more suitable to their condition than it is to our Jerusalem which is free.

5. The whole Church then was bound under the same state government; their state laws were by divine appointment; their kings were chosen by God. But now Christ chooses his Church out of all nations on earth and leaves them to various governments, laws, and officers of different nations for their civil state.

1. I confess if there were nothing but merely examples or laws from the Old Testament to confute this dividing position, to an examining eye, the argument would hardly be cogent or satisfactory—only insofar as there is common reason and equity in them—and so all judicial laws bind now as well as they did then.

2. Insofar as the New Testament approves for its times what was formerly done in the Old.

The strength of the argument from magistrates' power in the Old Testament lies in these two points:

First, there is common reason and equity. Whatever strength such kind of arguing has from one spiritual ordinance to prove another, without question

it is strong enough from one civil ordinance to prove another, even if it concerns spiritual things.

It is nature's dictate that magistrates should have some power in matters of religion. The generality of all people have ever thought it equitable. It has been ever challenged in all nations and commonwealths. The heathens would never allow their gods to be blasphemed but punished those guilty thereof by magistrate power. Socrates was put to death for blaspheming their multiplicity of gods.

Secondly, there is surely a common equity, for there is a necessity of it now as truly as there was then. I cannot argue the existence of spiritual ordinances from our need of them by saying, "There is such an institution because the Church needs it." Rather, I find it in the Word to be an institution, and therefore the Church needs it. However, in natural or civil matters, this way of arguing is strong enough; there is a need for such help, and therefore we should seek to have it.

Now, surely the need we have for such power is exceedingly great. We would be in a most miserable condition if we had no external civil power to restrain any kinds of blasphemies and seductions. The condition of the Jews —oh, how happy it was in comparison to ours if this were denied us! For if any one of theirs blasphemed God or sought to seduce others from Him, they knew what to do with him, besides persuading him otherwise. But if anyone should seek to seduce the wives of our bosoms, children of our bodies, friends as dear to us as our own lives into those ways that we think in our consciences will undo their souls for all eternity, yet we must only desire them not to do so. We must only admonish and seek to convince or reprove them, but we cannot restrain them.

If the deliverance from the pedagogy of the Law has brought us into this condition, our burden is greater in this matter than any that the Law laid upon our forefathers. Has Christ delivered us from one burden to lay a greater upon us? Must we now see those who are dearest to us drawn into the ways of eternal destruction and stand by helplessly, with no way left to help them or ourselves unless we can persuade them otherwise? Surely our condition is very sad. Have we not cause to say, "Lord, let any burden of the Ceremonial Law be laid upon our necks rather than this?"

If there were a group of madmen running up and down the streets with knives and swords in their hands, endeavoring to harm and kill all they met with, and we must do nothing to restrain them; if we could persuade them to do otherwise, well and good: but that is all we can do for help; what a dangerous thing this would be! The case is the same when those who are mad with damnable heresies run from place to place, seeking to draw all they can from the truth. If we have no means of help but arguments, it is ill with us. Surely God has not put His people into such a sad condition as this; He has provided better for His people than this.

Thirdly, we find in the records of Scripture mention of heathen magistrates who had nothing but the light of nature to guide them, involving themselves in matters of religion, and this the Holy Ghost relates in commendation of them for this thing.

The argument from these examples cannot be avoided, as that which is taken from the practice of the Kings of Judah. We read in Ezra 7:26 that Artaxerxes interposes his power in matters of religion, and Ezra blesses God for it: "Whosoever will not do the Law of thy God and the Law of the King, let judgment be executed speedily upon him." And in the next words, Ezra blesses God who put it in the heart of the King by these and other

means to beautify His house. The making of such a law was one notable means whereby the House of the Lord came to be beautified.

Thus also Nebuchadnezzar, in Daniel 3:29: "I make a decree that every people, nation, and language who speak anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dung-hill," etc. This Scripture records as a work of the King's repentance.

The King of Nineveh, in Jonah 3, by the decree of his princes and nobles, proclaims a fast and commands everyone to cry mightily to God and turn from his evil way.

Further, let us see how the Holy Ghost justifies this power of the magistrate in the times of the Gospel: First, in the prophecies of the times of the Gospel; secondly, in various places in the New Testament.

For prophecies, the aforementioned place, Zechariah 13:3, cannot be dismissed: Isaiah 49:23: "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers." The protection of their civil peace is not sufficient to give them such a denomination as nursing fathers and mothers.

Isaiah 60:10: "The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee." They shall not only be favorers of them but as kings they shall minister to them even by their power. So Revelation 21:24: "The kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor to the Church." There is such a time coming. This surely is more than merely protecting their outward peace.

In the New Testament, Romans 13:4: "He is thy minister for thy good." 1 Peter 2:13-14: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme or unto governors who are sent for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do well."

Now seeing the Scripture speaks thus generally—"For thy good," and "for the punishment of evildoers and praise of those who do well"—we should not distinguish where Scripture does not distinguish unless the nature of the thing requires it.

You might say that the nature of what is spoken requires that it must be restrained to those things that belong to his cognizance. Such a limitation must necessarily be granted; therefore it is true that the magistrate cannot command every good thing nor punish every evil. The abstruse controversies in religion do not come under the cognizance of a magistrate as a magistrate; only such things as are against common justice and equity and the common light of Christianity where he governs Christians. For he is to enjoin and punish such things only as if he were not; the community of people which sets him up ought to enjoin and punish because he has his power from them. But more on this in the next principle.

If you shall say that those Scriptures speaking of civil magistrates must be understood only in civil things...

The magistrate has his civil designation because the power he exercises is civil, and the actions he performs are civil. He cannot perform the duties of a church officer, such as administering sacraments, with the power he possesses. However, this does not prevent him from using his civil power to perform external acts upon the outward person that are subservient to spiritual good. Indeed, what he does does not have any spiritual efficacy, for if it did, it would be worship. Although he cannot work in a spiritual way upon a person's soul through his power, as it is not an ordinance set apart by God for that purpose, he may, by exercising his power upon the outward person, restrain them from external acts of evil or bring them to external good. His power remains civil but is ordered to aid spiritual good by

removing hindrances, applying external means, or restraining from external evil.

Any commandment that requires a duty also requires us to use all things that may help us perform that duty. If there are any civil, natural, or spiritual aids, we are bound to use them all. The great question here is whether God has appointed the use of the magistrate's power as a help to religious matters. Has God made this an ordinance for the spiritual good of people? That it is an ordinance for their civil good is clear from the Scriptures mentioned earlier. But how does it appear that God intended it to be an ordinance for their spiritual good?

Answer: Whatever natural quality exists in anything comes from God, for nature is God's work. If there is a natural quality in it to work upon the outward person for the furtherance of spiritual good, this is from God. If I were to use it to work upon the inward person expecting spiritual efficacy, then I would make it an ordinance for myself and sin against God by presuming to attribute more to a creature than God appointed. This was the error with ceremonies; they were used in a spiritual way to work upon the heart of man by virtue of an institution that man imposed on them beyond what God ever intended in their natural power.

But how can natural and external things help with spiritual and divine matters?

Answer: Any person's reason, even their senses, can tell them that removing external hindrances and employing various external means can prevent much evil and further much good that is spiritual and divine. Although it cannot reach the spirituality and divinity of that good, it reaches the external action, without which divine and spiritual good cannot exist.

Therefore, since the New Testament outlines the power of magistrates and requires submission to them in general terms, we can conclude that the Lord intended Christians to be subject to magistrates according to the light of nature and the equity of general rules previously found in Scripture. If God were to say, "You are Christians; see that you do not part with the liberty Christ has purchased for you," we could respond: "Lord, we found in your word that you once used the power of magistrates in religious matters; and in the New Testament, nothing was revealed to forbid their power in these matters. Indeed, Lord, you told us there that you appointed them for our good and to be a terror to evil works in general. From this, we gathered that in yielding to their power, it was your will for us to use those general rules in Scripture we found before the Gospel times and the light of nature. Being also persuaded it was your will for us to use all natural helps for our spiritual advantage, and finding it recorded in your Word that you allowed such power in religious matters even for those guided only by the light of nature, and since its use reached only the outward person, we did not see a necessity for a special institution for this. Knowing what natural quality it had as an external help was put into it by yourself, therefore we made use of it." God will accept this account.

1. When the apostles were brought before civil authorities about religious matters, we never find them pleading that authorities had no power over religious matters belonging solely to Jesus Christ as King and his church's governance. Their plea was only the justice of their cause—that what they professed and preached was God's truth and done in obedience to God.

2. If all men are bound to use all abilities, gifts, and talents they have for propagating the Gospel, then magistrates are bound to use those peculiar to them. If a man has more wisdom than others or a greater estate or more

friends, he is to use all these as aids for furthering religion. If a man has more power than others, he is also to use that power—not only by supporting what he believes is right but by all other means according to reason's dictates not forbidden by Scripture.

But we have often heard Tertullian's argument: If something is said to be lawful because Scripture does not forbid it, then it is unlawful because Scripture does not command it.

Answer: This rule applies in matters of God's worship but not in civil or natural matters, even if they are subservient to worship; there reason may guide extensively.

But you might ask: Will you then make the magistrate a judge in all religious causes? He may be wicked or a heathen yet still a true magistrate.

Answer: Whatever he may be, he can judge matters of fact and as far as reason goes in matters of right. He can judge whether you act against your principles in your profession, acts of worship, or wrongs done to others. He can judge whether your principles contradict the common knowledge of God given to men and human justice rules. A magistrate unskilled in medicine or navigation can still judge physicians and mariners if they wrong others in their fields.

Chapter Seven

The second Position: Conscience is a tender thing and must not be meddled with.

Certainly, conscience is a very tender thing; and as men must take heed not to offer violence to their own consciences, they must also be careful with the consciences of others. It is such a thing that is not in subjection to any creature in Heaven or on earth, only to God Himself. Gerard reports from the histories of France about a King of Navarre, who, writing to his nobles, used this expression: "The rule over consciences and souls is left to God alone." Similarly, a King of Poland was known to frequently say that God had reserved three things for Himself: 1. To create something from nothing; 2. To know future events; 3. To rule over conscience. Maximilian II used to say there was no tyranny more intolerable than seeking to rule over consciences. Henry III, King of France, as he lay dying, said, "Learn from me that piety is a duty of man unto God, over which worldly force has no power." This was spoken in the same chamber where the council was held about the fatal St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in 1572.

However, despite this, the Devil must not be left alone, even if he has infiltrated men's consciences. God has appointed no city of refuge for him; if he flees to men's consciences, as Joab did to the horns of the altar, he must be fetched from there or dealt with there. Something can be done to men to keep them from evil and to bring them back, despite their plea of conscience.

But what can be done to a man in such a case?

First, any man who pleads his conscience may be required to give an account of it. It is not enough for him to say his conscience compels him to do or refrain from something; he must provide the grounds upon which his conscience acts. The Word requires us to give an account to every man of the hope that is in us if he asks in a due way; we are bound to give no offense neither to Jew nor Gentile. It is against the light of nature for men in a society to do things for which they need give no account whatsoever.

Secondly, due inquiry should be made as to whether the Devil is indeed in the conscience. You may find him in some other part of the soul; he only pretends that it is his sanctuary, hoping to escape better there than anywhere else. If he were found in a man's will, he thinks he would soon be hunted out with violence and could not escape there; but he hopes men will deal more tenderly with conscience. Therefore, either he will get there, or at least he will claim he is there, hoping you will not search further when it is said he has taken refuge there. Like a malefactor being searched for, he may be lurking in some house nearby; but to prevent you from searching or continuing your search, he causes it to be said that he has gotten into some strong castle or another country where there is little hope of reaching him.

Question: But how can it be known whether the Devil is in a man's conscience or not? Conscience is an inward room; who can see into it and

determine what or who is there?

Answer: It is very difficult to make a judgment, but these notes may help us discern.

First, if I see a man's private interest heavily involved in what he claims is a matter of conscience, this may raise suspicion, though it cannot be a determining rule. A man may have his conscience lead him to something where there is much personal interest; however, this brings suspicion if the matter is not exceedingly clear to everyone.

Secondly, if in the course of a man's life he does not appear much under the command of his conscience but takes liberties as he pleases; if indeed a man generally appears very conscientious, we must be cautious in opposing him unless the evil we see now is very clear and gross. But a man who commonly trifles with his conscience forfeits the benefit of this plea, just as one may forfeit city freedom through misconduct. The benefit that might otherwise come from such a plea can be forfeited by such looseness of life.

Thirdly, when the account a man gives cannot reasonably be judged as leading him so grossly astray as it appears he is misled—allowing for all his weaknesses—we must acknowledge that reasons may differ between individuals. However, when they appear so gross that they cannot reasonably lead to such conclusions even after all allowances for weaknesses, we may suspect that the evil lies not in his conscience but elsewhere. Yet we should not act too hastily or violently with such men; they may be overpowered temporarily and unable to render a rational account of their ways. We should wait and deal with them tenderly in love; consider their personal disabilities and temptations, giving them all possible allowances. If one means does not show them their error, try another; if no good comes at one time, see what can be done at another. Consider whether

it is possible that even weak things may appear as grounds to a man with many weaknesses and temptations that he cannot deny without sinning. If so, you need to deal tenderly with such a man unless the grossness of the evil requires severity.

Fourthly, if a man is proud and turbulent in his behavior, you may know the Devil is more in the will than in the conscience. Although an erroneous conscience may cause one to hold fast to an error, it does not lead to proud, scornful, or turbulent behavior. When a man, due to his conscience (perhaps its weakness), differs from his brethren, he needs to carry himself with all humility, meekness, and self-denial in all other things. He should be willing to serve every man in what he lawfully can, to show that it is not from willfulness but merely the tenderness of his conscience that he cannot align with what his brethren do, whom he still reveres. In his behavior towards them, he shows that he esteems them as his betters. However, if a man who is weak and very much beneath others in parts and graces carries himself with arrogance, imperiousness, and contempt for those who differ from him and is contentious with them, there is great reason to think that the corruption is in the will rather than elsewhere. If there is some conscience in these men, their heart-distempers may justly forfeit their right to plead their consciences. Those who oppose them, if they do so in a Christian way, may justify their actions before God. If God were to call them to account and ask why they dealt with such men who professed they were guided by their consciences, they could answer: "Lord, you know we were willing to deal with them with all tenderness if we could have seen conscientiousness in their behavior. But we saw nothing but scornfulness, pride, imperiousness, turbulence, conceitedness; we could see nothing of the Spirit

of Jesus Christ acting in their way. This behavior persuaded us that the sinfulness was more in their wills than their consciences."

Fifthly, when a man is unwilling to use means to inform his conscience—not those means that are against his own principles—but goes on peremptorily and stubbornly: Surely, when we see many of our brethren differing from us, our respect for them should gain at least this much from us: if there are any unused means for further testing our opinions or informing our judgments, we should use those means. A conscientious heart will do so.

The sixth note added will seal up all; when a man by reason or Scripture is so challenged that he must either renounce his error or abandon some of his own principles, he will rather deny his principles than admit he is convinced of his error; even when those principles are of great importance. The man who does this is the one spoken of in Titus 3:11, who is αὐτοκατάκριστος, condemned by himself: "An Heretic after the first and second admonition reject; because he is self-condemned." We must not reject every man who errs in every little thing, not even after two or three admonitions—that was a prelatical, tyrannical rule—but he must be a heretic and err so grossly that he is self-condemned in his error. Such a man does not suffer for his conscience when he is rejected but for sinning against his conscience.

Question: But who can know when a man is condemned by himself? The judgment of a man's own conscience is a secret thing.

Answer: This is the strength of this hold the Devil gets into; he thinks he gets so deep that you cannot find him out. As for God's displeasure, who knows their consciences? These men will risk that. But by this Scripture in Titus 3, it is clear that a man's conscience may be seen into sufficiently for a

judgment to be passed upon him that he is self-condemned. To what purpose otherwise serves this Scripture? It is unlikely this heretic would acknowledge that he was self-condemned, yet the Apostle makes this the ground for his rejection. As if to say: "You see he will go against his own principles, against what his conscience tells him is truth, merely to maintain a wicked heresy that he is infected with; let him plead what he will, reject him, for his own conscience condemns him, and God is greater than his conscience and knows all things."

The third thing to be done to a man who pleads his conscience for evil is to declare to him the great snare and danger he brings himself into by allowing evil into his conscience. He puts himself into such a condition that whatever he does, he must sin against God as long as he holds his error. Evil enters the consciences of many very easily because they think the dictates of their consciences will be sufficient to support them in what they do; but they are deceived. An erroneous conscience does not bind; you sin despite your conscience bidding you do it; and if you go against this erroneous conscience, you sin too. What a miserable snare is this? You need to look to yourselves then and take heed of what you let into your consciences.

The fourth thing is to charge him—and if it is a matter of consequence—to adjure him in the Name of God (who searches the hearts of men and will judge them accordingly on the great day) that he deals plainly and sincerely and does not dare to put a pretense upon that which he knows his conscience cannot justify him in. If there is indeed any conscientiousness in the man, this will startle him.

But it may be this will not prevail; therefore, in the fifth place, whatever a man holds—though his conscience be never so much taken with it—if it

cannot stand with the power of godliness but destroys it, if this man remains in a Christian society after all means used to reduce him and still perseveres in it, he is—despite his conscience—to be cast out of the society of the Saints. This is not a trivial matter; if a man has any conscience in him, it cannot but be dreadful to him. If poison gets into a glass and you cannot wash it out, both the poison and glass are to be thrown into the sink. Such a man as this—with the conscience he has—is to be thrown upon the dunghill. If a man by his wickedness cuts himself off from the mystical body of Christ, the Church may cut him off from its visible body; he has forfeited his Church privileges.

Sixthly, if the error with its profession is destructive to the State and he cannot be reclaimed, he may likewise be cut off from it or at least deprived of its privileges and benefits despite his plea of conscience. This justifies cutting off Jesuits and priests who teach people that the Crown is at the disposal of any foreign power by which subjects may be freed from their allegiance. A Reverend Divine of ours,* in a treatise upon the pouring out of the seven vials, interprets the turning of the rivers into blood as the execution of justice—even unto blood—upon Romish emissaries like Jesuits and priests who come from the See of Rome to take people off from their allegiance.

Seventhly, whatever pretense of conscience a man has, it cannot excuse him in any matter of apparent injustice done to his brother regarding his estate or goods. For instance, if a man claims conscience in the point of community of goods, yet takes away his neighbor's goods by violence, his conscience cannot deliver him from the stroke of justice. The Papists pretend conscience for their murders for the Catholic cause, but this does

not deliver them from the hands of justice. Similarly, if a man claims conscience that he is bound to marry more wives than one, and the like.

Eighthly, a man may bring himself under both civil and ecclesiastical sword not only for sins destructive and injurious to our brother but also for sins against God, if they are against the light of nature, such as blasphemy and gross idolatry. Though the sun is down, if you allow your servant a candle to work by and he puts it out, he cannot plead that he could not work because it was dark. Man at first had sunlight to work by, but our sun is down; yet we have the candle of the light of nature. If we sin against that, our darkness can be no plea for us. If he is a professed Christian and sins against the common light of Christianity, which he cannot but see unless he shuts his eyes, he is to be dealt with as a man who sins against the light of nature.

Though those who are not Christians cannot be compelled by violence to profess Christian religion, they may be restrained by violence, if other means will not suffice, from openly blaspheming Christ and the Scriptures or committing any acts of open dishonor to them. Acts of open dishonor to God done by anyone are abominable, and those who love God and Christ have found them insufferable.

I suppose you have heard or read that notable story in the Book of Martyrs about one Gardiner. Though we do not justify his practice as allowable in an ordinary way, he being but a private man, there would be little question about it had he been a magistrate. He was a merchant in Portugal who saw the Cardinal offering the Host. Even in the presence of the King and his nobles, he ran to him, snatched it out of his hand, and threw it under his feet. If the King himself had done this, who would have condemned it?

10. Notwithstanding any man's conscience, he may be kept from endangering the salvation of others; no man's conscience can set him at liberty to harm others. Those who strengthen others in dangerous soul-damning principles may be removed from them; the light of nature teaches it.

In some cases, a private man may use violence to restrain men from evil. If a man should come to seduce my wife or child in a matter I know will endanger their souls, if I could have no help from the magistrate, I might, if I had power, keep him off. What I might do by my own strength in case there were no magistrate, I may call in the help of a magistrate to do for me when there is one.

Objection: But you will say, you speak all this while of restraining men from dangerous gross evils; but what if the evils are of less moment? Can nothing be done to restrain them?

Answer: Yes, a man may be put to some trouble in those ways of evil that his conscience puts him upon, so far as to curb the wantonness of his spirit and neglect of means. In times of liberty, there is great wantonness in men's spirits; they stand as in an equal balance to receive truth or error. Every little thing tips the balance in many men's spirits: interest in a friend, esteem from reputable men in some cases, or in others, the credit they perceive in being able to speak further on a matter than others or having deeper insight into it than others. To help against such temptations, if there is some trouble laid in the way of what is apparently evil so that men see there is something to be suffered in that way; if there are no more grains of trouble than may help against this wantonness and neglect of means, I see no reason why anyone should be offended at this.

Indeed, if there is a mistake and the trouble is put into the wrong scale—if it is laid in the way of truth—let the sin be upon those who dare venture upon their mistakes. Or if so much is put into the scale as will not only balance against wantonness and neglect of means but will be a sore temptation to decline the truth and rather embrace what is evil than endure so much trouble; this is very displeasing to God. If a man is asleep at a sermon, his friend may pull his hand; he will not be offended even if given a nip perhaps. But if he were struck on the head with a staff so as to make blood come or cut his flesh with a knife, this would not be borne.

One step further may be considered. Suppose a man is not wanton but serious and neglects no means to inform his conscience, yet he cannot yield —what shall be done to such a man?

Answer: Though such a man should be dealt with in much tenderness and love, yet in matters where his weakness makes him less serviceable to the Commonwealth or Church than other men who have more strength; he may be denied some privileges and benefits granted to others. For instance, some Anabaptists deny the lawfulness of war; suppose their consciences after much seriousness in using means cannot be satisfied. Yet seeing by this error they are made less useful in the State than others, they should not think it much though they are denied many privileges and accommodations granted to others who risk their lives for preserving the State.

If a man's body is weak and he cannot help it, yet by it he is not as useful as others—why should he think much that he does not have whatever others by strength can attain? Suppose a man has such a principle in his conscience that the King has absolute arbitrary power; though it is his conscience, yet by it he is disabled from employment and preferment in places of trust. So for the Church: suppose the government by Prelates had

been lawful (which now we know was not), there would have been no evil in denying those who could not submit to it their preferments of deaneries and prebends and the like.

But lest what I say here be misused, you must understand this denial of places of profit or honor to men, because of what their consciences will not allow them to yield to, applies only to such places where the tenderness of their consciences in such a point makes them unfit to manage. If, because their consciences differ from you in one thing, you take advantage against them in other things that have no dependence upon that wherein they differ from you, and make them suffer in those things too, you now (to say no worse) begin to grow near to a way of persecution and tyranny over your brethren, which Christ is displeased with.

We considered it in the Bishops not merely near, but as having reached tyranny and persecution when they would not allow those who could not conform to their Church discipline and ceremonies to even teach children grammar, practice medicine, or preach Christ in places where there was no preaching, and people lived in darkness, perishing for lack of knowledge. What dependence had these things upon their discipline and ceremonies, supposing they had been right? Yes, they would foment their errors by this means.

Answer: But seeing there was no dependence between their errors (if you will call them so) and these things, to deny the Church and Commonwealth the benefit of the gifts and graces of men upon such a pretense that they will abuse their liberty, we thought it was hard dealing, indeed no less than persecution.

Suppose a man differs from his brethren in point of Church Discipline; must not this man have a place in an army therefore? Though he sees not

the reason for such a discipline in the Church, yet God has endowed him with a spirit of valor, and he understands what military discipline means. Must he not have a place in a college to teach youth logic and philosophy? May he not preach Jesus Christ to poor ignorant creatures? If you fear he will divulge his opinions, surely some other course may be taken whereby he may suffer as much as such a fault warrants; but to deprive Church and State of what abilities God has given him, which might be very useful to them, and that before any such fault is committed, for fear it may be committed, the softest word I have to express myself against this is: It is very hard dealing with your brethren.

I have now gone to the utmost line I can in showing what is to be done to a man who pleads his conscience in things which we conceive are not right. I would now speak a word or two to men who have to deal with their brethren's consciences, and then to those who plead their consciences for their freedom.

To the first: Let those who have to deal with men's consciences first take heed they do not vilify and slight men's consciences. Do not scorn at the plea of their consciences: "What, this is your conscience? Your conscience, forsooth, will not suffer you." Woe to them who offend one of these little ones; it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the bottom of the sea (Matthew 18:6). It is his conscience, and perhaps better informed than yours, and more tender. You may have a corrupt conscience; your conscience may be broken by your sinning against it, or otherwise it is loose or benumbed, with no quickness in it. You can swallow down greater matters; therefore you wonder at those who are so conscientious, who stand upon small matters. What if at the great day Christ shall own these as truly conscientious and honor them for obeying the voice

of their consciences in small things, for not daring to offend them in anything? Where will you appear then? What is likely to become of you?

Or if their consciences are weak, not rightly informed, yet Christ expects you should seek to heal and strengthen them, not jeer and scorn them. That fearfulness of theirs to offend Christ, though in the particular they may be mistaken, shall be accepted when your boldness and venturesomeness in taking your liberty shall appear to be your folly.

2. Take heed in your dealings with such that you do not make them suffer more than Christ would have them suffer. Do not abuse your power over them so as to cause them to complain justly to God of conscience-oppression. Conscience-oppression is the most fearful oppression; of all the cries in the world, the cries caused by it come up most swiftly to God. When an oppressed soul shall get alone and make his moan to God: "Oh Lord, thou who knowest the secrets of all hearts, thou knowest the desires of my soul in uprightness to know thy will; I can freely and comfortably appeal to thee. Thou knowest what a sad affliction it is to me that my judgment should be different from my brethren's, whose parts and graces I prize far beyond my own. Thou knowest also there is no means for further Reformation that I have been willing to make use of as I was able, and whatever other help thou shalt make known to me, I am ready to make use of it so that I may not be led aside into error: and if thou wilt be pleased to reveal thy mind further to me, I am ready to submit to it. I should account it a greater happiness than all the comforts in the world can afford to know what thy mind is in such and such things; but Lord, as yet I cannot do this thing except I should sin against thee; thou knowest it: yet thou knowest also that I desire to walk humbly and peaceably with my brethren, and in all meekness, submissiveness, and quietness of spirit, together with all

diligence, I will wait till thou shalt further reveal thy mind to me. But Lord, in the meantime I find rigid dealing from my brethren; their spirits are embittered, their speeches are hard, their ways towards me are harsh; yea Lord there is violence in them; Lord thou knowest my spirit is not such as to need any such carriage from my brethren towards me; I am not conscious to myself (no not when I set myself most solemnly in thy presence) of stiffness or willfulness in my way; the least beam of light from thee would presently turn my spirit whichever way thou wouldst have it go." Such a moan to God would prove a sadder business against those who occasion it than if such men had strength and spirits to answer bitterness, harshness, and violence with bitterness, harshness, and violence.

Let me also on the other side speak to those who plead their consciences.

First, take heed you do not rest in this as an empty plea, setting it as a bulwark against anything that shall be said to you: "Why, it is my conscience, and who has anything to do with my conscience?" And so think you need look no further nor give any other account to your brethren than this. This is to abuse your conscience and the indulgence of God and the respect he would have men show to the consciences of his people; this is hardening your conscience against the truth—not true tenderness of it.

Secondly, if conscience is such a thing that none must have power over it but God, and such a thing wherein you have to deal so much with God, you need to keep it very clean. It is above all creatures, next to God, so take heed of defiling it. Oh, keep it pure: unclean consciences are good enough to prostrate to men, but consciences reserved for God need to be kept unspotted and very clean. Doves love white houses; the Holy Ghost loves a pure conscience.

Thirdly, you will have none to command your conscience; let conscience then command you. If you rebel against your conscience, it is just with God to allow men to tyrannize over your conscience. When you complain of men seeking to have power over your consciences, lay your hand upon your heart and say, "Have I not rebelled against my conscience? I have resisted its power over me; therefore, it is just that others should seek to bring it under their power."

Chapter Eight

They who are for a Congregational way do not hold absolute liberty for all Religions.

But for all that has been said, are there not yet a sort of men who, though they would color over things and put fair glosses upon their opinions and ways, say they would not have such absolute liberty as to have all religions suffered? Yet do they not come near this in their tenets and practice? Do not men in a Congregational way take away all ecclesiastical means that should hinder such absolute liberty as this? For they hold that every congregation has sole church power within itself, and they are not tied to give any account to others but merely in an arbitrary way. Will not this, once established, bring in a toleration of all religions and a very anarchy?

Answer: First, I know none holds this, and how far men in a Congregational way are from it shall appear presently.

In the clearing of this matter, I shall not argue for one side or the other. I shall only show you that there is in effect as much means to prevent or subdue error, heresy, and schism in the Congregational way (which you call by another name) as there is in what way other brethren endeavor to hold

forth. I am not here to plead what is right or wrong but only to show you the difference is not great as far as concerns this matter; what one holds, the same the other holds in effect. If this is done with clarity, then the great outcry against that way as fomenting divisions by opening a gap to all kinds of liberty will, I hope, be stilled, and your hearts in some measure satisfied. I confess were it as many of you are made to believe—that that way gives liberty or at least has no help against all errors and heresies—it must be acknowledged it were a means of most fearful divisions and in no case to be tolerated. But certainly, you will find it far otherwise.

This argument I am now about (namely, how far brethren agree in a matter of such great moment and in that which they are by some thought most to disagree in, and their disagreement most feared as a matter of dangerous consequence) I know cannot be an unpleasing argument to you. Although we cannot be ignorant that there is a generation of men that are vexed when they hear how near their brethren come to them in the way of agreement, it serves more for their turns to have the distance wide; they would keep open the wounds, yea widen them. But God forbid there should be such a spirit in you.

Wherefore for your help in this matter, these two things are to be premised:

First, that the only way the Church has to keep down errors or heresies is spiritual; as for other means, they are extrinsic to the Church; this all acknowledge. As for subjection to the Magistrate, if he pleases to interpose, both they and we must yield.

Secondly, the virtue of spiritual power works not upon the outward man but by its prevailing upon conscience; therefore, so far as men are conscientious, so far it works and no farther.

Now then see what difference there is in the Congregational way from the Presbyterian for prevailing with men's consciences to reduce to the truth those who go astray from it.

First, those in the Congregational may acknowledge that they are bound in conscience to give account of their ways to the Churches about them or to any other who shall require it; this not in an arbitrary way but as a duty that they owe to God and man.

Secondly, they acknowledge that Synods of other Ministers and Elders about them are an ordinance of Jesus Christ for helping the Church against errors, schisms, and scandals.

Thirdly, these Synods may by the power they have from Christ admonish men or Churches in His name when they see evils continuing in or growing upon the Church; and their admonitions carry with them the authority of Jesus Christ.

Fourthly, as there shall be cause, they may declare men or Churches to be subverters of the faith or otherwise according to the nature of the offense, to shame them before all the Churches about them.

Fifthly, they may by a solemn act in the name of Jesus Christ refuse any further communion with them until they repent.

Sixthly, they may declare—and that also in the name of Christ—that these erring people or Churches are not to be received into fellowship with any of the Churches of Christ nor to have communion with one another in the ordinances of Christ. Now all this being done in Christ's name—is this nothing to prevail with conscience?

You will say, "What if they care not for all this?"

Answer: That is as if you should say, "What if they are not conscientious? What if nothing can prevail with conscience?"

I demand: What can any Church power do more to work upon men's consciences for reducing them from evil?

You will say: They may do all this with more authority than the Congregational way will allow.

Answer: We need not contend about the word "authority." But how much higher is any act of authority in the Church than for the Officers of Christ to act in the name of Christ?

If you say: Private brethren may admonish and declare in the Name of Christ.

This is more than if any private brethren should do the same thing; for a Synod is a solemn ordinance of Christ, and the Elders are to be looked on as the Officers of Jesus Christ.

But our brethren say: There is one means more in their way than the Congregational way has; that is if the six former will not work, then Synods may deliver to Satan.

In this very thing lies the very knot of the controversy between those who are for the Presbyterian and those who are for the Congregational way in reference to the matter at hand—namely, the means for reducing from or keeping out errors and heresies from the Church. In this lies the dividing business. But I beseech you consider at what a point we divide here and judge whether the cause of division in this matter is so great that there can be no help and whether if an evil spirit prevails not amongst us we may not join. For...

First, consider what is involved in this delivering to Satan, which is a seventh measure that our Brethren think may hopefully prevail with men's consciences when the six former cannot. Yes, they say, for by this they are

put out of the Kingdom of Christ into the Kingdom of Satan, and this will terrify.

This putting out of Christ's Kingdom must be understood as "clave non errante," if the Synod judges correctly, not otherwise; yes, this is granted by all. Then consider whether this is not done before, and that with the authority of Christ by those former six measures. Heretical congregations or persons are judged and declared in a solemn ordinance by the officers of Christ gathered together in His name, to be such as have no right to any church ordinance and to have no communion with any of the churches of Christ. Now, if this judgment is correct, are not such persons or congregations put out of the Kingdom of Christ and consequently put under the power of Satan?

Objection: But they are not formally and juridically delivered to Satan.

Answer: What? Shall we still divide, as to devour one another, over formality and juridically, when those terms are not at all in Scripture, seeing we agree in the substance of the matter, which may as really and fully prevail with conscientious men as if formality were observed? Especially if we consider,

Secondly, that it is a great question among our Brethren whether this "traditio Satanæ" was not apostolic, peculiar to the power of Apostles, so that ordinary elders did not have it. If it proves so, then non-communion will prove the utmost censure the Church now has.

But thirdly, if some brethren rise to a seventh degree and others stay at six, which yet have such a power over conscience that if they do not prevail, the seventh is no way likely to prevail: Why should not the Apostle's rule quiet us all? Philippians 3:15-16: "Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule; if in anything you be

otherwise minded, God will reveal even this unto you." If we have attained but to six, and our brethren have attained to seven, let us walk together lovingly to the six; if God shall later reveal the seventh (we will promise to pray and study in the meantime), we shall walk with them in that also. Why must it needs be now urged with violence so as to divide otherwise? And although we hold not the seventh, yet there is an ingredient in the sixth that has in it the strength of the seventh. For wherein lies the strength of the seventh above the rest? Is it not in this: that it is the last means Christ has appointed in His Church to work upon the heart? This consideration has much terror in it. Now those in the Congregational way say that this is fully in the sixth; therefore, that is as terrible to their consciences as the seventh can be to the consciences of our brethren, and that upon the same ground.

And consider now, my Brethren, whether the Congregational way is such that if it is allowed, there will be no help to reduce an erring or heretical church, but all religions—Arianism, Mahometanism, anything—must be tolerated. Surely men do not deal fairly in raising such mighty accusations upon such poor and weak grounds; this great aspersion and huge outcry that these men would have all religions tolerated and that in their way there is no help against any heretical congregations molder and vanish away before you.

Let no man yet say, "All this that has been said is nothing." If you are conscientious who hear them say so, your own hearts must needs suggest an answer: surely these things would be very much to me to prevail with my conscience.

But what if congregations refuse to give account of their ways? What if they will not show so much conscientiousness as to regard admonitions, declarations against them, or withdrawing communion from them?

Answer: So we may say, what if they will not regard your delivering them up to Satan but will go on still?

You will say then you will complain to the Magistrate; his power must come in to assist, to make them regard what the Church does.

Answer: But now you have no further help from any intrinsic power the Church has; and as for subjection to the Magistrate, there we are on equal ground. If he will interpose, he may assist and second the sentence of judging men subverters of faith or withdrawing communion from them in one case as well as the sentence of giving men up to Satan in another; and we must still be subject here to suffer what is inflicted if we cannot do what is required. Only we do not go so far as some do in this one thing: whereas they lay a law upon the consciences of Magistrates that they are bound to assist with their power the decrees of the Church, taking cognizance only of the fact of the Church—that they have thus decreed—not inquiring into the nature of things; we dare not lay any such bond upon the Magistrate's conscience.

But say that he is to assist the Church both upon knowledge of what the Church has done and knowledge of the nature of things; seeing every private man has this power—to be judge of his own act—it would be a great misery upon those who have power over men to be denied this power.

If it shall be said, "But surely they do not agree so far; they do not come up to these six things mentioned." To that I answer: I do not deliver only my own judgment but by what I know of the judgments of all those Brethren with whom I have occasion to converse by conference both before and since; I stand charged to make it good to be their judgments also. Yes, it has been both theirs and mine for diverse years, even then when we never thought to have enjoyed our own land again. And if it is so, then let the

Lord be judge between us and our Brethren for those loud and grievous outcries there have been against us in this matter.

But if the difference is so little, why do they not come in?

We come as far as we have light to guide us; we dare not step one step in the dark. If we do, we shall certainly fall into sin; whatever else we fall into, whatever the thing may be to others, it would be our sin if there were no other reason but because we venture in the dark. We sail up to our Brethren as far as we can see the line of truth, and beyond it we dare not venture in the least.

The controversy is not about minor or major trouble or inconvenience; if it were, such a charge might well make us blush. The inconvenience or trouble is minor, yet a few men will not yield to their brethren, who are many, for peace's sake. But the controversy is about sin; now whether that be minor or major, the difference cannot but remain if one party insists upon another that which to them is sin. To acknowledge anything as a power of Christ, which one cannot see Christ has owned in His word, must necessarily be so. Therefore, the way to peace is not the necessity of coming up to one another because the thing is minor, but the loving, peaceable, and brotherly conduct towards one another because the difference is small.

Chapter Nine

The third dividing Principle is, Thatnothing which is conceived to be evil, is to be suffered.

This is the other extreme; some think all things should be tolerated, and they are lax and cause divisions on one hand; others think nothing should be tolerated, and these are rigid and cause divisions on the other hand. If anything is conceived as evil, either in opinion or practice, if instructions and persuasions cannot reform, there must be means used to compel. This is a harsh and sour principle, a disturbing principle to churches and states, to mankind. This principle seldom prevails with any but those who have gained power or hope to gain it. This must be a dividing principle.

First, because of the infinite variety of men's perceptions about what is good or evil, scarcely three men agree for any long time in their perceptions of some things as evil. If then nothing that is conceived as evil must be tolerated, there must necessarily be continual opposition between man and man.

This subjects the majority of men to suffer for many things which they see no evil in but are persuaded are good; this raises animosity against those by

whom they suffer. Though a man can subject his body and estate to another, he cannot subject his reason to another. In the common ways of justice, men are punished for those things which, if they are guilty of, they cannot but acknowledge themselves worthy of punishment, as in theft, murder, drunkenness, etc. And for the fact they are tried in such a way as they cannot but acknowledge is fit in reason to be subjected to; therefore, though they suffer much, yet they will yield to it without disturbance.

But if this principle prevails, almost every man is made liable to punishment for thousands of things that he can see no reason why he should be punished for. It is very hard to bring men's spirits to yield in such things.

But you will say, may not men be punished for things that they see no reason why they should be punished? For many malefactors may easily escape thus; guilt will quickly blind men; they will see no reason why they should be punished.

Answer: It is not what men say they see no reason for or what it may be they indeed see no reason for; but what men cannot see reason for, though they should bend their understandings and strength to the utmost; yea, what the majority of mankind and of that community of which a man is a part cannot possibly see reason for. It is impossible for the majority of mankind and the community of any church or state, though they should be ever so diligent in finding out what is good and what is evil, yet to be able to understand everything that is evil.

If you will have laws made against all things that those in authority conceive to be evil, then you must give them power to judge not only by the rules of common justice and equity and punish for the breach of them but by the perceptions that their own elevated parts shall suggest unto them and to punish men for not being elevated to that height of understanding

themselves have. But this power is more than is fit to be given to any men upon earth. This would bring tyranny both into state and church.

For first, from whence is the rise of all civil power that any man or society of men are invested with? Is it not from the majority of the men over whom they have power? Is it not the power which they themselves had and which they might have kept among themselves? For who can say that a democracy is a sinful government in itself? True; God establishes it upon particular men by His ordinance after it is given to them by the people; but the first rise is from them. And if so, then they should make no law to bring those men under punishment who gave them their power but such a law as these men may possibly come to understand as equal and just, for they act their power; and it must be supposed that they never intended to give a power beyond this. Those who give power may limit power; they may give part to one, part to another; they may limit the matter about which the power shall be exercised; it shall go so far and no further; the utmost limits cannot go beyond these rules of justice which they are capable of understanding. Hence it is that all men in our law are tried per pares, by their peers because it is supposed that they are to be accounted offenders and punished only so as those who are equal with themselves shall judge them worthy. And this likewise is the reason that courts are public; no man is to be shut out because all men that will may behold the trial and justify the proceedings of justice against offenders. It must necessarily be supposed then that the rules by which the judges go must be the rules of common equity and justice that all men may understand; beyond what these rules will reach to, the civil state is not to punish—not everything that men of deep judgments and strong parts may perceive as evil.

The power of the church likewise does not extend to punishing everything that either may by its governors be conceived as evil or that is indeed evil. As the rise of civil power shows that only such things are to be punished by it as are against common rules of justice and equity; so the rise of church power will show that only such things as are against common rules—such things as some way or other appear to be against conviction and are obstinately persisted in—are by church censure to be punished.

The rise of Church power is indeed different from the rise of the Civil, yet agrees in this: it limits the Church, as the rise of the Civil does the Civil power. The power of governors in the State arises from the people, and they act with the power that the Commonwealth gives to them. But the governors of the Church do not receive their power from the members of the Church, but from Christ. Neither do they act in the name of the Church, but in the Name of Christ. It is true that the members of the Church designate such men to such an office, but once designated, they are now invested with the power of Jesus Christ. They exercise His power and act in His Name, not in the name of the Church.

You might say, since the Church chooses their officers as well as the Commonwealth theirs, how does it appear that the officers of the Church do not exercise the power of the Church, as well as the officers of the Commonwealth exercise the power of the Commonwealth?

Answer: These two things show the difference clearly.

First, the officers of the Commonwealth can do nothing by their power that the Commonwealth could not do without them if they were not there. They might have kept their government in a democracy and, if they had pleased, done any act of power by a majority vote. But it is not so in the Church. If the Church is without officers, they cannot do what belongs to

officers to do. They can have no sacraments among them, nor can they exercise any spiritual jurisdiction among them—only brotherly admonition and withdrawing from those who walk disorderly for their own preservation.

Secondly, the members of the Church cannot limit the power of their officers as the Commonwealth may limit theirs. Once a man is chosen to be an officer in the Church, all that power that any in that office had since Christ's time, in any Church in all the Christian world, or ever can have until Christ comes again, falls upon him. If a man is chosen as a Pastor, he has as full power as any Pastor ever had on earth or can have by any pastoral power. The Church cannot limit him and say, "You shall be a Pastor for such ends and purposes, but no further." The same may be said of ruling; none on earth ever had or can have more power of ruling than this man who is chosen into that office. It is not thus in the State; all Kings do not have the same power. In some countries, kingly power reaches so far; in others, further, according to the variety of laws of the countries and agreements between them and the people. All Dukes, all States, all Parliaments do not have the same power.

Now then, since the rise of the power of Church governors comes from Jesus Christ and they do what they do in His Name, they cannot punish any evil beyond what Christ would have punished.

You might ask, what evils would Christ have punished and what not?

Answer: Christ would have no evil punished that is repented of. If it is a known evil, then it must be repented of particularly. If it is a sin of ignorance, Christ forgives it upon general repentance, even if a man should never be convinced of it all his days. Yet, says Christ, I discharge him of all these, supposing that his ignorance does not arise from willful neglect. But

if it is a sin committed willfully or continued in obstinately, then says Christ, I will have this man suffer for such an offense. Now comes in the power of the Church officers to do in the Name of Christ what He would have done. But if they go further, then they exercise tyrannical power. If they punish everything they conceive to be evil—whether committed through ignorance and weakness or willfulness and obstinacy—in this they take upon themselves a higher power of punishing than Christ (according to the tenor of the Gospel) exercises. For my part, says Christ, I go only so far with my power; if I see any of my Church sin through weakness and ignorance, laboring to understand and do my will and mourning that they know no more or do no better, I will pass by all. But if anyone appears willful and obstinate, I will deal severely with such a one.

If you say that if men have means of knowledge and strength yet continue ignorant and weak, should not such be dealt with as willful and obstinate?

Answer: No, says Christ, I do not go by any such rule. For I have revealed my will in my Word; I labor by my Spirit and Ministers to convince men. Yet I see after all means I use there are many who merely through their weakness are not convinced. I pity them; I deal gently with them; I pardon them. Those who go further and punish for every evil—and if they use means to convince them and they are not convinced—judge them obstinate and proceed against them accordingly; these challenge and exercise not the power of Christ but Antichrist. If Christ should deal with them as they deal with their brethren, it would go ill with them. If Christ should say whatever I see evil in you, I will not suffer it in you; if you are ignorant despite means of light, I will deal with you as willful and obstinate and never stop inflicting punishment upon you until you are convinced and reform; could any of you stand before Christ dealing thus with you? Take heed of

exercising that power over your brethren (and that in Christ's name) that you would not have Christ exercise over you.

Both the Civil State and Church must take us as we are fallen from that integrity of our first creation, not as we came first out of God's hands. God the Creator may indeed punish us for not knowing or doing what is our duty to know or do because He once made us perfect; but man must not do so. Man must deal with his fellow creatures as men imperfect; one man cannot require from another that perfection not only of heart but of external conversation that God may. Yea, God-man our Mediator looks upon us in a state of imperfection and deals with us accordingly, and thus He would have all do who have to deal with His people in His name.

But you said before all things must not be suffered; now you say some things must be suffered. Tell us then what must not and what must.

I am persuaded most of you yield to the falseness of both these dividing principles; you truly believe all things must not be suffered, and yet you think it too harsh to affirm that nothing is to be suffered. Only here lies the difficulty: what must and what must not be suffered? This has been the unhappiness of pleading for toleration of anything—even mentioning it—that men immediately cry out and say we would have everything tolerated.

I confess it is very hard to cut here right in the joint. Were I sure that none would blame or oppose what I shall deliver in this, except those who are willing to involve themselves in such a knotty business as this is, and to be helpful to us in understanding how to untie such a knot, whatever such opposers should prove otherwise, I should not fear them for being too numerous.

What I have, I shall present unto you.

Chapter Ten

Rules to Know in What Things We Are to Bear with Our Brethren

First, though men are known to err in judgment in things not fundamental nor destructive, yet if after such knowledge of them, they would keep their judgments to themselves, so as not to hurt others or disturb the peace, most men of moderate spirits, if not all, hold that such men are not to be punished either by Church or State. However, despite this being accepted, the practices of many are against it. They have ways to draw forth men's judgments, even when they wish to conceal them, and when they have drawn them forth, they make them suffer for their judgments in these three ways.

First, by requiring men to subscribe to things which they suspect are against their judgments. They invent Articles which, if put to them, they know will pinch them and draw forth their judgments. When they come to know these judgments, they make them as Articles of Accusation against them. Surely such dealings as these are very harsh.

But you will say, blessed be God we hope we have done with forcing men to subscribe.

Answer: God grant that we never meddle with anything akin to that tyranny; heretofore we groaned under the drawing out of men's judgments and then punishing them for them.

Secondly, if such things are put into oaths, which though a man should not hold in every clause, yet he may be godly and a good subject, and urge such oaths with violence under penalty, what is this but to punish a man for his judgment, though he would keep it to himself?

Thirdly, by proposing questions to men when they come to the choice of or admission to any place of preferment, to draw forth their judgments. Such questions concern not at all the qualification of men for such places, and then deny them those places either because they are unwilling to answer or if you will insist on having them answer, they discover their judgments different from yours. Is this not making men suffer for their judgments, though they would live peaceably, keeping them to themselves? Here is not that suffering of brethren that Christ would have.

Secondly, in things controversial and doubtful amongst godly and peaceable men, though there should be a declaration of difference of judgment and some different practice, yet there is to be a forbearance of compulsory violence. We must not be to one another in such things as these are like that giant we read of, who laid upon a bed all he took, and those who were too long he cut even with his bed, and such as were too short he stretched out to the length of it. Verily this is cruelty. God has not made men all of a length nor height; men's parts, gifts, graces differ; men's tempers, apprehensions, educations are various. If there is no suffering one another in things not clear, all the world must needs be quarrelling; there will be strengthening interests, sidings and opposings one another continually

unless not only men's bodies and estates but their very souls also be brought under sordid slavery.

Our brethren of Scotland writing against the tyranny of Prelates when they were under it in that book entitled "English and Popish Ceremonies" have this passage: If the error of conscience is about things unnecessary, then it is tutior pars, the surest and safest way, not to urge men to do that which in their consciences they condemn. And the Ministers of the Protestant Churches in France, giving their judgments "De pace inter Euangelieos procuranda," How Peace amongst the Protestants in Germany may be had, set forth by Duræns, say thus: Let all matters controversial be brought into such a certain model as may give satisfaction to both parties; and that if it be possible, framed out of the very words of Scripture: and let no man require anything else of his brother. Zanchius in præcep. 4 has this notable speech: That which I say (says he) is diligently to be observed, that those who would stir up Princes to have all people, Kingdoms, Commonwealths—which not overthrowing the Fundamentals of Religion differ from them in anything—condemned of heresy, excluded from friendship, driven out of their territories; these are no friends (says he) either to their Princes or to the Church of Christ.

Many think they do great service to Christ, the Church and State if they can stir up Magistrates to suppress whatever they conceive are errors; it may be their hearts are upright in the main; they aim at peace but certainly cause much disturbance in Church and State.

Bishop Davenant in a little book entitled "His Exhortation to Brotherly Love Amongst Churches," the ninth chapter has this title: That Brotherly Communion Between Churches Evangelical Is Not to Be Cut Asunder Because of Diverse Opinions About Questions Controversial. And in the

beginning of the 10th chapter: This is to be premised: The bonds of the brotherly communion of Christian Churches ought not to be dissolved upon every difference of opinions but only for denying or opposing Fundamentals. Here see the moderation of a Prelate.

Thus Cyprian of old delivered his opinion and practiced accordingly, differing from many of his brethren but withal professes that he meant not to prescribe or give laws to any; that he would not contend with any of his colleagues so as to break divine concord and the peace of our Lord; that he was far from judging or censuring any of his brethren or cutting off from his communion any that were of a different mind; and that in such case none ought to constrain his colleague by tyrannical violence (therein glancing at the violent proceeding of Stephen to whom he wrote) to a necessity of believing or following what he thinks meet. This modesty and charity of Cyprian is very often and very deservedly commended by S. Augustine (says D. Potter), an Episcopal man.

That this may go down better or at least that men's spirits may be in some measure moderated, take these following considerations.

First, this contention over every difference of opinion and urging our brethren with what we conceive as right in matters of controversy contradicts the purpose of Christ in his administration of differing gifts to his Church and human society. Christ reveals truths in different ways, some more obscurely, some more clearly. Christ could easily have given such gifts to all or revealed all truths so clearly that every person would be able to see every truth. Surely, Christ did not distribute gifts and reveal truths so differently to create continual strife and contention in his Church and in human societies, nor to provoke cruelty towards one another. Rather, it was so there might be the exercise of love, charity, forbearance, meekness, and

long-suffering towards one another. Christ bids us and charges us to be at peace among ourselves.

If we should say, "O Lord Jesus, would you have us be at peace with one another? There are many things in your Word that we and our brethren have different understandings of. For though (blessed be your Name) the great necessary things of salvation are clearly revealed, yet many other things are so obscure to us that through our weakness we cannot all see the same thing. Now, is it your will, O blessed Saviour, that one person who believes they understand the truth (and may indeed be right) compel another to their judgment? And do you also require that we must not bring our judgments to our brethren until your light brings them? How then is it possible we should be at peace with one another?"

Do not all divines say there are some things in Scripture where the elephant may swim and some things where the lamb may wade? Matters of discipline are acknowledged by all not to be revealed with such clarity that truly conscientious, upright, diligent men may not be able to see the mind of Christ in them. And to what end has Christ done this, do you think?

Secondly, compulsion in such matters as we are discussing is to strain justice so high as to make it "summa justitia," which is its degeneration. As physicians say of the utmost degree of health, it is the beginning of sickness. If justice is wound up a peg too high, it breaks. Even if justice were managed by the most holy, wise, self-denying, and meek men on earth, there would still be much danger in winding it up to the highest; for it is administered by men full of infirmities to men full of infirmities. Therefore, God will not have it strained too high; he would rather have charity be above justice than justice above charity.

This I have from Luther. Though he was a man of a fiery spirit and knew how to contend when there was cause, yet in an epistle he writes to the divines of Nuremberg upon occasion of dissensions among them, he has this passage: "Judgment must serve, not rule over charity; otherwise, it is one of those four things that Solomon says troubles the earth; namely, a servant ruling or the maid heir to her mistress. If therefore you would have peace," he says, "charity must rule over justice; you must not allow justice to rule over charity."

Thirdly, if men go upon this principle, they will be in danger of opposing truth as well as falsehood and compelling others to falsehood as well as to truth. In matters doubtful and controversial among good and peaceable men, it is not easy to have such grounded confidence as to be out of all danger of mistake. There is more confidence needed in something we impose on others than in what we practice ourselves. If something seems rather true than otherwise to us, we may lawfully do it; but this is not enough to justify imposing it on others who cannot see it as truth. In such a case, we need to be very sure.

The weak drizzles of our probabilities, guesses, and opinions are not enough to cause the stream of another man's conscience to stop or even turn its course another way. Especially considering that in such matters we often have misgivings ourselves; indeed, not long ago we were confident that what we now condemn was true, and what we now are ready to impose on others we then did as confidently condemn.

Great care must be taken that when we seek to pluck up tares, we do not also pluck up the wheat. This can be understood concerning things—truths and falsehoods—as well as persons; we may be mistaken in one as well as the other. "Pluck not up the tares." Christ does not forbid casting out wicked

men from the Church; but as Jerome notes, in those countries tares were very similar to wheat. Therefore, take heed, says Christ, what you do in plucking up; when dealing with men whose condition is any way doubtful, be sure they are hypocrites or else do not meddle with them. Do not pluck them up upon every suspicion because you think they are not right; for then you may pluck up wheat as well as tares—they may prove to be godly men. Therefore, you had better let tares grow; if you only think such men are not right, you are better off letting them remain in the Church than risking plucking up wheat by venturing upon them.

Thus, concerning things good or evil: there are some things apparently evil—they are more like thistles and briars than tares—and we may freely pluck them up. But other things, though perhaps they may prove evil, yet they have some likeness to good so that you can hardly discern whether they are good or evil. Now, says Christ, take heed what you do then; do not out of eagerness to oppose all evil and remove every tare also pluck out some wheat. What if what you oppose with violence as evil proves to be good? You had better let forty tares stand than pluck up one wheat.

Fourthly, if men assume the power to compel others to do whatever they believe is good and to deny or refrain from what they consider evil, they take more authority upon themselves than the Apostles ever did. The governance of the Saints under the Apostles was much milder, sweeter, and gentler than this. The rule the Apostles followed, as stated in Philippians 3:15, was: "Let therefore as many as be perfect be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you; nevertheless, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk." If anyone should be otherwise minded than I or the other Apostles, God will reveal it

in due time. We will not force him; only let us walk up to what we have attained.

This rule, Zanchy notes, Augustine would repeat a thousand times; and Chrysostome has a good note on this passage. He does not say God will bring them to it if they are otherwise minded, but God will reveal it, highlighting the love and goodness of God to those who are otherwise minded, excusing them that it was not through wickedness but for lack of knowledge that they acted differently. In Acts 15, where the Apostles and Elders were gathered together, the furthest they would go was to lay no other burden but those necessary things. The false teachers put a yoke upon them, which was such a burden that neither they nor their forefathers could bear (verse 10). Yet it was no judicial authority that these had over them; surely the yoke they put upon them, in the judgment of all, was but doctrinal. But for us, say the Apostles, finding what the mind of the Holy Ghost is, we dare not yoke you as they did; all that we burden you with are these necessary things. No Church officers or Synod can go further than this, but certainly not every matter in controversy among godly and peaceable men can be conceived to be necessary.

Romans 14 is a very useful place for this: "Him that is weak in the faith receive, but not to doubtful disputations; receive him, though he understands not all you do; do not trouble him, neither with nor for doubtful things. One believes he may eat all things; another who is weak eats herbs; let not him that eats despise him that eats not; neither let him that eats not judge him that eats" (verse 5). "One man esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike; let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Upon this, he gives general rules to do all to the glory of God. All these people were not in the right, for a man not to eat flesh out of

conscience when the thing was not forbidden was certainly a sin; or to make conscience of a holy day which God required not was a sin. Now the Apostle did not come with his authority and say, "I will make you leave off keeping such days," or "You shall eat," or "To abstain thus as you do is evil, and it must not be suffered in you." No, the Apostle lays no apostolic authority upon them but tells them that every man must be fully persuaded in his own mind in what he does; and "Who are you that judges another man's servant? The Lord has received him."

And yet the governors of the Churches in the Primitive times might have stood upon such a principle on much stronger grounds than any governors of the Church now can. There was less reason why they should suffer any difference in opinion or practice among them than why we should suffer differences among us; for they had men among them immediately inspired who could dictate the mind of Christ infallibly; they could tell them the certain meaning of any Scripture. The burden of being under the determinations of such men in points of differences would not have been as great as subjection to any governors now in such cases would be. Our differences are usually about the meaning of such or such Scriptures, in which both sides think they have the right and profess one to another, as in the presence of God, the searcher of all hearts, that if they could but see the meaning of such a Scripture to be so as their brethren believe it is, they would soon agree.

And yet though there were in these Primitive times such means of reconciling differences more than we have, there was much mutual toleration among them; they used no compulsive violence to force those who through weakness differed from them to come up to their judgments or practice. Indeed, it is also more tolerable for Papists not to tolerate any

difference in opinion or practice because first, they believe they have an infallible Judge to decide all controversies. Secondly, they hold implicit faith in the judgment of their clergy to be sufficient warrant to justify the belief or practice of the people or any particular man, and yet they suffer differences in opinions and practices among them. They have their several orders of monks, priests, friars, Jesuits; they differ very much from one another and yet agreeing in the root, they are suffered, supposing those two helps to union; they have an infallible Judge and implicit faith.

We have cause either to admire their moderation in their mutual bearing with one another or at the disquietness and rigidness of spirits among us who cannot bear with far lesser things in their brethren differing from them; for we profess we know no such external infallible Judge upon whom we may depend; neither dare we warrant an implicit faith. We teach men that every man must be persuaded in his own heart; must see the rule of his own actions; must give an account of his own way to God. Now what can men with the most gracious and peaceable spirits you can imagine do in such a case? Before they believe or do what their brethren believe or do, they must see the authority of the Word to ground their faith or actions; and for the present, though sincerely willing to know God's mind and diligently laborious to search it out, yet they cannot see it. And yet according to this sour, rigid principle, they must be forced to it by violence. What is it but to command the full tale of brick to be brought in where no straw can be had? If this is not so? Straw might be had in Egypt by seeking for it; but here, after the most careful and painful seeking for it, yet it cannot be had.

Fifthly, By this principle, the discovery of much truth will be hindered; it will stifle men's gifts and abilities in arguing and discussing truths. We know fire is sparked by striking the flint. Although differences can be very

distressing, the truth that emerges from them may compensate for the sadness. You cannot create a place for a window to let in light without enduring some trouble; children may think the house is being torn down when the window is being made, but the father knows the benefit that will come from it. He does not complain that the dust and debris lie around the house for a while; the light let in by it will recompense all. The trouble in discussions among brethren of different judgments may seem great, but either you or your posterity may later see cause to bless God for the light that has been or may be let into the churches by this means; men of moderate spirits already bless God. But if, according to this principle, the governors of the churches must suppress whatever they do not perceive as right, to what purpose should there be arguing and discussing of several judgments and several ways?

You might say, those who are the governors, they, or those whom they call to consult with, may argue and discuss, but not others.

Answer: Is this not to deny the church the benefit of the gifts and graces of thousands of others? The church may soon suffer as much prejudice by this as the trouble caused by some differences.

Sixthly, This lays a great temptation to idleness and pride before the guides of the church. Men are naturally inclined to sloth, and might not this principle suggest such a temptation as this: What need do we have to take care or pains to search into truths, to be able to convince gainsayers, to carry things with strength of Scripture and reason, seeing we have power to compel men to yield to us? And men who can do least by reason and Scripture are often strongest in their violence this way; this strength must come in to make up their other weaknesses. But perhaps conscience will not let them compel men immediately; it will tell them they must first seek to

convince men. But because seeking to satisfy other men's consciences in things differing from us is a troublesome work, the temptation that this principle presents may at least prevail thus far: that seeing besides means of conviction by arguing they have another help at hand to keep down error, namely, compulsory violence, making men who differ from them suffer for those things, therefore not to trouble themselves very much in seeking to convince, but for their own ease to rid their hands of such a burdensome work, to cast the trouble and lay heavy burdens upon their brethren. This is easy for them to do, though hard for their brethren to suffer. But the tables may turn one day, wherein the sufferers shall have the greatest ease, and the inflicters the sorest burden. But God forbid that their brethren should lay it upon them, even if it were put into their power to do it.

The temptation to pride is not less, nor are men's hearts less prone to this. If it prevails, what domineering is there likely to be of one over another, indeed of some few over many? If they judge in things ever so doubtful, all must yield, at least in their profession and practice. This is a great power to be given to men over men in matters of faith and godliness. This is lording it over God's inheritance. It is observable that when the church was in its lowest condition, this power was highest; the power of making canons in doubtful things to bind under penalties. And when this power was lowest, as in the primitive times, then the church was highest.

Seventhly, This will be a means to bring gross ignorance upon the face of the churches and of the world. For first, if men shall not be allowed to profess or practice otherwise than governors in church or state shall determine, they will not take pains to find out the truth themselves but rather accept things implicitly, which is the easiest way. They will think it of little purpose to take pains in examining things when after all is done

they must be bound up at least in their profession and practice to what either is or shall be determined by those who have power of rule in their hands.

Our late prelates' design was to bring in ignorance so they might rule over us with more freedom as they pleased; and in nothing did they drive on this design more than in the practice of this power, which they took upon themselves to command things doubtful and controversial and by violence urge their commands upon people. By which, had their power continued, gross ignorance would soon have spread over the land. From whence has come the gross ignorance of Popery but from the prevailing of this principle? By which people have been brought into such subjection under their guides that they have lost their understanding in matters of religion.

If it be said, But we will take care that those men who shall be consulted with and those who shall have power in their hands to determine shall be wise, understanding, godly men, and then the danger will not be so great.

Answer: Suppose those men who presently have such power have attained the highest measure of knowledge and godliness imaginable on earth; yet people are under this temptation to neglect acquiring knowledge themselves. And it may be more so because those appointed to determine things are so understanding and conscientious. Now these people growing ignorant, when these knowing and godly men who are now in place shall be gone, who shall choose others in their places? I suppose it is the opinion of most of you and of the godly in the kingdom and in all reformed churches that either the body of the church—the people—must choose their officers; or at least that none must be imposed upon them without their consent. Well then, if people through prevailing temptations grow ignorant; is it not likely they will choose such guides and leaders as themselves are? Or if they shall

not choose, yet their negative voice will have such an influence on the choice that it is very probable that in a generation or two blind guides will be brought in, and so the blind leading the blind. And when by this ignorance has prevailed and gained head in the church, there is almost an impossibility ever to get it out again; this brings men into darkness and locks and bolts the doors upon them.

Hence, men by advocating for this principle may unknowingly bring themselves and their descendants into greater bondage than they realize. Although now, while they hold power in their own hands, things may be well for them, in the future, others may hold the power, and then it may prove detrimental. They may then complain about what they currently advocate for. Even though the current guides of the Church may be good and holy, they or at least their descendants may live to see a change where such a principle, acted upon by different leaders, could oppress them. It is particularly strange that men should advocate for this now when the sores on their necks, caused by previous bondage, are scarcely healed.

Eighthly, there is yet a further danger in this: not only will men neglect truth, but there will be a strong temptation to resist and reject truth. If God begins to illuminate a man's spirit with light that appears to contradict what has been determined as opinion or practice under penalty, the corruption of a man's heart will entice him to turn away from that light. He will avoid letting it into his conscience or heart, lest it prevail and lead him into ways where he is likely to suffer. This has been common in former times; many have turned a blind eye to truths that would have prevented them from conforming because they foresaw the sad consequences if their consciences did not allow them to conform.

But you might say, this supposes that some things will be urged that are contrary to truth, which is uncharitable to suppose.

Answer: Although in fundamental matters there is no fear that godly and able men will err, let charity be stretched to its full extent and reverence for those in authority raised to the utmost height. Yet if they meddle with doubtful and controversial matters among godly and peaceable men and impose them on others, their confidence that they cannot err becomes a ground for great fear that they will indeed err.

Some will acknowledge that some liberty should be granted in doubtful and controversial matters to men who are truly conscientious, godly, and peaceable. But if this is allowed, then men who are not conscientious but of turbulent and corrupt spirits will abuse it.

Answer: We have provided rules to identify those who only pretend to have a conscience. If it does not appear through these or similar means that men are indeed conscientious in their way, we should judge them charitably. You find it significant if those are not admitted to communion with Christ and his Saints when they profess godliness in word and life, with nothing appearing to the contrary. Why then should you find it significant to tolerate those as conscientious who profess it in words and life, with nothing appearing to the contrary?

Bishop Davenant, in his exhortation to peace previously quoted, offers his opinion thus: Because it belongs only to God to teach the hearts of men, it is our duty always to make the best interpretation of things and presume of everyone where the contrary does not appear by manifest signs that he is kept from assenting by his conscience rather than by obstinacy.

As for the peaceableness of men's dispositions, let it be judged from their behavior in other matters of equal importance, where the temptation to

achieve their own ends is as great or even greater than here. Do they not conduct themselves in as peaceable, gentle, and self-denying a manner as any? Mr. Parker, upon the Cross, cap. 5. sect. 14., pleads for himself and others who could not yield in some things imposed on them when accused of pride, contempt, and unpeaceableness: "What signs," says he, "do men see in us of pride, contempt, unpeaceableness? What are our other works that betray such a disposition? Let it be named where we do not go two miles when commanded to go but one; indeed, whether we do not go as many miles as any shoe of the preparation of the Gospel of peace will carry us. What payment, what pain, what labor, what taxation ever made us murmur? Survey our charges where we have labored; if they are not found to be among the most faithful subjects in the land. We deserve no favor; indeed, there are areas where we stretch our consciences to the utmost to conform and obey in various matters. Are we refractory in other things? As Balaam's Ass said to his Master, 'Have I used to serve thee so at other times?'"

And whereas it is said that some will abuse such liberty as this: It is answered that surely those who are peaceable and conscientious must not be deprived of what sufferance Christ allows them because others who are in the same way are or may prove turbulent and do or may not appear truly conscientious. This is as far beneath the rule of justice as no sufferance in anything conceived erroneous is above it.

Thirdly, whatever errors or misconducts in religion the Church should bear with in men while continuing them in communion as brethren, these the Magistrate should also bear with in men while continuing them in the Kingdom or Commonwealth with the enjoyment of the liberty of subjects. Grant whatever can possibly be granted to the Magistrate regarding his

power over religion as Custos utriusque tabulae; yet certainly no one can imagine that his charge extends further than that of the Church. He is not to be more exact in his oversight of these matters than the Church is; for whatever power the Magistrate has in these matters, yet especially to the Church are committed the Oracles, Ordinances, and Truths of God. The charge of men's spiritual estate especially belongs to the Church. Now the Church is to bear with men in their infirmities even if they remain ignorant of many things after means used for information. No Church must cast off any from communion except for such things that all Churches of Christ ought to cast them off for. This is generally held by our brethren: if a man is rightly cast out of communion with one Church, he is thereby cast out of all; if this is so, then surely many things must be suffered before proceeding to cast out a member; it must not be for every error or misconduct.

Thus Bishop Davenant in his rules for peace states: Those may not be cut off from communion with particular Churches who remain joined to the Catholic Church.

Indeed,* none is to be cast out of communion except for that which if whole Churches were guilty of we must refuse communion with; indeed with all Churches in the world if they could be supposed so far left by Christ as guilty of the same thing. If this is so when a Church considers casting anyone out of communion it needs caution and should not immediately act because there is something evil in him; and if this caution applies to the Church then much more so does it apply to the civil Magistrate whose care over a man's spiritual estate is not as immediate or full as that of the Church.

From what has been said, two consequences are clear: First, articles or rules for doctrine or practice in matters of religion to be imposed upon men

should be as few as possible; there is very great danger in unnecessarily multiplying them. This has caused divisions and significant disturbances in the Churches of Christ throughout all ages.

I find an excellent passage in an epistle of Isaac Casaubon to Cardinal Perron, which he wrote in the name of King James by his command. The King, he says, thinks that the things absolutely necessary for salvation are not many. Therefore, His Majesty believes that the shortest way to peace is first by distinguishing necessary things from those that are not necessary and then striving for full agreement in those; but as for things not necessary, let them, he says, be left to Christian liberty. And again, these necessary things are few, and the King considers this distinction to be of such great importance to lessen the controversies that so exceedingly trouble the Church today, that all who study peace should most diligently explain, teach, and urge this.

God has so graciously ordered things for the body that things necessary for life are not many nor costly; the greatest stir in the world is about things not necessary. So it is for the soul.

A second consequence from what has been said is that we see who is most for peace. One professes what he is convinced of as truth and duty; if it is not necessary, he is not to force it upon his brethren, even if he has significant power in the Church or State to back him. The other holds this principle: that whatever he thinks to be a duty, he must force it upon his brethren, not only by the power of the Church but also by calling in the power of the Magistrate to support him in it.

Objection: But do not men in a Congregational way urge upon others their own conceptions and practices according to the power they have, as much as any? For if men will not enter into covenant, if they hold another kind of

government in the Church differing from them, they will not receive them nor communicate with them.

Answer: I wish all our controversy lay here; surely we would soon agree. Whoever does as you say cannot be justified in doing so. Some men, perhaps through an earnest desire to promote what they conceived to be the mind of Christ, have been too rigid in their dealings with their brethren. What has been said will show the evil of their practice as well as others'.

As for entering into Covenant, it is true there is such a practice in Congregational Churches; and a Covenant, either explicit or implicit, I think all acknowledge: that is, there must be some agreement to join those together in a body who were not previously joined, to make them part of such a society, to have power in it with others for the choice of officers in this congregation, and to be under the care and charge of those officers more than members of another congregation. What shall join them if not at least some mutual agreement to join in one body for such spiritual ends as Christ has appointed this body for? The very nature of a society that is embodied carries this with it; and any further than this I know none requires as necessary.

Indeed, the more explicit this agreement is, the more it aids edification. Surely there is no Christian who will not acknowledge that the more one Christian opens his heart to another and binds himself to walk in the ways of Christ with another, the more comfortable it is and helps to edification; and upon this ground do Congregational Churches practice this.

Suppose any godly man shall come and desire to join with any of them but tells them that he cannot yet be convinced by anything he can find in Scripture that this way of covenanting is required. If the Church cannot satisfy such a man (being godly) in their practice yet desires to know

whether he is willing to join with them in all the ordinances of Christ as far as he knows, a mere affirmative to this is a covenant sufficient to join him with them. The more fully he expresses this to them, the more acceptable it would be. Now then, why is there such a noise everywhere in exclamations against Church Covenant when it is nothing but this? How any gracious heart upon due consideration can be against it, I cannot see. And this is not only our present opinion but what we have consistently held forth since we knew anything in that way.

But what do you say to the other? If a man whom you believe is godly yet not convinced of your way of Government but rather thinks the Presbyterian Government to be the way of Christ; would you receive such a man into communion with you?

Answer: If any godly man whose conscience is not satisfied with that way of Government yet is so situated by Providence that he cannot join with those Churches where there is that Government he thinks to be Christ's; and because he desires to enjoy what ordinances of Christ he can, therefore tenders himself to one of these Congregational Churches: Such a man should be received into these ordinances he sees to be Christ's if there is nothing else against him but merely because after all due means used, yet through weakness he cannot see Christ's mind in some other ordinance. Christ does not lay so much upon the ordinance of Government as to exclude his Saints all their days from all other Church ordinances if through weakness they cannot be convinced of that.

Now let one who is in a Congregational way and cannot see Christ's mind in the Presbyterian Government yet come to one of those Churches and say he would gladly see Christ's mind in all his ways and enjoy all his ordinances but cannot see that a Minister who takes only the charge to feed

by Word and Sacraments one congregation should with others have the charge of ruling a hundred or more; and until he is convinced otherwise, he cannot in his practice acknowledge that Government to be Christ's. Would you yet receive such a one into communion with you in all other Church ordinances? If you would, I make no question then but if we understood one another well and were of quiet spirits, we might live together in peace.

Let not miscarriages in particular men or Churches in things of this nature hinder our peace; what we say ought to be suffered in us, we profess to be our duty to suffer that or anything of the like nature in others. Where there has not been that brotherly and Christian forbearance as ought to be, there has been sin committed against Christ: but let not this hinder brotherly and Christian agreement amongst ourselves or any other Churches of Christ.

Fourthly, evils that are small or uncertain, or come by accident, must rather be endured than any good that is great, certain, and intrinsic should be hindered. We must be cautious that in our zeal to oppose evil, we do not hinder a greater good. If the opposition to evil lies so far out of your reach that you cannot address it without hindering much good, you must be content to let it be.

Lastly, if the evils can only be removed by supernatural means, we must not use violence to remove them. Although God has such authority over us that He may justly punish us for not doing what we are unable to do by natural strength, one man does not have such authority over another. The power that God has given a magistrate is merely for natural help at most, and therefore it can go no further than to help us in a natural way to do what we are able to do by natural power. When it has gone so far, there it must rest. I shall refer the learned to Zanchy upon the fourth comment, where they may see more about this.

Chapter Eleven

The Fourth Dividing Principle: Division is the Best Way to Maintain Dominion

This is Machiavelli's principle: Divide and rule. When division is embedded in a principle not only in its core but also in its expression, directly justifying it rather than indirectly supporting it, then it becomes truly powerful. Who can stand before it? When this is brought down to the people, it is expressed by the proverbial saying, "It is good fishing in troubled waters." The divisions of the times are our advantages. Some people's goals are best served when the Church and State are most divided. They never had such gains as they do now.

It is true that it may be desired that people in evil things should not agree, so they may be like the witnesses against Christ who could not agree in their testimony. Paul cast a bone of dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees. But when people love division and desire its continuance, first, to maintain what is evil; secondly, to aim at their own ends without regard for public harm as long as their private advantages are served; not caring what house is on fire as long as their eggs are roasted; if they may have some poor, petty private benefit by them; thirdly, not caring what the

divisions are, whether against good or against evil, as long as their turn is served: this is abominable. Cursed is the person who wishes for, rejoices in, or seeks the continuance of divisions for these base ends. Indeed, that person is not worthy to breathe in so good a land as England who would not willingly lay down his life to cure the present divisions and distractions among us; who would not desire with Nazianzen, as formerly Jonah did, to be cast into the sea himself if only all might be calm in the public? Oh cruel, hard-hearted person who for his own private advantage is not sensitive to the woeful miseries of Church and State, and indeed to that dreadful dishonor to the name of God caused today by our sad divisions and miserable distractions! It would be just for such a person to be separated to evil and for his name to be blotted out from under heaven.

But if things were settled in Church and State, some people would not have such liberties as they do now; therefore, they are willing enough for our differences to continue. Their plot is to prolong them.

Answer: First, what you call seeking to prolong divisions may be what God now considers and will one day call seeking after the nearest union with Himself and the firmest union of His saints.

Secondly, the liberties these people seek are either evil or good. If evil, oh how dearly do they buy that which is evil by bringing upon themselves the guilt of all the evil that comes from our divisions! You need not wish any enemy more evil upon his head than this; certainly such a person has enough burden upon him.

But if those liberties they seek are good or even supposed by them to be so, why then should they fear a proper settling of things? Whatever is good can be no enemy to good. That Scripture, Romans 13:3, is enough to keep their hearts from fearing properly ordered authority, especially from fearing

it so much as to be driven by fear into such desperate guilt of wickedness as this is: to desire or endeavor the continuance of such public mischief for their own ends. Rulers, says the text, are not a terror to good works but to evil; will you then not be afraid of their power? Do what is good, and you shall have praise from the same. Surely then the power was as formidable to anything a Christian heart could suppose good as any power we are likely to deal with now.

Thirdly, it is a sign of a very poor, low, unworthy spirit to think that anyone in whom you have any persuasion there is any fear of God or interest in Christ should have no higher thoughts for their support and encouragement in what they conceive good according to the mind of Christ than those raised by hopes or desires for the continuance of such woeful evils in the divisions of Church and State. If they believed that Christ took no more care of them than this and left them to such miserable supports as these are, their condition would indeed be sad.

Fourthly, if such baseness of spirit as this were ruling in them—which contains all the malignity of an evil spirit's dregs—surely you would find it manifesting in them in some other things besides just where they differ from you. For certainly it is impossible for someone so abandoned by God to such dregs of evil not to break out into other vile evils in a short time. It would be strange if such horrid wickedness of a person's heart should break out in nothing else. The Lord therefore be judge between His servants and those men—yes, those men professing godliness—who have such hard thoughts of them; and may the Lord convince them of all their harsh words and writings on this matter.

Chapter Twelve

The Fifth Dividing Principle: That Every Man Is Bound to Profess and Practice Always What He Apprehends to Be Truth

This principle has greater strength because it comes under a guise of exact godliness—not a hypocritical show but an appearance to men's consciences.

It is very dividing: For, first, if while many things lie in men's own thoughts, they cause much strife within themselves; their reasonings are very diverse. Though they all have the same tint from the same affections and are swayed by the same ends, when these things come before others who do not have the same reasonings or affections to give them such a tint, but have reasonings and affections running quite another way, nor the same ends to sway them, but quite different to weigh them in a cross way, there must necessarily be much strife, such divisions as will be hard to reconcile. If men sometimes can hardly prevail with their own thoughts to agree, notwithstanding the sway of their own affections and ends, how are they likely to agree with others whose affections and ends are so varied from theirs?

Secondly, if men do presently profess and practice what they conceive to be right, they must necessarily profess and recant, recant and profess; for in many things, what they apprehend as true at one time, they suspect, yea see cause to deny at another. What confusion and disorder would there be in matters of religion if continually by some or other there should be a profession of things as true and good, and calling the same things presently into question, yea within a while denying and renouncing them? And if not so, then

Thirdly, if a man has once made a profession of what he conceives to be a truth differing from others, if it proves to be a misapprehension, there lies a great temptation upon him to stand out in it, to strive to make it out to the utmost; for nothing is more contrary to a man's nature than to acknowledge himself to be mistaken in his understanding and to lie down in the shame of rashness and inconsiderateness in his actions. Therefore, whatever men's own thoughts be within their own spirits, they need to take heed of what they do when they come to make open profession and practice what they apprehend and engage themselves thereby to maintain. There are not many who attain to Augustine's self-denial, to publish retractions to all the world. Now if a man through the strength of this temptation shall still retain what he has made profession of, and others shall see his weakness joined with willfulness, they must oppose him in it, and so contention and division are likely to arise higher and higher.

In regard therefore of the great usefulness of this point and the difficulty of rightly understanding it, I shall endeavor to speak to it under these three heads:

First, to show wherein profession is necessary.

Secondly, wherein men may keep in what they think they understand to be truth so as not to profess or practice it.

Thirdly, I shall propose some rules of direction to show in what manner a man should make a profession of what he conceives to be truth, though it be different from his brethren.

For the first. Certainly, profession in some things is very necessary. Romans 10:10: "With the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Confession is here joined to believing as necessary to salvation. This I conceive to be the meaning of those places which hold forth the necessity of baptism: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Augustine in one of his Sermons De Tempore says, "We cannot be saved except we profess our faith outwardly for the salvation of others." And Christ, Mark 8:38 says, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." And it is observable that these follow upon those words: "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" As if Christ should say, "If you would not lose your souls eternally, look to this: make profession of the truth as you are called to it; though you live in a wicked and adulterous generation, yet be not ashamed of me before them; for if you are, your souls may go for it eternally."

Zwingli in his third Epistle says, "We may as well with a Diocletian worship before the altar of Jupiter and Venus as conceal our faith under the power of Antichrist."

Now though profession is necessary, yet in what cases we are bound to profess and in what not is no easy matter to determine. Zuarez, a man of

great judgment, yet falling upon this question—when a man is bound to make profession of the truth—says, "We cannot give rules in particular when there is a necessity of profession in regard of the good of our neighbor, but it must be determined by the judgment of prudence."

But though the determination is very difficult, yet we may assert these five cases that bind us to profession:

First, when the truths are necessary to salvation and my forbearance in them may endanger the salvation of any. The salvation of the soul of the poorest beggar is to be preferred before the glory, pomp, outward peace, and comforts of all the kingdoms on earth; therefore much before my private contentments. In extreme danger of life there is no time to reason what in prudence is fit to be done but save the man's life if you can and reason the case afterward.

Secondly, when not professing shall be interpreted as a denial, though in case of a lesser truth; I must not deny the truth—the least truth interpretatively—I must rather be willing to suffer than that the truth should suffer by me so far. This was Daniel's case when he would not cease his praying three times a day; neither would he shut his windows though it endangered his life. A carnal heart would say why might not Daniel have been wiser? He might have forborne a while; at least he might have shut his windows. No, Daniel was willing to venture his life in the cause rather than he would so much as by way of interpretation deny that honor that he knew was due to God.

Thirdly, when others shall be scandalized so as to be weakened in their faith by my denial; yea, so scandalized as to be in danger to sin because they see me not profess; in this case we must venture very far. We should take heed of offending any of the saints so as to grieve them but when the

offense comes to weaken their faith or occasion their sin there we should venture very far to our own outward prejudice rather than so offend them.

Fourthly, when an account of my faith is demanded—if it be not either in scorn to deride or in malice to ensnare but seriously—so as giving it may be for edification especially in a way of giving a public testimony to the truth. 1 Peter 3:15: "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason for the hope that is in you." If to every one much more to magistrates.

Fifthly, so far as those whom God has committed to my charge for instruction are capable at some time or other I must manifest that truth of God to them that may be for their good according as I am able.

Yet this duty of profession, being a duty required by an affirmative precept, though we are always bound, is not required at all times. We must always maintain a disposition of heart that is ready to testify to any truth of God if called to do so by God, rather than prioritizing our ease or any outward comfort in this world. We should be able to appeal to God in the sincerity of our hearts to judge the high esteem we have for His truth. "Lord, if you make known to me now or at any other time that your Name may have any glory through my profession of any truth of yours, regardless of what becomes of my outward peace, ease, or content, I am ready to do it for your name's sake." There is a time, says Hugo, when nothing is to be spoken, a time when something is to be spoken, but there is no time when all things are to be spoken.

There are six other cases wherein you are not bound to profess:

First, when you are required to do so in a way of scorn or to ensnare you; this would be like casting pearls before swine.

Secondly, you are not bound to make a profession of a truth to those who are not able to receive it, whose weakness is such that they cannot understand it until they are grounded in some other truths. "I have many things to say," says Christ, "but you are not able to bear them." So St. Paul says, "Do you have faith? Have it to yourself;" he speaks in the case of doubtful things, which will trouble the weak.

Thirdly, when men's hearts appear so corrupt that there is apparent danger of abuse of truths, strengthening them in their lusts. There are precious truths that many ministers cannot speak of before some people without trembling hearts; and were it not that they believed they were the portion of some souls in the congregation, they would not dare mention them.

Fourthly, when your profession of some truths will divert men's hearts from others that are more weighty and necessary. The rule of the Apostle in Romans 14:1 holds forth this: "Receive those who are weak in faith, but not for doubtful disputations;" this may hinder them in the great things of the Kingdom of God—righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost, as if the Apostle should say, "Let them be well established in these; but these doubtful disputations will hinder them in such things as those."

Fifthly, when my profession at this time in this thing is likely to hinder a more useful profession at another time in another thing. Proverbs 29:11 says, "A fool utters all his mind; he that is wise keeps it in till afterward." It was the wisdom of Paul when he was at Athens not to immediately break out against their idols; he waited for his due time, and yet all the time he maintained his uprightness in the hatred of idolatry as much as ever.

Sixthly, when our profession will cause public disturbance, especially to the godly. The disturbance of men's corruptions who will oppose out of malice is not much to be regarded. When it was told Christ that the

Pharisees were offended, he did not care for it, but he made a great matter of the offense of any of his little ones. When men who love the truth as well as we do shall not only be against what we conceive as truth but shall be offended and that generally at it; if we have discharged our own consciences by declaring as we are called to what we conceive as the mind of God, we should sit down quietly and not continue in a way of public offense and disturbance to the Saints. The rule of the Apostle will come in here: "Let the spirit of the prophets be subject to the prophets." We should wait until God will some other way or at some other time have that prevail in the hearts and consciences of his people which we conceive to be truth and they now are so much offended at. There could never be peace continued in the Church if every man must continually, upon all occasions, have liberty openly to make a profession of what he apprehends to be a truth; never have done with it, though the Church, which is faithful and desires unfeignedly to honor Christ and his truth, be never so much against it.

In several of these cases, the consideration of that text in Ecclesiastes 7:16 is very suitable: "Be not righteous over much; neither make yourself over wise: why should you destroy yourself?" Amongst other things, this is included in the scope of the Holy Ghost: when you apprehend a thing to be a truth, do not think that you are bound at all times and on all occasions to profess, practice, or promote that truth without any consideration of others. Being carried on with this apprehension—it is a truth—come what may; whatever becomes of me or whatever trouble shall follow upon it, I must and will profess it and publish it again and again to the death. In this, you need to look to your spirit; in this, you may be over-just and make yourself overwise. Though there may be some uprightness in your heart and some

love for Christ and his truth, yet there may be a mixture of your own spirit also; you may stretch beyond the rule. This is to be over-righteous—to think out of zeal for God and his truth—to go beyond what God requires.

It is true that at no time and on no occasion—even if your life and all the lives in the world lay upon it—must you deny any truth, even the least one. But there may be a time when God does not require you to make a profession of everything you believe to be a truth.

You might say this tends toward looseness, lukewarmness, or time-serving; men pretending and pleading discretion grow loose and remiss and so by degrees fall off from the truth.

Verse 17 warns against that too: "Be not over-much wicked; neither be foolish." As you must be careful not to go beyond the rule, so take heed you do not fall off from it; thus you may grow wicked and foolish—yes, very wicked—over-wicked. God will meet with you there too. Therefore Verse 18 says: "It is good that you should take hold of this; yes also from this withdraw not your hand." Take both; be careful of yourself in both. But especially mark the last clause of Verse 18: "He that fears God shall come forth from them all." The fear of God possessing your heart will help you in these straits; by it, you shall be delivered from being ensnared by your indiscreet sinful zeal, and it shall likewise keep you from bringing misery upon yourself by falling as far on the other hand into looseness and time-serving. The fear of God will balance your soul evenly; it will carry you on in a way that shall be good in the eyes of the Lord and His Saints.

There is a natural boldness and a mixed zeal in many who are godly, which carries them on in ways that cause great disturbance to others and bring themselves into great straits and snares. These individuals are very ready to censure others for remissness and looseness, who do not act as they

do. However, this Scripture reproves them, showing that it is not through fleshly wisdom and providing for ease that others do not act as they do, but rather the fear of God rightly balancing their spirits. God will acknowledge His fear in their hearts, ordering them correctly, while your disorderly, mixed zeal shall receive rebuke from Christ.

Object. But does not Christ say He came into the world to witness to the truth, and is not every truth more valuable than our lives?

Answer. The person who, in the former five cases where profession is shown to be our duty, witnesses to the truth demonstrates that truth is indeed precious to them. They give that testimony to the truth for which they were born, even if in the latter six cases they refrain.

Obj. But when these latter cases occur, how shall the truth be maintained? Will it not suffer much prejudice?

Answer. 1. Christ will not rely on human weaknesses for the maintenance of His truth.2. If every person, according to their place, delivers their own soul and declares (observing the rules we shall speak to presently) what they conceive to be the mind of God, even if they do not continually hold forth the same in words or practice, the truth is still maintained.3. The truth is maintained by refraining from practices that those with opinions contrary to the truth engage in. Not doing as they do is a continual witness against them and thus a witness for the truth. This is a Christian's duty at all times. Although I must never do what my conscience says is inherently sinful, even in the least thing, I am not always bound to do what my conscience says is inherently good (as it may occur) in some significant matters. A thing inherently evil can never be made my duty to do, regardless of circumstances or perceived good outcomes. However, a thing inherently good may, due to attending circumstances, be such that at

this time it is my duty to refrain from it. In not doing it, I cannot be charged with a sin of omission or of not living according to what my judgment and conscience are convinced of as truth and good.

To further understand our duty of profession so as not to cause divisions by it, consider these five rules for its ordering:

First, we must be well-grounded in fundamentals before making a profession of other truths. Seldom or never have you known individuals who, at the beginning of their profession of religion, focused their initial strength on controversies without eventually vanishing and coming to nothing in their profession. Be first well-rooted in the faith, in the great things of godliness, the absolutely necessary things of eternal life. Then your search into other truths of God for further edification will be timely.

Secondly, take heed that what you do is not out of an affection for novelties, which people naturally have itching desires for. It is very pleasing to the flesh to convey such things to others and to be the first to bring things previously unknown to others, whatever those things may be. There is much wickedness in raising old errors as if they were new truths; similarly, there is much vanity in presenting old truths in novel and affected phrases as if one desires to be thought to have discovered something new that has not been or is little known in the world. Upon examination, when unclothed of its new expressions, it often proves to be the same old truth that has ordinarily been known and taught, revealing the person as no more knowledgeable than ordinary. Take heed of this vanity of spirit in holding forth truth, especially when speaking publicly of God's truths. Speak of them with reverence for the name of the great God, as the Oracles of God—clearly and plainly—not in obscure or unknown expressions like the Oracles of Idols were delivered.

Thirdly, anything differing from others who are godly should not be held forth and professed without serious examination. We may venture more readily upon those things generally received by the Saints; but if they differ, we need to examine them repeatedly with a cautious eye over our own hearts and take heed of our spirits and behavior in such matters where we are likely to diverge significantly from many godly and able brethren. We must avoid publishing such things rashly or undigestedly lest we wrong the truth of God and make its profession appear ridiculous. If something is true today, it will still be true tomorrow.

Fourthly, we must not think it enough merely to assert things boldly. According to the rule of the Apostle in 1 Peter 3:15, we must give an account with meekness; we must not do it in a passionate or rebellious way, nor with our affections hurrying tumultuously; nor after a contentious manner as if desiring victory rather than truth; but with quietness and composure of spirit. We must not think it burdensome to bear contradiction from others, even if it leads to contemptuous behavior against us.

Lastly, with fear—either concerning ourselves who make the profession or concerning those before whom we make it—we must not do it conceitedly or arrogantly with foolish confidence in our own apprehensions and abilities but with fear manifesting our awareness of our own weakness, vanity, and nothingness. In respect of those before whom the profession is made, we must manifest our due reverent esteem for them; no unbecoming behavior, scornfulness, lightness, or contempt should be shown. If it is before magistrates especially—regardless of their personal attributes—reverential respect should be given due to their positions. If they are men of worth, learning, grace, or public use in the Church or State, respect due to

their worth should also be manifested in our conduct towards them. Grace teaches no one to be unmannerly, rude, scornful, furious, or foolish.

Fifthly, if you would make a profession of, or practice anything differing from others who are godly and judicious, you should first acquaint those who are most able with what you intend. Do not go to youths, women, and weak ones first, seeking to promote what you apprehend by possessing their hearts first with it and getting them to be a party for you; this is not the way of God. If God has revealed some new thing to you, and you have some new light that is not yet made known to your brethren, which not only by profane men but, I fear, by some who are godly, is in a profane manner scorned at—and it would be well if none of those who pretend it did not give some occasion—were it not the temptation to the despising of that expression. Yet you should first go to those who are most able to judge, acquaint them with what apprehensions you have, and see whether they cannot make it appear to you that you are mistaken; if not, they may confirm you in the truth so that you may go on in it with more confidence.

If churches were settled as they ought to be, I should think it very ill for any minister to preach anything not ordinarily received by the saints before they have acquainted other elders, even some of other churches, with it. If out of an eager desire to be foremost in venting some new thing, they shall do it merely from themselves, they may be means to raise and engage themselves in woeful disturbances before they are aware. That common union and fellowship that there is between elders and churches requires mutual advice and consultation in matters of difficulty, though to lay a law upon them to advise in everything, be it never so clear, would be hard.

Chapter Thirteen

The Sixth Dividing Principle: What is in itself bestmust be chosen and done, not weighing circumstances or references.

This brings much trouble to the churches; indeed, it causes much trouble in the spirits and lives of many truly godly. It causes men to break the bonds of their callings, their relations, and their public interests; therefore, certainly, it must needs be a dividing principle.

Some men whose calling is only to a private employment, yet having some gifts and having used sometimes in their families to take a Scripture and speak something out of it; upon this, they think it is a better thing to be exercised in preaching God's Word than to sit in a shop all day at some mean work or selling out wares. Therefore, they think they are bound to give over their callings, which they look at as too low, mean things, and become preachers of the Word, not regarding those due ways that Christ would have men come into such an employment by.

Although I do not think that tradesmen who have good knowledge in the Scripture and are gifted by God to speak the Word to people for their edification—when there is a want of able men who have been all their lives

preparing for such a work and are set apart for it—rather than people should continue in ignorance and so perish (if those who are able and fit to judge shall judge them meet for such a work), they may be employed to make Christ known to them. Yet for every man that takes himself to be a gifted man—and it may be is so judged by some who are willing to flatter him—to take upon himself or by the advice of two or three of his friends to leave his other employment for the work of the ministry because that is a more noble and excellent work; this is not a way of God but a way of confusion and disorder.

Again, it is in itself a better thing to enjoy a ministry of the most eminent gifts and graces than one of lower; but if this should be made a rule—that a man who is under a pastor who is faithful and in some good measure gifted, upon another man's coming into the country that is more eminent, he should forsake his pastor and join the other; and if after this still a more eminent man comes, he should leave the former and join him; and by the same law, a pastor who has a good people yet if others are more likely to receive more good, he may leave his own people and go to them—what confusion and disorder would there be continually in the church?

Men must consider not only what the thing is in its own nature but what it is to them, how it stands in reference to their relations. If you are joined to a pastor so that you believe he is set over you by Christ to be a pastor to you (not because the bishop has sent one or an old usurer dies and leaves the patronage of a living to some ostler or tap-wench in an alehouse, and he or she shall send one by virtue of their right to the patronage; this cannot tie a man's conscience to depend upon him for the ordinances of Christ all his days in case he cannot remove his dwelling), but if you cannot but look upon the man as the pastor that Christ has set over you. Though this man

has meaner gifts than others; and it would be more comfortable for you to have another pastor; yet this is not enough to cause you to desert him whom Christ has set over you; and if people may not leave their pastors because others have more eminent gifts, then surely pastors must not leave their people because others have more eminent livings.

To instance yet further so that you may see how this principle disturbs men's spirits: Many being in the works of their calling have some thoughts come into their mind that prayer is a better work, more noble and spiritual than to be employed as they are; therefore they must needs presently leave their work and go to prayer. How many have been perplexed with temptations this way by which their lives have been made very uncomfortable? Prayer in itself is better, but is it better at this time for me, all things considered? Am I not about that which God has called me to?

By this principle many deceive and trouble themselves in respect of their souls; as some by a conceit of the like nature deceive and bring great trouble to themselves in respect of their bodies. Some who have sickly bodies, their flesh is decayed, think such and such things have most nourishment in them; such things are hot and full of spirits and juice; therefore they will eat and drink altogether such things, leaving their ordinary diet. By this means they many times overthrow their bodies: for though a man wants flesh, yet the way for him to have it may not be to take nourishing things but purging; and though he is troubled with faintness, it may be the way to get good spirits is by eating ordinary diet and cooling his body so that some distemper may be cured, and he may get his veins filled with good blood and spirits got from it rather than by drinking hot waters that are full of spirits which perhaps burn his heart and dry his body so that there is no good blood generated from his diet.

It is not enough, therefore, to say the thing is in itself better, but is it better in all the references I have, and it has? Is it better in regard to others, in regard to the public, for helping me in all my relations? May it not help one way and hinder many ways? If a physician should come to a man, see his disease is hot, and should therefore cool him by giving him water, the man may like it for the present; why is it not better to be cool than so burning hot? But thus the physician discovers his folly, and the patient loses his life. A physician, in prescribing some medicine, needs to have many considerations in his head at once: how one part stands affected to the other, of what years the man is, of what complexion, how long the disease has been upon him, what was last done to him, etc.

So it should be in the duties of religion. A Christian who desires to walk orderly, to beautify and honor his profession, to enjoy communion with God and peace in his own soul, and be useful to the public, needs to have his wits about him. He should not immediately fall upon a work because it is now presented as good to him in a single consideration; he must compare one thing with another and see what it is in all its references. Otherwise, he will interfere; he will hack and hew, bungle, and disturb himself and others in the ways of religion. He will make religion tiresome to himself and others. He will be in danger of eventually casting off strictness and growing more loose than others by how much more constrained he has been in a disorderly way than others.

I believe some of you have known those who, in their youth, have been very strict and tender. Whatever they have conceived to be better than others, they have immediately followed with all eagerness, never considering circumstances, references, or consequences. But the thing is good; it must be done. Yet being wearied with this, they have afterward

grown loose in as great an excess the other way; indeed, they may have vanished and come to nothing.

Chap. XIII The Seventh Dividing Principle: It is Obstinacy for a Man Not to Be Convinced by the Judgment of Many More Learned and Godly Than Himself

The making of this to be the rule to judge obstinacy by has in all ages caused great divisions by exasperating the spirits of men against one another. In times of Popery, what rage did it raise against men who were most conscientious? The generality of men thought they did God good service by persecuting those who would not yield to the judgment of others who had the repute of learning and piety. Those who were conscientious could not yield to their determinations, not seeing the truth of God in them, and this made the stir.

While men appear obstinate, by the rule of Christ we are not to bear with them; and this principle sets thousands of godly peaceable men in the seat of the obstinate. These cannot in conscience yield, and others cannot but in conscience oppose them. What reconciliation then can there be hoped for? Either men must captivate their consciences, causing them in a sordid way to bow down to slavery, or else there must needs be continual division and opposition where this prevails.

I confess such a principle as this would make for union amongst those who either think they need not or through carelessness regard not to search out truth but with implicit faith take in all that shall be imposed upon them. They think ignorance of God's mind and conscience slavery is no great evil. This is never urged with violence but either by those who have given up their consciences to be serviceable to the ease and content of the flesh or

those who have or hope to have power in their hands to bring others into subjection to them.

Because rightly informing our judgments in this may much conduce to peace, I shall endeavor:

1. To show you what due respect is to be given to men's judgment who are learned and godly.2. Yet not so much as to make their judgments the rule to judge men obstinate if they differ from them.3. What then should be the rule? By what should we judge a man to be obstinate?

For the first, certainly much respect is to be given to the learning and godliness of men. There is a great delusion in many men's hearts that makes them think it to be half Popery to give any respect to learning. Although the abuse of learning has done much evil—against that much has been and may be said—I dare avow this: never since the beginning of the world could a man be found to speak against learning but an ignorant man; neither is it likely—nay, I may aver—it is impossible that any but such will be found to the end of the world. Learning has so much of God in it that it never had nor will have any enemy but ignorance.

1 Tim. 4:13: "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." Verse 15: "Give thyself wholly to them," ἐν τούτοις ἴσθι (be in them). And when we see grace added to learning, it should add much to our esteem of such a man; it is the orient pearl in the gold ring; it is a great testimony to a way that it is the way of good men. Prov. 2:20: "That thou mayest walk in the way of good men and keep the paths of the righteous." The judgment and counsel of such are to be received with very great respect, especially if the eminence of their grace appears in the tenderness of their spirits so that we may see much of the fear of God in them. Ezra 10:3: "Now let us make a covenant according to the counsel of my lord and of those that tremble at

the commandment of our God." And when not only some few godly men are of this mind but when it is that which God has sealed in the hearts of the saints generally, very high respect is to be given unto it.

Wherefore he that differs in his judgment from wise, learned, godly men had need first spend much time in prayer and humiliation before the Lord. There is a notable expression of Basil cited in an appendix of an epistle of Luther to the ministers of Nuremberg who were at variance one from another: He who will separate himself from his brethren had need consider many things even to anxiety; he had need break his sleep many nights and seek from God with many tears the demonstration of the truth.

Secondly, even when you cannot agree with their judgments, you must preserve due reverence in your heart and show respect to men of learning and grace according to their worth. We have a notable account of that holy man, Mr. Greenham, in a letter of his to the Bishop of Ely, in whose diocese he lived. The Bishop, seeking to bring him to conformity, objected thus: "Why will you not yield? Luther approved of these things; are you wiser than he?" His sober and gracious answer was, "I reverence more the revealed will of God in teaching that worthy instrument of God, Mr. Luther, so many necessary things to salvation than I search into His secret will, why He kept back from his knowledge other things of less importance."

Thirdly, if those things wherein we differ from the judgments of learned and godly men are not matters of duty and only may bring us to some suffering, we should silently yield for peace's sake and out of respect to them, not oppose.

Fourthly, in all things wherein you may have any help from them, you should seek them out and desire to partake of the benefit of those gifts and graces God has bestowed upon them.

Fifthly, in all things wherein you can agree, you should be more careful to manifest all possible observance and respect to them, blessing God for any help He grants to you by them, either in making known His truth to you or at least in further confirming you in it by them.

Sixthly, in what still your consciences will not allow you to agree with them, you are to take it as your affliction and to account that way you are in as lacking a great luster and most desirable encouragement, in that so many learned and godly men's judgments and practices are against it.

We are to raise our respect for men of learning and godliness this high; but if we should go so high as to give up our judgments and consciences to them, we would dishonor Christ in honoring them; indeed, they would consider themselves dishonored. Those who are truly godly and wise consider it their honor to carry a loving respect for those who differ from them rather than desire that men should follow them blindly without understanding their grounds. Prelatical spirits indeed consider it their honor to force men to be of their mind; it is their glory that they can say to the consciences of men, "Bow down before us." A gracious spirit abhors the thought of such tyranny. This excessive raising of respect due to learned, holy men has been very hurtful in the Church, prejudicial to the souls of men, but especially to the honor of Christ.

I will give you an instance. Erasmus was no novice, yet how dangerously he was taken with this will appear by a strange expression of his in an epistle he wrote to one Bilibaldus: "How far the authority of the Church prevails with others, I know not; but with me it has that power that I could be of the opinion with Arians and Pelagians if the Church did but allow that which they taught." This you will say is a strange expression coming from a learned man and one too not addicted to the Church that then was in that

excess as others were; how then did this concept prevail with weaker men who gave up their consciences to others through their blind superstition?

Wherefore secondly, though great respect is to be given to holy and learned men, yet not such that a man must be judged obstinate if he does not submit to their judgments and determinations. For,

First, if a man should believe or do anything before he sees some other grounds besides their judgments or examples, though the thing were in itself never so good, yet it would be sin to him. If indeed this were enough to answer Christ: "Lord, I am a poor weak man; I cannot find out Thy truths myself; therefore seeing learned godly men to be of such a judgment and doing such things, I thought it too much presumption for me to differ from them; therefore I also believed it to be true and practiced accordingly," this would be an easy way for people to agree, and it might well be judged obstinacy to gainsay. But this account Christ will not take, for He tells us, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," and the judgments and practices of godly learned men He never made to be the rule of faith.

Secondly, if God in revealing His mind to men always did it according to the proportion of their gifts and graces, then it would be too much boldness for any to differ from those who are most eminent; but experience tells us it is otherwise. As God causes His rain to fall upon one field and not upon another; and as the wind blows where it wills, so are the workings of the Spirit of God upon men. Although He reveals to all His saints whatsoever is absolutely necessary for salvation, yet for other truths, a man of eminent parts shall know one thing while another of weaker parts shall know another. David was a man as eminent for parts and was filled with the Spirit of God as much as Nathan, both in regard to prophecy and godliness; yet sometimes that was revealed to Nathan which was kept hidden from David.

When the Book of the Law was found and read before Josiah, they sent to Huldah the prophetess even though there were prophets in the land at that time.

But you will say, is it not more likely that men of learning and piety should know what is right and what is not better than others?

Answer: True, it is more likely they should; but God many times does things which we think are not likely; that which is most unlikely to us God many times chooses as best to serve His ends.

Thirdly, if there were no other reason why a man of weaker parts should differ from others than because he is conceited about his parts and thinks himself more able to understand than those who are far his betters, then there would be more liberty to deal severely with him. But being there may be this reason why men who are weak yet differ from those who are eminent: Christ has laid this charge upon them that they must not believe or practice anything in matters of religion but what they shall first see ground for out of His Word. If a man shall be jealous of himself, fearing lest his own understanding should mislead him, and in the use of all means he can seeks God and yet cannot see from Scripture the ground of those things learned and godly men have determined; having received such a charge from Christ not to alter his judgment or practice until in the use of these means he should receive further light from Him; what would you have this man do? If he yields to you, he sins against the charge of Christ and his own conscience; if he does not either now or after such a time you prescribe him alter his judgment and practice, you judge him obstinate and in the name of Christ deal with him as such. Do not you by this make that bond that Christ has laid upon him (to do all he does from a principle of faith) heavier than Christ would have it?

Fourthly, the more learning and godliness men have, and the more effort they put into finding the truth, the less reason there is to judge those who differ from them as obstinate, simply because they differ. You might ask, how can that be? If men are very learned and godly, and work hard to find the truth, shouldn't we trust their judgments more than our own?

Answer: We must indeed honor them more; however, the depth of their learning, the prominence of their godliness, and the diligence of their efforts in discovering truth may excuse those from being labeled obstinate who cannot see all that they can from the Word. Is it not more than probable that those who are weaker and significantly beneath them might, through mere weakness, be unable to see the scriptural rule in matters that these learned individuals have understood with the help of their great learning, godliness, and tireless efforts? Can it be expected that those who have not reached such eminence or who cannot invest as much effort in searching should attain what these eminent and industrious men have achieved? Can they, in a few months, come to understand what these scholars have been studying and debating for years before they could see it? Can they be satisfied in their consciences about the mind of Christ when these eminent men struggled for a long time to satisfy one another? Indeed, even after all their learning, godliness, and diligent efforts, they may view many things as merely probable or more likely than not. They may not have full assurance in their own hearts. Should those who do not see enough ground for faith to settle upon be judged and treated as obstinate simply because they do not yet share their views? God forbid.

Fifthly, there is much danger in making this the rule. If going against the judgment of godly and learned men is considered obstinacy now, it may soon lead to a situation where opposing those in power is deemed obstinacy,

regardless of who they are. Who would dare question their learning and piety? Despite any future failures in appointing unlearned and ungodly individuals to positions of power, those who do not share their views may still be judged as obstinate. What predicament would we then find ourselves in?

If you say, "True, our situation would be dire, but we must risk it; better an inconvenience than a mischief."

Answer: But this would not be merely an inconvenience; it would be a mischief. In civil matters, we must indeed take this risk because we are not required to understand the reasons and grounds for everything. As long as nothing appears contrary to justice and piety, we must submit. However, in religious matters, it is different; we must understand everything from the Word. Therefore, those who propose that we may treat these men as obstinate by Christ's ordinance—if after two or three admonitions they do not share the same judgment or actions as learned and godly men—bring the Church into greater bondage than they realize.

Sixthly, learned and godly men still possess flesh as well as spirit, and personal engagements often influence them significantly. Here with us, we know how most learned and godly men lean one way, but in New England, most lean another way. Recently, most learned and godly men in Old England judged submission to Prelatical power in the Church and the practice of ceremonies and use of Common Prayer to be lawful. I hope this is no longer the case.

Seventhly, if it is always considered obstinacy not to believe or practice what they deem should be believed and practiced, then sometimes it will be obstinacy not to believe and practice a contradiction. We know some

learned and godly men determine one thing while others determine the opposite; indeed, they often contradict themselves.

Eighthly, it goes against the Apostle's rule: "Test all things; hold fast what is good; abstain from every form of evil." If after testing prophecy there is even an appearance of evil, we are bound to abstain.

Ninthly, from our own experience, we know we have differed from many more learned and godly than ourselves, yet our consciences excused us before God. We did not act out of obstinacy; even if our lives depended on it, we could not have changed our stance at that time.

But if we do not judge those who go against the determination of those most able to judge as obstinate, then every man may do what seems right in his own eyes, leading to confusion.

Answer: Not so. Although this is not the rule to judge men as obstinate by, there are other rules by which men can be judged as such and dealt with accordingly. These include:

First: If the matter in which men differ goes against the common principles of Christianity, then those who profess Christianity involve themselves in obstinacy if they oppose these principles.

Second: In other matters, if their behavior is turbulent and entirely unbecoming of a Christian differing from his brethren.

Third: Where there is neglect of means of reformation that he cannot reasonably oppose.

Fourth: If he contradicts his own principles so that he appears self-condemned.

Chapter Fourteen

The Eighth Dividing Principle: If others oppose what we believe to be true, we may judge them as going against their own understanding.

This is a worse, more divisive principle than the former; it is worse to make our judgments the rule of other men's actions than to make other men's judgments the rule of our actions. This causes men who differ to have exceedingly harsh thoughts about one another; it causes a mighty spirit to rise in them against each other. A man cannot judge worse of another than this: that he goes against his own light. Of all things, conscientious men do not know how to bear this; yet how often will men who are weak judge those who are strong because they cannot see into the reasons for their actions? Therefore, those who do them must necessarily do them against their own light.

If they see another man's style, manner of conversation, and way of life differing from their own, they immediately judge him as sinning against his own conscience, acting with ulterior motives, doing what he does merely

out of cunning and craftiness. This stems from the pride and bitterness of men's spirits. It is far enough for you to judge your brother by thinking, "Were I in his condition, should I do as he does, I would go against my light; I would act with ulterior motives." But to conclude that he goes against his light and acts with ulterior motives is very sinful.

Many carnal men think that if they were to make such a show of religion or do such things as certain men do, it would be hypocrisy in them, and they judge correctly because their principles would not support their practice. However, to judge all who do such things as hypocrites is considered a very wicked thing. If you had any spirit of humility or wisdom in you, you would rather think, "It may be he sees what I do not; I am to look to my own heart and ways by what principles I go myself." Men who are weak and can see but a little way into things must take heed not to censure others who know how to manage matters better than themselves. Some may do what is acceptable to God that you could not do without an evil conscience. The same honesty and sincerity may continue in a man, though in true wisdom and discretion he applies himself diversely according to different occasions, just as the hand remains the same whether closed into a fist or extended abroad or bent this way or that way as occasion serves.

Wherefore, for your direction in this, take these five rules:

First, we are bound to give the best interpretation of our brethren's actions we can if they are not apparently wrong. We should not do as the logicians, "Sequi partem deteriorem," but incline to that which may any way be conceived or hoped to have any goodness in it. We must rather wrong ourselves by thinking too well of them than wrong them by thinking too ill of them. This would help exceedingly much to peace.

Secondly, we should rather be suspicious of ourselves than others, knowing more of the evils of our own hearts than we can know of any others.

Thirdly, if we know certainly we are right and others are not, our hearts should rather be taken up with admiring and blessing God's goodness to us for what He shows us than in censuring our brethren for what He has denied them.

Fourthly, we must remember that not long ago we were ourselves of another mind, and yet we did not sin against our light.

Fifthly, we must consider also that in other things our brethren see what we do not, and we would be loath to have such measures from them—that they should judge us as going against our light and acting with ulterior motives in that we differ from them. We must grant that liberty to our brethren that we would have ourselves; that is, not to be involved in the judgments of others but to try all things and keep what God makes known to us to be good. This liberty, says Luther, Paul has given me, and I will stand by it; I will not suffer it to be captivated.

The Ninth Dividing Principle: Rules of Prudence Are Sufficient to Guide Us in Natural Things and Civil Affairs and May as Well Suffice Us in Spiritual and Church Affairs

A great part of our divisions about church affairs comes from this principle. If God would help us with right apprehensions about this, our divisions would largely vanish. Those whose consciences are taken with a contrary principle—namely, that there must be institutions for all things that are properly ecclesiastical and spiritual—cannot yield to any such thing until they see the stamp on it, an institution upon it. Others who think that because prudence is enough to order civil affairs there needs no institution

for these things think those who stand for them are too rigid and stiff in their way.

It divides also upon this ground: In the corrupt state of the Church (such as ours yet is), if we bind to institutions, we shall be sorely pinched with many things that will be very troublesome to us. But if we go according to the rules of common prudence, we may decline or alter what would pinch and take up what may be commodious for us. Hence the principle is very desirable if it can be maintained; men will strive hard before they will lose it. On the other side, God is seen as a jealous God who will not allow man's wisdom to share with Him in the things of His worship, which are spiritual and holy—to appoint and leave out as may be most convenient for their freedom from trouble. Therefore, they dare not yield to any ordinance beyond civil matters without some institution of Christ in His Word, and this divides.

Now for your help in this: As God has given two lights to the world—the Sun, the greater, to rule the day; and the Moon, the lesser, to rule the night—so He has given two lights to man to guide his course: the Scriptures, the greater, to guide man especially in his spiritual condition in those more immediate references he has to God for his worship and enjoyment of communion with Him; the other, the lesser, the light of reason, to be his guide in natural and civil things in ordering his life for his natural and civil good. And though it is true that religion makes use of reason and we have help from the Scriptures in our natural and civil affairs, yet these two lights have their distinct special use according to those distinct conditions of man.

When I say we must have Scripture, and in it institutions for those things which are spiritual and properly Church affairs, I mean whatsoever is used for drawing my soul nearer to God, or God nearer to me; or for offering my

homage to God, beyond what is inherent in the nature of the thing, as ordained by God. For that, I must have an institution; I must not create any such thing for myself. If I use anything of my own for such an end that I may worship God by it, or that God might convey some spiritual efficacy to me through it, because I think it as suitable for such an end as other ordinances I find in the Word, and yet have no institution for it, in this I sin against Christ the Lord, who alone has the power to set apart the use of what He pleases for offering homage to God or conveying any spiritual efficacy from God into the hearts of His servants.

Man's natural and civil good is not so high that reason and prudence cannot reach them; but for such things as these, all the reason and prudence in the world lie too low. They cannot, without sinful presumption, attempt to put anything of their own in the place of these. Therefore, there can be no other officers in the Church to act by any spiritual power than what we find in the Word; no new ordinances, no new courts erected, no kind of authority, no extent of authority any further than we find in Scripture. The proof is evident: all Church ordinances are for spiritual ends, to work by a spiritual efficacy beyond what is natural or civil. The efficacy of the power of government consists much in those who govern; if they do not have their charter to authorize their power and its extent, it loses its efficacy, though it be otherwise managed with never so much wisdom and justice. The same act that is an act of justice in one is murder in another; indeed, the same man's act done within such limits is an act of justice, and if done beyond those limits, it is murder.

But you will say, surely there is use of reason and prudence in spiritual matters; how far may their use extend?

To the doing of these two things:

First, by reason I may compare institutions and argue from one institution to another, and so find out institutions that lie more in the dark by others which are more apparent. Though the thing that I gather is not explicitly stated in Scripture, yet if I gather by necessary consequence from one or more institutions, it has the force of an institution in it. If I make reason the basis, the ground of my consequence, it will never rise up to that height as to constitute an institution; but if I make some other institution the basis of my consequence, then it may.

Secondly, when I have found an institution, then reason and prudence come in to help manage this in a fit and comely way, applying it to fit persons and times, making use of fit seasons, due order, and whatever natural or civil conveniences may further its due administration. The prelates abused that Scripture, "Let all things be done decently and in order," for they joined their own institutions to God's to make them decent and orderly. But that Scripture only shows you that when you have an institution of Christ, you are to apply by the use of reason and prudence whatever natural or civil helps you can for better managing this institution of His.

From hence we have an answer to the objection made against many things done by those who are in a Congregational way: What institution do they have for many things they do? What for their covenant?

Though there be no text of Scripture that holds forth this explicitly, yet it is grounded upon other institutions plainly held forth in Scripture.

First, it is clear in Scripture that besides the Catholic Church there are particular churches—saints embodied under such officers who are officers to them as they are not to others. These people can look upon this man as their pastor, and this pastor upon this people in a peculiar relation; they may

do some acts of power over one another in their congregation which they cannot do over others in another congregation. Now then it follows that they being a body must need something to join them together; and the least thing that can join them is the manifestation of their assent to join for those ends for which Christ has appointed such a body. And what is their covenant but this? Only some manifest this assent more largely, some more briefly. I know nothing more is required but to manifest their assent to join with that body to set up all the ordinances of Christ as far as they know.

If there be any other thing done in their churches wherein they make further use of reason and prudence than in the two aforementioned things, they cannot justify it but must acknowledge it as evil.

The Tenth Dividing Principle; or rather vain conceit: Every difference in religion is a differing religion.

What do you hear more ordinary than this: How many religions have we now? Shall so many religions be suffered amongst us? We cannot tell now what religion men are of. Upon this apprehension, they oppose such as differ from them in some few things with all the violence they can, as men bringing up new religions and would take away their religion from them. How can they possibly accord with men that are of a different religion from them?

Surely we are more afraid than hurt. Though our differences are sad enough, yet they do not come up to this—to make us men of different religions. We agree on the same end, though not on the same means; they are but different ways of opposing the common adversary. Agreeing on the same means in the same way of opposing the common enemy would be very comfortable; it would be our strength, but that cannot be expected in this world.

Livy, in his story of a great battle between Hannibal and Scipio, says that at the joining of the armies, the shouting of Scipio's men was far more terrible than the shouting of Hannibal's because Scipio's men were all Romans; their shouting had all the same tone. But Hannibal's army was made up of men from several countries, so that in their shouting there was a variety of tones in their voices, which was not accounted as formidable a shout as the other. It is true our adversaries do not look upon our opposition to them having so much diversity in it as formidable as they would if we were all but one in our way of opposing them. But still we are all shouting against the common enemy; although therefore the terror upon our adversary would be greater if our shout were more uniform, yet we hope the victory may be as sure.

Soldiers who march against a common enemy all under the same captain who follow the same colors in their ensign and wear them upon their hats or arms may win the day even though they are not all clothed alike and differ in things of less concernment.

Revelation 15:2 describes the Saints standing upon a sea of glass, mingled with fire. Master Brightman interprets this sea of glass as the doctrine of the Gospel, which is clearer and more transparent than the doctrine of the Law, symbolized by the sea of brass that Solomon made. However, there is fire mingled in this sea of glass, indicating, he says, contentions and divisions in the Church where this Gospel doctrine is taught. Yet note what follows: they gained victory over the beast, his image, his mark, and the number of his name, and they held the harps of God in their hands and sang the song of Moses, etc.

People in a crowd may step on each other, yet they all aim for the same door; they all wish to go the same way. Godly people may be divided in

their opinions and ways, but they are united in Christ. Though they may be separated from a particular society, they are not divided from the Church. It is with the Saints as with tree branches during a storm; you may see branches beating against each other as if to break apart, like armies fighting, but this lasts only while the wind and tempest rage. Wait a while, and you will see each branch standing in its own order and comeliness. Why? Because they are all united in one root. If any branch is rotten, the storm breaks it off, but sound branches return to their former place. These times of division may break off men whose spirits were previously unsound; they will never join with the Saints again as they seemed to do before. But after a while, when this gust is over, others may come in and show themselves to be united and receive nourishment from the same root.

Chapter Fifteen

Dividing Distempers: The Lusts of Men's Hearts

These divide us not only from God but from one another. "This I learn," says Luther, "from my own experience, that I have more cause to fear what is within me than what is without." Whatever others do to divide us would prevail little if not for the lusts within our hearts. Vapors within the earth cause earthquakes; they rend and tear. The winds, storms, and tempests outside never move it. Ill humors within the body disturb more than the air outside. James 4:1 asks, "Whence are wars and fightings among you? Are they not hence, even from your lusts?" Where do they come from? The answer is soon made: Do you not see plainly that they come from your lusts? Yet if this question were put to some of us—Whence are all our divisions?—some would answer that certain kinds of men cause them, while others would say different men are responsible. We all deflect the cause of our divisions from ourselves; few would give Saint James's answer: They are from hence, even from our lusts. There would not be such evil distillations from the head if not for the malignant vapors arising from the stomach. Curing the heart will sooner cure the head than curing the head will cure the heart.

Whence are wars? Even from your lusts. The Apostle does not condemn wars simply; this was the error of the old Manichees, revived by some among us, especially as wars are viewed under that notion—raised for religion. They seek to weaken our hands in these wars by telling young people who have newly given their names to Christ and therefore desire to be guided by the Word in all they do—whom God has used under Himself to be the strength of these wars—that they have no warrant to fight for religion. To whom our answer is that we have a civil right to the outward peaceable profession and practice of our religion; we have the laws of the land for it, and for maintaining this right we fight. There can be no reason why our civil right to our religion may not be maintained by the sword as well as our civil right to our houses and lands. This answers all objections against maintaining religion by the sword from the practice of Christians in primitive times who never sought to maintain religion thus. We say their case was not the same as ours; they never had any civil right to profess and practice their religion in the countries where they lived, as we have.

The wars meant in this text are contentions, quarrels, and divisions among Christians; though they did not take up swords against each other, there were many quarrels and divisions among them—these came from their lusts. The lusts of men's hearts are very quarrelsome. Storms and tempests occur below in this impure muddy part of the world; in higher parts, all is serene, calm, and clear. 1 Corinthians 3:3 states: "For ye are yet carnal." How does he prove that? "Whereas there is among you envying, strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?" Strifes and divisions manifest men's hearts as very carnal.

Augustine comments on Genesis 15:10 where God required Abraham to take beasts and birds for sacrifice; the beasts were divided, cut asunder, but

not the birds. Thus (he says by way of allusion), carnal brutish men are divided from one another, but not the birds—not those who are more spiritual and celestial.

"You walk as men," says the Apostle; you should not walk as men but as it becomes those whose condition is raised above that of men—as it becomes Christians, the redeemed ones of the Lord. You say, "Can flesh and blood endure this? Can any man living bear this?" What if flesh and blood cannot? A Christian can—a member of Jesus Christ who is God-man can. Chrysostom in one of his sermons to the people of Antioch brings in God's gracious dealing with Cain as an example for them to imitate in their conduct towards those who behave ill towards them. He also brings them in replying that God indeed was gentle and patient toward Cain because He is God—He is above all passion—but we are but men. He answers them: Therefore did the Son of God come down that He might make you as near as may be to being God-like.

The Scripture says, the Saints are made partakers of the divine nature; therefore, do not say, "We are but men." You must not walk as men, but as those who are endowed with the Divine nature. It is a great charge that the Holy Ghost lays upon the Corinthians, that they walked but as men; yet many fall short of the lives of men: they rather walk as dogs, as tigers, as wolves.

Galatians 5:20 lists the fruits of the flesh: hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings. All these are the causes or workings of divisions. Surely our divisions are the fruits of the flesh. We see it in nature: the more spiritual anything is, the more it unites; and the grosser the substance of anything is, the less it unites. The beams of the Sun are of a kind of spiritual nature; therefore, thousands of them will unite in a

point, but it's not so in other things. Spiritual hearts are like the Sun's beams; though thousands of them live together, they will unite in one as long as they remain spiritual.

The three thousand converts in Acts 2 joined with one accord, with one single heart. We find it now by experience: as long as there are but a few in a Church, they agree well, but usually when they become numerous, dissensions arise among them. This is an argument that the hearts of men are not spiritual; still much flesh remains. Brackish water ascending to the Heavens is sweetened; it comes down sweet from there. Thus, those things which have trouble and an aptitude to breed divisions, yet spiritual heavenly hearts dealing with them, turn their nature and work spiritual advantage out of them.

The higher fire ascends, the more it unites; the flame that is broad at the bottom, as it grows high, unites to be as the point of a needle. When the hearts of Christians keep low and have a great deal of smoke among them, they do not unite; but when they can rise high, oh what close, single-hearted union is there! A crooked and a straight line cannot join, but two straight lines will join at every point.

The lusts of men's hearts cause divisions in many ways:

First, they are men's own; therefore, they will contend for them. Nothing is a man's own so much as his lusts; man aims wholly at himself in satisfying his lust. A dog will bark and bite and fly in a man's face to preserve his own pups.

Secondly, men's lusts blind their judgments. "Perit judicium cum res transit in affectum" (Judgment perishes when emotion takes over); when the heart is tainted, the judgment is soon blinded. If the beam of the scale you weigh by is not straight, the scale with the lighter weight may weigh down

the heavier. If our hearts are crooked, warping to any sinful lust, whatever weight there may be in any arguments to convince, the scale will go according to the warping of the heart; the conclusion will follow the worse part.

Thirdly, men's lusts weaken their spirits so that they are not able to bear anything that comes across them. Women, children, sick people—who are weakest—fall out most with one another. Things that are rotten cannot hold together; every little touch breaks them apart. That which is sound has strength to hold one part to another.

Fourthly, in men's lusts there is confusion; they cannot be kept in order; therefore, they must cause disturbance not only in men's own spirits but to all who deal with men acted by them. Where there is confusion, there cannot be union. When there is right order in an army, though the men be ever so numerous and differing in other respects, yet if they keep their ranks they are all but one. But if put to a rout and confusion, then the bond of unity is broken and every man divides from another to shift for himself.

In men's lusts there are contradictions; no virtue is contrary to another, but vices have nothing but contrarieties and contradictions in them. Men's lusts oppose and fight against one another in men's hearts; no wonder then when there are such stirrings within that they break forth into quarrels and contentions without. If a man is quarrelsome in his family, no wonder if when he comes abroad he quarrels and contends with his neighbors also.

Sixthly, in men's lusts there is violence; violence and peace cannot stand together. Isaiah 60:18 promises peace and promises that violence shall be no more heard in their land. Men's lusts are boisterous and unruly, especially when they have been acting for a while; at first venting they

seem fair, but after a while they grow outrageous. Violent and boisterous dispositions are unfit for society.

You shall find in experience men who seem to be of weak spirits and soft tempers, very remiss in what they ordinarily do; yet let the lusts of these men be engaged in any cause or side—oh how violent and impetuous they will be! They care not what they say or do; they will divide from God, from the public, from their dearest friends, from their nearest relations, from what they themselves have professed before—from their credit and profit, from their own peace—from anything and all to serve a lust engaged in such a business. It is a dangerous thing to have a man's lust engaged; nothing can stand against an engaged lust. A man runs headlong; he will break his conscience; he will desperately endanger his eternal breaking to maintain the engagement of his lust.

Seventhly, in the lusts of men's hearts there is an antipathy against God, against His ways, purity of His ordinances, His Saints. Genesis 3:15 says: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed."

In antipathy, the opposition is:

1. In the nature of things; therefore it's deeply rooted; it does not come accidentally. You may find two sheep fighting upon some accident, but their natures are not opposite like the wolf and the sheep.

2. The cause of this opposition is secret; wicked men have their spirits rise against the godly, but they are not able to say why. The husband loved his wife while she was carnal; now God has turned her heart, she is more obedient than ever, she seeks to give him content in all things more than before, she is more useful to him on all occasions, more faithful, every way more lovely than before. Only she is godly now, and was not so before. But

his heart is now quite off from her; he dares not say that it is for her godliness, if he has any conviction himself, but so it is that now he looks upon her with an evil eye and an estranged heart.

Similarly, a wicked father or mother who loved their child exceedingly before God was pleased to work upon him, now finds the child more dutiful than he was. Yet the heart of the father or mother is taken off from him, can hardly endure him, and is ready to take any exception against him. Their countenances are lowering and sad towards him; they can give no reason for this change, but as they were wont to say of Christians, "Such a man is a good man, but he is a Christian." Bonus vir Caius Seius sed Christianus, non amo te, I love you not, but I can give no reason; Hoc tantum possum dicere, Non amo te, all that I can say is this, that I do not love you.

3. It is a settled, constant opposition: This has been in all generations the great cause of division between the men of the world and the Saints, and still it continues the same. You may see the same spirit of the old opposers of godliness and godly men working in our days; the names of things may be changed, but the same kind of men for the same things are opposed and hated now in the same manner as in former generations.

4. It is very strong; ungodly men are exceedingly embittered against the Saints. Ezek. 26:6: Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the Land of Israel. This spirit of bitterness and indignation that was in them against the people of God is seminally at least in all wicked men.

5. The enmity of antipathy is incurable; it can never be taken away except one ceases to be in its nature what it was. There can be no compounding things that are so contrary; one of them must cease to be or be turned into another nature, or else the opposition will be everlasting.

The great divisions amongst us are those that are between the seed of the woman and the seed of the Serpent. Some divisions there are between those who are the seed of Christ, but the great stirrings in the Kingdom come from the evil spirit there is in the seed of the Serpent against the godly in the Land. In the beginning of the Parliament when men's liberties and estates being involved in one, there was good agreement; all men rejoiced, generally the countenances of those who were not popish and Prelaticall were serene, they had comfortable aspects one upon another. But when those whose spirits were opposite to the power of godliness saw how the godly amongst them rejoiced, how their heads were lifted up, how their hearts were filled with hopes of good days wherein Religion should be countenanced and honored; that antipathy that was in their hearts against the ways of God boiled in them. Though they were glad that they should be freed from some burdens, yet to see those whom they hated in their hearts rejoice so much, they could not bear it. Their spirit rose against them, and in opposition to them they have raised these stirrings; they have made these woeful distractions that are amongst us.

Lastly, the lusts of men's hearts are the cause of our divisions because God requires every man according to his place to make opposition against them. The cause of the strife lies not in those who oppose them; they do but their duty. But in those who nourish such lusts within them; yet we find it ordinarily that those who are most corrupt will cry out against those who oppose them in their wicked ways as the cause of strife and divisions, as if they were the troublers of Israel. Whereas indeed themselves, the wicked lusts of their own hearts are the troublers of Israel; those who oppose their lusts desire all good to their persons.

I remember Augustine in his book about the unity of the Church has this passage: The son does more grievously persecute his father by living naughtily than the father him by chastising him duly. Sarah's maid did more trouble her by her wicked pride than she her maid by her deserved correction. Those men who are most faulty are the men who are to be charged to be the greatest troublers in Church and State.

Thus in general, men's lusts are the cause of divisions; but let us inquire into the particular lusts of men which we may also charge: We shall find these dividing distempers to be as many as the dividing principles: As the philosopher speaks of four cardinal virtues, so the first four that I shall name I may call the four cardinal vices: these are Pride, Self-love, Envy, Passion or Rebelliousness. All other distempers that cause divisions have the poison of these four at their root. These are the chariot wheels of the Furies or the four horses that draw them up and down hurrying from place to place.

Chap. XVIThe Pride of men's hearts: The great dividing distemper.*

Pride is the greatest master of misrule in the world; it is the great incendiary in the soul of man, in families, in towns, cities, in all societies, in Church and State: This wind causes tempests to arise. Prov. 13:10: Only by pride comes contention. The Holy Ghost singles out pride as the only cause of all contentions because it is chief; though there be many in a riot, the whole usually is laid upon the ringleaders. Pride is the ringleader to all riots, divisions, disturbances amongst us. Prov. 21:24: Proud and haughty scorner is his name who deals in proud wrath. Pride may be well indicted for being a great common barrator in all towns, cities, and kingdoms; it makes woeful troubles wherever it comes.

Mathematicians make this a rule to know when a thing is exactly round and when it is exactly plain; round things will not touch but at a point; if you lay plain things together, they will touch in every part of them. Proud hearts will join only in some things that concern themselves, but plain hearts will join in everything wherein God may have glory and their brethren good.

Gouty swollen legs keep at a distance from one another; bladders that are blown up with wind spurt away from each other and will not close. But if you prick them and let out the wind, you can pack a thousand in a small space. We find this by experience: when God gives us the most success in our armies, we become most divided. Then every man begins to look high and to be self-serving; and when the Lord disapproves of our armies and brings us low, we think and speak of ways of reconciliation. We then lament our divisions with some brokenness of spirit.

It is like soldiers fighting against a common adversary; they can agree well enough, but when it comes to dividing the spoils or being stationed in garrisons, they fall out. When we lie under the danger of the same common calamity, we can agree, but when we come to share for ourselves, our spirits swell against one another.

We read in Scripture about the manna that God gave His people. Its nature was such that the heat of the sun melted it. You might ask, how could it then endure the heat of the oven? For they baked it in the oven. Yet it was of a strange kind of nature that it could bear the heat of the oven but not the heat of the sun. Our hearts are of a similar temper; the heat of the sun of prosperity dissolves us and causes us to run from one another, but the heat of the fire of affliction bakes us, brings us together, and settles us. It makes

us one, takes away our rawness, consumes many of our ill humors, and composes our spirits into unity.

The stupidity of our hearts is such that we do not make our brethren's case, who suffer the rage of these wars, our own. But we, for the present having some more liberty than formerly, are lifted up and in the pride of our hearts push at our brethren and smite our fellow servants. If the dogs are at a little distance from us, though we even hear the cries of our brethren who are worried by them, we foolishly bless ourselves in our present ease, enjoyments, and hopes as if our flesh must be spared, our estates, liberties, and enjoyments must be continued or even raised, no matter what becomes of others. Oh sinful vain spirits, fooled and hardened by their pride!

But what are the several workings of pride that cause such a stir in the world?

First, a proud man thinks himself too great to be crossed. "Shall I bear this? I will make you know what it is to do such things against me." He thinks it a great dishonor to bear anything; therefore, he must quarrel and contend, if only to show what a man of spirit he is or to demonstrate that he is a man of such worth that whatever others bear, it is not fit for him to bear it. It is reasonable that such a man should make those who presume to cross him yield to him and stoop under him. Now when one proud man thinks it a dishonor to put up with wrongs from another who may be as proud as himself, and he thinks it a dishonor for him to put up with wrongs; what peace can there be? Some wrongs must be endured, but proud men will never agree on who should begin.

Secondly, because his spirit swells so big, he thinks everything that crosses him is very great; his sufferings are great to him according to how highly he thinks of himself. According to the excellence or meanness of any

person, so are his sufferings reckoned. Sufferings of a man in eminence are judged according to his eminence and place; if a mean man suffers the same things, they are not considered as great. Now whether a man is great really or in his own perception, it's all one in regard to his esteem of his sufferings; he thinks them intolerable because they are against himself.

In Daniel 3:14: "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Do not you serve my gods?" That which you have in your books: Is it true? Arias Montanus translates it as "Nunquid desolatio": What, is there desolation made? What, you oppose the command of a king? If this is suffered, what desolation must follow? And indeed the root from which the word comes signifies "desolari," to make desolate. Why? Was it desolation that these three poor innocent men made because they would not—nay, they could not—do as this proud king would have them? What made him thus aggravate the offense but merely the pride of his heart? He thought that anything contrary to his command was a most heinous offense, a thing most horrid in its very mention, no less than the utter undoing of all things. Pride always aggravates anything done against its own mind.

This in Daniel that Montanus turns "Nunquid desolatio," Buxtorfius translates as "num de industria"; what on purpose? You do it on purpose to provoke me; thus proud men and women in their families say: "Whatsoever children or servants do amiss; what? You do it on purpose to anger me, do you?" When the wind comes across the stream, the waters rage; so do the will and affections of a proud heart when anything crosses it.

Thirdly, pride makes men swell beyond their bounds; the way to keep all things in union is for every man to keep within his bounds. Swelling beyond tends to breaking all into pieces. Habakkuk 2:5: "He is a proud man who neither keeps at home nor enlarges his desire as hell and cannot be

satisfied." If any humor of the body goes beyond its bounds, it brings much trouble to it; the health and peace of the body consist in keeping every humor within its vessel and due proportion.

Fourthly, pride hardens men's hearts. Daniel 5:20: "His mind is hardened in his pride." If you would make things cleave together, you must have them soft; two flints will not join. The Spaniard has a proverb: Lime and stone will make a wall if one is hard; yet if the other is yielding, there may be a joining and good may be done—not otherwise.

Fifthly, pride causes men to despise the persons' actions and sufferings of others; nothing is more insufferable to a man's spirit than being vilified. A proud man despises what others do and others what he does; every man next to his person desires the honor of his actions. If these two are contemned, his sufferings will likewise be contemned by the proud. This also goes very near to a man; one man thinks what another suffers is nothing—no matter what becomes of him; another thinks his sufferings are nothing—no matter what becomes of him. Oh, at what a distance now are men's hearts from one another!

Sixtly, pride causes every man to desire to be noticed and to have prominence in something or other. If he cannot be eminent on one side, he will seek it on the other; he must be noticed in one way or another. When he is in a good and peaceable way, God makes some use of him. Yet, because he is not observed and regarded as eminent, he will rather turn to some other way—to contend, strive, oppose, or anything—so that he may be noticed as somebody and not leave the world without some noise. "What, shall such a man as I, with such parts, such approved abilities, so endowed by God to do some eminent service, be laid aside and nobody regard me? I

must embark on some notable work, something that may draw the eye of observance upon me."

I have read of a young man who set Diana's Temple on fire, and when asked the reason, he said it was so that he might have a name and people might talk of him. Because he could not be famous by doing good, he chose to be by doing evil. Proud spirits will risk setting the Temple of God, even Church and State, on fire so that they may have a name. Whatever they do or suffer, to get a name they will rather venture than die in obscurity; that is something they cannot bear.

7. A proud man would have others under him; and others, being proud too, would have him under them. He would have others yield to him, and others would have him yield to them. Where will the agreement then begin? What has rent and torn the world in all ages, bringing woeful distractions, perplexities, confusions, and miseries in all countries by wars, but the pride of a few great ones seeking to bring one under another? Those wasting wars of the Romans between Sylla and Marius, Caesar and Pompey—were they not from this? It is hard for men in great places and of great spirits to accord long. Melanchthon in his comment upon Prov. 13:10 says concerning such men there was once this proverb: "Duo montes non miscentur," meaning two mountains will not mix together.

Eighthly, a proud man makes his will the rule of his actions and would have it be the rule for other men too. Other men, being proud too, would have their wills as the rule of their actions and his too. Thus the blustering wind of pride in men's hearts causes them to jostle against one another and so split themselves upon each other; just as where many ships lie together, a violent wind breaking their anchor cables causes them to dash against one another and make shipwreck even in the haven.

9. A proud man opposes others because they have begun such a work; and others who are also proud oppose him because he has begun it. The Senators of Rome could have been content to admit Christ among their gods but refused only because the motion did not begin with them. Many among us have no other reason for opposing good motions but because they were not first in them. They are loath to break the ice or begin a good work if they see any difficulty in it. Yet the cause of God must not go on; Christ must not be admitted if they were not at the beginning. Like two men carrying a long piece of timber through a narrow passage—one man will go before, and the other will go before—they can never carry it in because they cannot agree who shall go foremost.

10. One proud man is conceited about what he does because it is his own way; another proud man is conceited about what he does because it is his own way. Thus men draw diverse ways, and the public cause of God and His people must give way to their conceitedness. Pride makes a man drunk with his own conceits. Hab. 2:5 says the proud man is like one who transgresses by wine; and drunkards, you know, are quarrelsome. Do not wonder at any absurd thing in a proud man, for pride makes him drunk. Prov. 13:10 says proud men who cause contention are opposed to the well-advised: "But with the well-advised (cum consultis) is wisdom." The Septuagint reads it as "The wise are such as know themselves," but the proud do not.

11. Proud men will venture upon things unseemly, thinking their esteem and greatness will bear them out; others who are proud will venture upon the like for the same reason, for every man is ready to have high thoughts of himself. Psal. 19:14 says, "Deliver me from presumptuous sins," translated by some as "from proud sins" or "from insolent sins." Pride makes one

insolent. A proud man, says the philosopher, is a pretender of boldness and valor and therefore will foolishly venture upon anything.

12. If there is anything to be done that is considered mean and low, a proud man will seek to put it upon others; others who are proud will seek to put it upon him. If it is a work of credit, then he seeks it for himself, and others seek it for themselves; hence arise jarrings and divisions.

13. If there is any good success in anything, pride makes one man attribute it to himself and another man attribute it to himself; if the success is poor, then one shifts blame from himself and another from himself, thus raising and fomenting quarrels and contentions.

14. One proud man thinks himself the only worthy one to have his counsel followed and his desires satisfied; another thinks himself the man whose counsel should be followed and desires satisfied; thus men struggle and oppose one another.

Lastly, one proud man is very discerning in discovering pride in another; though he entertains it in his own bosom, he hates it in others wherever he sees it. This is a peculiar curse upon this sin: one drunkard loves another; one whoremaster loves another; but one proud man hates another. This is exemplified notably in Boniface II, Bishop of Rome. He says of Aurelius Bishop of Carthage and those present at the Sixth Council of Carthage that through the instigation of the Devil they swelled with pride against the Roman Church—meaning against its supremacy—spoken upon Eulalius Bishop of Carthage's submission to the Chair of Rome. Behold the proud Bishop of Rome who would have all preeminence himself swells with pride against the pride of others.

Here we see what a troublemaker pride is. What Tertullus said to Felix in Acts 24:2 is true of humility: "By thee we enjoy great quietness." But the

contrary is as true of pride: "By thee are made woeful divisions; by thee we suffer miserable disturbances." Though there be no occasion for quarrel, yet pride will make some; only by pride comes contention, as before in Prov. 13:10. Though there be nothing else but pride—and in Hebrew it is יתן מצה (Dabit jurgium), meaning "give contention"—if there be no cause given, it will make it.

Now let every man look into his own heart and see what pride has been, and still is there, and be humbled before the Lord for this. All you contentious, rebellious, quarrelsome people, you are charged this day from God to be men and women of proud spirits, and the evil in our sad divisions is greatly caused by that pride in your bosom. St. Paul did beat down his body, lest after he had preached to others, he should become a reprobate. Let us all, and especially ministers, labor to beat down our spirits, lest after all our profession and glorious shows, we at last become reprobates, or at least such as God may cast out for the present in this world, taking no delight in making use of us. What is it in such times as these to have hearts swollen and lifted up in pride? God is now about staining the pride of the earth. How unseasonable and dangerous is it for a mariner to have his top-sails up and all spread in a violent storm? It is time then to pull down all, lest he be sunk irrecoverably. The point of a needle will let the wind out of a bladder, and shall not the swords of God, the swords of war and plague that have got so deep into our bowels, let out the windy pride of our hearts? The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone will be exalted. May the Lord humble us so that He may reconcile us not only to Himself but to one another.

Chapter Sixteen

Self-love, the Second Dividing Distemper.

This is near akin to the former: Philippians 2:3. Let nothing be done through strife: Verse 4. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others: This is the cause of strife because men look so much on their own things. Many will have no peace unless their own party is followed; Jehu-like, "What hast thou to do with peace? Follow me." It is not peace but party that they mind. Maxima pars studiorum est studium partium: The greatest part of their studies is to study sides and parts. Luther upon the 127th Psalm has a notable speech: "I am of that opinion," says he, "that monarchies would continue longer than they do were it not for that same little pronoun [Ego], that same [I] (myself)." Certainly, if this same self could be laid aside, all governments and societies would not only continue longer but flourish better.

Self-love is the cause of our divisions.

First, where this prevails, men love to take in all to themselves but let out nothing from themselves; this must needs divide societies in Church and State, for they are bodies. If one member in the body takes in all to itself and lets out nothing from itself to other members—suppose the arm or leg

takes in all the blood and spirits that come in to strengthen itself, and when it has got them in, keeps them and lets out none to any other member—how soon would the members drop one from another? The whole world is maintained by mutual communication of one creature to another; take away that, and the world dissolves presently.

Secondly, those who are driven by self-love have no common ends to join them; therefore they cannot close. If they are employed in public service, they quickly warp to their private ends. Take two boards never so straight; yet if one is seasoned and the other green, they will lie close for a while, but before long you will find that the unseasoned will divide from the other by warping, especially when heat comes to it. Thus many at first—oh who but they for the public, for the common good—but there being a principle of self within, like the sap in the board, when they begin to feel heat or some difficulties arise, they warp to their own ends and divide from those they were employed with. Men's private ends are narrow; they cannot drive on them without meeting with one another and jostling one another, quarreling, contending, and fighting for the way as carmen do when they meet in narrow streets and boatmen in narrow passages. If we had public ends, our way would be broad enough; we might go on peaceably and comfortably without prejudice to one another. If a man lived alone, then he might go on quietly in his way; only God would meet him in it. But seeing men live in the world amongst others, they must consider that if they will drive on their own designs and work their own ends, other men have designs and ends to drive on and work as well as they do: it is therefore impossible but you will cross and be crossed; you will vex and fret at others, and others will vex and fret at you. Whatsoever is such, says Tully, wherein many cannot excel,

in that there is for the most part such contention as society can hardly be kept entire.

Thirdly, self makes every man judge things according to what is in himself. I have read of Blackmores: when they paint an angel, they paint him black like themselves; and when they paint the devil, they paint him white, as much different from themselves as they can. Thus men driven by self—the foulest, blackest opinion—yet if suitable to their judgments, they will set out like angels with the fairest glosses that may be; and that which is truth, if disagreeing from them, they will paint out in the foulest manner that can be; they labor so to besmear it that if possible it shall look like a devil. If a selfish man is conscious of not having that which is commendable, he will not believe that others have it: As Nero, being abominably filthy, would not believe there was any chaste man in the world: Whatsoever evil he does, he thinks all men if they had the like opportunity would do the same; if they have plots to fetch about their own ends, they think every man is plotting too.

Fourthly, self makes much stir and trouble for it is a very odious thing; Omne affectatum odiosum: as vermin are odious because they only take in to themselves, consume things, and are no way useful to anything else. When anything does but smell of self, it begins to be loathed; let a man have never such excellent parts or do never such excellent things yet if self appears, the loveliness and glory of all is gone; therefore those men that act self need to be very cunning to keep it hidden. Herein appears what a vile thing self is: though in truth it acts all and receives the incomes of all yet it dares not appear but lies skulking under all the covers it can; how vile is this self for which all must be done—which thou makest thy God—yet cannot in the least appear but is odious and abominable to everyone? Yea it

is conscious to itself that it is so and therefore dares not appear; yet the acting of it is very mischievous to all human societies.

Fifthly, there is this wickedness in self-love: even those things that people acknowledge to be right and good in general, if they do not suit with something they desire in particular, will lead them to oppose it. What peace and union can there be among people if they commend something as good, yet when it conflicts with their interests, they oppose and contend against it? As in Acts 26:7: "Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God night and day, hope to come. For this hope's sake, I am accused by the Jews." The twelve tribes, the whole body of the Jews, consistently grant the promise of the Resurrection, yet in malice towards me, they accuse me of this; or if not so, they are willing for me to fail in this cause. Just as many ministers used to commend highly the ways of religion in their pulpits, exhorting people to grow in godliness and be careful in all their ways; but when some parishioners practiced in particular what was commended in general, they would hate and persecute them for it. God deliver us from such a spirit.

Sixthly, self-interest causes those in public employment to maintain their private disputes and grudges, interrupting public matters. They will undermine each other's work for the public good, letting it suffer so they can make each other feel their private grievances. In this, Christians are beneath heathens. I have read of Aristides and Themistocles, who had many disputes between themselves, but when both were employed in the work of the Commonwealth on an embassy, one said to the other, "Let us lay down all our private grudges upon these mountains, at least until our business is over. If there is just cause when we have done our work for the Commonwealth, we may then examine them." It would be fortunate if all

those in public employment in this land would speak thus to one another from their hearts; but people are selfish and cannot do it. Hence come many of our breaches and divisions.

Seventhly, self-interest causes people not to see their own evils, or if they do, to indulge themselves in them while being quick-sighted and severe in discovering and opposing the evils in others. This causes many breaches and fallings out. We may apply that of the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 13: "Love covers a multitude of faults," to self-love. Selfish people see little evil in themselves; all is ever well with them regardless of what others do. The more they indulge themselves, the more severe they are with others. But Christ would have the opposite: severity towards ourselves but indulgence towards others. Those who are so are the most peaceable people. Matthew 18:8: "If your hand or foot offends you, cut it off and cast it from you; or if your eye offends you, pluck it out." We must deal severely with ourselves in things as near and dear to us as our hands and eyes. But verse 15: When Christ gives order on how we are to deal with our brethren, he requires more moderation: "If your brother offends you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone; if he will not hear you, then take one or two more with you and see what you can do with him that way; yea, and after that tell the church." Not immediately cut him off or cast him away as you must do when your hand or eye offends you. If people have any indulgence, let it be exercised towards their brethren; if they have any severity, let them exercise that against themselves. I remember reading of Pliny saying of himself that he so passed by other men's offenses as if he were the greatest offender and was so severe against himself as if he meant to pardon none. If it were so with us, we would live at more peace with one another than we do.

Eighthly, selfishness causes reservedness; great self-lovers never care for communion except with those either far above them, so they may gain from them and have credit by associating with them, or with those beneath them who will admire them and whom they may rule over. In the company of either of these, they will fully express themselves; but if there is equality, you will get little from them. There is nothing to draw forth self; soon there grows a strangeness between them and such people. Union will not hold where communion is not free; if there is an interruption of the freedom of communion, the union will soon break.

You might say these were once very close friends; how did they break apart? What has either done? What unkindness has befallen them? None at all—only that principle of self was not fully satisfied as it would be; upon that, they began to be reserved and strange and eventually fell off from one another from former love and friendship. Then every little thing caused grudges between them.

Ninthly, self-interest sets people's wits to work in cunning craftiness to manipulate others for their own ends, which goes against a person's spirit as much as anything. When someone discerns it, no one can tolerate being circumvented or used merely for another's ends. The more cunning involved, the more odious and abominable it is to one's spirit when perceived; a person cannot bear it. Crooked windings are the ways of the serpent. But if someone not only seeks to use another for their own benefit but then casts them off to fend for themselves afterward, this is so provoking that it makes breaches irreconcilable.

Tenthly, when one is self-interested in their ways, they teach others to be so in theirs. As a person learns to be rebellious by associating with the rebellious, many who once had plain hearts full of love and sweetness learn

to be selfish by associating with selfish political people. They see how someone hooks themselves into everything and maneuvers this way and that way but still gets it to come back to self. They did not perceive it at first acquaintance when their heart was fully open to them. But now they see everyone is for themselves; why should they not be too? And what then is likely to become of the public?

Surely this selfishnesse is very vile in the eyes of God; God hath made us members of a community, the Universe is maintained by union, therefore the creatures will venture the destroying themselves in going contrary to their natures, rather then there should not be union in theworld; that which they doe in a naturall way, we should doe by the strength of reason, much more by grace. Phylosophers say there cannot be a vacuity in the world; The world could not stand, but would be dissolved, if every part were not filled, because Nature subsists by being one; if there were the least vacuity, then all things should not be joyned in one, there would not be a contiguity of one part with another. This is the reason that water will ascend when the ayre is drawn out of a pipe, to fill it; this is to prevent division in nature; O that we had but so much naturalnesse in us, that when we see there is like to be any breach of union, we would be willing to lay down our self-ends, to venture our selves, to bee any thing in the world that is not sinne, that wee may helpe to a joyning: O foolish heart, that in such a time as this art selfish, when the danger is publike! As in a storme, when the Ship is in danger, if every Mariner should be busie about his own Cabbin, dressing and painting that; what infinite sottish folly were it? and is it not our case? It were just with God to leave thee to thy selfe hereafter; if thou wilt looke so much to thy selfe now. Ezek. 22:16. And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thy selfe in the sight of the Heathen, and thou shalt know that I am the

Lord: This is in a way of threat, as appeares if you compare it with ver. 14, 15. Woe to us if God leaves us to our selves. I have heard of a story of a foole being left in a chamber, and the doore locked when he was asleepe, after he awakes and findes door locked, and all the people gone, he cryes out at the window, Oh my selfe, my selfe, O my selfe, nothing else came from him but O my selfe. Such fooles have we amongst us now, nothing but Selfe is in their thoughts, their hearts and endeavours. The Apostles complaint, Phil. 2:21. may justly be ours, All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christs: Their owne things, that is, sayes Chrysostome,* their pleasure and their security, their temporall commodities, their profits, their honours: So others, why are not the comforts, the safeties, the honours of the Saints the things of Christ, doth not Christ owne them? Are they not under his protection and care?

Answ. Yes, And he would owne them more, if we owned them lesse; the more we deny them, the more hath he a care of them: We may by our giving them up to the honour of Christ, make them to be amongst the number of his things, and then they would be pretious indeed: but by desiring them, using them, rejoycing in them, in reference to our selves, Christ accounts them not amongst his things, things of a higher nature are his things, the glory of his Father, the propagation of the Gospel, the spirituall good of his people, and the things of eternall life, they are his things; let us make his things ours, and he will make our things his.

Chapter Seventeen

The Third Dividing Distemper: Envy

Envy is a squint-eyed fool. Job 5:2 states, "Envy slays the silly one." James 3:14 warns, "If you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts." Envy is a bitter thing that causes strife and makes it bitter too. As verse 16 says, "Where envying and strife is." Galatians 5:20 lists hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, and envyings. 1 Corinthians 3:3 notes, "There is among you envying, strife, divisions."

Envy created divisions between angels and men; it was the first sin—not the first born of the Devil, but that which turned angels into devils. The first heart-division among men was between Cain and Abel, and what caused it but envy? Who can stand before envy? She is subtle, undermining, and dares not appear at first; but if she cannot be satisfied with her underhanded works, then she flings, rends, frets, and fights. She uses violence, seeks to raise a contrary faction, and falls on anything in the world as long as mischief may be done. Let it become of God's glory, of service to the public, or of saving souls; rather than that esteem, respect, and honor that otherwise might be had should not be obtained. All must come under; all must be serviceable to this base lust. Rather than the glory of an envious

man being eclipsed, God Himself and His blessed truth must be darkened. O hideous wickedness and high impudence against the God of Heaven!

Envy divides in counsels, in instruments, actions, in all proceedings. She will make use of good to oppose that which is good; if she cannot raise evil men to oppose good, she will seek to get good men to oppose. She would make God contrary to Himself; she would strike at God with His own sword. Philippians 1:15 notes that some preach Christ out of envy. As envy makes use of good for evil, so God makes use of this evil for good. Many seek to excel in preaching or otherwise by this means; and says Saint Paul, "Howsoever I do rejoice, and will rejoice."

If envy cannot reach others by imitation, she will reach them by calumniation. Zoilus the common slanderer was asked why he spoke evil of such and such men. "Because," says he, "I can do no evil to them." If there is any good done, she seeks to blast it together with the instruments of it; if any evil, she rakes into it and feeds upon it like that bird Ibis in Africa that eats serpents. Luther says envious men feed upon the dung of other men; they are like flies that love to be upon sores.

Erasmus tells of one who collected all the lame defective verses in Homer and passed over all that were so excellent. When you see a man seeking to rake and gather together all he can of any distempers, disorders, mistakes, or miscarriages by hearsay, letters, or any way so he may fill up his dung-cart; and for the good—the graces or gifts of God in men—those are laid aside or slightly passed over. If at all mentioned, it is with some dirt mingled. Surely this is an envious man fitted for strife and debate whom God permits to be an affliction to His people by raising up a spirit of strife and contention and causing divisions among them. Like the kite who passes over fair meadows and pleasant fields without regard until she meets with

carrion—there she falls and fastens—now she is upon her prey where she would be.

How pleasant is it to some men to hear of or find out evil in others whom they do not love? To say no worse. You know how it has been an old practice to seek to get anything by reports or any other ways that might blast the professors of religion; and how glad were they? How did it please them at heart if they could meet with anything that might serve their turn?

This is a very shameful distemper. Some men will upon occasion confess they fear other men, and others that they love not other men or that they contemn others. But no man will acknowledge that he envies others; there is too much shame in this to be owned by any.

The impiety and wickedness are not less; it is a monstrous wickedness for a man to complain of God that He made the world no better. And yet such wickedness exists in some men's hearts. But what is it then to complain of and quarrel with God that He has made the world or any part of it so well? This the envious man does.

An envious man cannot endure to see others better than himself or to have more respect than himself. It is reported of Licinius, an intimate familiar with Constantine the Great who also married his sister but fell off to be a desperate enemy against Christians, alleging this as the reason: because in their assemblies they prayed for Constantine and not for him. Envious men, whether they deserve respect or not, yet if others have it and not themselves, they rage and are mad.

There is no vice but has some kind of opposition to some other—such as covetousness to prodigality—but envy only opposes that which is good and all good; therefore there is nothing in it but evil and a universal evil. Gulielmus Parisiensis brings in Gregory saying that all the poison in the old

serpent is in this sin as if it had emptied itself of its poison and vomited it into this sin—so much venom there is in it.

Is it not a very evil thing that in men's opposition against what they see others desire, they should give this reason why it should not be allowed: because if it is, the greater part of the most godly people in all places will join with it? This brings to mind what I have read in Ecclesiastical History: In the Second Century, Emperor Hadrian would have built a church for the honor of Christ void of images, because such was the custom of the Christians; but his friends dissuaded him, saying, if he did so, all men would forsake the temples of the gods and become Christians.

I find in that learned piece of Voetius, "Desperata causa papatus," a notable story of Raynerius, a Popish Inquisitor. He exclaims against the Waldenses, those poor men of Lyons (as he calls them). He says there was never any more pernicious sect than that; and I pray why? He gives three reasons: First, that it is very ancient; some say (says he) it has continued from the time of Sylvester; others, from the times of the Apostles. Secondly, it is so general, there is scarcely any country but this has got into it. Thirdly, whereas others are guilty of blasphemy against God, upon which they are abhorred, these appear to be holy men; they live justly, their belief in God is right, they believe all the Articles in the Creed. We can find no fault with them either for their lives or for their doctrine, only they are against the Church of Rome, in which the people are ready to join with them.

These are strange accusations, for do not they themselves make all these the signs of the true Church? And yet are these poor men so vile because such things are found amongst them. Surely, it is envy that embitters the spirits of men against others because they see in them those things which they cannot but acknowledge to be good. Herein lies the great evil of envy,

that malignity of it by which it causes so great contentions to appear; they are angry they can find no evil in them whereby they may gain an advantage against them.

The Holy Ghost says that envy is rottenness to the bones; the same learned man Gulielmus Parisiensis applies this to such as are chief in Church and Commonwealth, who are as it were the bones, the strength, the support of the societies whereof they are. Envy, says he, is often found amongst them, and it is rottenness to them. This vile sin has caused a rot in many men of eminent abilities and places who might otherwise have done much service for God and his people in Church and Commonwealth: oh, it is a mischievous sin. Take away envy, says Augustine, and what is mine you have; take away envy, and what is yours I have.

We read in Acts 11 of Barnabas that he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost, and he was a man of a cleaving disposition, of an uniting temper. Verse 23: He exhorted them that with full purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord. This man was free from envy, for the text says when he had seen the grace of God, he was glad: He rejoiced in and blessed God for the graces he saw in his Saints. Do you envy for my sake? says Moses; I would to God all the people of the Lord did prophesy. Moses was a fit man for public service who was so void of envy; no men are so fit for public employment as such who can bless God that he is pleased to make use of others as well as, yea beyond themselves.

It was a good speech of that gracious, holy old disciple Mr. Dod lately deceased: I would to God, says he, I were the worst minister in England; not wishing himself worse than he was but all ministers better.

The Fourth Dividing Distemper: Passion

Prov. 29:23. An angry man stirs up strife. Passion is so opposite to union that Prov. 22:24. the Holy Ghost would have us make no friendship with an angry man.

First, this fire of anger burns asunder the bands of union, the bands of relation, as Nebuchadnezzar's fire did the bands of the three children. A rebellious heart cares not for any relations. What makes divisions between husband and wife, brother and brother, servants and masters and mistresses, neighbor and neighbor but passionate rebelliousness?

Secondly, this fire burns asunder the bands by which men's lusts were tied up and kept in; it sets men's lusts at liberty. The lusts of men's hearts are like a bed of snakes in the cold, but the heat of passion warming them causes them to crawl and hiss. What a stir would the lions in the Tower make and the bears in Paris-garden if they were let loose? Passion lets men's lion-like lusts loose.

Philosophers say of the inferior orbs that were they not kept in, restrained in their motion by the Primum Mobile, they would set all the world on fire. If our lower affections, especially this of anger, be not kept in and ordered by reason and religion, they will set all on fire. Passion makes men and women lawless, boundless, careless.

Men know not what they do in their anger; this raises such smoke that they cannot see their way; the more corrupt the heart is, the greater and more noisome is the smoke raised by this fire in the heart. Put fire to wet straw and filthy stuff; oh what a filthy smoke arises!

Leviticus 13:25. We read of a leprosy breaking out of a burning; seldom do men's passions burn but there is a leprosy breaking out of that burning, and what union can there be with such? If rebellious people were dealt with like lepers—shut up from others—we should have more peace.

Some men when once their anger is up will never have done; we can have no quiet with them; this fire in them is like that of hell—unquenchable. The dog days continue with them all year long. Seven devils can better agree in one Mary Magdalene than seven rebellious people in one family.

If one should set the beacons on fire upon the landing of every cock-boat, what continual combustions and tumults would there be in the land? Those men who upon every trifle are all on fire by their passions—and what in them lies sets others on fire—do exceedingly disturb the peace of those places where they live, those societies of which they are. Their hot passions cause the climate where they live to be like the torrid zone—too hot for any to live near them.

Christ is the Prince of Peace, and the Devil is the Prince of Divisions. Hence that expression of the Holy Ghost, Ephesians 4:27: Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil: you are loath to give place to your brother. You will say, What, shall I yield to him? You will not yield to him but you will yield to him that is worse—to the Devil. So you do when you yield to wrath.

There are various other dividing distempers that we shall speak to, but for the present, let us make use of the great mercy of God towards us, which we solemnized yesterday in a public Thanksgiving. Let us see how we may improve this glorious work of God for the closing of our spirits and the healing of our divisions. It calls to us aloud to join—oh, let your hearts join. There are twelve arguments in this great work of God to persuade us to union.

First, there has appeared much of God's presence in this great work. "I will praise thee, oh Lord, for thou hast done it," Psalms 52:9. The Lord has appeared wonderfully; His naked arm has been revealed, His right hand has

become glorious in power. Those who were present saw much of God in this work. They send to us to give God the glory, and all the country around still sends to us to tell us how much of God they have seen in this.

But how is this an argument for us to unite?

Answer: Suppose children or servants were wrangling with one another; would this not be an argument to make them be quiet? "Your Father is here, Your Master has come." Will not all be silent presently? God is among us; we may see the face of God in what He has done for us, and shall we be quarreling before His face?

Just three days before this great goodness of God, by special order from the House of Commons, there was a day set apart to humble our souls before the Lord and to seek Him for this mercy that we now rejoice in. In our humiliation, was not this one great sin we confessed—our divisions? Did we not then acknowledge that it would be righteous with God because of our divisions to give us up as a prey to our adversaries? Now then, have not our divisions overcome God's goodness, lest God's goodness overcome our divisions? Suppose there had been a day of humiliation set apart to mourn under the heavy hand of God against us in delivering us up into the hands of our enemies, as (through His mercy) we have had a day of Thanksgiving to bless Him for our deliverance from them. Would not this sin have been the matter of a great part of the confession of all your ministers? Oh, the divisions that are among us! Thou hast dealt righteously with us. Our wraths were up against one another, and it is just with thee, O Lord, to let out the rage of the adversary upon us; and shall we yet continue in that after a mercy which we have confessed might justly have prevented the mercy? Shall we still be guilty of that which our consciences tell us would have been the burden of them as the just cause of our misery if the

Lord had come against us in His sore displeasure? God forbid. Let not that evil now be found in us that would have galled our consciences if mercy had been denied us.

We are delivered from being devoured by our enemies; shall we now devour one another? Oh, unworthy we are of such a deliverance as this. It went ill with us at the beginning of the fight, but God looked mercifully upon us; His bowels worked: "If I do not come in for their help, these ungodly men will devour my servants." However fair they have been to some because they have not yet attained their own ends, if they prevail here, they will account all their own, and then they will begin to exercise that cruelty that has not yet been heard of. But it shall not be; my heart cannot bear the cries of my servants under such cruelties as I foresee. Do you think this was God's end in delivering us from being devoured by our enemies—that we may be devoured by one another? We read in Ezekiel 5:3-4 that the Prophet was bid to bind up a few hairs in his skirt, which was to signify a few of the people who were preserved from that common calamity. But afterward, these were cast into the fire, and fire came forth from these to all the house of Israel. Polanus upon the place has this note: that grievous evils may come upon those who have been preserved from former common miseries, and those who for a while have been preserved by their contentions and divisions may be the cause of woeful evil to others. God forbid that this text should be fulfilled in us. Let not a fire come from us, who yet are so graciously preserved, to devour the house of Israel.

Fourthly, God in this work has joined several sorts of instruments—men of various opinions; He has made them one to do us good. Why should we not be one in the enjoyment of that good? Let each part have their due

honor under God; in His mercy, God has made use of both, and why may not both enjoy the fruit of this mercy together in the land?

Fifthly, we were not without some fears lest God should leave us in the work of Reformation begun; but now God speaks aloud to encourage us; He tells us He owns the work. Now what does this require of us? A little logic will draw the consequence: Has God declared Himself that He intends to go on in this work He has begun? Then let us all join together to further it to the utmost we can; let us not exasperate the spirits of one another in ways of strife and opposition, but let everyone set his hand and heart to this work so that he may be able to say: "Oh Lord God, thou that knowest the secrets of all hearts knowest that upon this great mercy of thine my heart was so moved that whatsoever I could possibly see to be thy will for the furtherance of this great work of Reformation, and that I was able to do, I did set myself to do it and am resolved to spend my strength and life in it." If everyone did thus, oh what glory might God have from this mercy of His!

Sixthly, when the Lord comes to us with mercies—and such great mercies—He expects we should rejoice in them and sing praise; but how can we sing without harmony? Prayer requires an agreement. Matthew 18:19: "If two of you shall agree on earth touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them." Surely praise requires agreement much more. Psalms out of tune are harsh to the ear; disagreement of heart is much more so to the Spirit of God.

7. Surely, when God has done so much for us, it must be acknowledged to be our duty to study what sacrifice would be most pleasing to Him. Some sacrifice we must offer: if there is any more acceptable to Him than another, surely He deserves it now. If a friend had done some real kindness for you, you would be glad to know what might be most grateful to him, wherein

you might testify your thankfulness. Is this in your hearts? Do you now say, "Oh, that we did but know what is the thing that would be most pleasing to God; what sacrifice would smell sweetest in His nostrils!" The Lord knows we would gladly offer it, whatever it may be.

I will tell you: that we would lay aside our divisions, our rebelliousness, that we would abandon our contentions and strife, that we would put on the bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another; if any man has a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do you (Col. 3:12). And in 1 Pet. 3:4, a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price; it is much valued, πολυτελές. Psal. 51:17 states that the sacrifice of God, that which is instead of all sacrifices, is a broken spirit. Our hearts have been broken from one another in our unhappy divisions; oh, that now they could break towards one another in love and tenderness! Here would be a sacrifice more esteemed by God than thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of oil: loving mercy and walking humbly are preferred above such sacrifices (Micah 6:8).

Eighthly, God might have soldered us together by the fire of His wrath; He might have made our blood to have been our cement to join our flinty hearts together. But it is otherwise; God seeks to draw us to Himself and one to another by the cords of love, the allurements of His mercy.

Ninthly, what can have that power to take off the sourness of men's spirits like mercy—the mercy of a God? Surely if anything can sweeten them, that must do it. We read in 1 Sam. 11:11-13 a notable experiment of the efficacy of mercy to sweeten men's hearts. After Saul had slain the Ammonites, some boisterous spirits would have had him slay those who had formerly rejected him; but mark Saul's answer in verse 13: "There shall not a man be

put to death this day." Why? "For this day the Lord has wrought salvation in Israel." Though Saul at another time was a man of a harsh and cruel spirit, yet now mercy sweetens him; that which he was one day by the sense of mercy, that should we be not only on the day of our Thanksgiving but in the course of our lives.

When salvation came to the house of Zacchaeus, oh, what a sweet temper was he in! "Behold, half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wronged anyone, I restore fourfold." Salvation has this day come to the Kingdom; oh, that all we had hearts to say, "If we have wronged any, we will restore; if we have wronged any in their names by word or writing in any way, we will restore." Mercy and love call for mercy and love; if we were in a right tune, there would be a sympathy between the bowels of God and ours; as in two lutes, if the string in one is wound up to be answerable to the other, if you then strike one string, the other will move though lying at a distance. Now God's love, God's bowels move; let our love, our bowels move answerably.

10. God shows that He can own us notwithstanding all our infirmities. Was ever Kingdom in a more distempered condition than ours has been of late? And yet the Lord has owned us. Why should we not own our brethren notwithstanding their infirmities? Why should our divisions cause us to cast off one another when our divisions from God have not provoked Him to cast us off?

11. Is it not in our desires that this great victory might be pursued so that it might not be lost as others (in great part) have been? Surely it cannot be pursued better than by taking this advantage of it to unite ourselves more together than ever we have done. This would strike as great a terror into the hearts of our adversaries as the victory has done.

Lastly, we need to take heed of breaches lest God should be provoked to change His administrations towards us. If there is so much choler in the stomach that sweet meats are turned into choler, it would be just with God to come with bitter and sour pills to purge out our choler. We read in Jude verse 5: "The Lord saved the people out of the land of Egypt; yet afterward He destroyed them that believed not." The Lord has granted us a great salvation from our enemies who would have brought us into Egyptian bondage. We have been singing the song of Moses; we have been praising God according to that (Apoc. 15:3), but let us take heed that yet God is not provoked against us for we are not out of all danger. As they by not believing, so we by not agreeing but contending and quarrelling may at last be destroyed.

You know how the lord of that servant to whom ten thousand talents were given took it when he should presently go to his fellow servant who owed him but a hundred pence and lay hands on him and take him by the throat and say, "Pay what you owe," and cast him into prison (Mat. 18:28). If men are not mollified by this mercy, they will be hardened; they will use their brethren worse than they did before because they would declare to all the world that they make no such interpretation of this mercy as that God would have them have further tender regard towards seeking union and peace with bearing with or yielding unto their brethren more than before. It is not unlikely but temptation may be suggested to do some act more against them either now or within a while to wipe away any conceit of any such interpretation of this gracious work of God for us.

But those who are of gracious and peaceable spirits should take the hint of this and go to all they know who have been at distance from one another—of whom they may have hope to do good—and seek to mollify their spirits,

to know what it is they have against one another, what prejudices or hard thoughts have been entertained by them and by all means they are able to remove them so that we loving and delighting in one another may cause the Lord to love us and delight in us and show mercy to us yet more and more.

Chapter Eighteen

The Fifth Dividing Distemper (Rigidity); the Sixth Rashness; the Seventh Wilfulness; the Eighth Unconstancy.

Rigid, harsh, sour, crabbed, rough-hewn spirits are unfit for union; there is no sweetness, no amiableness, no pleasingness in them. They please themselves in a rugged austerity but are pleasing to none else in all their ways. They will abate nothing of their own, nor yield anything to others. This is against the rule of the Apostle, Romans 15:1-3. We must not please ourselves, but let everyone please their neighbor for their good to edification; and this, according to the example of Christ, who pleased not himself. This is the duty not only of weak men, who need to please others because they have need of others, but also of those who are strong. They ought not to please themselves but seek to please others.

Men who are of austere spirits, affecting a gravity that turns to a dull, sullen sternness, think it to be the commendation of the strength of their spirits that they can carry themselves as they do towards others, seeking altogether content for themselves without any yieldableness to others. No, that is but lightness and weakness in men; they are of a more staid and

strong temper than to do so. These men, by their wisdom, do very much sin against the wisdom of the Holy Ghost in this Scripture; yea, and against the example of Jesus Christ, who in his whole course manifested tenderness, gentleness, affableness, amiableness towards weak ones who were infinitely beneath him. Here he is set forth unto us as one who pleased not himself, far from this rigid harsh temper.

Those swords are not of the best-tempered metal that will not bend but stand stiff, but such as yield and bend with most ease and stand straight again. Neither are those dispositions the best that are the stiffest, but such as are most yieldable and yet stand straight too. This harsh and rigid spirit makes men's gifts and graces very unuseful. When Plato saw Xenocrates of an austere rigid temper, he advised him to sacrifice to the Graces that he might have more mildness, fearing that otherwise his parts and learning would be unprofitable.

The Jews observe upon Exodus 25:3 that no iron was in the stuff of the Tabernacle; rigid iron spirits are very unfit for Church work. Leviticus 17:7 states they shall no more sacrifice to Devils. The word translated "Devils" signifies rough ones; Devils had their names from thence; this is the name of a Satyr, Isaiah 34:14, "The rough one." The Spirit of God is a dove-like sweet Spirit, but the Spirit of the Devil is a rough harsh spirit, the spirit of a Satyr. Proverbs 11:17 says he that is cruel troubles his own flesh. That word here translated "cruel," the Septuagint elsewhere translates by a word that signifies rigid, stiff (ϛερεὸς), Jeremiah 30:14. Men of such tempers are very troublesome to themselves, to their families, to all with whom they converse.

If a smith would join two pieces of iron, he must first file them or beat them smooth. If the joiner would join two pieces of wood, he must plane

them. Except our spirits be filed, beaten smooth, or planed, they are unfit for joining.

The Sixth Dividing Distemper: Rashness

Acts 19:36 states you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. Doing things rashly and quietness are opposed.

1. Rashness makes men engage themselves suddenly in business before they have examined it well. This causes much trouble, for if a man is engaged he lies under a temptation to go on in it. As in 2 Chronicles 25:9, when the man of God came to Amaziah to take him off from a business he was engaged in; "O but," says he, "what shall I do for the hundred talents I have given out already?" Thus many answer to the truth of God that would take them off from what they are engaged in: "But what shall I do for my credit that lies engaged?"

Secondly, rashness causes men suddenly to provoke others; whereas if they considered what ill consequences might come of it, they would forbear. Rash men quickly take hold of the sword of justice to hack and hew; they think that what they do is according to reason but do not wisely weigh things in the balance of justice. Remember, justice has a balance as well as a sword. Proverbs 29:11 states a fool utters all his mind;* the Septuagint translates it as θυμον (anger). Rash fools by uttering their anger suddenly cause great stir and trouble wherever they come. The Hebrew word that signifies a fool and that which signifies suddenly or rashly is from the same root.

Thirdly, when peace sometimes is even concluded and there is great joy in hope of a comfortable agreement, rashness will suddenly break it without any due consideration.

O that promise in Isaiah 52:4 were fulfilled amongst us: "The heart of the rash shall understand knowledge." Rash men think they presently understand all that is knowable in such a business and thence presume to make sudden determinations; but as over-hasty digestion causes wind and brings much trouble to the body, so over-hasty resolutions bring trouble to men's spirits and societies.

The Seventh Dividing Distemper: Wilfulness

I think I may say in most men, will is the axle-tree; lust and passions are the wheels upon which almost all their actions are carried. Where there is much will, though the thing be little about which men contend, yet the opposition may be great; as a little stone thrown with a strong arm may take deep impression.

It is a dangerous thing to have men's wills engaged in matters of difference; it is easier to deal with twenty men's reasons than with one man's will. A man of a willful stout spirit stands as a stake in the midst of a stream, lets all pass by him, but he stands where he was. What hope can there be of union where there will be no yielding? One man's will raises another's; set will against will and they may dash one against another but are not likely to close or get into one another.

A willful man thinks it is beneath a wise man to alter his way; yea, it may be he thinks it a dishonor to the truth that both he, his profession, and the honor of God shall suffer by it. When stubborn self-willedness is taken for right constancy and settledness, it is very strong in men. But let us take heed of this; it does not matter though we go back from our former assertions so long as we go forward to the truth. Luther was called an apostate; "I am so," says he, "but it is from error to the truth."

Many times stoutness of spirit comes from weakness rather than strength; there is not always the greatest strength of judgment where there is the greatest strength of will. As a man's judgment that is without prejudice is very strong; so a man's prejudice that is without judgment is as strong. The dullest horses are not always the most easily reined.

"I know and am persuaded," says the Apostle in Romans 14:14. Many men are persuaded before they know; those who are persuaded before they know will not be persuaded to know. Men's wills will not suffer their understandings to consider; if they do consider, they will not suffer them to be convinced; if they are convinced, they will not suffer them to acknowledge that they are convinced.

It is dishonest for a man not to give in his bond when the debt is paid; similarly, it is dishonest for a man not to acknowledge himself convinced but to stand out against the truth, even when his conscience tells him it is clear. Let men lay down their wills, and there will be no hell, says Bernard. So say I: take away men's wills, and contentions will cease. Scaliger tells us that the nature of some kind of amber is such that it will draw to itself all kinds of stalks of any herb, except basilisk, an herb called Capitalis because it makes men heady, filling their brains with black exhalations. Thus, those who, by the fumes of their corrupt wills, have grown headstrong will not be drawn by that which draws others.

However, this charge of willfulness is often misused; if men will not yield to what some conceive to be right, they are immediately accused of willfulness and stubbornness. They do not see because they will not see; they are not convinced because they will not be. We who differ so much from others in things that others think to be clear should be cautious about accusing others of willfulness who differ from us. Just as it is dishonest not

to give in the bond when the debt is paid, it is equally a cheat to require the bond before the debt is satisfied. Men may think and claim they have done enough to convince others when, upon examination, it may be found to be nothing or far short of satisfying the reasons against it if they were their own. But when a man may have peace in his conscience that what he holds or does is not through willfulness but constancy of his love for the truth, I shall speak to that presently.

The Eighth Dividing Distemper: Unconstancy

If a man had an art to change his face every day—to seem sometimes white, sometimes black, sometimes ruddy, sometimes pale, sometimes hairy, sometimes smooth, sometimes old, sometimes young—how unfit would such a man be for society? What men cannot do with their faces, they do with the unconstancy of their spirits. Our affections and determinations must not be like the Persian decrees, which admit no alteration; neither must they be like the Polish laws, which (they say) last but three days. When a thing is so brittle that it breaks as soon as you meddle with it, how can you make it join? There must be some consistency in that which you would fasten to another thing. When men's spirits are so fickle that one cannot tell where to find them, how can there be a close?

O how much are men now differing from themselves in what their thoughts of men and carriage towards them have been, though the men concerning whom they thus differ remain the same they were, even the same they appeared to be long since! There was sweet agreement in affection, loving embraces, rejoicing in the presence of one another, and yet nothing is known in those from whom their hearts, countenances, and ways are alienated more than formerly was—not difference in judgment; that was known before. Such a change of spirits and carriages in godly men towards

one another has appeared as never appeared in any age since the world began. A great deal of stir there has been more than formerly, and yet what are these men otherwise than they have been many years since?

Were I to speak to wicked men to charge them with the unconstancy of their spirits, I would use that similitude I have out of Epiphanius, who speaks of the Jews desiring the coming of the Messiah but hating him when he came. They were (says he) like mad dogs who first fawn upon men and then bite and devour them. But because I speak to many of the Saints, I would rather use a softer expression more suitable to the honor due to godly men. I compare them in their unconstancy towards their brethren—which has caused so great division—to the sweetness of the air on a fair sunshine morning. Oh, how it delights the traveler when he goes forth! And truly such were the serene countenances of our brethren towards us. But within a while, the clouds overcast, the sky looks lowering, gusts of wind arise; yes, thunderbolts of terrible words fly about our ears, and the flashes of their anger strike upon our faces.

Tantæ ne animis cœlestibus iræ.

Unconstancy is evil and a cause of division; stubbornness is evil and a cause of division. A man must not be one thing one day and another thing another day; not like a weathercock carried up and down with every wind; neither must he be willful and stubborn like a rusty lock that will not be stirred by any key.

Now then, how shall we know when a man is neither fickle nor stubborn? For unless some rules of discernment are given, this temptation may be before me: I must not be fickle, unsettled, and unconstant; I will therefore stiffly stand to maintain what I have professed.

Answer: You may know whether your fickleness is avoided by true settled constancy of spirit or by stubbornness by these five notes:

First, true constancy and settledness of spirit are obtained by much prayer and humiliation before the Lord: "Establish me Lord with thy free spirit; unite my heart to fear thy name." When after your heart-breakings and meltings, heart-cryings and pourings forth—"Lord show me what thy will is in this thing; keep me from miscarrying; let me not settle upon any error instead of the truth; but what is thy truth fasten my soul in it so that whatever temptations come I may never be taken off from it." Tell God in prayer what the thing is and what has persuaded your heart to embrace it; open your heart fully to God in all your aims. If by this means your heart is fixed, now it is delivered from fickleness and not fallen into stubbornness.

Secondly, where true constancy is attained by the Spirit of God and not by the stubbornness of your own spirit, there is an exercise of much grace and growth in grace—such as faith, humility, love, meekness, patience, etc. (1 Peter 3:17-18). "Take heed ye fall not from your steadfastness but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Hearts that are stout and willful are dry and sapless.

Thirdly, if the more a man has to do with God, the more settled he is in his way—when he has the most full converse and sweetness of communion with God—he is then most fully settled, satisfied, established in such a truth which he before conceived to be of God.

Many men are very stiff and willful—unmovable when they have to deal with men—they seem then to be the most confident men in the world. But God knows—and their consciences know—when they solemnly set themselves in the presence of God and have the most real sight of God and have to deal most immediately with him; then they have misgiving

thoughts; they have fears that things may not prove as sure as they led others to believe they apprehended them to be. But if God's presence and your dealings with him confirm you in this, your conscience may give you assurance that as you are not fickle and wavering so neither are you stout and willful.

Fourthly, when there is a proportion in men's constancy, if a man is resolute and constant in one thing but very fickle and easily turned aside in others, there is cause to suspect his constancy is rather from stubbornness than from grace; for grace works proportionately through the whole soul and in the whole course of a man's life.

Fifthly, if the more real the presence of death and judgment appears to a man, the more settled he is in that way; this likewise may be a good evidence to him that his settledness in such a way is right.

Chapter Nineteen

The ninth dividing distemper, A spirit of jealousy. The tenth, A spirit of contention. The eleventh, Covetousness. The twelfth, Falseness.

Envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 1 Tim. 6:4. Strife and evil surmisings are near akin. If contentious men can get nothing against their brethren, they will surmise there is something; if they can find nothing in their actions to judge, they will judge their hearts; if there is nothing above-board, they will think there may be something underboard; and from thinking there may be something, they will think it is very likely there is something; and from likely there is, they will conclude there is. Surely there is some plot working. But this is against the law of Love, for it thinks no evil; all the good that they see in their brethren is blasted by their suspicion of evil. Love would teach us rather by what appears to judge the best of what appears not, than by what appears not to judge the worst of what appears.

Suspicion is like some jelly stuff that is got between the joints; if the bone is out of joint, and any jelly is got in, though it be but a little soft stuff, it will hinder the setting of the bone. I confess in these times, because we have been so extremely deceived in those who have been used in public place, in whom we so much confided, there is a great deal of reason that we should be very wary of men and believe (till we have very good grounds of confidence) with trembling.

I remember Melchior Adam in the life of Bucholcerus tells of a witty counsel of his to his friend Hubnerus, who being to go to the Court to teach the Prince Electors' children, at their parting, I will give you, says he, one profitable rule for your whole life: I commend (says he) to you the faith of the Devils. At which Hubnerus wondered, Take heed (says he) how you trust any at the Court; believe their promises but warily, but with fear; you may fear they will never come to anything. But in the meantime while we are thus fearful of one another, while we cannot trust one another, we cannot join one with another.

I have read of Cambyses; he did but dream his brother should be King of Persia, and he put him to death. Many amongst us do but dream of men, with whom our hearts are not, that they have some plots working, and how do our spirits work against them? Groundless jealousies arise from much baseness in our own hearts. Those who have no principle of faithfulness in themselves are suspicious of everyone; but as for those who suffer causelessly, in this thing let them be of good comfort: God will reward them good for what evil they suffer.

We read in Num. 5:28 that if a man were jealous of his wife so that he brought her to the trial by drinking the water of jealousy, if she were clear, she should not only be freed from hurt by that water but she should

conceive seed. If she went barren before, the Lord would recompense her sorrow and trouble she suffered by her husband's suspicion of her. And Paulus Fagius upon the place says, The Jews had a tradition not only that she should conceive but it should be a man-child; if she had any disease, she should be freed; and if she brought forth before with difficulty, she should bring forth now with ease.

Let not men therefore who are of public use, having their consciences clear yet because they are under suspicion throw off all in anger: Such a temptation many lie under; but let them know this temptation cannot prevail but upon the distemper of their hearts, the exceedingly sinful rebelliousness of their spirits; they should trust God with their names, their esteem, their honor, and go on in their work. The only way to deliver themselves from suspicion is their constant industry and faithfulness in all opportunities of service God puts into their hands; and with the more quietness of spirit, with the less noise they go on, the sooner will the suspicions they were under wash off and vanish to nothing; God will make their names break forth as the light; those weeds having no ground to take root will wither and die away.

The tenth dividing distemper, A spirit of contention.

As in some there is a strong inclination, a vehement impetus to whoredom, which the Prophet calls a spirit of whoredom; so there is in others a vehement strong disposition of heart to contention; these have a spirit of contention; these are like Salamanders who love and live in the fire. They thirst after the waters of Massah and Meribah; their temper is such as if they drank no other drink than what was brewed of those waters. Contentions and strifes that are as tedious to other men as death are their

delight; they are most in their element when they are over head and ears in them.

A contentious spirit will always find matter for contention. Prov. 26:21: As coals to burning coals and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife: they are ready to put their hands to any strife they meet with: yet Prov. 26:17: He that meddles with strife belonging not to him is like one that holds a dog by the ears. Many men have no mettle in anything but contentions; like many jades who are dull in travel, they have mettle only to kick and to play jadish tricks.

If you have any spirit, any zeal and courage, it is a pity it should be laid out in quarrels; reserve it for the Cause of God, to strengthen you in contending for the Truth and the Public.

The eleventh distemper, Covetousness.

This is the root of all evil; there is no greater plague to friendship than the desire for money, says Lælius apud Cicero. A covetous man is clever in foreseeing ways of gain, and he is stubborn in holding fast to what may be for his advantage. You know what a stir Demetrius and his fellows made in Ephesus when their profit was endangered; they would rather set all in a tumult than let their gain go. 1 Tim. 4:5. Envy, strife, railings, and perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness. How will some object against men, withdraw from them, and deprive themselves of the benefits of the gifts of God in them, of much good they have previously acknowledged they have received from them, all merely to save their purses, and that in a poor, petty way? What a stir has this Meum and Tuum made in the world? The sweetness of gain among men is like honey cast among bears; they will fight, rend, and tear out one another's throats for it. Those who will be rich fall into temptations and a

snare, and into many hurtful lusts, 1 Tim. 6:9-10. They pierce themselves and others too with many sorrows.

When divisions arose in Germany upon Luther's doctrine, men of base covetous spirits, judging Luther by themselves, thought that Luther made all this stir to get gain. Why then, says one, do you not stop the man's mouth with gold or silver? Another answers, Oh, this German beast cares not for money.

The twelfth dividing distemper, Falseness.

Nothing more firmly unites and holds together the Commonwealth than fidelity, says Cicero. Truth is a girdle. Stand therefore, having your loins girt with truth, Eph. 6:14. Truth binds, and falseness loosens. The Apostle Eph. 4:25 exhorts to put away lying and for every man to speak truth to his neighbor on this ground because we are members one of another. The Romans esteemed truth so highly for uniting men into societies that they built a temple to it as to a goddess; in this temple all leagues, covenants, truces, and important bargains were made, which were so religiously observed that whoever broke them was held as a cursed, damned creature, unfit for human society. Rom. 1:29. Full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity. A man would be better off being true to false principles than being false to true ones. Those who are false are also mischievous: they care not what mischief they do to any so long as they may uphold themselves and repair that credit which formerly they had but now through their base falseness is cracked; and if they have wronged any by their falseness, they seek to keep such down, if not to ruin them, fearing lest their falseness should hereafter be avenged; and if they cannot get them down by force, they will seek to do it by adding yet more falseness, by flattering those whom their hearts hate and would gladly ruin. That Scripture, Prov. 26:28,

is very remarkable for this: A lying tongue hates those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth works ruin. Psal. 72:14. He shall deliver their soul from deceit and violence. If men who are false cannot accomplish their ends by deceit, they will seek to do it by violence: God has His time to deliver His saints from both. Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.

Chapter Twenty

Dividing Practices. The first, The Practice of the Tongue. The second, Needless Disputes.

Provoking bitter language is a great divider: An evil tongue in Scripture is compared to swords, arrows, razors, the poison of asps, fire, even to the fire of hell which sets all the world on fire, to wild beasts; it is an unruly member that cannot be tamed. When a philosopher saw two women of ill fame talking together, he said that by this speech the asp takes in poison from the viper, which it seems was a proverbial speech in Tertullian's time; he inveighing against Marcion the heretic said, Let the heretic cease borrowing poison from the Jew according to the proverb: the asp from the viper.

Many men of moderate spirits, if left alone yet meeting with men who tell them stories and speak ill of those men that previously they had a good opinion of, now before they have examined what the truth is there is venom got into their spirits before they are aware; their hearts begin to be hot and to rise against those men they hear such things of; their thoughts are altered concerning them; their spirits alienated; breaches are made; and men who are innocent wonder from whence all comes. O take heed of these men of

evil tongues especially at your tables for while you are warm with mirth and good cheer you are in greater danger to take down the discourse of such as are at table with you; some poison may get into your spirits and you not think of it.

Saint Augustine could not endure such guests at his table; he caused therefore these two verses to be written over his table; it were well they were over some of yours:

Quisquis amat dictis absentum rodere vitam,Hanc mensam vetitam noverit ipse sibi.To speak ill of the absent forbear,Or else sit not at table here.

But if men of evil tongues do so much hurt to men of moderate spirits what hurt do they do one to another? When two or three or more of them meet together having all of them bitter spirits and evil tongues what hot burning venom do they infuse one into another inflaming one another with malice? That proverbial speech ὀφις ἢ μὴ φαγη ὀφιν δράκων οὐ γξνήσεται is true of these men; if one serpent did not eat another there would be no dragon; by taking in one another's poison they grow to be fiery dragons flying up and down from place to place with their fiery stings.

Destroy O Lord and divide their tongues for I have seen violence and strife in the city Psal. 45:9. The same letters in the Hebrew word that signify verbum (a word) also signify pestis (the plague); an evil tongue has the pestilence in it.

The whisperings of an evil tongue cause divisions Rom. 1:29. Full of envy debate malignity whisperers. 2 Cor. 12:20. Debates envyings wraths strifes whisperings. Many with sidling paltry dispositions go up and down whispering; they speak very secretly to you; you must tell nobody by any means yet themselves tell it to a second a third a tenth and anyone they

meet with whom they desire to ingratiate themselves; and to everybody they speak yet still they must tell nobody; they do not love to be brought forth as the authors; they tell you as a friend what they hear; and thus carrying tales up and down in a secret way they do what in them lies to blast the names of their brethren; jealousies suspicions envyings displeasure anger is raised and the parties against whom all this is wonder what is the matter they being no ways conscious to themselves of any misconduct towards such from whom they find such strange carriage; at last some nibbling whispering mouse is found to be the cause of all.

These whispering tale-bearers have such an art as to cause what they speak in secret to sink very deeply into men's hearts. They profess themselves very sorry for what they tell you, but it is too true, and with a deep sigh, they harm their neighbor; "Et sic cum vultu mæsto procedit maledictio," Bern. But let men take heed of them, for they strike and wound as much, if not more, than they do those against whom they speak, for the latter know nothing of it. Though they suffer, yet they do not sin; but you may not only be troubled, and that causelessly (it may be), and for nothing lose the sweetness of your love to your friend and the enjoyment of his to you; but withal, you may entertain sin into your heart and so be wounded.

Proverbs 18:8: "The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." Beware therefore of such. Proverbs 20:19: "He that goes about as a tale-bearer reveals secrets; therefore meddle not with him that flatters with his lips." He may come flattering, fawning, and smiling to you as if he considered you a special friend and therefore would not tell everybody; but meddle not with him. If you shall hug and embrace him, you have received a wound even in the

innermost parts of the belly. Proverbs 26:20: "Where no wood is, there the fire goes out; so where there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceases."

Proverbs 16:28: "A whisperer separates chief friends." Those who have lived in entire friendship for many years sometimes have their hearts very much estranged by some whispering woman, the beauty of their friendship darkened, and the sweetness of it almost lost. Whispering tale-bearing tongues are the cause of strife; take heed of it.

And so is a censuring tongue: I can compare this to nothing better than to a candle whose tallow is mixed with brine. As soon as you light it, it spits up and down the room. Thus many have salt brine in their spirits, which when they get a little knowledge, they spit here and there in hard and bitter censures, which are exceedingly provoking to the spirits of men. Though the censures should prove true, yet the mixture of so much salt brine in them cannot but exasperate and cause men's hearts to fret; but much more if they prove to be mere slanderers.

Jeremiah 9:4: "Take ye heed every one of his neighbor, and trust ye not in any brother, for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbor will walk with slanders." And Jeremiah 6:28: "They are all grievous revolters, walking with slanders; they are brass and iron; they are all corrupters." And yet more, if this be a raging tongue: Hosea 7:16: "Their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue." Discontents rise high, first by too much liberty of the tongue, then higher by the bitterness of it; but when it comes to the rage of it, by this many times they rise so high that great men, yea princes, come to fall by the sword.

There is a story in the Tripartite History of a Christian who professed he had been thirty-seven years learning that lesson from Psalm 39:1: "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not in my tongue," and yet had not

learned it. I fear there are many amongst us who have been professors these thirty-seven years and yet have not learned this lesson; notwithstanding the Scripture says, "If a man bridles not his tongue, he deceives his own heart; this man's religion is in vain," James 1:26.

The Second Dividing Practice: Needless Disputes

When men have got a little knowledge, they think it a fine thing to be arguing and disputing in matters of religion. Unnecessary disputes become their necessary practice, for otherwise they shall be accounted as nobody if they have not something to object against almost everything. But in this way of theirs, they shall be accounted knowing men, men who have an insight into things, who understand more than ordinary men do. Hence they turn all their religion into disputes, and by them, they grow giddy.

Wine is good when it goes to the heart to cheer it, but when it fumes all up into the head, it makes it giddy. Knowledge is good when the strength of it gets to the heart to comfort it, there to breed good spirits for strengthening it in the ways of holiness; but when it flies up all into the head, it fills it with thousands of fantasies; it causes pride and giddiness. Disputes draw the best spirits from the heart, by which it weakens it.

It is a very ill sign in a man to have a contradicting spirit, to get into a vein of disputing against anything, though it be good. I have read of Gregory Nazianzen that he told his friends Julian would prove to be a notoriously wicked man; he gave this reason: because he took such delight in disputing against that which was good.

Disputes are seldom without much heart-distemper; if they continue long, they cause snarling one at another; and no marvel though those who snarl so often do bite at last. A man shows most parts in the matter of truth but most grace in the manner of handling it with reverence, holiness, and modesty.

Romans 14:1: "Receive not the weak in faith to doubtful disputations." Here is a direct injunction against those disputes I am speaking of. Let no man say every truth is precious; the least truth is more worth than our lives; we must contend for every truth.

Answer: The least truth is so precious that we must rather lose our lives than deny it; you must do and suffer much to maintain truth, but this in an orderly way.

First, you must be grounded in the main fundamentals of religion; you must be strong in the faith, and after that, labor to edify yourselves in all the truths of God, so that one may be helpful to another. It is not for everyone who has but little time, little knowledge, little means, little strength, to tire out themselves and others in doubtful disputes. The Scripture is so much against this as nothing can be more. 1 Tim. 1:4: "Which minister questions rather than edifying."

To ask and discuss questions about the great things that concern your soul, your eternal estate, and how you may live further to the honor of God is good when you meet together. To confer with one another about what God has done for your souls, to tell each other the experiences of your own hearts and God's dealings with you, what temptations you meet with, and how God helps you against them—such things as these would edify.

But when your questions are about things that you are never likely to understand, and if you did understand, they would concern you little and would not be helpful to you at all in the ways of godliness, these are the things the Holy Ghost would not have you spend your time on. Eccles. 7:29: "Man was made upright, and he has found out many inventions." Miscuerit se infinitis quæstionibus, so the old Latin reads it: he has mingled himself in infinite questions.

If we had more of that great question among us, "What shall we do to be saved?" it would cause many unprofitable questions to vanish. Never did such ignorance come upon the Christian world as in that age when the Schoolmen were in the highest esteem; all religion then was turned into questions, and both the mystery and the power of godliness were lost. The things of religion are rather to be believed than disputed. "We believe fishermen, not logicians," says Ambrose.

The Devil today seeks to darken the glory of religion this way; he sees that because so much light has broken forth, he cannot get men off it by profanity. Therefore, he labors to eat out the strength of it by busying them and getting them to delight in multitudes of questions about things of lesser concernment. 1 Tim. 6:4: "He is proud and knows nothing but doting about questions and strife of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmises, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth." These men conceive they have more knowledge than other men, but the Holy Ghost says they know nothing; they cry out much for the truth and contend for the truth, but the Holy Ghost says they are destitute of the truth.

2 Tim. 2:22-23: "Follow charity, peace, but foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes; but the servant of the Lord must not strive." And Titus 3:8-9: "This is a faithful saying, these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works; these things are good and profitable unto men, but avoid foolish questions and genealogies and contentions and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain."

The question about the law—whether a man is justified by it or by free grace in Christ—is not one of those foolish questions and needless strivings; this is a great question we are to contend for; our life is in it. But

there are other questions about the law which cause striving rather than edifying, such as whether the law is a rule for our lives as it was given by Moses. That we are bound to do what is required in the law—such as loving God and not worshipping images—is generally acknowledged. But whether we are bound to do it as it was delivered by Moses upon Mount Sinai troubles many men's heads.

That we are bound to do the same things as they are delivered by Christ in the hand of that Mediator is acknowledged by anyone who understands themselves in any measure. Now then let these two things be granted about the law: First, that we are not justified by it but by the free grace of God in Christ; secondly, that what duties of holiness are set down in the law, we are bound to them by the most strong obligations. What need do we have to contend further about the law? Let us be established in these two, and it will be sufficient for our edifying.

It is likely when Paul wrote this epistle to Titus that people's heads were troubled about some such kind of questions about the law as are among us; therefore he says, "Avoid foolish questions and strivings about the law." But now the questions about the law are driven on to such a dangerous issue that we have cause not only to be careful to avoid them but even to tremble at the thought of them.

It is now considered a legal thing against the grace of the Gospel to confess sin, to be humbled for sin, to make conscience of duty, or to be troubled in conscience for neglecting it. No, they thank God they are delivered from such things; in respect of God, whether they sin or not is all one. Yea, these things prevail with those who have been forward in profession of religion who seemed to walk strictly but now have grown

loose. That faith is easily wrought which teaches men to believe well of themselves though their lives be ill.

There is a mighty change in men's spirits now from what was before; times have been when any opinion that tended to looseness was immediately distasteful as unsavory and rejected by those who made a profession of religion.

Sleidan, in the tenth book of his Commentaries, says, the Devil that sought to do mischief at Munster was not a skillful Devil, but rude and simple, because he sought to prevail by tempting men to looseness. Whereas, he says, if he had been a cunning Devil, he would rather have deceived by abstaining from flesh, by abhorring matrimony, by shows of wonderful lowliness of mind, etc. He might sooner have taken men this way.

But truly now the most cunning Devils see it to be the best way to attain their ends, to raise up and foment opinions that tend to the liberty of the flesh, so long as they can carry them on under the guise of magnifying free grace. They find that these things are exceedingly suitable to men's spirits in these times, that they are taken in by such who formerly appeared so conscientious that he feared he should never have been able to prevail with them. He never found a way like this to prevail with such men; indeed, never a way like this to choke the Word when it first begins to work upon the heart. He has blasted more young seeming converts this way than ever he did by any other since he was a Devil.

Heretofore, the way was to stir up others to deride them for following the Word and for praying; now he has a way worth two of that, to make them deride others for their conscientiousness in following the Word and praying. This is strengthened with a high persuasion that hereby they are the great

magnifiers of the free grace of God in the Gospel, the only men who understand the Gospel way. This Devil now looks upon himself and his fellows as simple and foolish in all their former devices. Here is an experiment beyond them all; seeing this Christ must needs be magnified, he will magnify him too. Seeing the Gospel must go on, he will put it on too. He will find out a device here to strike at the practice, power, and life of godliness in a more secret and prevailing way than ever was done before.

It is likely in this generation that the former principles of godliness will not be eradicated; but if this way prevails still in proportion to what it has done, in a generation or two it is likely to bring general profaneness and licentiousness upon the face of the Christian world more than any way of Satan ever did since the world began. For here is a way to be loose and profane and to satisfy conscience too.

Chapter Twenty-One

The Third Dividing Practice: Men Not Keeping Within the Bounds That God Has Set Them

First, when men will be meddling with that which concerns them not, that is out of their sphere. 1 Thessalonians 4:11: "Study to be quiet, and do your own business." Proverbs 20:3: "It is an honor for a man to cease from strife, but every fool will be meddling." Choler in the gall is useful to the body, but if it overflows, the body grows into distemper presently. We may all be useful in our places if we keep to them, contenting ourselves with the improvement of our talents in them; thus both ourselves and others may have quiet.

When manna was gathered and kept in that proportion God would have it, it was very good; but when men must have more and keep it longer than God would have them, then it breeds worms. Thus it will be in all that we have or do; let us keep our proportion God sets us, and all will be well. But if we think to provide better for ourselves by going beyond our measure, worms are presently bred in all.

But especially where men will not keep within their bounds in their power over others; for what is all our contestation at this time? Is it not about men

stretching their power beyond their line both in State and Church? From whence are our State-divisions, our wars, but because Princes have been persuaded their power was boundless? At least not to be kept within those bounds the State says it ought to be. They think there is such a distance between them and others that the estates, liberties, lives of all men within their country lie at their mercy; not considering how they come to be raised so high: that what they have above others is given to them by those above whom they are.

No man inherits more than was given to his forefathers and so to him, whereby they might see that they are not limited only by the laws of God but by the laws of men also, namely, the agreement between them and the people when they are raised to such dignities. There is nothing weakens their right more than pleading it by conquest; Princes have little cause to thank those who plead their right that way. The surest foundation for Princes to set their feet on is the agreement between the people and them or their progenitors; but if they go beyond this agreement, what stirrings, what woeful disturbances do they make!

Secondly, if either they or any governors of the State shall instead of being helpful to the government of the Church take it all from it into their own hands, in this they go beyond those bounds Christ would have them. It is by the civil power that the governors of the Church have the peaceable exercise of what power Christ has given them, but they do not receive their power from them. Civil authority cannot put any spiritual power into a man or company of men which they had not before; it can only protect, encourage, and further the exercise of that power that Christ has given.

"They are inconsiderate men," says Calvin, "who make magistrates too spiritual." This evil, he says, prevails in Germany and in the countries about

us; we find what fruit grows from this root, namely, that those who are in power think themselves so spiritual that there is no other ecclesiastical government. This sacrilege comes in violently amongst us because they cannot measure their office within its due bounds.

And for Church-governors, if they would keep within their limits, we might enjoy much peace. If first they would assume no more power than Christ has given them; secondly, if they would not extend it over more congregations than Christ has committed to them; thirdly, if they would not exercise it in more things than Christ would have them. Let us look a little into these three, for the lack of a right understanding in them has caused and may yet further cause much disturbance.

For the first point, it is evident in Scripture, as seen in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Romans 12:8, that Christ has appointed some to rule in His Church, and not all members are in the office of ruling. However, the notion that these officers, whether preaching elders or others, should have the sole power of ruling and act entirely within their own consistory or classis—without the Church having any role but to obey—assumes power beyond what is given to them. This has introduced tyranny into the Church, causing church officers to view the rest of the Church contemptuously, as if they were ignorant and weak, unfit to engage in governance matters or even to acknowledge or consent to the actions of church officers. Whether the congregation understands or agrees is deemed irrelevant; the decisions of those in authority must stand, and their censures must be submitted to.

Peter Martyr, in a letter to ministers and believers in Poland, exhorts them to establish discipline in the Church as soon as possible while people's hearts are fervent with love for and desire for the Gospel. He warns that it will be more challenging to introduce discipline later when their hearts

grow cold. He emphasizes that discipline is not a trivial matter, asserting that churches lacking it cannot be said to profess the Gospel truly or solidly. He insists that discipline is not the least part of Christian religion and that neglecting it is akin to neglecting a significant portion of the Gospel. He anticipates objections that under the guise of discipline, ministers might tyrannize and impose their own will.

To this concern, he responds that tyranny among ministers need not be feared where Gospel rules for censures are observed. In cases of excommunication for those who refuse to reform, the consent of the Church is necessary; if done with this authority, no one can complain of tyranny by a few.

Cyprian, in his sixth epistle, declares his intention to do nothing without the counsel of the elders and the consent of the people. Our brethren in Scotland, opposing the prelates, attribute significant authority to the people in matters of excommunication. They assert that it pertains to the whole Church collectively to deny Christian communion to wicked individuals who persist in disobedience; therefore, it pertains to the whole Church to excommunicate them. Furthermore, they argue that since it pertains to the whole Church to admit someone into communion, it also pertains to cast someone out. They cite that when the Apostle wrote to the whole Church of Corinth, he instructed them to deliver an incestuous person to Satan when gathered together; thus, every particular church or congregation has the power to excommunicate. They provide arguments to show that the Apostle did not excommunicate by his own authority alone but by the authority of the Church collectively, not just by its ministers or elders.

Let no one say this was merely one minister's opinion. At the beginning of this Parliament, I, along with a reverend brother, asked Master Henderson—

accompanied by two or three ministers from Scotland—whether we could consider that book as representing the judgment of the most godly and capable ministers of Scotland regarding church discipline. They affirmed that we could.

The second way church officers exceed their limits is by extending their power over more congregations than Christ has charged them with. The chief church controversy today concerns this extent. I will only outline where the difference lies between opposing views. The question is whether a pastor set by Christ over a particular congregation for teaching through Word and Sacraments may retain pastoral duties for one congregation but extend ruling authority over hundreds more.

Some argue that no minister can have ruling authority over people beyond his charge for Word and Sacrament; they believe those who can say to a minister that his charge does not extend to their souls for feeding cannot be ruled by him either. If he thinks he may preach or administer sacraments arbitrarily without claiming authority over them, then at most he may exercise rule only in this manner.

Others contend that a minister may respond by acknowledging his particular congregation as his flock while occasionally helping another congregation without having charge over their souls as pastor. However, they believe his ruling power extends with others over hundreds of congregations according to their association. They claim supreme ruling power over these congregations beyond what local ministers or elders possess; even if all local leaders disagree with them on matters concerning a congregation, they will judge and determine, exercising ecclesiastical jurisdiction as they see fit—even if none have ever met any members of that congregation.

This is where the major dividing controversy lies; determining which view is right or wrong is not my task here. My role is merely to present what the controversy involves and why there is so much debate.

Though I do not resolve this issue either way, I will leave two considerations to aid your thoughts on it.

First, the extent of the power of Jurisdiction must be defined by its institution as well as the power itself; all juridical power whatsoever, either in state or Church, receives its limits or extent from the same authority from which it first originated. This is impossible to deny: If a man is made a Mayor of a town by a Charter, he cannot therefore claim the power of a Mayor wherever he goes, unless the authority that first gave him his power also extends it. Now, the Charter by which any Church Officer is invested with power is the Word; therefore, we cannot restrict or enlarge the power of a Minister other than how we find it in the Word. For civil power, it may be restricted or enlarged as the Governors of State see fit because their Charter is from man; it is ἀνθρωπίνη κτίσις (human creation).

Secondly, man is naturally more impatient about having Jurisdiction claimed over him unless he sees the claim to be right; and in the matter of spiritual jurisdiction, man is most sensitive because, in that, men come in the Name of Christ to him, claiming authority to exercise the power of Christ over him—not over the outward man so much as over his soul, to deliver it up to Satan. Surely there needs to be shown a clear and full Charter that any men have that gives them such power as this, to which men in conscience shall be bound to submit. Now then, here lies the division: one says his Charter does extend so far; the other says he does not find it so in the reading of it.

There is yet a further consideration of stretching either Civil or Ecclesiastical authority beyond their bounds, which has been and may be the cause of much division; that is, their claiming and exercising power in things indifferent, beyond what God has given them. For the opening of which we must know:

First, no man either in State or Church has any authority given him by God to command anything merely because he wills it; especially when the things concern the worship of God. Our Brethren of Scotland, in their dispute against English Popish ceremonies, part 3, chap. 8, page 127, have this passage: Princes have enjoined things pertaining to the worship of God, but those things were the very same which God's written Word had expressly commanded; when Princes went beyond these limits and bounds, they took upon themselves to judge and command more than God has put within the compass of their power. And page 136 of the same Book they say: The Apostle, 1 Cor. 7:23, forbids us to be the servants of men; that is, to do things for which we have no other warrant besides the pleasure and will of men. This was the Doctrine in Tertullian's time: You exercise, says he, an unjust dominion over others if you deny a thing may be done because you will, not because it ought not to be done.

It is only the Prerogative of God and Jesus Christ to command a thing because they will.

God has appointed Civil Governors to be his Ministers for our good (Rom. 13). Those things only which they can do in God's Name as his Ministers and are for the good of a State are the objects about which their power is to be exercised; they are not to require a thing because there is nothing against it but because this thing is for God. And Church-governors are to require only such things as Christ requires; all the exercise of their

power ought to be in the Name of Christ, hence not because they will or because nothing can be said to the contrary.

In all they require of us, they must be able to say as Paul did in 1 Cor. 14:38, giving rules about order and decency: If any man thinks himself to be a Prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the Commandments of the Lord.

You will say: But are Governors always bound to show a reason for their will to those who are under them? Or may they not obey except they know some good in the thing besides doing the will of those who command them?

Answer: Though no Governors may command but upon reason, yet the Governors of State need not always disclose the reasons for their commands.

We may give up our Civil liberties so far as to be bound to yield to our Governors' commands if we see nothing against what they command but have cause to suppose that they see some reason that we do not, which is not fit to make known to us. This is grounded upon this reason: that there are Arcana imperii (mysteries of State) that are not fit for every man to know; the secrecy of them conduces most to the good of the State. But it is otherwise in matters of the Church, which are spiritual; there are no such mysteries in the Church wherein any members of it can be required to be active but it concerns them to understand as well as do.

All actions of the Church as such must be done for spiritual edification; now a man cannot do a thing for edifying his soul or another's soul unless he understands his action and its rule; he must see it required by the Word or otherwise he cannot expect any spiritual efficacy in what he does. I may do a thing for a civil good wherein I may trust another man's reason and this may be sufficient to attain my end—the procuring of some good merely

civil—but this will never reach a spiritual good. I must see the reason, ground, and rule of the action myself; I must judge by the Word that this action at this time clothed with all its circumstances is by Christ fitted for such a spiritual good that I aim at.

Besides, if things merely indifferent are enjoined, then Christian liberty is violated. No, say some; Christian liberty is in the conscience. As long as a man keeps his conscience free, the thing may still be indifferent to him regarding his conscience though his practice is determined, and so Christian liberty is preserved. This is what the Prelatical party used against our Brethren of Scotland many years ago when they pleaded that by their usurpation Christian liberty was taken from them.

To that answer of the Prelates, they thus reply: When the authority of the Church's constitution is imposed to bind and restrain Christians' practice in things indifferent,* they are deprived of their liberty just as if an opinion of necessity were imposed on their consciences. They urge that place, Col. 2:21, where the Apostle gives instances, say they, of such human ordinances as take away Christian liberty; he says not "you must think you may not touch," but "touch not"; you must not practice nor be subject to such ordinances; telling us that when practice is restrained from touching, tasting, handling by men's ordinance, then Christian liberty is spoiled though conscience remains free; if the outward man is brought into bondage, this constitutes spiritual thralldom (say they) though there be no more.

And further, the Apostle gives these two arguments against these things:

First, he says they perish with use; that is, there is no good comes from them.

It may be you will say, what harm is there in them? That is not enough, says the Apostle, to justify them. Even if there should be no harm in them, yet seeing they perish in the use, seeing there comes no good by them, you must not do them. But what if they shall be commanded by authority? May we not do them then? No, says the Apostle, that is another argument against them; they are after the commandments and doctrines of men. If it is a mere ordinance of man, and there is no other reason in the thing but because man enjoins it in the Church, you are not to do it.

Indeed, in some respects, we have less liberty in things indifferent if they are enjoined by men than we had before. This is thought to be a very strange assertion by some; but consider this one thing, and it will not appear so: Though I might do such a thing before, yet if man shall take upon him this authority to command merely because of his will and pleasure, if I now obey, I am in danger of edifying him, of strengthening him in this his sin. He challenges this authority, and I seem to yield it to him; certainly, he is strengthened in it by my subjection unless I do this, at least profess against any such authority of man granted by Jesus Christ.

But some say, if you take from governors the power to command things indifferent, you take away all their power; for things necessary are required without them, and things sinful they may not command.

Answer: Surely this notion comes rather from tradition than from due consideration; for is it not power enough to see to the keeping of the commands of God, that the ordinances be kept pure, that there be justice between man and man, to reward those who do well, and to punish the evildoers?

Yet thus far must be granted to the officers of the Church: they have authority from Christ to declare dogmatically when a thing in itself

indifferent yet by reason of some circumstances comes to be a duty. This is to be regarded more than the declaration of any private brother or brethren, for they do it by way of office in the name of Christ. This we find in Acts 15: the Apostles and Elders sent their decrees, δόγματα κεκριμένα, their dogmatic determinations about some things in themselves indifferent. But as clothed with those circumstances, they call them things necessary; they determine them to be done from the reason of the things, not from their authority. Those things were duties before they decreed them and would have been had they never decreed them. Even forbearing the eating of blood was a duty in case of offense, though their decree had never been; otherwise, it was no duty notwithstanding their decree. For afterward Paul says that whatever is sold in the shambles, they might eat of it, asking no question for conscience's sake, and every creature of God is good if it is received with thanksgiving.

Thus we have seen what the bounds are which God has set for men in authority or at least the controversy about them: let them be careful to keep within their bounds as they are set to keep others within theirs. By this, Church and State may enjoy much peace.

Chapter Twenty-Two

The Fourth Dividing Practice: Gathering of Churches Disorderly

This is cried out as the greatest dividing practice of all. You may speak of this or that being dividing amongst us, say some, but above all things, this gathering of churches is the great divider amongst us.

To this I shall speak in these six things.

First, it is not absolutely unlawful for a church to be gathered out of a church. Voetius, that learned professor of Utrecht, answering Jansenius pleading against us for separating from the Romish Church, which was the most ancient and famous Church: No, says he, it is not absolutely evil to separate from such a church; for then the Christians gathering themselves out of the Jewish Church were schismatics, which is false.

Doctor Jackson, a prelatical man, in the 14th chapter of his Treatise of the Church, gives two reasons which he says are just and necessary for which men (whether few or many) may and ought to separate themselves from any visible church. First, because they are urged or constrained to profess or believe some points of doctrine or to venture upon some practices which are contrary to the rule of faith or love of God. Second, in case they are utterly deprived of freedom of conscience in professing what they inwardly believe

or are bereft of some other means either altogether necessary or most expedient to salvation. For which latter he quotes 1 Cor. 7:23: "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye servants of men." Although (says he) we were persuaded that we could communicate with such a church without evident danger of damnation, yet inasmuch as we cannot communicate with it upon any better terms than legal servants or bondslaves do with their masters, we are bound in conscience and religious discretion when lawful occasions and opportunities are offered to use our liberty and seek our freedom rather than live in bondage.

This doctrine was allowed in the bishops' times. Now suppose upon these two grounds there be a withdrawing from a church; Christ does not require his people to live without ordinances all their days rather than they should join themselves together into another body.

Secondly, yet where these causes are not but men may communicate without sin, professing the truth and enjoying all ordinances as freemen of Christ. Men must not separate from a church though there be corruption in it to gather into a new church which may be more pure and in some respects more comfortable. First, because we never find the saints in Scripture separating or raising churches in such a case; and secondly, there would be no continuance in church fellowship if this were admitted: for what church is so pure and has all things so comfortable but within a while another church will be more pure and some things will be more comfortable there? The general peace of the church should be more regarded by us than some comfortable accommodations for ourselves.

Thirdly, although you cannot for the present communicate with the church in which you are without sin or bondage, yet you are not presently to withdraw to gather into another or join with another. You are bound to give

so much respect to the church as to continue with much long-suffering to seek the good of that church to remove the sin that is upon it with all good means you can. You must bear much with a brother; much more with a church.

Fourthly, if things were in that ordered and settled way as they ought, there ought to be no gathering of any new churches without consulting and advising with neighboring churches. Christ would have all churches unite themselves and have conjunction one with another being all of the same body of Christ. If then there is to be raised a new sister church that expects and desires the benefit of communion with the rest, there is all the reason in the world that the help, advice, and assistance of the other churches should be made use of in raising and ordering this church that they are thus to own in the way of communion with them to whom they are to give the right hand of fellowship.

Fifthly, all believers who live in a place together ought, as far as they can, to join into one Church, even if they have different judgments and temperaments. Whatever differences they have, if they can coexist with grace, they have no encouragement from the examples of any of the Churches we read about in Scripture to divide themselves into small groups. The way of Christ throughout Scripture is that all the Saints in such a place, who are not more than can join in one, should join together and form just one Church. Certainly, this is more for the honor of Christ's Body than the division of Saints in the same place into several small societies. Christ places great importance on the union of his Saints in one, in all ways, by all means possible.

Sixthly, as things currently stand with us, there is no substantial reason for the outcry against the gathering of Churches as a divisive practice, as many

seem to make it. How can this practice be so offensive when almost all of you think it lawful for a man to move from one Church to another for convenience, provided he relocates his dwelling? But these do not establish new Churches.

Answer: If a group of men with estates is not satisfied with the Ministry they are currently joined with and decides to buy land close by, build on it, and receive permission from the State to create a new Parish from those dwellings, who would blame them for gathering a Church in this manner? Hence, it is apparent that withdrawing from our Churches and gathering others is not against any Church Principle according to our Brethren's judgments; the offense lies only against some Civil constitution.

Secondly, this practice has been commonly practiced before without any offense to the godly and is still practiced without complaint. Has it not been, and is it not still common for many not to communicate in the Parishes where they live? Nor commonly to hear there, but from all parts of the City to come to some Parishes where they perceive the best Ministers to be, and there to hear and communicate regularly, with allowance for the maintenance of such Ministers? Yes, and thus the husband goes one way and the wife another, yet none are offended; perhaps the gentleman is content with his Parish-Church, but his wife or lady is not satisfied and must go elsewhere.

If it is said that this was during a time of great confusion when things were not as reformed as they are now and may be further reformed:

Answer: 1. Then it is not inherently unlawful.2. It continues so still in many places of this City.3. When you have reformed further, perhaps men's consciences will be further satisfied; you may reform enough to prevent much of what you now complain about.

But though they came for their present relief, they did not bind themselves to one another by Covenant as men do now.

Answer: If those who came constantly to your Ministry and Sacraments had professed their willingness to join with you in all the Ordinances of Christ as far as they knew and to walk accordingly, you might have more comfortably administered ordinances to them; it could not have been offensive to you.

Objection: But their Covenant binds them so that they cannot return back again, regardless of any reformation.

Answer: Pray for and endeavor to advance Reformation to the utmost, and then see what they will do; they have not yet declared themselves as holding themselves so joined by any Covenant that they may not join with you. Whatever relief they have had for the present time or whatever agreement there has been among themselves should not hinder them from following that way consistently presented in Scripture; namely, for all the Saints that live together to join in one as far as possible.

But those who gather Churches in this way view all others who are not in that way as Heathens; what division must this cause?

Answer: If this were true, it would indeed be a sad dividing practice; wicked men cannot endure being judged this way or being cast out as unworthy of Church-fellowship. Much less can the Saints bear it; it must deeply affect their hearts. Aben Ezra says the Ammonites and Moabites burned the Books of the Law because of Deuteronomy 23:3: "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the Congregation of the Lord, even to their tenth Generation." If an Ammonite or Moabite cannot bear being shut out of the Congregation of the Lord,* how can the Saints bear it? But God knows, and our Brethren may know—I hope they shall know—

that this is not the case: O no, they view you as precious Saints of God, their dear Brethren in Jesus Christ. They bless God for the graces they see in you and rejoice in the hope of living eternally in Heaven with you.

But why then will they not admit them to their communion?

Answer: In all worship that belongs to Saints as Saints, they joyfully join with them; but they believe there is some worship that belongs to Saints gathered in a Society under officers, which cannot be performed orderly except in that way. They think it unreasonable for anyone to have the benefits of Church privileges while being under no power or discipline of any Church; that they should pick and choose Ordinances yet live at liberty so that if they walk disorderly, no Church has any power to call them to account. Suppose this is a reason why they do not admit some; this is different from judging them as Heathens.

Let me say further: I know none of these congregated Churches, either here or elsewhere, that ever refused anyone who appeared godly from communicating with them if they acknowledged themselves as members of any Church elsewhere, even if that Church was in a different way regarding government.

You will ask, what need is there for that?

Answer: If it is to prevent looseness in men who will be under no government or because they judge Sacramental communion as a Church-Ordinance; or if it should be through a mistake—yet howsoever—this must not be judged as them considering all who do not join with them as Heathens; this is the most uncharitable interpretation possible.

Chapter Twenty-Three

The fifth dividing practice: The aspersing and seeking to damage the reputations of those men whom the Lord uses as instruments of good.

This may be done, you know, otherwise than by the tongue. This has been an old dividing way: if we can discredit the leader of a party, we shall do well enough with the rest. Therefore, let us interpret what they do as negatively as possible; let us attach as many ill things to them as we can find any color or pretense for. Let reports be raised, fomented, and spread; whether they are true or not, it makes no matter—something will stick. Jeremiah 20:10: "Report," say they, "and we will report it." Do but raise a report; let us be able to say we heard it, or there was a letter written about such a thing, and we will boldly assert it and divulge it. The very apprehension of it will prevail with many; these men shall not have that esteem in the hearts of men so generally as they have had before. If we once diminish their esteem, we shall do well enough with their cause.

If we can find any bold spirit willing to encounter them in this, who dares to gather up, make, aggravate, or twist reports, or do anything that may render them otherwise in the thoughts and hearts of men than they have been, we shall break them. It is but one or two venturing the hard thoughts of men to make an experiment; some may be found fit for such a business. We will find ways to encourage them; if their hearts begin to fail, we will apply warm encouragements to them. We will support them one way or another; this must be done, or else whatever we do will be to no purpose. Something or other must be found to serve our ends in this.

Does Moses prevail too much in the hearts of the people? Something must be found against him. If we can find nothing against himself, yet we will find something against his wife. She is an Ethiopian woman, Numbers 12:1. And yet who was she but the daughter of Jethro, to whom he had been married many years before? For an Ethiopian and a Midianitish woman are all one. But now we are resolved to pick out whatever we can get information of, even if it is in things done many years since, when they were in the university or lived in such places in times of old. It will serve our turn; we may fasten it upon them. Proverbs 16:27: "An ungodly man digs up evil, and in his lips there is a burning fire." If he has nothing above ground, he will dig something up, even if it is what both God and man have buried long since.

David was a public instrument of God for much good, yet Psalm 31:1 says he was a reproach among his enemies, but especially among his neighbors. Nehemiah was raised up by God for great service; what dirt was cast upon him? He was accused of sedition and rebellion. Paul was called a pestilent fellow; he and his company with him turned the world upside down. What evil can be devised that was not fastened upon the Christians in

the primitive times? They were charged with being the cause of all their misery; if they had bad weather, if the rivers overflowed, if the Nile did not flow, if there was any earthquake, plague, famine—haul the Christians to the lions. At their meetings, they said they made Thyestes suppers, who invited his brother to supper and presented him a dish of his own flesh, a limb of his son. Many such abominable things were fastened upon them that are not fit to be named.

Tertullian tells the Christians that they were like men on a rope; if they went one step awry, they were in danger of being undone by it. So narrowly did their enemies watch them and so maliciously did they aggravate all their mistakes. Thus the most eminent after his time, like Athanasius, was as miserably slandered as ever poor man in this world by the Arian party; they rendered him most odious to his friends and strangers.

In the beginning of Reformation, the Waldenses were so slandered that the story says of them there was not one arrow in the quiver of malice but it was drawn forth and shot at them. Luther, Calvin, Beza, Oecolampadius, Bullinger, and the rest are by some in writing rendered the most black and vile pieces that the earth bore, both in their lives and deaths. I find it recorded of Zwingli that he was a man so eminent that his friends made him almost a god; and so traduced by his enemies that one would wonder the earth did not open and swallow up such a man.

The same dealings did that worthy instrument of God Mr. Knox find when he fled with others to Frankfurt during Queen Mary's time. When men of vile contentious spirits could not prevail against him any other way, they sought to slander him so maliciously that his life was in danger. They accused him to the governors of Frankfurt for a sermon preached in England in which the Emperor was concerned: "O England, England," he

said, "if thou wilt obstinately return into Egypt—that is, if thou contract marriage, confederacy or league with such princes as maintain and advance idolatry—such as the Emperor who is no less enemy to Christ than Nero; if for the pleasure of such princes thou return to thine old abominations, then assuredly, O England, thou shalt be plagued and brought to desolation by means of those whose favor thou seekest."

The same measure did those worthy men of God meet with who sought after Reformation in Queen Elizabeth's days. They called Mr. Cartwright an Anabaptist and whatever evil there was in any opinion in those times they fastened upon him. Mr. Udall was accused for his life and condemned to be hanged for writing that if Parliament did not bring in the government of Christ, Christ himself would bring it in by some means that would make their hearts ache—or to that effect—meaning as he expounded the words that Christ would in some way of judgment make way to set up his own government in the land. But they twisted the words to a seditious sense as if he had meant to conspire to raise a force and by violence of arms make Parliament yield to that way of government he conceived to be Christ's—just like those accusations among us today that if such kind of men cannot have liberty of their way granted to them since they have or hope to have the sword in their hand they will take it to themselves and defend themselves also in it.

Only in this do they go beyond the bitterness of the Prelatic party: they twisted what was said or written; these feign what was never said or written. Who are the firebrands among us if not such men as these? As firebrands plucked out of the fire now seek to fire those who plucked them out—but if this is too hot what will you call them? What will you say of

them? Oh is this the fruit of all prayers for them—relief of them—respect to them?

Tanta ne vos generis tenuit fiducia vestri? Sed motas præstat componere lites.

Whoever reads that book by Bancroft, entitled "Dangerous Positions," published and practiced by those who pretend reformation for the Presbyterian government, will find the entire subject of the book to be the defamation of the most eminent godly ministers of those times. It portrays them to the state as men unfit to be tolerated in any Christian commonwealth. At that time, the state was wholly in favor of prelacy and opposed to the form of government these men sought. Their adversaries felt emboldened to take whatever liberties they pleased to calumniate, traduce, and render them as vile as possible. There was no better way to suppress them than this; it was akin to those in the primitive times who put Christians into bear and tiger skins and then cast them to the dogs to be devoured.

Let the servants of God appear as they are, and they will gain reverential respect even from the multitude. But when these ugly things are imposed upon them, they become objects of fury. I have read in Suetonius about the cruelty of Tiberius, who, because it was unlawful for virgins to be put to death, caused the executioner to violate them and then execute them. This is akin to the cruelty of some among us; they can harm some men only by first defiling their names. Once defiled, they believe they can do anything with them. To those who create divisions among us in such an ungodly way, all I shall further say is: The Lord rebuke them.

As for the servants of God, they commit their names and ways to God, knowing that the Lord takes care of their names as well as their souls. If dirt

is cast upon a mud wall, it sticks; but if upon marble, it soon washes or crumbles away. God will, in time, justify His servants even in your consciences by the constancy of their peaceable conduct towards men and their gracious holy walking with God. Only take heed that you do not involve yourselves in the guilt of wrong done unto them by your readiness to embrace and take pleasure in whatever evil you hear of those whom God considers faithful.

Chapter Twenty-Four

The Sixth Dividing Practice: The Giving of Characterizing Names to Men, Names of Division

This is an old, continued practice of the devil; he has gained much by it and is therefore loath to leave it. The orthodox of old were called Cornelians and Cyrillians by the followers of Novatus and Nestorius. In times of reformation, they were labeled Lutherans, Zwinglians, Hussites, Calvinists, and Huguenots. Tertullian says in his "Apology" for the Christians of his time that their crime, for which they are persecuted, has no name; the crime for which they are hated and persecuted is merely their name. Such men are cried out against under such a name, but when things are examined, their name is all their crime.

Among others, that of "schismatic" is not only a characterizing but a stigmatizing name. Many have borne this brand of reproach, which upon examination will be found to be, as it is applied by many, nothing but a scaring word taken up by those who understand little of what schism is. I shall therefore endeavor to explain this briefly.

The word "schism" comes from the Greek σχίζω (schizo), meaning "to rend," from which comes σχίσμα (schisma), a rent. It is among divines a

technological term. Schism in the church is much like sedition in the state. When the church grew up to the state and outward glory of an earthly kingdom, much use was made of this term as a brand upon those who would not subject themselves to the yokes of those who loved preeminence in the church.

But the true nature of schism is this: an uncharitable, unjust, rash, violent breaking from union with the church or its members. The church is that from which the rent is made: heresy divides from the head, schism from the body, apostasy from both. This rent is either from the whole church or some part; if from the whole, it is Donatism. Donatus denied any to be part of the body of Christ or believers or such as could be saved except for that company that joined with him and those in his way. This is clear from Augustine's entire discourse against him in "De unitate Ecclesiae." Therefore, those who censure such as deny communion with some particular congregations as Donatists reveal either ignorance or malice, if not both.

Yet schism may occur even if the rent is only from some part of the church; but this must presuppose union with that part. Now there may be a twofold union with several parts of the church: either that which all who are to be accounted Christians have with them as they are part of the same Catholic body or that which is by agreement to grow up together into a special fellowship. The rending from either of these unions in such a way as mentioned before is schism.

If we separate from or refuse communion with those who are to be accounted Christians, which is due to all Christians, this is more gross schism. Or if we break off that communion which is by special agreement —either when Christians join together privately for mutual edification and

comfort or when they join together to form a distinct spiritual corporation to set up public ordinances of Christ, which Scripture calls a church—though there may be schism in breaking the former, yet the censure of schism is especially applied to undue breaking off communion in the latter.

This implies a union by a church agreement; where there never was such an agreement, there cannot be guilt of this schism. Although those who dwell within such a perambulation or compass of ground should not join in some ordinances with some within that compass—whatever offense there may be against some civil constitution—yet they do not contract upon themselves the guilt of schism because that union they never had cannot be broken.

But you will say: Yes, they are schismatics even if they were never so united because they were bound to unite thus and have not done so.

It must be granted that Christ, by what He ordered the Apostles to do, would have all Christians dwelling together, as far as they can, unite into a body. However, there is no such order from Christ that all who dwell on one side of the street should be of one body, and all on the other side of another body. If they are more than can join into one spiritual corporation, they are bound to join into several, so as they may best contribute to their own and other churches' edification. If they fail in this, not joining in the best way possible, their sin is against the edification that Christ requires, but it is not necessarily the sin of schism. Whoever they were that bounded parishes surely did not bound them to the greatest edification of the Church that might be possible, and yet who will say they were therefore schismatics? But suppose you have joined with any company of saints in a spiritual corporation; if you now uncharitably, unjustly, rashly, and violently break

from communion with them, then you contract the guilt of schism upon yourself.

First, the separation must be from a lack of charity. By faith especially, we are united to Christ our head, and by charity to one another. If a man appears to depart from any fundamental article of our faith which joined him to his head, he is to be judged a heretic. Similarly, by his appearing to depart from that love by which he was joined in communion with the members, he is to be judged a schismatic. If his departure proceeds from his love of God, his love for His saints, and his own soul—indeed, his love for that very church from which he departs—as sometimes it may, witnessing in a gracious way against evil in it, he is far from the guilt of schism.

If you say love is a secret thing and we cannot judge what is in the heart, we cannot judge it while it is in the heart, but when it appears, we may. You may know whether this or other principles act upon men by their behavior in breaking off communion. Where this is not present, bitterness, pride, and self-interest will soon appear and carry them beyond those principles they profess to follow.

If the cause of leaving communion is just, then those who give this cause are the schismatics, not those who withdraw because of it. Thus the governors of the Church may be the schismatics, and a private member withdrawing may be free. Suarez, a great Jesuit, in his disputation "De Schismate," says in some cases the Pope may be a schismatic.

If governors shall enjoin anything upon the Church or any member that is sin; or if they shall mingle evil in public worship so that there can be no joining with their worship without also joining with sin; in this case, if any withdraw from them, they are the schismatics, not those who withdraw—they are fugitives, not deserters. The blame of schism, says learned Voetius,

must not be upon those who forsake such as have forsaken Christ and the ancient faith but upon those who have thus forsaken Christ and His truth.

When the Second Council of Nice set up image-worship, many thousands could not yield to it but were forced to withdraw. Who was the schismatic party there but the Synod and those who joined with it?

Furthermore, if they impose that which is not necessary (though in itself not sinful) and will not bear with the weaknesses of those who think it to be evil; if upon that they are forced to withdraw; in this case, the governors are the schismatics also; the cause of the division is in them. They ought in such things to bear the weaknesses of their brethren and not imperiously require of them those things for which there is no necessity. If such things are sinful to their brethren's consciences and they insist on enforcing them, they lay a necessity upon them to withdraw. God will not lay the indictment of schism thus: "Such a one departed from the communion of such a Church because he would not do what was lawful to be done"; but thus: "You imposed that upon your brother which there was no necessity for and would not forbear him in what I would have you forbear him but caused him by your imperiousness and stubbornness to depart from communion with you." It is true, says God, the thing might have been done, but it was not necessary; it was out of conscience to Me that they refrained; the weakness is theirs, but the schism is yours.

This has been generally received (though it is very false) that if a man departs from a Church because he refuses to join with it in that which is not in itself evil, that this man's departure is schismatic: Certainly not. Grant there is a weakness in his conscience and thus a sin; he should inform his conscience better but cannot; and this inability is not without sin. Yet this does not rise to such a height of sin as to make that (which—supposing him

to be in this condition—is better for him to do than not to do) become schism; especially if he is willing to hold communion with that Church still in all acts of worship wherein he can join without sinning against his conscience and continues brotherly love to them as saints in all expressions thereof as he is able.

The first great schism in the Church caused by its governors was that which Victor Bishop of Rome and those who joined with him caused by that imperious way of enjoining Easter to be kept at such a time as you have mentioned. The story of which you have in Eusebius, lib. 5. cap. 23. Those who denied not the lawfulness of keeping Easter have generally accused Victor and those who so violently urged this upon the Churches as the cause of the schism—not those who did not conform to what was enjoined them because the thing was not necessary and there should have been forbearance in it. No governor ought to urge such unnecessary things which are but under suspicion by tender consciences; if they do, the schism is justly charged upon them.

Thirdly, where a man cannot have his soul edified in some ordinances and truths of great moment which that Church whereof he now is shall deny and is in great danger of being seduced to evil, he may depart from that Church to another if he does it orderly and not be guilty at all of schism. Love for God and his own soul is the cause of this—not lack of love for his brethren.

It is a good speech I find Chillingworth has. What the goodness of the man was, I know not, but in that treatise of his, "The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way," Cap. 5, Part 1, Sect. 61, answering that plea of his adversary against Protestants—that communion with a Church not erring in fundamentals, upon pretense of erring in other matters, must not be

forsaken—he has this excellent saying: If I did not find in myself a love and desire for all profitable truth; if I did not put away idleness, prejudice, and worldly affections, and so examine to the bottom all my opinions of divine matters, being prepared in mind to follow God, and God only, whichever way He shall lead me; if I did not hope that I either do or endeavor to do these things, certainly I should have little hope of obtaining salvation.

When I consider these causes of departing from a particular Church, that speech of Tertullian concerning a martyr comes to my mind: Non pœna sed causa facit Martyrem, Not the punishment but the cause makes a martyr. So, Non decessio sed causa facit Schismaticum, Not the departing, but the cause makes a schismatic. Aquinas, showing wherein the viciousness of schism lies,* says; As in natural things that which is by accident does not constitute the species, so in moral matters, not that which is beside the intention, for that is accidental: therefore, he says, the sin of schism is in that it intends to separate from that unity which charity makes, and therefore schismatics are properly those who of their own accord and intention do separate themselves from the unity of the Church.

The next thing considerable in the description of schism is the rashness or the separation: though the cause of separating be just, yet the manner of it may be schismatical if done rashly or violently. Those who are joined in communion with others, when they differ from those with whom they have communion, are bound to examine, try, and make use of all means they can to satisfy their consciences in things they scruple: and if they cannot, yet before they break off communion they are bound to seek by all means they can for a redress of those things which after most serious examination appear evil to them. They are bound to wait with much forbearance and longsuffering. And at last, if there be a necessity of departing, they must not

rend away with violence but show themselves willing and ready in the spirit of love and meekness to open their cause, to show their reasons to the Church why they cannot continue in that communion with them they formerly had, and desire that they may peaceably and lovingly depart, seeing they cannot with peace of their conscience and love to their souls continue with them, and that they may join with some other Church where they may enjoy peace and further edification.

Surely here is no schism; this is no rending away; here is no violence used; here is only a loving and peaceable secession. Notwithstanding this, were it not for the pride, envy, and rebelliousness of men's spirits, much love and peace might continue amongst Christians and Churches. True indeed, if men can bear no contradiction or any kind of blame for their ways, there must needs be trouble; but then those who do contradict or blame, though they be in the wrong, yet if it be through weakness and carried with meekness, they are not so much the cause of the trouble as those who cannot bear this weakness of their brethren without rebelliousness and contention.

There are other names of division; the name of Puritan—what a divider has it been? But seeing itself ready to die, it divided itself into two: Roundhead and Independent. These are now the opprobrious, discriminating, scornful names of division amongst us. For the first, there is so much folly and absurdity in it that surely it will soon vanish by itself if you contemn it; it is too low and contemptible for a pulpit or a pen to meddle with. But the other carries in its face an open defiance to all kinds of government—a monstrous kind of liberty for men to live as they list and to be accountable to none whatsoever they hold or do. Certainly such kinds of people as these are not to be suffered; shall I say in any Christian

society? No, not in any human society. If there be any such people as these, they are one of the most monstrous kinds of people that ever lived upon the face of the earth. How many run away with the word and cry out against men and their ways under this name which they know not? How far those who are for the Congregational way are from such an uncontrollable liberty has been shown in Chap. 7, Pag. 41.

I shall add this one thing: Of all kinds of governments in the Church, that which has this name fastened upon it is most opposite to the name of any in that sense it is ordinarily taken. For there is no Church government that holds forth more means to reduce from error or any miscarriage than this does; examine it with the Prelatic or Presbyterial Government, and you shall find it. For first, in the Prelatic Government, if once the prelates determine any case, you must there rest; there is no Church help for you except you will say it is in a Convocation where we know they ruled both in the choice of members and ordering all things as they list. In the Presbyterial way, if so many associated elders determine any case, it must in them receive the final determination; you must rest in it even though the greater part of the Churches and the greater number of elders in a kingdom should be of another mind. For if you rise to a National Assembly, there are not a twentieth part of elders of the kingdom in it.

But those whom men call Independents say that if anything be done by them that is offensive—not only those associated elders but all or any elders or churches whatsoever may require account—may in the name of Christ do all in effect for reducing them that those associated elders can do. Still remembering that Church power in one or the other goes no further than men's consciences; if men will not conscientiously regard what is done to reduce them from evil, there is no help within the Church but to appeal to

Christ. As for external help by the magistrate—that concerns not the controversy about Church government—and yet for subjection to that ordinance of God—the principles and profession of those you call Independents leave as much to the magistrate as the principle or profession of those who are Presbyterial do—if not more. Tolle jam nominis crimen et nihil restat nisi criminis nomen; Now take away the crime of the name and there remains nothing but the name of a crime.

The Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth Dividing Practices

Chapter Twenty-Five

The seventh: Whatsoever personal evil there is in any onewho is in a differing way from others is cast upon all that are in that way.

This you know was the practice of former times: whatsoever evil any rebellious professor was guilty of, it was cast upon all. They would say, "They are all like this; do you not see what hypocrites they are? Whatever their shows may be, yet if they have the opportunity, they will be as vile as any men. Enough may be found against the best of them all if they were narrowly watched. This is their way; they are a company of dissemblers." Such kinds of imputations were cast upon the misconduct of any one, upon all, on purpose to enrage the people against them. We considered this hard dealing in the past; let us not now be guilty of such things ourselves.

Some such practice likely existed among the Corinthians when the foul act of the incestuous person broke forth. Some of them were puffed up, as the Apostle charges them. It is a very strange charge that anyone should be

puffed up upon such a thing as that. What was there in it to occasion puffing up? The answer is this: It is clear there were great divisions in Corinth; some sided one way, some another. Now, one of them who was of such a side fell into this foul and scandalous sin. Upon that, the other side thought they had an advantage against the whole party, and this puffed them up. "Nay, do you not see what one of them has done? You may by him see what kind of men they are." This made the whole party low in their eyes; they cast the contempt of this one upon all that were associated with him in such a way differing from others. This could not but widen the divisions among them.

It is an evil advantage that many take. If they see some very erroneous in many ways and obnoxious in their lives, yet if these agree but in some one thing with those whom they themselves differ from, all the odium of these errors and loose lives must be cast upon such as they thus agree with in that one thing, though their consciences cannot but tell them that those brethren who are in a differing way from them do abominate such errors and looseness of life as much as themselves.

After God used Luther to bring light into Germany, many sects arose. Papists say there had grown in the Church after Luther's time, in one hundred years, two hundred and seventy sects, whereas from Christ's time to his, there cannot be reckoned above a hundred eighty-one. Now this was the practice of the Papists: that they might cast an odium upon the Lutheran party, which they looked upon as standing most in their light. Whatever errors were held or misconducts of life appeared in any of these sects, all was cast upon the Lutheran party on this ground: because the Lutherans and these sects agreed in this, that they were all against the Papacy.

There are many among us who contend for several ways: Anabaptists, Antinomians, Socinians, Separatists, those that are for the Congregational way, Seekers, with many others. They all agree in this: that they are against the Prelacy. Do you now think it would be a just thing for the Prelates to gather together all the errors, opinions, and misconducts in life in all these sorts of men and cast the ignominy and odium of all upon our brethren who contend for the Presbytery? If they should say, "Look what vile opinions are held by those who are against Episcopacy; how scandalously many of them live; but they all concur in this: they would have the Prelacy down; they are enemies to Bishops." You would immediately answer, "What though they agree in this one thing? Yet such as are for the Presbytery are as much against the errors and disorders of those who join with them in this one thing as yourselves are."

We read in Jeremiah 29:26 that Shemaiah sent letters to Zephaniah against Jeremiah. Mark the argument he uses why Jeremiah should be dealt with severely. The Lord, says he to Zephaniah, has made you priest instead of Jehoiada. Why, what then? Where lies the force of his argument that Jeremiah must therefore be punished? It lay here: Jehoiada had punished one Matthan, an idolatrous priest; therefore, says Shemaiah, you must do as Jehoiada did; as if he should say, "They are both in one way." This Jeremiah was a priest, and so was Matthan; such kind of men must be looked to; they are all alike. Matthan was odious to the people; they all said he was not to be suffered. And they being in some things alike, therefore all the evil which was found in Matthan, all the odium that was upon him, must be cast upon Jeremiah. Certainly, this is a very sinful, unjust, uncharitable practice of men (especially such as profess godliness) against their brethren: it widens, heightens, and lengthens our divisions very much.

The eighth dividing practice is an inordinate cleaving to some while denying due respect to others.

This was the practice among the Corinthians which caused great divisions among them; some were of Paul, some of Apollos, some of Cephas. No question a man may in his heart more reverence and prize and outwardly show more respect to those whom God makes the greatest instruments of good (ceteris paribus) than to others. David showed more respect to Nathan than to Gad; Nathan was by far more intimate with him. The intimacy was such between them that Nathan thought it a very strange thing that David should do anything about disposing of his crown and not make him acquainted with it. So Valentinian the Emperor on this ground honored Ambrose above any of the bishops in his time. Such men as God is not pleased to make so instrumental for good as others should not envy this; let them be willing that those should be honored whom God honors. But yet people should take heed that they give not so much honor to one that they deny due respect to others; and ministers and others in public place should not entertain, much less seek for or rejoice in any honor or respect given to them which they see detracts from that esteem and countenance that is due to others.

Peter Martyr upon that place, 1 Corinthians 3:4-5, observes that heathen philosophers were ambitious that their disciples should receive denomination from them: hence some were called Platonici, others Pythagorici, others Epicurei. But this should be abominated among Christians. Lactantius has a notable speech against this: "Those," says he, "cease to be Christians who take upon them the names of men and are not called by the name of Christ."

Peter Martyr upon the fore-named place says of Socrates that he was more modest than the rest; he refused to be accounted the author of that learning he taught others but said of himself that he was but as a midwife to be helpful to bringing forth that which was in the minds of men before.

The weakness and folly of people in their excessive giving or denying of respect are often caused, but more commonly encouraged and increased by the pride and vanity of teachers. These teachers seek or at least pleasingly embrace such excessive respect given to them, causing others to suffer. This leads to the formation of factions, resulting in more harm to the public than their honors are worth a thousand times over. This evil often results in reason and truth from one person being little regarded, while error and weakness from another are eagerly embraced and stubbornly maintained. It should be with reason and truth as it is with money: one person's money in a market is as good as another's, so should one person's reason and truth be as good as another's.

Chapter Twenty-Six

The Ninth Dividing Practice: Because Men Cannot Join in All Things with Others, They Will Join in Nothing

Some people have such divisive dispositions that if they are offended by someone in any one thing, whether in hearing or otherwise, they will leave in a huff, resolving never to listen to them again. You think you have the liberty, in any rebellious mood, to cast off the means of good that God offers to you, refusing to partake of such people's gifts and graces as you please. Perhaps your pride is suddenly inflated, or your spirit has fallen into such a sullen mood that you will not even go or send to them to see if, upon a serious and quiet examination of things, you might find satisfaction in what currently offends you. No, people's spirits are carried away with rash, headstrong resolutions.

I believe there has never been such a kind of spirit prevailing among those who profess godliness since Christian religion was introduced to the world. Never have so many withdrawn from hearing even those by whom they acknowledge God has spoken to their hearts, and that before they have gone to them to share what troubles them, to see if they might find some

satisfaction. Certainly, if you have no need of the Word, the Word has no need of you. You may easily express your discontents to one another; you may easily say you are resolved never to hear such a person again, but you cannot so easily answer this to Jesus Christ. When your weaknesses and prevailing distempers trouble your conscience, this will greatly aggravate their evil. You neglected in a whimsical way and self-willed resolution those means that might have done your soul good—means that many hundreds, if not thousands, of souls bless God for all their lives, even now blessing God in heaven for.

In the past, you would have been glad of what you now slight and reject; this is not due to more light or strength that you have now which you did not have then, but from more vanity, pride, and wantonness.

Others deny hearing not from such a troubled spirit but out of tenderness because they think the minister is not a true minister of Christ due to not having a true call, being ordained by the prelates, etc. I confess that although I have never doubted the lawfulness of the call of many ministers of parish congregations in England—though they had something added that was sinful—it did not nullify the call they had by the Church, that communion of Saints among whom they exercised their ministry. Yet I do not think it is the shortest way to convince those who refuse to hear by proving the lawfulness of the call of those ministers whom they refuse to hear. Instead, it is better to show them that even if their call is not right to the ministry, they do not have sufficient grounds for withdrawing from hearing them. For they hold it is lawful for a man to preach the Word as a gifted man, and they do not deny that these men from whom they withdraw are gifted and faithful and preach excellent truths.

But they will say if they did this as gifted men, it would be another matter; but they preach by virtue of their call. The answer is that if they are motivated by that principle and make a mistake therein, this is their personal sin, not the sin of those who join with them in a good thing which they do upon an ill ground. When I join with a man in an action, I am to look at the action and the principle I go upon, but let him with whom I join look at the principle he goes upon.

Your hearing a man does not justify his call to the office of ministry. If a man does something he may do by virtue of two relations or either of them —he may think he stands in one of those relations which he does not—yet he does the action by virtue of it in his own thoughts; in this he sins. But there is another relation wherein he stands that is enough to warrant the action he does as lawful. Now though he does not intend acting by this relation, the action may be sin to him but not at all sin to those who join with him in it. If he goes upon a false ground when he may go upon a true one, let him look to it. I will join with him in that action as warranted for him to do by virtue of his second relation, which he may not acknowledge himself.

Take an instance in some other thing, and perhaps the case will be clearer. Giving alms is a work that a man may do either by virtue of church office as a deacon or as a Christian whom God has blessed in his estate or entrusted with the distribution of what others entrust him with. Now suppose a man is in the place of a deacon; he thinks himself to be in that office by a right call into it and gives out the alms of his church by virtue of his call. But I am persuaded his call to that office is not right; he is not a true deacon. Yet if I am in need, knowing that both he and those who have given him money to dispose may and ought to distribute to those in need by virtue of another

relation—as men or Christians enabled by God—surely then I may receive alms from him lawfully even though his principle by which he gives them to me is sin to him. I may communicate with him in this thing even though he acts by virtue of an office he had no true call unto; why may I not as well communicate with a man in his gifts even though he acts thus sinfully himself?

This consideration will answer all those objections against hearing men who are said not to be baptized; grant they are not, and so you think they cannot be ministers; yet they are men gifted by God and thereby enabled to dispense many truths of God to your soul.

The Tenth Dividing Practice: Fastening Upon Those Who Are in Any Error All Those False Things and Dangerous Consequences That by Strength of Reason and Subtlety May Be Drawn from That Error

This embitters the spirits of men against one another. It is true that if you grant one false thing, a thousand may follow, but I must not judge a man who holds that one false opinion as if he possesses the malignity of those thousand evil things in his spirit. I find that our Divines, who have been of peaceable spirits, have condemned very much this fastening of dangerous consequences of men's opinions upon those who hold the opinions, yet whose hearts are as much against such consequences as possibly may be deduced from them. In giving rules for peace, they advise taking heed of this, as it makes brethren who differ in their opinions unlikely ever to become one.

Davenant says, "It is abhorrent to charity and right reason that anyone, because of consequences from what he holds, neither understood nor granted by him, should be thought to deny or reject a fundamental article which he firmly believes, expressly asserts, and if he were called to it,

would seal the truth of it with his blood." Truer and more gentle is the judgment of that great and peace-making Divine, Bucer, who says, "It is our part not to look at what may follow from an opinion, but at what follows in the consciences of those who hold it."

The Eleventh Dividing Practice: To Commend and Countenance What We Care Not For in Opposition to What We Dislike

When those who profess godliness make much of wicked men, commend them, join with them, embrace them; yes, be well pleased with the bitterness, boisterousness, and boldness of their daring spirits because there may be use made of them against those men and ways they differ from, this is an evil that brings guilt upon themselves and makes the division between them and their brethren very great. If your hearts are right and your cause is good, you need not make use of anything evil to comfort your hearts or maintain your cause. The Lord will not be beholden to the evil or the bitterness of men's spirits for the furtherance of His cause; and why should you? God will not take the wicked by the hand, neither should you.

Are not your spirits strengthened against your adversaries when you see them calling in Papists and all manner of the refuse of wicked and treacherous men? Can you think that these are the most likely to maintain the Protestant religion and the liberty of the subject? Why do you seek to strengthen yourselves by stirring up vile men to join with you, such as heretofore your hearts were opposed to? How is it that you can close so lovingly now? You can smile upon one another and shake hands together. How is it that you rejoice in the hearts of evil men; they encourage you, and you encourage them? Those unsavory bitter expressions that come from them you can smile at and be well pleased with because they are against those who differ from you. Blow up that spark of integrity that heretofore

has been in you; lay your hands upon your hearts, think to yourselves: is it the Spirit of Jesus Christ that acts us in such a way wherein we are? Surely, this is not the way of peace but of division and confusion.

The Last Dividing Practice: The Practice of Revenge

When any provoke you, you say you will be even with him; there is a way whereby you may be not even with him but above him: forgive him.

Practicing revenge is the way to continue divisions to the end of the world; such offend me, therefore I will offend them; and therefore they offend me again, me again, and I them, and so it may run infinitely; they deny me a kindness, therefore I will deny them, and therefore they will deny me; so these unkindnesses run on endlessly; divisions will have a line of succession. Where will it stop if this is the way of men?

Paulus Fagius in his notes upon Leviticus 19:18 says, "If Reuben should say to Simeon, 'Lend me thy axe,' and he should answer, 'I will not'; the next day Simeon has need of an axe, and he comes to Reuben and says, 'I pray lend me your axe,' and Reuben answers, 'No, you would not lend me yours yesterday'; the Jews accounted this to be revenge." There is much more malignity in our revengeful practices one upon another than this.

Basil inveighing against requiting evil for evil in his tenth sermon speaks thus to a revengeful heart: "Do not make your adversary your master; do not imitate him whom you hate; be not his looking-glass to present his form and fashion in yourself."

Revenge God challenges to Himself as His own; presume not to encroach upon God's property, to get up into God's seat and do His work; thou hast enough to do on thine own. It is very observable how God stands upon His challenge of revenge as His own; as that which He by no means will suffer others to meddle with: in those scriptures where this is mentioned, the

challenge is doubled, yea, sometimes trebled. As Psalm 94:1: "O Lord God to whom vengeance belongeth, O God to whom vengeance belongeth." So Nahum 1:2: "The Lord revengeth, the Lord revengeth, the Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries." Hebrews 10:30: "Vengeance belongeth to me; I will recompense," saith the Lord; and again, "The Lord will judge His people." You must not think revenge to be so light a matter.

How unbecoming are revengeful practices to Christian profession! Many of the heathens were above such things. Plutarch reports of Phocion that when he had done notable service for the Athenians yet was put to death by them; but being asked a little before his death whether he had anything to say to his son; "Yes," says he, "that I have. I require of thee my son that thou never wishest ill to the Athenians for this they do to me."

How far are most of us from this? We can hardly pass by an ill look without revenge; but if we conceive ourselves wronged in words or actions, then revenge rises high; such things must not be borne.

A gentleman of very good credit, who lived at court for many years, told me that he once heard a prominent man in this kingdom say he never forgave anyone in his life. I am inclined to believe it because I have been told by other gentlemen that the same man would, when walking alone, speak to himself, clap his hand upon his chest, and swear by the name of God that he would be avenged. He would be avenged; and that the woman who lay in his bosom was known to sit alone and sing to herself, "Revenge, Revenge, O how sweet is revenge!"

If such individuals gain power and are so dominated by their spouses that they must allow things to be managed according to the will of their vengeful wives, what peace or security can there be?

Sir Walter Raleigh, in his "History of the World," tells of the sad case of the Lacedaemonians when Nabis, having power in his hands and a wife named Apega, a woman full of cruelty and revenge, delighted in her. He caused her image to be made, vividly representing her and dressed in costly garments. However, it was actually a device to torment men. He used it thus: when he could not have his way with men through his own persuasion, he took them by the hand, telling them that perhaps his wife Apega, who sat nearby in a chair, could persuade more effectively. So he led them to the image that rose up and opened its arms as if for an embrace. Those arms were full of sharp iron nails, similar to those hidden in the chest beneath her clothes, and with these, she gripped the men to death. Nabis stood by and laughed at the cruel death of these miserable men.

May the Lord deliver us from vengeful spirits.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

The Evil of Divisions: They Hinder Much Good

Eusebius reports of Constantine that he was more troubled with the dissensions of the Church than with all the wars in his dominions. He took them so to heart that he could not sleep quietly because of them. Although he had a spirit full of heroic valor, the dissensions of the Church were such evils to him that they caused him to cry and sob. Thus, he writes in an epistle to Alexander and Arius: "Let me enjoy the days in peace and the nights without molestation, that the pleasure which rises out of the pure light of concord and quiet life may henceforth be inviolably conserved; if it otherwise happens, it behooves us to sob and sigh, and to shed many a salt tear."

What heart that has any tenderness in it does not bleed at the sense of those sore and dreadful heart-divisions among us? The evil in them is beyond what tongue or pen can express. Consider it under these three heads:

1. The good they hinder.
2. The sin they cause.
3. The misery they bring.

First, the quiet, comfort, and sweetness of our spirits are hindered by divisions. They put the spirit out of tune. Men who previously had sweet spirits full of ingenuity have lost their sweetness since they have involved themselves in these divisions; their ingenuity is gone. When the bee stings, she leaves her sting behind her and never gathers honey again. Men, by stinging one another, do not lose their stings, but they lose their honey; they are never likely to have that sweetness in their hearts that they once had.

"Shall I lose my sweetness," says the fig tree, "and go to be promoted over the trees?" Why do you not reason thus with your spirit? "Shall I lose my sweetness in contending to get my will above others? God forbid." There was a time when both myself and others found much sweetness in the temper of my spirit; there was nothing but peaceableness, quiet, calmness, and contentedness in it, and how comfortable was such a temper of spirit! When my spirit was in that sweet frame, all things were sweet to me; but since I have been involved in quarrels and contentions, it has been far otherwise with me.

Proverbs 15:4 states that perverseness in the tongue causes a breach in the spirit. Contentions cause much perverseness in men's tongues, and this causes a breach in their spirits. Your contending costs you dearly: even if it were nothing else, the loss of this sweetness of spirit makes it very costly to you. All the wrong you would have endured if you had not contended would not have been as great an evil to you as this one thing is. There is nothing more contrary to ingenuity than quarrelsomeness.

It is reported of Melanchthon that when he was about to die, he had this speech, and Strigelius at his death had the same: "I desire to depart this life for two reasons: First, that I may enjoy the desired sight of the Son of God and the Church in heaven. Secondly, that I may be delivered from the fierce

and implacable hatred of divines." There was much disputing, contending, and quarreling in those times, which was so tedious to the spirits of these good men that it made them more willing to die so that they might be where their souls should be at rest.

That saint of God, old Mr. Dod, never loved to meddle with controversies; he gave this reason: he found his heart worse when he did. Men seldom come away from hot disputes or any other contentions without their spirits being altered for the worse. They find it so, and others find it in them. If a man has been abroad and met with company with whom he has been contending, his wife, children, and servants find that he does not come home with the same spirit that he went out with.

Secondly, they hinder the freedom of a man's spirit, which a wise man sets a high price upon; the strength of many men's spirits is spent in contentions; they have no command of them for anything else. When a man is once engaged in a contest, he knows not how to get off; contention is a great snare to a man. He wishes he had never meddled with it; he is weary of it but knows not how to come off fairly.

I have read of Francis the First, King of France, consulting with his captains on how to lead his army over the Alps into Italy—whether this way or that way—when Amarill his fool sprang out of a corner where he sat unseen and bade them rather take care which way they should bring their army out of Italy back again. It is easy for one to involve himself in quarrels, but the difficulty is to be disengaged from them when you are in.

Thirdly, they hinder the good of the body; many men contending with their brethren are so full of stomach that they have no appetite; they hinder their sleep. Men lie tossing up and down a great part of the night, sometimes whole nights, musing, plotting, and contriving how they may

make their party good or what advantages they may gain over those they contend with.

Have thoughts about the breach sin has made between God and your soul broken your sleep as much as thoughts about breaches between you and your neighbors and brethren? We read of Moses in Deuteronomy 34:7 that he was 120 years old when he died; his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated. Some give this as one reason for such wonderful preservation of his health and strength: the meekness of his spirit. God witnesses of him in Numbers 12:3 that he was the meekest man upon the face of the earth. That good old man Mr. Dod came very near to Moses in one respect and in another.

Fourthly, they hinder men's judgments: if the water is muddy, we cannot see what lies at the bottom. These dissensions disturb the medium of our sight: you cannot weigh gold amidst blustering winds; you cannot consider and give a judgment upon truth unless the heart is calm.

Gregory Nazianzen has this similitude: "As the earth," says he, "is fixed to men whose brains and eyes are sound, but to those who have vertigo in their heads it seems to turn round: so we are deceived in our apprehensions of things; we do not have the same judgment of things when we love and when we do not love."

Fifthly, they hinder the sweetness of Christian fellowship and communion. You know your communion with the Saints used to be far more sweet than it is now. You used to have your hearts leap at the sight of one another. Seneca says, "The very sight of a good man delights," and the sight of a godly person used to delight us more than it does now. You look at each other sourly, with frowning faces, and withdraw from one another. Your comforts used to be double, triple, sevenfold, a hundredfold,

according to the society of Saints you engaged with. One godly person considered it the joy of his heart that he had something to share with another godly person, and the other had similar joy in sharing with him. Thus, comforts were multiplied, but now your comforts are singular.

Oh, the sweetness and suitability there used to be in the spirits of Christians! Shall I say suitability? It was a blessed oneness of heart. They exchanged souls with one another every day; their souls clasped and cleaved to each other. Oh, how they loved to open their hearts to one another! What delight was there in pouring forth their spirits into one another! What cheerfulness was there in their meetings! They ate their bread together with singleness of heart and joy, praising the Lord. There were no merrier meetings in the world than those of the Saints. They parted from one another with their souls bound up in each other; their hearts warmed, enlarged, resolved, and strengthened in God's ways.

But now they cannot meet without falling into discord, contending with one another, and parting with spirits estranged, soured, and embittered against each other; their hearts weakened and more unsettled in the things of God than before. Previously, when they were absent from one another, the memory of each other was joyful; but these days seem to be gone. Where is the opening of secrets to one another as before? Everyone is afraid of another. What sweet visits there used to be! What bearing of one another's burdens! What heart-encouraging letters! It was with the Saints as in Tertullian's time; Christians called each other brethren and were ready to die for one another. But now they are burdens to each other's spirits, bringing evils upon one another. Those who were once forward Professors, whose society was only among the Saints, now find comfort among those

who are carnal; they close with them, their interactions are mostly among them.

Oh Lord, what fire is kindled among us! The nature of fire is to gather things of a like nature together and separate things of a different nature: but our fire does quite the contrary; it separates things that are homogeneous and joins things heterogeneous. Surely this is no other than the fire of hell.

Sixthly, they hinder our time. An abundance of time is spent on our divisions, which we cannot account for before God. When men are engaged in contentions, they will pursue them night and day; whatever business is neglected, this must not be. Even the best of our time that was once spent in meditation, reading, and prayer is now spent in contending and arguing. Those quiet times we used to converse with God are now spent in thoughts about our divisions; and when we go out, much of our time is taken up going from one group to another to help forward and foment division. Of all the time in a person's life, the time spent in legal disputes and quarrels is the worst, and it would be fortunate for many if it were not counted among the days, weeks, or months of their lives.

Seventhly, they hinder our prayers. If two or three agree together about anything they ask, it shall be done for them by my Father, says Christ (Matthew 18:18). In 1 Timothy 2:8, "I will that men pray, lifting up their hands without wrath." When Daniel was in distress, he went to his companions and asked them to lift up prayers to God for him (Daniel 2:17). There was a sweet agreement between them. Hence their stock and trade in prayer went in common, but divisions greatly hinder prayer either with one another or for one another. In 1 Peter 3:7, the Apostle gives rules for a peaceable loving life between husband and wife; the woman must be meek,

and the man must live with his wife as a man of knowledge; they must walk together as heirs of life. Why so? That your prayers may not be hindered.

Private contentions in families are great hindrances to family prayers: so our public divisions and contentions are great hindrances to the prayers of Christians in a more public way. How did they use to pour forth their hearts in prayer together? Then their hearts closed, but now it is otherwise. Men do not walk together as heirs of life now; therefore their prayers are hindered. God does not accept our gift if we offer it when our hearts are distant from our brethren. When breaches continue and we are not reconciled, you know Christ requires us to leave our gift at the altar until reconciliation is made. It is the Spirit of God in the Saints that is the spirit of prayer: now God's Spirit is a dove-like, meek, quiet, and peaceable spirit.

Eighthly, they hinder the use of our gifts: when vessels are soured with vinegar, they spoil any liquid poured into them; they make it good for nothing. Many people have excellent gifts, but they are in such sour vinegar spirits that they are of little or no use in Church and Commonwealth.

1. In these times of division, many people exercise their gifts and talents in little else but matters of division; do you think that God has given you such talents for no other purpose than this?

2. They have no heart to share their gifts with their brethren in counseling, admonishing, strengthening, or comforting: no, their hearts are estranged from them; they do not care to have anything to do with them. But do you think you are so much your own person that you may keep or employ your talents as you please? Are you not stewards of Christ? Are they not given to you for the edification of your brethren as well as for your own good? Can this satisfy your conscience? Such a person differs from you; he has angered you; therefore, even though you have an opportunity to be useful to

him, you refuse it as if it were at your liberty to use your abilities for good or not. Certainly, this is not according to the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7). The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every person for profit.

3. If you do make use of your gifts for the good of others, yet dissensions between you will hinder their benefit. You are not likely to do any good by them unless they are carried on by the oil of love; they will not soak into men's hearts. When did you ever know a wrangling, contentious minister (though his gifts were excellent) do good among his people? And what comfort can a man have in his life if he is laid aside by God as a useless man?

4. These divisions cause men to make the gifts of others useless to themselves. God puts opportunities into men's hands to gain much good from the excellent gifts their brethren have. Yet, if there is any difference between them, either they will not acknowledge the gifts of God in others, or they have no desire to receive the good they might have because their hearts are not with them.

Ninthly, they hinder our graces. How little of God and Christ, how little spirituality appears in professors of religion since these divisions have been among us, compared to what appeared in former times. As the members of the body (says Augustine) are not quickened unless they are joined, so even the members of Christ do not receive the quickening virtue of Christ unless they are joined. Here is the reason for the deadness, coldness, emptiness, barrenness, and vanity of your spirits: you are not joined.

O where are the heavenly Christians that used to be, those humble, holy, gracious souls who lived by faith, who were able to deny themselves? Their whole lives were nothing but a continual exercise of self-denial. They were not only patient but joyful under afflictions. Where are those watchful

Christians who walked closely with God, who enjoyed such spiritual communion with Him that their faces shone in their holy heavenly conversations? Where are those tender, broken-hearted Christians who lived upon the Word, to whom the Word was sweeter than honey and the honeycomb?

Now there is another kind of face among professors of religion, as if there were godliness in these days not of the same kind as before. If our forefathers, who were most holy and gracious, should rise again, they would not recognize those who now make a great noise and stir about religion as if they had risen higher than their forefathers had. Yet they are loose, vain, frothy, and false in their ways. Certainly, those holy, gracious saints whom these new professors slight would abominate them if they were alive, as a great disgrace and dishonor to Jesus Christ and His saints.

Take away their disputes, and otherwise, how empty and dry are they? If they ever had any grace, it is buried under a lot of rubbish; we cannot see it. Can these men be anything but an empty vine when their hearts are so divided? The graces they seemed to have had are quite blasted; if there were any in truth, they are exceedingly weakened. Vinegar will dissolve pearls. Pliny tells of Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, that in her wanton bravado at a supper she made for Marcus Antonius, she dissolved a pearl in vinegar and drank it off, preparing another, both valued at nearly five thousand pounds. Oh, the many precious pearls worth thousands in gold and silver that are dissolved by the vinegar sourness of men's spirits in these sharp dissensions among us!

Our divisions hinder the breaking forth of the luster and shine of religion in its beauty and glory. The fire of our contentions raises such smoke that it smothers us; it takes away our comeliness and makes us look black. No

amiability appears in the ways of religion to convince men of their excellence. Scratched faces and torn garments we consider a shame; distracted, divided spirits rending and tearing one another render us uncomely and bring shame to the profession of religion we take upon ourselves.

The Turks used to wonder much at our Englishmen for cutting their clothes, counting them little better than madmen for making holes in whole cloth that time itself would tear too soon. The cuts and slashes in our spirits from our divisions today are much more uncomely and may justly render us foolish and mad in the eyes of all who behold us.

Our divisions hinder our strength. If you untwist a cable, how weak it becomes in its separate parts! A threefold cord is not easily broken, but a single one is. Divide a strong current into several rivulets, and how shallow and weak will the course of the water be? Plutarch's report of King Scythia's act toward his sons has been famous for illustrating how divisions weaken wherever they occur. He says he had eighty sons, and when near death, he caused a bundle of arrows to be brought and given to them one by one, bidding each to break it; they all answered it was impossible for any man to do it. Then he had the arrows taken out one by one and bade one son break them; this any could easily do. Upon this, he spoke to his sons: If you agree together, you shall remain strong and unconquerable; but if you divide yourselves, contending with one another, you will be weak and easily overcome.

They hinder our doing good in public; what concerns many must be done by many. But how can two, much less many, walk together if they are not agreed? What one does, another seeks to undo. Although God can turn whatever is contrary to His work to its furtherance, man cannot do so.

When God would hinder the work of building Babel, He confounded their tongues so they could not join together in it. Thus when the Devil would hinder the work of Jerusalem, he knows no way more likely than by dividing the hearts of those employed if he can possibly bring confusion.

They hinder our own ends; none are more crossed in their ends and designs than contentious people. We no longer have the mutual benefit of one another's estates or houses or the many ways of accommodation and help from one another as we used to have; now every man shifts for himself. Scarcely anyone who knew what heartfelt friendship meant enjoys those outward accommodations as he used to.

They hinder the blessing of God. Psalm 133 commends the love of brethren: "There the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore." There! That is where the love of brethren is; there is a blessing commanded by God. It comes with power—no less than life—and this life forevermore. God dwells in Salem (says Luther), not in Babylon; where there is peace, not where there is confusion.

Lastly, indeed, they hinder all good. They are like the Torrid Zone; nothing can prosper under it. When the Dog-star rises, no plants thrive as at other times. When a fire is kindled in a town, the bells ring backward. When fires of contentions are kindled in places, all things go awry. There is little joy in anything.

Thus you see how great the evil is in our divisions concerning what good we lose by them. Now then, consider whether it is possible that any gain we can get by them can recompense this loss; can anything gained by them justify the cost? But even if it could be supposed that our loss may be recompensed, yet I am sure nothing can counterbalance the evil there is in them, in respect of their sinfulness. That is the next point.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

The Sinfulness of Our Divisions.

Though there is sin in many things mentioned, we considered them in reference to our good that was hindered. But now let us consider what venom of sin there is in them.

The number 2 has been considered accursed because it was the first that departed from unity. The departure from that unity God would have is a very cursed thing, for it has much sin in it. That which St. Augustine says of original sin, we may well apply to our divisions: They are sin, the punishment of sin, the cause of sin, nothing but a heap of sin.

First, they are against the solemn charge and command of God and of Jesus Christ. 1 John 3:23: This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another as he gave us commandment. It is not an arbitrary thing that we should love one another, but it is the command of God and a great command joined to that of believing in his Son Jesus Christ. The one is as truly necessary to salvation as the other. Let men talk of faith, of believing on the Son of God, of trusting to free grace in Christ, yet if they have dividing, contending spirits,

no love, no sweetness, no grace of union with the Saints, their faith is a dead faith.

Because God stands much upon this to have his people live together in love, at the beginning of the verse he says it is his commandment; at the end of the verse he says he gave us commandment. It is also observable that he says of the commandment of love that he gave us that commandment. It is a gift, for it is a sweet commandment. We should not only submit to it as being bound by its authority but should open our hearts to it and embrace it joyfully as a gift from God. The commandment of love God gives us as a gift from his love.

The excellency of these commandments is further amplified in verse 24: And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. I do not think you can find in all Scripture any command of God in one verse and a piece of another so inculcated and commended. Again, chap. 4:21: This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also. If you think you have any command to love God or to believe in Jesus Christ, know the same authority lays a command upon you to love your brother also. John 15:12: This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you. And verse 17: These things I command you, that ye love one another. Christ, you see, likewise makes a great matter of the Saints loving one another. Surely the sin then must be great that breaks such a great commandment as this, upon which God the Father and Jesus Christ his Son lay so much weight.

Secondly, these unkind and unloving divisions are against the prayer of Jesus Christ, indeed against that prayer he made for us a little before he died, John 17:21. He prays to his Father that all who did believe and should afterward believe on him might be one, as his Father is in him and he is in

his Father; and that they may be one in the Father and him: as if he should say, Oh Father, I am now going out of the world, and I foresee when I am gone even those whom thou hast given me, who are one in me and in thee, will meet with strong temptations to divide them one from another: but oh Father I beseech thee, let thy fatherly care be over them to keep their hearts together, that they may be united in the strongest union possible for creatures to be united in. Oh Father, let them be one as thou and I am one.

Would we not be loath to lose the benefit of that heavenly prayer of Christ for us in that 17th chapter of John? Read it over; see what soul-ravishing excellency there is in it since he has expressly said he intended us who live now in it as well as those disciples who then lived with him. Let us prize this prayer as being more to us than ten thousand worlds.

Luther writes a chiding letter to Melanchthon: By those sinful distrustful fears and carking thoughts of yours, says he, you do irritas facere præces nostras—you make void our prayers. How great then is the evil of our divisions? By them we do what lies within us to make void concerning us the prayer—that blessed prayer—of Jesus Christ.

Satan, says Christ to Peter, has desired to winnow you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not. He shall not prevail, says Christ. Why? Because I have prayed for you. Oh blessed Savior, is not thy prayer against our divisions as strong? Canst thou not prevail with thy Father as well in this as in that? We know thy Father did and does ever hear thee; some way or other this prayer of Christ is and shall be heard; yet our sin is not the less for it tends to frustrate Christ's prayer.

Satan desires to winnow us in our divisions, but he desires not to have the chaff divided from the wheat; he rather would have the chaff mixed with the wheat. The mixing of the chaff with the wheat causes a great stir

amongst us: But Christ's prayer which helped Peter in his winnowing we hope will help us in ours; only let us not do anything that makes against it.

Thirdly, our divisions are against our own prayers. How often have many who are now estranged from one another previously prayed together, with their hearts seeming to melt into one another, so that one would think it impossible that there could ever be such a distance between them as there is now. How often have we prayed, "Oh, that we might be blessed with the mercy of worshiping God according to His own mind! That we might be delivered from conscience oppression and spiritual bondage! Oh, that we might be delivered from the inventions of men in the service of God, that the Saints might join and serve the Lord with one accord." There were never such hopes that the Saints should enjoy their prayers as there have been of late, and yet never were they so divided as they are now; they now seek to bring one another into bondage.

If five or six years ago, when many of us were praying together, making our moans to God for the oppression we were under, God had then presented us with a vision of times like these, could we have believed it possible that there should be such a distance in our spirits as there is now?

Fourthly, our divisions are very dishonorable to Jesus Christ. Were it only that they darkened our names, it would not be so much; but that which darkens the glory of Jesus Christ should concern us deeply. I have read of Alexander Severus, who, upon seeing two Christians contending with one another, commanded them not to presume to take the name of Christians upon themselves any longer. "For," he says, "you dishonor your Master Christ, whose disciples you profess to be." It is a dishonor to a general to have his army routed and run into confusion. The Devil seems to prevail against us in these divisions, routing us.

John 17:21, 23 is a notable scripture showing the sinfulness of our divisions in the dishonor they bring upon Christ. It may be as strong an argument against them as any I know in the Book of God. Christ, praying to the Father for the union of His Saints, uses this argument: "O Father, let this be granted, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." And again, verse 23: "Let them be perfect in one, that the world may know that thou hast sent me." If they are not united in love and peace but have a spirit of division ruling among them, what will the world think? Surely, that thou didst not send me; that I, who am their head, teacher, and Lord, never came from thee. For thou art wisdom, holiness, and love; and if I had come from thee, then those who own me to be theirs and whom I own to be mine would reflect in their conversations something of that spirit of holiness, wisdom, and love there is in thee. But when the world does not see this in them but the complete opposite, they will never believe that I came from thee. Those truths that I came into the world to make known as from thee, O Father, will not be believed but rather persecuted if those who profess them by their divisions and oppositions show forth a spirit of pride, folly, envy, and rebelliousness. Therefore, O Father, let them be one as thou and I are one. If this petition is not granted, how shall I face the world? I shall be contemned in the world. What am I come down from thee for such glorious ends as indeed those were for which I came into the world? And when I should come to attain those ends for which I came, shall there be such behavior in those who profess my Name that by it the world shall persuade themselves that thou didst never send me? O what a grievous evil this would be! Surely any Christian heart must tremble at the thought of having a hand in so great an evil as this.

Fifthly, divisions are sinful because they grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Ephesians 4:30-31 says: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Surely there is no godly heart but will say, "O God forbid that I should do anything to grieve the good Spirit of God." It is the Spirit that has enlightened me and revealed the great mysteries of God, of Christ, and of eternal life unto me. It is that Spirit that has drawn my soul to Jesus Christ and comforted it with consolations more precious than ten thousand worlds. The Spirit has strengthened me, helped me against temptations, carried me through difficulties, and enabled me to rejoice in tribulations. The Spirit is an earnest to assure me of God's electing love; it has sealed me unto the day of redemption. And now shall I be guilty of so great a sin as to grieve this blessed Spirit of the Lord? If I knew wherein I have grieved it, it could not but make my soul bleed within me that I should have such a wretched heart to grieve this Holy Spirit by whom my soul has enjoyed so much good. I hope I should forever hereafter take heed of that thing; I would rather suffer any grief in the world to my own spirit than be any occasion of grief to that blessed Spirit of God.

But would you know what it is that has grieved it and what is likely to grieve it further? Mark what follows in verse 31: "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice." And would you do that which may rejoice it? Oh! God knows it would be the greatest joy in the world for me to do it. Then verse 32 says: "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Sixtly, these divisions do grieve and offend our brethren, and this should not be a light matter to us. Christ considers it a great evil to offend one of His little ones. We may think it a small matter to give offense to some of

God's people who are poor and humble in the world, as long as we have the support of influential people. But, friend, whatever slight thoughts you have of it, Christ thinks it a significant matter. You may look upon them as beneath you, and the times may favor you more than them; but if you give them cause to go to God and make their complaints to Him about any ill treatment they have received from you, saying, "Lord, You know I was for peace to the utmost that I could, as far as I was able to see Your Word as my guide; but those who were once like brothers to me now have estranged spirits, their hearts are embittered, their words and actions are very grievous, all because I cannot conform to their opinions and ways," certainly this would prove very ill for you, regard it as lightly as you will.

It may be that when others behave towards you differently than you expected, you vent your frustrations against them through quarreling, using harsh language, vilifying, and scorning. Your strength runs out in this way; but there is a generation of men who, when wronged, improve their strength in patient bearing and in making their moans to God in the exercise of faith, committing their cause to Him.

In Matthew 18:24-31, you have the story of the servant who had ten thousand talents forgiven him, yet took his fellow servant by the throat who owed him a hundred pence and put him into prison. The text says, when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were sorry and came and told their Lord what was done. You do not hear them cry out against their fellow servant, "Oh, what a vile base wretch he was to deal thus with his fellow!" No, but they went and told their Lord. It is not the way of Christians when they perceive wrong done to give harsh language or seek to right themselves or others through bitter provoking expressions; but their hearts being filled with grief, if they must vent it, if quiet debates with their

brethren will not ease them, let them vent themselves by pouring forth their complaints to the Lord.

Seventhly, there is much sin in our divisions because they stir up much corruption on all sides, both in ourselves and others. As if you shake a glass of water that has dirt at the bottom, the dirt spreads itself all over: so does the dirty stuff in our hearts when these divisions cause a commotion in them. That corruption is now discovered that neither we nor others thought was in us. Do not say in your hearts, or perhaps one to another, "Who would have thought it possible that so much filthy stuff should lie so long in such men's hearts undiscovered, which now appears since these unhappy divisions have been among us?" James 3:16 says where there is envying and strife, there is confusion and every evil work.

When snakes are cold, they lie still; but if the heat of fire comes to them, then they hiss and put forth their stings. Thus men's corruptions are heated by the fire of contention kindled among us; they begin to stir, act, and rise very high. The reason some give for the Apostle's prohibition in Ephesians 4—"Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," which Chrysostom also notes—is because when men's wrath is stirred by contending, if it continues in its heat until night, as they lie upon their beds their corruptions will be boiling. They will lie musing and plotting against those who contend with them; their thoughts in the night season will work up their corruptions to a great height. Have you not found it so? When the sun has gone down upon your wrath, you could hardly sleep that night?

William the Conqueror in his first year commanded that every night at eight o'clock a bell should be rung and that all people should then put out their fire, which was called the Curfew Bell. It would be well if some were admonished every night to cover the fire of their passions.

We also stir up the corruptions of others in these our divisions. Do you not see those distempers previously mentioned working and breaking forth in your brethren when you provoke them by contending with them? O pity your brother if you cannot pity yourself. Does it not grieve you that your brother should bring sin upon himself? Would it not be better for you to suffer than for your brother to sin? It is an evil thing to be an occasion of grief to our brethren. The Lord does not willingly grieve the children of men, but being an occasion of sin to them is much worse.

When did you ever meet with your brethren and have your spirits put into any heat? But after your parting, when you began to cool down, you then saw cause to grieve for unbecoming words, actions, and outbursts of passion that were either in you or them. Sometimes in a contentious debate there is more sin committed in one hour than there is otherwise in a whole year between those who live lovingly and sweetly together. Indeed, sometimes such corruptions are stirred by differences and divisions that one would think were not compatible with a saint; namely, rejoicing in the evil of other men, even godly men.

David said his zeal had even consumed him because his enemies had forgotten God's Word; but some men's zeal consumes them because their friends remember God's Word. The more inoffensive they walk, the more they are troubled. It would be endless to mention the uncharitableness, wrongs, malice, injustice, oppression, cruelty, and abundance of other sins caused by our divisions.

Eightly, yet further, as they stir up sin, so they harden in sin. Fire hardens clay into brick: thus are men's hearts hardened in evil by our divisions. Men who previously had tender spirits and whose hearts were ready to relent

upon any brotherly admonition now stand stiffly and behave scornfully. O this fire of contention has baked their lusts and hardened their hearts.

In Ezekiel 11, God promises to give His people one heart—a heart of flesh. While the hearts of the saints are united, they are tender; but when they divide, they grow hard. Hence is the reason why brethren who have fallen out find it so hard to convince either party of any ill behavior. They are angry and think they do well to be angry because their hearts are hardened.

Jonah was in a petulant mood; his heart was hardened with it. Let God Himself come now to convince him—he stands firm and will by no means acknowledge himself faulty; no, what he does he will justify—he does well to be angry.

Ninthly, there is much sin in them, for they are a means to keep others from God's ways. If this is their religion, for men to quarrel with one another, I will have none of it. Carnal-hearted men tend to blame Religion for all the failings of its Professors. You know what Saint Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14: If men speak with strange tongues, and there comes in one unlearned, will they not be to him as Barbarians? Will they not say they are mad? Thus, when the men of the world look upon those who profess Religion and see their strange and divided ways, will they not think them even mad people?

I charge you, says the Church in Song of Solomon 3:5, by the roes and by the hinds, that you do not stir up my Beloved until he pleases. This is interpreted by some as follows: The roes and hinds are shy and fearful creatures, signifying those who observe the ways of the Church and are ready to take offense at anything amiss. Therefore, I charge you, say those who are faithful, to do nothing that may cause disturbance in the Church,

whereby observers of your ways shall be offended. If they see failings in you, they will turn away, and of all failings, none are more offensive to onlookers than wranglings and contentions. When they see this, they will conclude, "Surely this is not the way of Christ."

10. They are a very poor use of our zeal and courage. Zeal and courage have such excellence in them that it's a great pity they should be used only to raise and maintain quarrels and divisions. The Lord has use for every man's zeal and courage; reserve them for Him, for some notable work that God has for you, and do not waste them on things that bring no good. If soldiers near their enemies, having little powder, were to spend what they have on making squibs and fireworks, would they not be condemned for folly, if not treachery, by all? Those with the most zeal and courage have little enough to serve their purpose for the services God requires of them. Must this be spent on unworthy bickerings, wranglings, and quarrels? A man's body is in poor condition if it has a sore that draws nourishment away from the parts of the body that need it; the sore is fed, but the other parts grow weak and feeble. Thus it is with many men's spirits; they are troubled, and whatever abilities they have are drawn forth to feed those troubles. What account can be given to God for such use of them?

11. They greatly hinder the Cause of Christ now in hand—the great work of Reformation. Had we joined hand in hand together and set ourselves to serve the Lord with one shoulder, what abundance of service might have been done? How might the honor of Christ have been advanced among us by now? But while one draws one way and another another, one seeks to set up while another labors to pull down; how can the work go on?

You will say that things would indeed progress if those who differ from others would give up their judgments and practices to them—to believe

what they believe and do what they do. But how can this be? You would not have them give up their judgments or practices until they know they are right, and how can that be until they find out through discussion, prayer, reading, and meditation? If some men had certainly found out the right way and others knew certainly that they had done so, then the work would be at an end.

But when we complain of our divisions for hindering the Cause of Christ or the work of Reformation, we do not complain against men because they cannot all understand things alike. But this we complain of:

1. That all men who profess godliness have not joined in opposing what they believe cannot stand with godliness by all the means God has put into their hands.

2. That they have not joined to promote those ways of godliness which they are convinced are right.

3. That they have not joined to study what ways and means may be found to ease each other's hearts and consciences, to bear with one another as far as Christ would have them help and bear with one another. It is this that has caused such a stop in the work of Reformation. A peaceable, humble, and quiet discussion of things furthers the Reformation that Christ would have. Do you think that Christ would be pleased with a Reformation where the lesser part gives up their consciences and practices to the judgments of the greater? Such a superficial handling of matters might happen quickly, but Christ must have all matters of His worship and doctrine consented to and practiced from a principle of faith. Let us join with all our might in all we know, and with peaceable, quiet, humble spirits seek to know more. In the meantime, let us carry ourselves humbly and peaceably towards those we

differ from, and Christ will not charge us at the Great Day for hindering His Cause—the great work of Reformation in hand.

12. These our dissensions are against a great part of the Covenant of Grace which God has made with His people in Christ and those many promises of peace that there is to be in the times of the Gospel. By these actions, we do what tends to make void the Covenant; we act as if saying that Christ is not come in the flesh. 1 John 4:3 states that every spirit that does not confess Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God; this is the spirit of Antichrist. Many men talk much about Antichrist, but those who profess the Gospel yet have unpeaceable, contentious spirits possess the spirit of Antichrist; they do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

It is an argument used by Jews against Christ: they say if He were come, then that prophecy in Isaiah 11:6 would be fulfilled—"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the cow and the bear shall feed together," etc. But this is not so; they cite many other places where Peace is prophesied about, such as Isaiah 9:7: "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." Those who seek His Government should also seek His Peace.

Galatinus de Arcanis Catholicæ veritatis spends several chapters answering the Jews' objections against Christ from these and other places, as seen in Lib. 5, Chapters 6, 7, and 8. A special part of the Covenant of Grace is in the promise found in Ezekiel 11:19: "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God," and in Jeremiah 32:38-39: "They shall be my people, and I will be their God, and I will give them one heart and one way." Many speak much of the Covenant of Grace but manifest little of this part of it in

themselves. If that which is against any command of God is sinful, much more is that which is directly against God's Covenant with His people, which tends to make even the Covenant of Grace ineffective; if it is ineffective in one part, it will be ineffective in the other.

13. By our divisions, we cross the end that God aimed at in the variety of His administrations in the gifts and graces of men. This was not Christ's end in dispensing gifts and graces in different ways, that there might be fuel for contentions and quarrels, but rather to exercise love. We spoke to this before; now only take notice of it as a consideration that sets out the exceeding sinfulness of our divisions.

The Aggravations of the Sinfulness of Our Divisions

Firstly, that we who are Christians should be thus divided. It would not be so much if we were heathens; our divisions are against the very character of Christianity: "Hereby shall ye know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another," says Christ. Love and unity are Christ's badge, the arms of a Christian, whereby he shows of what house he is. But by these divisions of ours, what do we do but rend the very arms that Christ has honored us with and cast them under our feet?

Secondly, that we who were so recently in bondage should, upon the beginning of our deliverance, thus fall out with one another, one from another, one upon another. For us who are newly come out of prison, who still have upon us the very smell of our prison garments, the sores on our necks from those yokes that were recently upon them are not yet healed, and yet we thus presently fight with one another—this is uncomely and very sinful.

Thirdly, the union of our enemies is an aggravation of the sinfulness of our divisions; how great a shame is it that they should join better than we?

Do they have stronger bonds of union than we? In Psalm 83:5-6, we read of ten or eleven sorts of men who could all agree in that which was evil; the text says, "They consulted together with one consent,"* it is in Hebrew, "with one heart." There was Edom, the Ishmaelites, the Moabites, the Hagarites, Gebal, Ammon, Amalek, the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria is joined with the children of Lot. These were of several opinions and ways in matters of religion and yet could join. I remember Gregory Nazianzen in one of his orations makes a bitter complaint of this,* "Who is there," says he, "that is of a right mind that does not deplore the present state of things? Who can find expressions to set out this calamity of ours, that thieves and robbers,* tyrants and whoremongers should be at peace among themselves, yet we cannot be at peace?" Revelation 17:13 tells us about ten kings of the earth who are of one mind to give their power to the Beast and to make war with the Lamb; shall not we be of one mind to fight against the Beast for the Lamb?

Fourthly, that such as God has joined in so many bands of union should so divide as we do—such as old acquaintances, dear friendships from former times, fellow sufferers—that such as are related nearly—brethren, sisters, kinsmen, kinswomen—such as live in the same family or are part of the same society or calling, such as have received much good from one another—yet now they should be thus divided and thereby cause so much evil to one another. This is a sore and grievous evil.* Luther in an epistle to his friend Spalatinus tells him that if he must perish, he would not want Emperor Charles to have a hand in it out of respect for him but rather let him perish by those of Rome. For he knows what misery followed Sigismund the Emperor after the death of John Huss. Although we should desire that we might be no occasion of evil to any, yet if it must be so, better

a thousand times that the evil fall upon wicked men and those who are at the greatest distance from us than upon those who are godly and so near to us.

Fifthly, that such as agree in so many things—yes, in all things necessary to salvation—yes, almost if not in all the doctrinal parts of religion—yet because of some few things of lesser moment there should be such a fearful breach as now there is. This makes the account we are able to give of our breach worse and our sin greater. And this is the evil spirit of some; they wish our divisions were in greater things so they might justify their opposition more.

Sixthly, the sin is great because it is heart-division; if it were head-division—a difference of judgment—it would be ill but not so ill. Jeremiah 4:18 says their wickedness is bitter because it reaches to the heart. This makes the wickedness of our divisions bitter; the heart commands the head but the head cannot command the heart.

Seventhly, they are worse because they break out as much as they do; wounds that take air grow much worse than those kept closed. It is an ignorant and foolish speech some please themselves with when provoked and vent abundance of choler in bitter wicked language: "When I am angry," say they, "I must vent what I have within; it is better to let it out than to keep it in." Indeed if breaking it out made it less within than before —as corruption from a sore when it breaks out—then there would be some reason in what you say; but it is otherwise. As more you act grace more it increases; so more you act sin more it increases. Besides heart-corruptions when they break forth dishonor God publicly whereas when kept in dishonor to God is only between God and yourselves.

Eighthly, our divisions are in presence of wicked men; we should not reveal our shame before them. Genesis 13:7 says there was strife between Abraham's herdmen and Lot's herdmen while Canaanites and Perizzites dwelt in land.* Their strife was more vile because it was before them. Let us remember when striving that Canaanites and Perizzites dwell in land. It is not safe says Nazianzen to entrust him who hates Christians with hearing anything against Christians.*

9. Our divisions are long-standing, and nothing seems to quiet us, as if they were irreconcilable. There is, says Nazianzen, a satiety in all things among men except in contentions; in food, in drink, in singing, in all things otherwise most delightful, but men never cease in harming one another. We are like cocks, who are easily set to fighting, and once engaged, they will not stop until they kill one another.

10. The recent Covenant that should have been a means to unite us has become a means of widening our divisions. This is due to false interpretations of it, by twisting its meaning to serve personal agendas, and by accusing others of perjury because they do not fully conform to certain expectations. Through this abuse, some seek to turn it into a snare for their brethren.

11. We are thus divided at such an unseasonable time for divisions as this:

First, it is a time of affliction. It was distressing for the Children of Israel when they encountered fiery serpents in the wilderness; similarly, while we are in a state of affliction, we become fiery serpents to one another. The Hebrew word that signifies afflicted also signifies meek, indicating that those who are afflicted should be meek. When a storm approaches, bees flock together to the hive. Jeremiah 50:4 states, "In those days," says the Lord, "the children of Israel shall come, and the children of Judah together,

going and weeping they shall go and seek the Lord their God." Judah and Israel could not agree at other times, but when they are in a weeping condition, then they come together.

Secondly, it is a time of Fasting and Prayer. England has never known such fasting and prayer as it has recently; no nation in the world that we know of has ever experienced the like. Shall we, in such times as these—when we are humbling ourselves before Almighty God and judging ourselves for the pride and rebelliousness of our hearts—contend against one another? Isaiah 58:4 says, "Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fist of wickedness." It is indeed a fist of wickedness that fights during times of fasting. Is this the fast that I have chosen? How do we acknowledge during our fasts our vileness, our unworthiness of the least mercy, our pride, our self-love, our envy, our passions—all those distempers that are dividing distempers—yet still we continue in them, and they break forth into dividing practices? Surely our fasts will rise up in judgment against us to make the sin of our divisions exceedingly sinful.

Thirdly, it is also a time of great mercies. We are afflicted but not forsaken; mercies should sweeten our spirits. This summer has been a continuous miracle of mercies; if our agreement and love for one another were now beyond the expectation of all men, as God's mercies to us have been beyond all expectation, even such a fruit of mercies would be the greatest mercy of all. But if instead of being sweetened by mercies, we become more embittered against one another, how great is this sin? If we take occasion from our victories at Naseby, Taunton, Bridgewater, Sherborne, Bristol to seek to drive out of the kingdom thousands of godly men whom God used as instruments of such great mercy to us; will this not be sin unto us? God indeed brought us into a wilderness but has spoken

comfortably to us there; our wilderness is our way to Canaan. It was Joseph's charge to his brethren in Genesis 45:24 when they were going from Egypt to Canaan: "See that you do not fall out by the way." We hope God is leading us to Canaan; oh that we could see Christ looking upon us and charging us, saying, "See that you do not fall out by the way; do not grudge against one another." Let not one say, "You are the cause of our trouble," and another say, "No, but you are the cause of our trouble." Let everyone charge his own heart; let every man fall out with his own sin as much as he will, but let not brethren fall out by the way.

Fourthly, it is a time of Service. God has never put such opportunities for service into our hands as He has now. How many holy men who were equipped with great abilities and enlarged hearts for serving God and His people in former times lived privately and only enjoyed sweet communion between God and their own souls? Oh how they prized opportunities for service! How they thirsted after and eagerly embraced advantages for public work! They were willing to submit to anything their consciences would allow so they might be employed in work for God and His saints. Though their encouragement from men was small, yet their work was their reward. But in those times, almost all places of public employment were in the hands or at the disposal of evil men. Could they have foreseen that within a few years there would be an open door for all godly men to fully employ their gifts and graces? How would they have rejoiced and longed to see those times and blessed those who should live in them! I am confident it cannot be shown that ever there was a time since the world began when so many godly people in a kingdom have had such a large opportunity for public service as in these last five years in England. Shall this opportunity

be lost with our wranglings and contentions? Oh how unworthy are we to live in such times as these!

When a master sets his servants to work on something of great importance —where losing the opportunity would be a great loss—if these servants waste this opportunity by wrangling with one another about their work or opposing each other in it, will this be a good account to their master? So much time was spent working but so much in quarreling that little work was done. We read of Nehemiah 6:3 when Sanballat and Tobiah—those quarrelsome companions—sent for him to meet them intending to quarrel with him. He answered them, "I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease?" If we see men set upon strife and contention, we should not meddle with them or spend our time answering what comes from them. Our case would be miserable if we were at the mercy of every quarreller bound to answer whatever he pleases to put forth. But let us tend to our work; these opportunities for service that we now have are too precious to give way to them—to be spent or lost upon them.

How just would it be with God to take these opportunities from us—to bring us again into such a condition where we would be glad for a day's employment in public service—and then oh how would our consciences trouble us for such poor use of them when we had them!

5. This time is the time of the trial of our spirits. We have never had such a time to test what spirit of love and principles of union are in us as we do now; and shall we now fail? May it not be justly thought that all our seeming love for one another, and our unity in the past, was only for our own ends? Before, we were all under oppression, or at least the fear of it, when we saw ourselves in the same condition, then the trial was not as severe. But now there is some difference in the condition of godly men.

Some have the times smiling upon them more than others; now is the time of trial.

The time of the trial of the spirit of Pharaoh's Butler towards Joseph was when he was out of prison, enjoying his position at the Court, while Joseph remained still in prison. Perhaps while they were fellow prisoners, he might have told Joseph that his heart did close much with him, and if he had any opportunity to be useful to him, oh what happiness he would think it to himself! Surely it should be improved for the good of Joseph to the utmost. But when he was preferred, when he had respect among great ones, and Joseph still was kept low, then he was not the same man that he was when he was Joseph's fellow sufferer. Now he has other things in his head: Joseph is forgotten by him. Where this evil is, be sure God will find it out: for it is an evil very grievous to His Spirit.

Put these together, and it will appear that it is no time now to contend, whatever we do at other times. I remember I have read of Sir Francis Drake, having a dear friend of his slain by a bullet as he sat with him at supper. "Ah," says he, "I could grieve for thee, but now is no time for me to let down my spirits." So when anyone shall do such things as might cause contention, speak to your own heart, "Ah, I find my anger stirred; I could contend, but now is no time for me to let my spirits rise in a contending way; these times call for peace and union, not for strife and debate." This is the 11th aggravation: we are divided in such a time as this.

The twelfth is that we are divided, notwithstanding we are all convinced of the evil of divisions. We cry out exceedingly against them: we tell one another that of all the tokens of God's displeasure among us, these are the greatest. Yet scarcely a man does anything or leaves anything undone towards any help against divisions or furtherance of our union. Every man

cries out about the thief, but who stops him? We all say we would have peace, oh peace is an excellent thing! But where is the man who is willing to bear any cost for it, either in putting up any wrong which he conceives is done to himself or bearing with his brother in anything differing from himself? The Lord may justly judge us out of our own mouths.

13. We have complained of others who were in positions of power, being of harsh, cruel dispositions. We have said if they had been of gentle, loving, peaceable dispositions, tendering the glory of God dearly and the good of their brethren as their own, what abundance of good might they have done! We have thought in those times, "Oh if such men were in place, who were then our dear brethren, whom we conceived to be of holy, humble, sweet, peaceable spirits, very tender-hearted towards any they saw godliness in; had they power in their hands, what safety, peace, rest would the Saints have! How comfortably should they go on in their work! How would they be edified, praising the Lord! What a heaven upon earth should we have!" And yet we find it otherwise. We may say we looked for light and behold (I will not say darkness) but behold dimness even from them: for brightness but behold obscurity.

Oh how do the actions of these men in some degree justify the harshness, sourness, domineering and cruelty of some of the Prelates! We hope nothing shall ever befall us as to be such a temptation to us as to justify their places. But some of their persons are so far justified as there is occasion given to think they were not such vile men as heretofore we thought they were. For now we see what a temptation there is in having the times shine upon men, in having power put into men's hands. We see now that men who have other manner of principles than ever they had yet how sadly they miscarry when

they come under similar temptations. How can we answer Christ Jesus for these things?

14. We are still divided though we have seen the woeful evils that divisions have brought upon others; yet we cannot be warned by other men's harms. Those who are acquainted with Ecclesiastical Histories may furnish themselves with volumes in this kind. Who can read that short but sour History of the troubles at Frankford but his heart must needs bleed within him? And of late what evils have almost all the Protestant party in Germany and through the Christian world suffered by divisions! And yet we engage ourselves in them and are every day engaging ourselves more and more. How deep we shall sink the Lord knows.

15. In our very laboring for union we are divided; in our endeavors for peace we are at variance. Nazianzen in his 12th Oration rebuking this strange miscarriage of men has this notable expression: "While we would have charity, we study hatred; while we seek to set up the cornerstone which unites the sides together, we are loosened ourselves; we are for peace and yet we fight one with another." Our ways of late have been little else but doing and undoing; yea we cross ourselves in what we would do by doing what we do. We are full of contradictions in our own spirits and actions and we cry out about others that they are not consistent with their own principles.

Lastly, the sin of our divisions is greater because we make Religion patronize them. We divide from one another and all under a pretense of Religion. Surely this Virgin is forced for there is nothing more contrary to the name or nature of Religion than to cause or further divisions. The name carries union, strong union with it: Religio à Religando, from binding us again to God and to one another after we were divided by our sin. To

attribute our wicked divisions to Religion is no other than to bring down the Holy Ghost from the likeness of a Dove to be like a Vulture or a Raven. What spirit is it that we profess ourselves to be acted by when we are working for Religion? Is it not the Spirit of God? And is not that a Dove-like spirit? Although we dishonor ourselves by revealing the baseness of our own spirits by our divisions yet let us not put dishonor upon the blessed Spirit of God; this makes the sin abominable.

Nazianzen in his aforementioned Oration inveighs against this in those in his time: "In our pleadings for the truth," says he, "we belie one another; as if this were the way to maintain truth."

Chapter Twenty-Nine

The woeful miseries that our divisions bring upon us.

They are themselves fruits of the curse; therefore, there can come no other but cursed fruits from them, except God, contrary to their nature, is pleased to overrule them, which only He is able to do. It was the curse of God upon the ground: "Briars and thorns shall it bring forth." It is no less a curse of God upon men's hearts that they bring forth such briars and thorns by which they tear one another.

First, our divisions provoke the wrath of God against us. Though the wrath of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God, it may accomplish the wrath of God. Isaiah 9:21: "Manasseh against Ephraim, and Ephraim against Manasseh, and they together against Judah; for all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still." When we are thus one against another, the anger of God is not turned away from us. We may fear His hand will yet be further stretched out against us; as long as our wrath against one another continues so hot, certainly God's wrath is not appeased.

We read of Abraham, when he was about to sacrifice Isaac, he found a ram entangled in the briars, which God had prepared for him to be a

sacrifice. We are this day entangled in the briars, and we know not how to get out; it is a sign that we are prepared to be a sacrifice, even to the wrath of God.

Secondly, by them we serve the designs of our enemies. What would they have given, when they first divided from us, to have procured such great divisions amongst ourselves as have been and yet are? If a million would have purchased them, rather than they should not have been, they would (no question) have given it. I am sure they further their designs more than many millions would have done: "Hoc Ithacus velit, & magno mercentur Atridæ."

We have often said that some who have kept at the Parliament have served the designs of the King and those about him better than those who were with him. Certainly, those who foment divisions amongst us do serve our enemies' turn more than many that are with them. When in our contentions our spirits rise one against another, and we reproach one another, we do not consider, says Nazianzen, how unsafe it is to put weapons into our enemies' hands. He thought in his time, though nearly thirteen hundred years since, that the divisions of the Churches were a great means to further and hasten the coming of Antichrist. For so he says in the same Oration before quoted: "I verily fear lest Antichrist should come suddenly upon these our divisions," and lest he should take advantage of these our offenses and distempers to raise his power over us. Let those therefore who cry down Antichrist so much also cry down divisions, lest they prove to serve the designs of Antichrist in a very great measure, though they think not so.

Thirdly, by these we make ourselves a scorn to our enemies. Hosea 7:16: "The rage of their tongue shall be their division in the land of Egypt." When malignants hear our rage one against another, we are a derision amongst

them; these Egyptians jeer us, they contemn us, and all the power we can make against them. I find in one of Melanchthon's Epistles a story of one Bessarion exhorting the princes to concord that they might join against the Turks. He brings in this apologue: There was a war between the wolves and the dogs; news came to the wolves that there was a huge army of dogs coming against them, intending to tear them in pieces. The wolves sent an old wolf out to be a scout; he comes and tells them there were indeed a great company of dogs more than themselves were, but they need not fear, for he perceived they were of different colors. Upon this, the wolves made nothing of them, accounting it an easy matter to deal with them who were so differing amongst themselves. In the same manner, says Melanchthon, do Staphilus and Canisius and others of the popish faction triumph in respect of us; upon which he falls to prayer that the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, would govern them and make all in their Churches to be one in Him.

Fourthly, by these we are likely to be made a prey to our enemies. Here many sad stories might be told you of the prevailings of enemies against divided people. The divisions of Israel at this time made them a prey to their adversaries, which you may see clearly if you read 2 Kings 17. Afterwards, the divisions of the other tribes made them a prey to the Romans. When the Turks have prevailed over Christians, do not all stories tell us it has been through the divisions of Christians? When Normans and Danes prevailed in England, it was by the advantage they had of our divisions; if we will still divide and contend, our condition may prove to be like two birds pecking at one another; in the meantime, the kite comes and catches them both away.

Fifthly, if God should free us from our enemies, yet we are likely to devour one another, and this is a greater misery than to be devoured by the

common adversary. Galatians 5:15: "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not consumed one of another." What biting and devouring was this? It was not in an open hostile way; they did not take up arms one against another but by their different opinions and contentious behaviors in matters of religion. Their differences in matters of religion were very great —non de finibus sed de hæreditate—not about the bounds but the inheritance itself; yet unpeaceableness and violence in their behaviors towards one another, though the matter of their difference was so great, is condemned and threatened by the Apostle. Do not our adversaries say, "Let them alone and they will devour one another"? God gives us good hope that He will deliver us from our enemies; but the hearts of many godly and wise men tremble within them, fearing lest that wolvish distemper of ours should feed upon our own flesh when the matter that it had to feed upon from without is taken away.

Sixthly, if we should not devour one another, yet being thus divided we are likely to perish by ourselves as those infecta which after they are cut asunder yet the several parts live; they wriggle up and down a little while but cannot hold long. So it is likely to be with us; except we join together, we cannot live.

Seventhly, these divisions are likely to make many miserable indeed; for if God is not merciful to them—and that soon—they are likely to be such a rock of offense as to split them upon which they are running; they are in very great danger of making shipwreck of their consciences; yea I fear some have done it already; if it is not so, may the Lord be merciful to them and prevent it. The spoiled houses, torn estates, and maimed bodies of men caused by our divisions are sad objects to look upon; but the broken, maimed, spoiled consciences that these have caused—and are likely further

to cause—were and yet are likely to be objects before us to be lamented with tears of blood. This shipwreck of conscience may not be felt now but will prove horror of conscience hereafter.

Eighthly, they are likely to lay a foundation of much evil for posterity; this consideration is almost as sad as any. We think it a great evil that the children of kings should be brought up in the sight of blood, that they should be in danger of having principles of cruelty or tyranny instilled into them at a tender age. We are afraid that the muddy water they drink now might breed diseases in them that may manifest later. Surely, it is also a great evil for the children of the Church to be brought up amidst divisions in matters of religion; that the knowledge of religion they now acquire should be like troubled waters full of soil.

In the beginning of this Parliament, there was as hopeful a generation of young ones coming up as ever the sun saw, but many of them have lost their lives in this public cause. God will certainly take a valuable consideration at the hands of the adversaries for their blood especially; we have cause to bless God for them. God made use of them to stop the rage, the overflowing of the proud adversaries upon us; they have served their generation and have been more useful in it than others who have lived 70 or 80 years before. But for those who are preserved, these divisions in matters of religion have spoiled many of them. They are carried away with such a strange kind of spirit of error, conceitedness, folly, willfulness, bitterness, licentiousness, and boldness, that their hopeful beginnings are lost. The next generation is likely to reap very sour, bitter, and unwholesome fruits from these quarrels and contentions.

By what has been said, you may see why the Spirit of God, in Proverbs 6:19, puts the sowers of discord among those whom God hates. What the

harvest of such seed is likely to be, we shall see in the next section.

Aggravations of the Misery That Comes by Our Divisions

First, our misery is greater because it is still increasing; divisions make way for more divisions. We beat our brethren until they cry, and then we beat them because they cry—is this not hard dealing? We read in our chronicles that those who were born in England the year after the great mortality of 1349 lacked some of their cheek teeth. If we should judge men's teeth by their biting, one would think that now men had more teeth, or at least far sharper than they used to have; there was never such biting as there is now.

Yet thanks be to God this increase is not in all places, not in our armies. There was a time when we were much afraid of divisions there, but now we hear they are comfortably united. Dividing terms are not heard among them as formerly; though there be differing judgments, their hearts and arms are open to one another. They love one another and are willing to live and die with one another. The blessing of the Almighty be upon you; go on and prosper, the Lord is with you. He has done great things by you and delights to use you in great services for the honor of His name and the good of His people. You have had, and have, the prayers of the saints; they bless you and bless God for you. Soldiers united in love and hating what is vile are exceedingly strengthened in valor.

Plutarch reports of a Theban band that was only three hundred strong yet was the most terrible to enemies and did the greatest services. They were called the Holy Band because they hated dishonest things and were willing to venture their lives for honest causes, fearing dishonorable reproach more than honorable danger. Though this was one reason it had that name, Plutarch thinks that the first reason it was called the Holy Band was due to

their entire love for one another. By the same reasoning, he says Plato calls a lover a divine friend by God's appointment.

These Thebans, together with other countrymen, had great power against the Lacedaemonians. To resist such power as the Athenians feared it, they stopped protecting them, renouncing their previous league with them. Every man said the Thebans were undone. But these despised Thebans met with the Lacedaemonians near Tegyra where, according to some accounts, they were outnumbered six to one by a warlike and valiant people. One came running to Pelopidas, the captain of the Thebans, saying, "Sir, we have fallen into the hands of the Lacedaemonians." "Nay, have they not fallen into ours?" said Pelopidas. And so it turned out; they utterly routed them.

In all the wars that the Lacedaemonians ever had with both Greeks and barbarians, no chronicle ever mentioned that they were overcome by an equal number in battle. These Thebans grew so terrible to their enemies that none dared encounter them for a long time. After this battle, Pelopidas never separated them but kept them together and always began with them to charge in his most dangerous battles.

Yet despite all this service, they had ill requital from their people. When their captain Pelopidas came home, a party was stirred up against him that sought to break him, though they could not prevail. It is further reported of this band that it was never broken or overthrown until the battle of Chaeronea where it seems some were added to them. See what love and valor will do in an army unto death. Philip, taking a view of the slain bodies there, saw four hundred dead on the ground, one hard by another, all thrust through with pikes on their breasts. Being told it was the Lovers' Band, he wept for pity, saying, "Woe be to them that think these men did or suffered any evil or dishonest thing."

Ever since our armies have been united, God has wonderfully blessed them. Shall men of war be at peace? Is this fitting? And shall men of peace be at war? How unfitting would this be? Yet so it is. The seeds of dissension have never sprung up more against us than they have of late. The spirits of men seem to be heated and ready to boil against one another in this city more than they have before.

The Lord has made London a blessing to the whole kingdom and the neighboring kingdoms too. The children not yet born will have cause to bless God for London, for their union, their faithfulness, their courage, their generosity. And shall now, when God is about to bring us rest from the rage of our enemies, a fire of dissension be kindled among us? Shall the comfort of all our former mercies and future hopes be lost by raising new quarrels? And must this come from the city? The Lord forbid. The Lord make you like Jerusalem, a city compact, at unity within itself. Your very name carries unity in the face of it. "Civis à coeundo," says Cicero: "quod vinculo quodam societatis in unum coeunt quasi Coivis."

I remember I have read in Livy a notable speech of Scipio to the citizens at Carthage. "By what name," says he, "shall I call you? I know not: Shall I call you Cives, qui à patria vestra descivistis?" Things have not come to this pass in this city. The Lord forbid that there should ever be that degenerating from that unity and love that has been before, that there should be cause to say, "Shall you still be called Cives? qui à pristina unitate, à pristino amore mutuo descivistis," who have departed from your former unity and mutual love. Oh no, let brotherly love continue (Hebrews 13:1). Let none take your crown, but abide glorious in the eyes of the whole nation about you and all strangers that come into you.

We pray for the peace of London: Let them prosper that love it; peace be within her walls and prosperity within her palaces. If any shall say the city is not guilty herein, it is but some few private men: I gladly answer as Scipio in his aforementioned speech did to the Carthaginians, making such an objection, "Libenter credam negantibus," I am very willing to believe it. Only do you make it appear to be so by knitting yourselves so much the more strongly together by how much any among you seeks to disunite you.

A second aggravation of the misery of our divisions is that surely none will pity us in all the evil that comes upon us by them. If God should have allowed our enemies to prevail against us, all the Protestant party in the world would have pitied us. If those who had escaped had fled for their lives to them, they would have entertained them with much compassion. But if we harm ourselves by our divisions, we shall be looked upon as contemptible in the eyes of all. If we should flee to them, we may expect to be entertained with rebukes: "You are an unworthy generation: God put a price into your hands to have done yourselves and all the Protestant party good; you might have freed yourselves from thralldom and many ways have been helpful to us, but you had such proud, envious, quarrelsome spirits that you broke asunder one from another, you harmed one another, and so have undone yourselves and your posterity; you are not worthy to live among men." Can we bear such rebukes as these? Every man that is in misery desires to be pitied, but this misery is likely to be such that no pity can be expected in it.

Thirdly, our consciences will fly in our faces, telling us that we may thank ourselves for all this. It is a great part of the torment of the damned that their consciences shall always upbraid them for bringing so much evil upon themselves. This shall be the gnawing of that worm of conscience forever.

Fourthly, our misery is and will be aggravated by the executioners of it: our familiars, our brethren, those who not long since were dear to us, will be made use of to make us miserable. How great a misery will that be? When the men of Judah came up to Samson to deliver him to the Philistines (Judges 15:11-12), Samson said to them, "But swear to me that you will not fall upon me yourselves." He thought it a very grievous thing for the men of Judah to fall upon him. He did not so much regard what the Philistines could do against him. Certainly, there is nothing in the world more sad than for one brother to make another miserable.

The history of that war between Sulla and Marius tells of one having slain a man not knowing him, but after he looked and found it was his brother, in the anguish of his heart because he had slain his brother, he took his sword and ran it into his own bowels. It is a great evil to be an instrument of evil to our brethren and to suffer evil from our brethren.

This consideration might be enough to stop us in our divisions and cause us to think of ways of joining. Plutarch in the forecited place, the life of Pelopidas, says that the poets write that the misfortune of Laius who was slain by his brother Oedipus was the first original cause that the Thebans began to be in such love one with another, to join in that Holy Band before mentioned. If this were cause enough to take us off from our contentions, we have enough of this among us. The Lord be merciful to us.

Fifthly, the misery of our contentions in the civil state is such that if we are overcome, we are undone; for our outward condition, we and our posterity are made slaves; if we do prevail, yet there is sadness in our conquest. That is a miserable war which is thus. The civil wars of the Romans were such: "Nullos habitura triumphos," there was no triumph but sadness even in victory.

Sixthly, what help can there be? For we willfully make ourselves miserable; if men will undo themselves, who can help it? Except God comes in from heaven with a mighty hand to help, our wound is incurable.

Thus you have seen what evil and bitter things our divisions are; their root is evil and bitter, and they are the root of much evil and bitter fruit. We read Genesis 38:29 that Pharez was the son of Tamar; Pharez signifies division or fraction, from whence he had his name; Tamar signifies a palm tree,* "Ab amaritudine," says Pagnine, according to some, from bitterness; division comes from bitterness and begets like itself nothing but bitterness.

Chapter Thirty

Cautions about our Divisions, that we may not make an illuse of them, buttry if it bepossible to get good out of them.

Our divisions are very evil; yet let us not make them worse than they are, and let us take heed that we are not made worse by them. Wherefore we shall:

First, show what are those ill uses which many make of them.

Secondly, demonstrate that it is no such strange thing as some would make it that there should be divisions in times of reformation.

Thirdly, explain how it comes to pass that godly men are divided who above all men one would think should agree.

Fourthly, why these differences are so strong, and sometimes so sharp among those men who seem to come very near together in the main, the matter of whose difference lies in smaller things.

Fifthly, how far God Himself, and Christ, and the Gospel, may be said to have a hand in our divisions.

Sixthly, what good uses we should make of our divisions.

For the first. The ill uses that many make of our divisions are:

First, some, upon the evils they see and feel in them, think it was better with us before and wish we had those times again. Just like the murmuring Israelites, as soon as they were put to any straits, they wished they were in Egypt again; it was better with us then, they say. Indeed, in Numbers 16:13, out of discontent with their present condition, they commend the land of Egypt, where they were bond-slaves, to be a land that flowed with milk and honey, murmuring at Moses who brought them out of such a land. The land of Canaan that God promised to carry them to was a land that flowed with milk and honey, but out of the perverseness of their spirits, they despised that land, and Egypt now, in this rebellious humor of theirs, must be the land that flowed with milk and honey. Oh, the perverseness of men's hearts! If they are but a little crossed, how hard is it for God or man to please them! How unworthy are such rebellious spirits as these to live in such a time as this, to see the great works of God that He has done for His people. It is true, previously men seemed to be more united than now; there appear more differences in men's opinions and ways than formerly. But why was it that men formerly were not at such a distance? Was it not because they were chained together? Two prisoners chained to a block keep together all day long; men who are at liberty walk in the streets at a distance. If the prisoners should commend their life as more comfortable than yours because they keep closer together all day than you do, would you envy their happiness? There was a time when a tyrannical chain was upon us; we dared not then discuss any matters of difference with freedom. If a convocation determined it, there was a chain upon us to fasten us to it. Now God has given us more liberty to debate things freely so that we may find out the truth more clearly. And though men while they are in their debates

be at some distance from one another, do not say it was better with us before than it is now; you do not speak wisely concerning this thing.

Surely these men who are so desirous of former times are ad servitudinem nati, born to be slaves; it is a pity but they should have their ears bored for slaves.

Secondly, the ill use that others make of these divisions is to cry out against religion and preaching. Since there has been so much profession and preaching, we never had a good world; there was more love and unity before; all things were more quiet; neighbors were more at peace with one another. This is no different than if men when Christ lived among them should have objected against Him: Since this Christ has come among us, we have had more trouble than we or our forefathers ever knew; we were not used to hearing of men possessed with the devil as we do now; now what a noise is there in all the country of men possessed with evil spirits? We do not read of such things before Christ's time. Yet do you think this was a good argument why men should wish that Christ had never come? If the devil is put into a rage now more than before, it is a sign he is more opposed than he was before; he possessed all in quiet before, but now his kingdom begins to shake.

Thirdly, because of these divisions, many resolve they will stand neutral; they see it is doubtful which way things may go. Seeing there are such differences, we will stand by and look on until we see how they will agree. By this means they do not only desert the public cause that is now on foot but they are in danger of being for anything at last or turning atheists. Chrysostom in his sermons upon Acts 15 inveighs against such men as these; he there makes an apology for the dissensions of the Christians. The heathens objected: We would come to you, but we know not to whom we

should come; one is of one mind, another is of another; we cannot tell what you hold; you are so different from yourselves. Chrysostom's answer is: This is but a cavil; for first, this hinders you not in other matters where there is difference among men; yet you will take pains and inquire which is right. Yes secondly, if you did know what you should hold, yet you would not embrace it; for you do know what you should do and yet you do not do it; do what you know and then ask of God and He will reveal more to you.

Fourthly, others cry out against those men who have been most active in this common cause, putting forth themselves, venturing their estates and lives, and encouraging others. At first these men were honored, but men did not then see what would follow; they did not think that such troubles would have attended such undertakings as now they have found. Upon this their hearts rise against those who were the most public-spirited: Had it not been, say they, for a few hot fiery-spirited men who know not what they would have, things had never come to this pass; we might have been quiet. These men are by some, yes many, looked upon as no other than disturbers, men of turbulent unquiet spirits. And yet they have been the means of preserving you and your posterity from slavery and of continuing the Gospel among you. This is an ill requital of all that willingness of theirs to hazard their estates and lives for your good. You have cause to bless God that seeing you were of such low, narrow, timorous spirits yourselves, unfit for such a work as God had to do in the beginning of the change of these times, He raised up others and gave them enlarged resolved spirits fit for such a public work accompanied with so many difficulties as attended upon this. Did they break the ice for you and do you thus requite them? This is like a rebellious perverse patient who flies in the face of his physician because his medicine makes him sick.

Fifthly, others seeing much evil come from the divisions among us think there is no way to help them but by violence, forcing men to yield to what they think is right. They think they do God good service by compelling men to the same judgment and way that they themselves are of. This is a very ill use of them. It is a new and unheard-of way of preaching, says Gregory, to require men to believe by blows. To go from the divine Word to an iron sword, from the pen to the halberd to persuade men to believe is a way that Gerard confesses Catholically against.

Socrates, in his Ecclesiastical History, lib. 3, cap. 21, reports of the Macedonians petitioning Emperor Jovianus for the banishment of those who did not share their views on significant religious matters. The Emperor, upon receiving their supplication, gave them no other answer but this: "I tell you truly, I cannot abide contention, but those who embrace unity and concord, I do honor and reverence."

Tertullian, in his book Ad Scapulam, cap. 2, says, "It is not the way of Religion to compel Religion, which ought to be embraced willingly, not by force. If you should compel us," he says, "to sacrifice, what would you achieve for your gods? None desire sacrifice from those who are unwilling, but such as are contentious; but God is not contentious."

I find in Thuanus's History, lib. 16, a notable passage in a writing that the Senate of Paris sent to their King in the year 1555 after he had issued an Edict requiring great severity against those who differed in matters of Religion. They professed to him that they did not think his Edict fair and that they could not subscribe to it. For, they say, "We see that such severe punishments for matters of Religion render men detestable to the people, but their errors remain unchanged; they are not at all altered in their opinions by severity. But for their part, they give their judgment that it were

better to follow the old way of the Church, which did not propagate Religion by sword and fire but by pure doctrine and the good examples of the lives of their Bishops. Let them live piously and teach the word of God sincerely; this is the way to root out errors that increase so fast. But if this is not done, no laws or edicts of men will do any good."

Sleidan, in his Commentaries, has set down a Decree of the Emperor, King Ferdinand, and the rest of the Princes and States that the controversy of Religion should be appeased by none other than godly, friendly, and quiet means. But a few pages later, he relates the effect of a petition from those in Austria for their freedom in Religion to King Ferdinand, with an answer from the King to them: in which there was this passage: "That such as shall not like that Religion which the Prince has chosen may have free liberty to sell what they have and go dwell in another place without any blemish to their reputation." To which the Ambassadors of Austria reply: "What disadvantage is herein? How heavy and sorrowful news this would be to the people, who sees not? When they shall hear that those who have been ever most ready to spend their blood and life for the preservation and dignity of the House of Austria must now forsake their most sweet native country, so many years inhabited and enriched by their forefathers? Therefore we admit not that Answer in this behalf: but as we have done often heretofore, for the honor of God we beseech you that you would suffer us to have no hindrance in this matter," etc.

But you will say, what does all this tend to but to plead for an absolute Toleration, which you seemed before to be against?

I answer: In quoting these authors, I do not endorse such a judgment that possibly you may think to be in some of them for an absolute Toleration. How a Toleration should be limited and granted I have spoken to before;

but I produce these authors to this end: that the rigidity of the judgments of some amongst us who think all differences in religion that cannot be quelled by argument must be quelled by violence may be softened. I am sure if any of these men go too far one way, those whom I am now reproving go as wide another. Fierce violence in matters of Religion is dangerous; as the surgeon's rigorous handling of his patient's arm breaks that bone completely which before was just out of joint.

Some take advantage by them to give themselves over to looseness in their lives: it is a time of liberty, and they will take their time. If times were quiet and settled, they would be observed more narrowly; there would be means of restraint. But in these times every man takes his own way, and so will they. But know that God takes this very ill at your hands. The more loose others are, the more conscientious should you be: the worse the days are, the more circumspectly should you walk. Ezekiel 44:10: "The Levites that are gone from me, which went astray when Israel forsook me, they shall also bear their iniquity." The commonness of a sin is an aggravation of it.

Some make no other use of them than to observe which way there may be advantage gained by them: how they may suit themselves to this side or the other for their gain or to drive on some private design. So long as they can make use of the times that run such a way, they are for them: if the stream turns, they can turn too; they can tack about to every wind. Their study is not to help heal them but to contrive ways how they may profit from them. Hence they wrench and sprain their consciences with their quick turnings this way and that way: they will be on the sunny side wherever it may be. Cunning heads and corrupt hearts will serve their own ends by all varieties of times. If they were in Diocletian's time, they could be Pagans; if in

Constantine's, Christians; if in Constantius's, Arians; if in Julian's, Apostates; if in Jovian's, Christians again: and all this within less than the age of a man.

Some have their spirits in a base manner subjugated by these divisions and troubles that come upon them: they care not what they do or submit to; so long as they may have peace, they will bow down their backs and consciences; they will put themselves and posterity under the yoke of perpetual slavery; so long as they may be at quiet and enjoy their estates for the present, no matter what becomes of the public or what becomes of the truth. They are content to let all go, to betray all for their own private advantage. This is beneath the spirit of a man.

Others are discouraged upon seeing the great evils that daily flow from our divisions and are likely still to flow; their hearts sink in despair. They question whether it is indeed God's cause that we now undertake. When the Temple was being built, there was no noise of hammer, axe, or any tool of iron heard in the house while it was being built. But oh Lord! Is our work Temple-work? We hear not only the noise of hammer and axe but also swords and spears, drums and cannons, railings and revilings; these are dreadful in our ears. But let us not be discouraged; for though there was no noise heard in the House itself during its construction, yet there was during its preparation. It may be all we are yet about is only preparatory work for the House of our God. If God will use us only in this capacity, yet blessed be His name.

Wherefore though our divisions are many and very evil, yet they are not so evil nor so many but that there may still be hope in Israel concerning this thing. For consider: it is no new thing for divisions to exist within the Church.

The Apostle would not have us think it strange concerning the fiery trial, which he means as persecution. The fiery contentions among us are another fiery trial. We should not find this strange either, as if such a thing had befallen us that never yet befell any. I think, considering all circumstances, it is very hard to parallel, but the Church in all ages has been sorely afflicted with divisions.

In Acts 15:39, Paul and Barnabas, two great Apostles, were so divided that they could not keep company together but went one from another in anger. The text says, "The contentions were so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from another." The word signifies such sharpness as there is in vinegar. It is used by physicians to signify the sharpness of the feverish humor when it is acting in a fit. Their dissension put them, as it were, into the fit of a fever.

You might say, surely it was some very great matter that should cause such eminent and holy men to be in such a passion one against another, to be so hot as not to company together. Truly no; the matter was not great. It was whether Mark should go with them or not; one would have him, the other would not, and about this, the contention arose to this height.

Read the Epistle to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, and you shall find very great dissensions in these Churches. In later times especially, when God delivered them from those ten bloody persecutions, the contentions of the Church were very great. When Constantine came to the Nicene Council, various members of that council accused one another to the Emperor and put up libels one against another, which Constantine caused to be burned.

After all the debates of the council, with the presence of the Emperor who labored all he could for peace and union among them, making large

speeches to that purpose, yet there were five of them who dissented from the rest in matters of greater consequence than any among us dissent from our brethren, namely, in that point of Christ's being of the same substance with the Father.

I find in Eusebius this grievous complaint: After our affairs, through too much liberty, ease, and security, degenerated from the rule of piety, one pursued another with open contumely and hatred; we impugned ourselves by none other than ourselves with the armor of spite and sharp spears of opprobrious words. So that bishops against bishops and people against people raised sedition; and they who seemed our shepherds, laying aside the rule of piety, practiced contention and schism among themselves. While they aggravated contention, threats, mutual hatred, and enmity, and everyone proceeded in ambition much like tyranny itself, then the Lord according to the saying of Jeremiah made the daughter of Zion obscure and overthrew from above the glory of Israel.

The contentions of the Church caused by those four grand heresies of Arius, Macedonius, Nestorius, and Eutyches, one after another, exercised the Church for a long time. There was much siding, some cleaving to one part, some to another in all these four. The first denied Christ's divinity, upon which the first Nicene Council was called. The second denied the personality of the Spirit, upon which the second General Council was called at Constantinople. The third denied the distinction of persons in Christ, upon which the third General Council was called at Ephesus. The fourth confounded Christ's natures, upon which the fourth was called at Chalcedon.

Around this time Pelagius and Donatus caused much disturbance in Europe and Africa. Epiphanius, who lived in the third century, reckons sixty

several heresies that had gained followers, causing great breaches in the Church from the time of the Apostles to his own time.

After the division of the Empire into Eastern and Western parts, there arose mighty contention for primacy between the Bishops of Rome and Constantinople. This put the Church into woeful contentions for many years, with one part excommunicating the other and writing and opposing one another to the utmost.

When this heat was at its hottest on one side upon the Western parts, God let out the Goths, Huns, Vandals—those barbarous people—and Mahomet upon the Eastern. As a result, all learning was almost extinct in the Christian world and gross darkness came upon the face of all Churches.

The Church having lost her lights—men of learning and worth—then arose a great contention about images that ἐικονομαχία [iconomachy], with Eastern Churches demolishing images in temples and Western Churches maintaining them with extreme contention against the Eastern. There were not only excommunications thundered one against another but much blood was shed in that quarrel.

In this condition have the Churches been from time to time divided, even fighting one with another about opinions. For divisions and contentions between particular men—the most eminent lights in the Church—in those times after they came to have rest from persecutions, we find most lamentable complaints in the writings of the Ancients about how these dissensions were an extreme offense to the heathen.

Nazianzen in his first Apologetical Oration says: "We are made a spectacle to angels and men—not as that valiant champion Paul who fought against principalities and powers—but we are made a scorn to wicked men

in their markets, their feasts, their plays, in all their meetings. The most vile people jeer us—and all this for contending and warring one with another."

Basil makes this complaint: "I have lived now," he says, "the age of a man and see more union in arts and sciences than in divinity; for in the Church I see such dissensions as do divide it asunder and dissipate it."

Chrysostom and Epiphanius fell out so bitterly that one wished the other might never die a Bishop, and the other wished that he might never go home alive. And it happened to both as each had wished for the other, for Epiphanius did not return to Cyprus; he died at sea. Neither did Chrysostom die a Bishop, for he was deposed and banished from the Church.

The contentions between Jerome and Rufinus were very bitter, though they had been great friends. Augustine, in his 15th Epistle, says their friendship had been famous in all the Churches. He reflects, "If such things may fall out between Jerome and Rufinus, who that is now a friend may not fear to be an enemy?" Yet Rufinus writes two books against Jerome, titled "Rufini Invectiva in Hieronymum." He begins his first invective by applying the words of the Psalmist to Jerome: "I lie among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword" (Psalm 57:4). In the beginning of his second, he accuses him of lying and doing what he reproves in others, with an abundance of such bitter content.

Jerome retaliates in kind. In his 16th epistle to Principia the Virgin, he calls Rufinus a scorpion because of the poison that came from him. In his Apology against Rufinus, Book 3, he applies this Scripture to him: "In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride" (Proverbs 14:3) and "The vile person will speak villainy, and his heart will work iniquity, to utter error against the Lord" (Isaiah 32:6). I find in an Epistle of Augustine to Jerome a great

complaint about the differences between Rufinus and him, with very heartfelt expressions urging Jerome to peace: "When I read your Epistles, I pined away with grief; my heart was cold within me with fear. Oh miserable, oh lamentable condition that we are in! You who were once most familiar, joined in the strongest bonds; you who were once united in the sweetness of the holy Scriptures, now there is bitterness among you. Woe is me that I cannot meet you together, that I might fall down at your feet and weep my fill! That I might beg of you as strongly as I love you, sometimes either of you for your own sake, sometimes both of you for each other's sake, and especially for the sake of those who are weak, for whom Christ died, who look upon you with great danger; that you would not in your writings spread such things against one another, which even if you should agree you could not wipe off from one another; or such things as if you were agreed you would be afraid to read."

Indeed, there was often very hot contention between Jerome and Augustine himself. Sometimes I find some of their writings against each other to be very sharp. If we can debate things without bitterness of discord, well and good; but if I cannot tell you what should be mended in your writings, and you tell me what should be mended in mine without suspicion of envy and breach of friendship, let us meddle no more but favor our healths and lives.

In later times when God stirred up a spirit in Luther and others to set themselves against the tyranny of Antichrist, to throw off that heavy yoke of bondage, the dissensions between the chief public instruments of God to the Church were very great, as with Luther, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, and Karlstadt. Luther in one of his Epistles says there was no wickedness or cruelty that Zwingli did not charge him with. In another Epistle, he

complains that Karlstadt was more malicious against him than any of his enemies had been. As for Oecolampadius, Luther was so provoked against him that he called him the black devil. We may see what strange corruptions are sometimes working in the hearts of godly men.

As for the many sects and divisions in and shortly after Luther's time, they would fill a large volume to name them with their several opinions and ways. There is one Schlusselburgius, a Protestant Divine, who gathered the chief of them together in twelve or thirteen books he wrote about them. There is not any strange opinion among us now that you shall not find among them in exact terms, prevailing enough to gather a strong party. Only I do not recall one that has taken some who acknowledge the Scripture yet think there is no visible Church upon the earth.

In later times whoever reads Junius's commentary on Psalm 122 will find the state of the Church in his time miserably distracted and distressed with contentions. "I cannot," he says, "but be exceedingly moved when I think of these evils. What shall I do? Shall I hold my peace when the devil has stirred up such great perturbation, has kindled such a great fire? Certainly there is such a fire kindled in the Christian world that unless God looks from heaven upon us, it will consume all: the minds of men are as hearths for this fire upon which sin burns; the tongues of men are like bellows that blow this fire; others are like fuel by which this fire burns more and more. What the tongue cannot do to blow up this fire, virulent papers do—dung carts of virulent papers—that is his expression. Indeed a great part of the Christian world at this time seems more like a place for burning dead bodies than the house of Christ's flock: are these Shepherds? Are these the Sheep of Christ whom I see consumed away in their miserable burning? Surely they are Shepherds still; they are the Sheep of Christ and anointed ones still:

but many of them in this horrible and deadly burning remember not that they are Sheep or Shepherds." Thus he proceeds further in pouring forth his soul in most grievous complaints.

This fiery trial of dissensions in the Church is no new thing: we are to be aware of it and account it a great affliction; but not to look upon it as if some strange thing had befallen us that never befell the Churches before.

But you may say, how can we do less than account it a very strange thing that those who fear God should be thus divided? That dogs should snarl at one another is no marvel: but that sheep—that those who are godly—should do thus is something we cannot help but wonder at: for what reason can there be given for it? Indeed what semblance of reason can there be imagined?

Answer: If we consider things wisely, we have no such cause to wonder that godly men in this state of imperfection should differ so much from one another as they do; for...

First, every godly person values and seeks after knowledge. Others focus mainly on their profit and pleasure; they do not trouble themselves with knowing the things of God unless ambition drives them to it. They do not care which way truths go. But the godly person values every truth highly, worth contending for to the utmost, rather than denying it or losing it. In the dark, all colors appear alike, but in the light, they appear diverse. While the Egyptians were in the dark, they all sat still, but they moved with various motions when the light broke out upon them. When people discuss things and desire to see further into them, it is impossible, considering the weaknesses of even the best and the variety of people's perceptions, that there must be much difference in judgments. Considering that everything they perceive as truth engages their consciences, at least to the extent that

they must not deny it for anything in the world, this creates distance between people, even if both are godly and love the truth equally.

Secondly, godly people are free individuals; Christ has made them so and requires them not to allow themselves to be brought under bondage. They must not and cannot submit their consciences to the opinions, determinations, or decrees of any living person; they cannot submit to any as lords over their faith. Others can do this: regarding points of religion, some say, let learned people judge them; we will not be wiser than they; we will submit, and others must submit to what they determine. This makes quick work indeed of divisions, but those who fear God cannot do this. They must see everything they own as truth with their own light, yet received from Jesus Christ. Though they respect people of greater parts and deeper learning, they have Christ's charge upon them not to acknowledge it as truth until they understand it to be so. This causes much contention among good people due to their weakness and the corruption of their hearts.

The less distance people perceive between themselves and others regarding power, the more differences there are among them, as it is said that the greatest and fiercest storms occur around the equator. People are kept more at peace in the commonwealth than in the church because there is greater subjection of one to another there than may be admitted in the church.

Thirdly, godly people commit themselves to the strictest rules of holiness; they walk in the narrow way of Christ. It is broad enough for the spiritual part, but regarding our corruptions, it is a narrow path. They dare not allow themselves to deviate even slightly from the rule to gratify others; they dare not bend to suit others but must keep themselves to the straight rule. They must keep precisely in their path; they cannot go aside to accommodate

others. Hence there is clashing, as everyone does not have the same thoughts about the rule and way as others do. Those who walk by loose rules in ways that are broad even to their flesh can easily accommodate one another; they can gratify their friends' corruptions more than others can. Godly people cannot yield for peace's sake to terms that other people can.

Fourthly, the things that saints are concerned with are great things, matters of high nature concerning their ultimate end and eternal estates. Hence everyone is very careful and strongly set on maintaining what they perceive. Those who do not understand the infinite consequence of these things or have not had the fear of them fall upon their hearts wonder at the firmness of people's spirits that they can yield no more in such matters where they believe they might yield. Where there are different perceptions of these matters concerning people's eternal estates, even among godly people, they must stand against one another until God causes one of them to see things differently than they do now.

Fifthly, religious matters are hidden mysteries; they are God's secrets and are hard to understand. God reveals them in different ways; they are not ordinarily so clearly revealed that perceptions of them are likely to differ.

Sixthly, saints are bound to watch over one another; each is his brother's keeper. They ought to advise, admonish, and reprove one another and not allow sin upon their brethren. Now this (through our corruption) is very displeasing; we do not love to be meddled with or crossed in what we desire. But other people can better preserve their own peace by leaving their brethren alone: "I will not trouble them lest I be troubled myself." Hence it is that they often live more quietly with one another than godly people do; yet this is a great evil and a shame to those who are godly that it should be so under any terms.

Seventhly, ungodly people are dead in sins; the Devil has them secure enough. He does not seek to stir their corruptions as much as he does those of the godly; he shall not gain as much advantage by one as by the other. Therefore, he labors to keep the corruptions of the godly active as much as he can so that he may disturb their own spirits and those with whom they converse.

Thus you see it is no wonder why there are dissensions among those who truly fear God. Suppose they should live all together; yet as long as they live here in this muddy world, there will sometimes be foul weather among them. But if you look into the church and consider its dissensions, there is a further reason for them: usually, many hypocrites mingle with the godly there. They take up a profession of religion and creep into the church; finding spiritual things unsuitable for them, they fly off because their spirits are not brought under Christ's yoke. They resist those things that constrain them.

We read in Numbers 11:4 that the great trouble among the Children of Israel after leaving Egypt was from the mixed multitude among them. These are like ill humors in the body that disturb its peace greatly. None have more turbulent, cruel, or impatient spirits than hypocrites; none are so desirous of revenge as they, says Luther.

Furthermore, those who come closest together yet differ in some things are often at greater variance with one another than those who differ in more things from them. The Jews and Samaritans were at greater variance than Jews and Heathens.

Epiphanius tells of a sect of Jews called Nazarites who continued Jewish customs and ceremonies but also acknowledged Christ. In hatred towards

them, Jews cursed them solemnly three times a day—morning, noon, and evening—when they went into their synagogue to pray.

The Turks have an honorable esteem of Christ, which the Tartars do not; yet it is said that the Tartars turn Christian sooner than the Turks. The Turks and Persians are both Muslims; they are both circumcised, but the Turks follow the way of Ebubezer, and the Persians are of the School of Haly. They detest one another more than they do the Christians. They will both tolerate Christians to live among them, but they will not tolerate Muslims who are in a different order from themselves.

Luther complains much of those who acknowledged the same doctrine, professed the same faith with himself, and came to the same Sacraments, yet were worse enemies than the Papists. The Papists laughed at them and said, "They bite one another and are consumed by one another."

I have read of a profane speech by Cosmus, Duke of Florence, against some perfidious friends: "You shall read," says he, "that we are commanded to forgive our enemies, but you never read that we are commanded to forgive our friends." Breaches among friends, especially those who are otherwise nearest, are the greatest. Proverbs 18:19 states, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and their contentions are like the bars of a castle."

1. We see it in nature: the nearer the union is, the more grievous is the separation. It is not as great an evil for a man for his arm to be separated from his body as for his soul; for the union of the one is integral, of the other it is essential. The bone is more firmly united in all its parts than the flesh, and the least breach in that is far more hurtful than a greater one in the flesh.

2. Those who agree on many things have hope that they may get one another to their side; upon this, they struggle with one another more. As for those who are at a great distance, they have no hope to prevail with them; therefore, they make no onset. But seeing themselves frustrated in their hopes troubles them, and it often stirs up a spirit of anger against those whom they cannot bring over to their side.

3. Those who agree on many and great things and yet stand out on few and less consequential matters are thought to be more unreasonable. If you yield this far, why not a little further? One thinks so of the other, and hence their spirits are stirred against one another.

4. Those who come up near to others and yet dissent seem to stand more in the light of those they come up so near to than those who are at a greater distance. It makes men think such a one is not in the right; if he were, those who come so near to him would see it. They who think themselves beyond others cannot enjoy that comfort and content in what they are beyond others in as otherwise they might because such as are so near them are against it. If they did not agree on most things and those of greatest moment, their opposition would not be much regarded. But because they are such men who for their judgments and lives are so unblameable, their differing in such a thing is more significant than if a hundred times as many who were at a greater distance in their principles and lives should differ from us.

5. Those who are so near one another have occasion to converse more together than others have and to argue things more often with one another than with those they differ more from. Now it is seldom that men of different judgments and ways meet and argue without some heat between them before they have done; thus, their spirits grow more estranged from one another than before. And if your spirits be estranged, then those that

you have reference to and such as are in your way will have their spirits estranged too. Your relation of things to them according to what apprehensions you have of them will be enough to estrange their hearts, and so by degrees bitterness grows up between you.

The fifth thing: That God has a hand in our Divisions, and how far.

God had a great stroke in the division of these ten Tribes from the two, 1 Kings 12:23-24. The word of the Lord came to Shemajah the man of God, saying, "Return every man to his house, for this thing is from the Lord." In the sense of the Prophet there, we may say that our Divisions are from the Lord. We are wrangling, devising, plotting, working one against another, minding nothing but to get the day one over another; but God is working out ends above our reach for His glory and the good of His Saints. "There must be Heresies," says the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 11:19. So there must be divisions.

That word 'Hæresis' is used to signify several opinions or ways: Hæreses Platonicæ, Hæreses Peripateticæ. Chrysostome interprets that place of the Apostle as referring to such Divisions as we are treating of.

But why must there be Divisions? What does God aim at in them?

Answer: First, the discovery of men's spirits—that they which are approved may be manifest, says the Apostle. By those divisions in Corinth, wherein the rich divided from the poor—whereby the poor were condemned—the graces of the poor in bearing this were manifested. Thus Chrysostome upon the place: The Apostle says this to comfort the poor who were able with a generous mind to bear that contempt. The melting of metal discovers dross by dividing one from the other. These are melting times; thereby discovering times. If Reformation had gone on without opposition, we would not have seen what drossy spirits we had among us. Those who

have kept upright without warping in these times are honorable before God and His holy Angels and Saints.

2. By these Divisions God exercises the graces of His servants. A little skill in a mariner is enough to guide his ship in fair weather; but when storms arise, when seas swell and grow troublesome, then his skill is put to it. In these stormy troublesome times there needs much wisdom, faith, love, humility, patience, self-denial, meekness—all graces are put to it now; they need to put forth all their strength and act with all their vigor. Our graces need to be stirring, full of life and quickness now. God prizes the exercise of His Saints' graces at a very high rate. He thinks it worth their suffering much trouble. It is good evidence of grace—yea, much grace—to account the trouble of many afflictions as recompensed by exercising graces. In times of division men need to stir up all their graces and be very watchful over their ways and walk exactly—be circumspect and accurate in their lives. Those who do not have their hearts with them have their eyes upon them—prying into them and watching for their halting. When there is siding there is much observing. "Lord," says David (Psalm 27:11), "teach me thy way and lead me in a plain path because of mine enemies." So it is in your books; but you may read it as "because of mine observers": enemies are observers.

Hence it was the policy of the Lacedæmonians always to send two ambassadors together who disagreed among themselves so that they might mutually have an eye upon each other's actions.

3. God will have these to be in just judgment to the wicked, that they may be a stumbling block to those who will not receive the truth in love. There are so many opinions, such divisions, so many religions, say some, that we know not what to do. If your hearts are carnal, not loving the ways of God,

not valuing spiritual things, not favoring the things of another world, these opinions and divisions may be laid by God in judgment as a stumbling block in your way, so that you may stumble upon them and break yourself forever. God has no need of you. If you will be rebellious and perverse against his truths, if you have a mind to take offense, you shall have enough before you to take offense at. Stumble and break your necks as a just reward for the perverseness of your hearts. These divisions which you rejoice in, which you can speak of as glad that you have such an objection against my people and ways that your hearts are opposed to, shall cost you dearly, even the perdition of your souls everlastingly.

It was a speech of Tertullian: I account it no danger to affirm that God has so ordered the revelation of truth in Scriptures that he might administer matter for heretics.

4. God has a hand in these divisions to bring forth further light. Sparks are beaten out by the flints striking together. Many sparks of light, many truths are beaten out by the beatings of men's spirits one against another. If light is let into a house, there must be some trouble to beat down a window. A child thinks the house is being torn down, but the father knows the light will be worth the cost and trouble. If you will have the cloth woven, the woof and the warp must be cast across one another. If you will have truths argued out, you must be content to bear with some opposition for the time. Those who are not willing to bear some trouble, to be at some cost to find out truth, are unworthy of it. Those who love truth will seek for it for truth's sake; those who love victory, yet because the truth is the strongest, will seek after truth that they may get victory. Daniel 12:4: Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. To some, these divisions darken truths; to others, they enlighten them. We may well behold men's weakness in these

divisions but better admire God's strength and wisdom in ordering them to his glory and his children's good.

Be not discouraged, ye Saints of the Lord, at these divisions; your Father has a hand in them, he will bring good out of them. Yea, Christ, who is the Prince of Peace, has a hand in them. Matthew 10:34-35: He says, "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I came to bring a sword. I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother." One would think it to be the strangest speech that could be, to come from the mouth of him who is the great peacemaker. Oh blessed Savior, must we not think that thou art come to send peace? Thou art our peace. Is not thine embassy from thy Father an embassy of peace? True: peace with my Father, but not peace on the earth; not an earthly peace; do not think that I came from heaven to work this for men, that they should live at ease in plenty and pleasure, that they should have no disturbance, no trouble to the flesh: no, the event of my coming you will find to be a sword, divisions, and that between those of the nearest relations. A child who is wicked will despise and break with his godly father, and the daughter with her godly mother. And Luke 12:53: The carnal father and mother will have their hearts rise against their godly son and daughter. I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled? Let it kindle as soon as it will; I am contented; I know much good will come of it. These Scriptures are enough to take away forever the offense of divisions.

First, Christ himself is the greatest offense to wicked men that ever was in the world: he is the stumbling stone and rock of offense; thousands upon thousands being offended at him miscarry everlastingly. Christ foreseeing how many would be offended at him, Matthew 11:6: blesses the man who shall not be offended. Some are offended at what they see in Christ; others

apprehend whatsoever is in him to be most excellent and lovely, that which they cannot but defend and stand for to the death. He is disallowed by men, rejected by the builders, a stone of stumbling to them: but to the Saints the chief cornerstone, elect, precious (1 Peter 2:4-8). Such different apprehensions of Christ must needs divide men.

2. Christ comes to make the greatest alteration that ever was or can be in the world, and do we not find that troubles accompany alterations? And above all alterations, alterations in government, and especially such a government as gives no composition, yields no compliance with anything else? When Christ comes he brings his fan in his hand; he must have his floor thoroughly purged; he gathers his wheat into his garner and severs the chaff to be burnt in unquenchable fire. If he comes thus, who shall abide his coming? Malachi 3:2: Who shall stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and fuller's soap; he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he shall purify the sons of Levi. Certainly there will be much ado when they come to be purified. No men in the world are likely to make so much stir when they come to be purified as the clergy will. Christ comes to cast out devils; they will foam, fret, vex, rend and tear when they are being cast out.

The Gospel likewise divides. The word of the Gospel is a dividing word (Hebrews 4:12). It is quick, powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow. It divides in a man's own heart and divides between man and man.

The light of it divides. The first division we ever read of was of God's making (Genesis 1:3-4). When he said, "Let there be light," God divided the light from the darkness.

The doctrine of the Gospel shows the spirituality of God's commands, the sinfulness of thoughts, of the first stirrings of sin (Matthew 5). This touches

to the quick.

The heat of the Gospel divides: it is like fire when it comes. Is not my word like fire? The preaching of the Gospel with power heaps coals of fire upon men's heads which will either melt them or burn them. In it there is a separation of the precious from the vile.

The ordinances of the Gospel divide; they differentiate men. Some they will receive; others they will not. They must bring men to a higher, stricter way than the sluggish, dead, vain, slight, drossy hearts of men are willing to come up unto.

The godliness that is in Christ Jesus divides; therefore whosoever will live godly so must expect to suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).

1. Those who hold forth the life and power of godliness seem to claim a more special and peculiar interest in God than others, which cannot be endured, 1 John 5:19. We are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness.

2. Their lives condemn others, which they cannot abide, as Noah is said to condemn the world, Hebrews 11:7.

3. In godliness, there is an excellence. Those whose hearts are corrupt cannot look upon anything that has any appearance of excellence without a spirit of envy. If they judge men only to be conceited with it as an excellence, but for their part, they think it not to be so, then they look upon them with a spirit of indignation.

4. Godliness makes men zealous in such things as others can see no reason why they should be. They think they become fervent in a cold matter, and that the ground of their zeal is vanity and turbulence of spirit.

5. It makes men constant: nothing can turn them out of their way. The son yields not to his father, the servant not to his master; this is judged to be

stubbornness and willfulness, though God knows it is far otherwise. It must therefore enrage others at them.

The Good Uses That We Are to Make of Our Divisions

Why may not meat come out of the eater, and sweet out of these bitter things? The heavens can draw up salt vapors from the sea and send them down again in sweet refreshing showers. Why may not heavenly hearts change the very nature of these sour brinish things and make them sweet to themselves and others? This is the excellence of grace; it does not only preserve the soul from the evil of temptations but it gains advantage by them, turning the evil into good. Luther, upon Galatians 5:17, has a notable expression to set forth the power of grace: By this a Christian (says he) comes to be a mighty workman and a wonderful creator, who of heaviness can make joy, of terrors comfort, of sin righteousness, of death life. And why may not I add, of division and contention, peace and union?

First, by these divisions men may come to see the vileness and vanity of their own hearts. What were the thoughts of men heretofore? Oh, had we but liberty and opportunity to be instrumental for God, we hope we should improve all to the utmost for Him. Now God has granted these to us, we abuse them; we grow wanton, we jar against one another. We are like some mariners who are calm in a storm but storm in a calm. Surely every man is vanity. The untowardness of the spirits of those who heretofore longed after ordinances, freed from those defilements they mourned under, when they have their desires in great measure satisfied, discovers so much evil in the hearts of men that it justifies those whom they themselves have had hard thoughts of—men who seemed carnal and corrupt that you looked upon as very evil—men of bitter spirits against good men. You thought such things apparently argued them void of grace, and yet when you are got into Church

fellowship, that way of freedom that your souls mourned after a long time, now though you be joined in covenant one to another, yet if your brethren differ anything from you, though they be otherwise godly, what a bitterness of spirit is there in some of you against them! What pride! What rebelliousness do you manifest against them! Oh what a poor creature is man! If once he gets power and liberty, what a deal of filth appears in him! We may learn by this to have charitable thoughts of some whom we have had hard thoughts before; we see if these men have any grace, grace may be in a man's heart lying under much corruption.

Secondly, learn to be humbled for that dishonor which comes to God by these divisions; you spend your time in vexing and fretting at, in crying out against these breaches, but when was your heart broken with the dishonor that God has by them?

Thirdly, let these divisions confirm us in the main and settle us there more than ever; for do we not see that those many sorts of men who are divided,* who oppose one another much, yet they all join in the things of the greatest consequence? They all witness against the common enemy. This, says Nazianzen, is the greatest argument of the truth: that it is not overcome by time; neither can enmity one against another put out that little spark of love for it that is in us, etc. If a man's house stands after many shakings of strong winds,* he concludes the foundation is good; this satisfies him, though some tiles be shaken off.

Fourthly, let us bless God who has carried on the work of Reformation thus far notwithstanding our divisions; we were afraid that these differences —not so much between the good and bad but between the good and good— would have undone all. And yet behold the Lord beyond our thoughts, how

infinitely beyond our deserts has carried on the work hitherto so as it gains ground, though it is not so speedily brought to an issue as we would have it.

Fifthly, let us hence raise our hopes in this: that Satan's time is not long; his raging and foaming so violently does evidence it to us. Surely Christ our Prince of Peace is at hand; He will tread down Satan under our feet shortly.

Sixthly, let us from these stirs without be put upon laboring to make and confirm peace within. Oh consider: is the breach between man and man so grievous? How grievous is that which is between God and the soul! I find it hard and doubt whether it be possible to be at peace with men in this world; I find them of such rebellious, peevish, selfish, willful spirits—even many who seem to be good men otherwise—but God gives many encouragements to poor souls to come unto Him; He is a God of love and mercy; He delights not to grieve the children of men or to crush under His feet the prisoners of the earth. He is willing to be reconciled to sinners; there is nothing that His heart is more set upon than reconciliation with wretched sinful souls.

Oh that in these sad days of miserable dissensions I might be blessed with the comforts of the reconciliation of my soul with God! If this were so, I hope I should be able contentedly to bear and with strength to pass through all those heart-saddening evils caused by these breaches and dissensions among us. This would indeed be a good use made of such evil things if men's contending with you shall thus further your peace with God. What he once said of Adam's sin—it was Fælix peccatum, a happy sin because it occasioned so much good in Man's Redemption—so I may say of that strife and contention there is among us: it is fælix contentio, a happy contention that God has turned to so much good unto you.

I have read of Robert Holgate, who was Archbishop of York. Because he could not peaceably enjoy his small living in Lincolnshire, due to the litigiousness of a neighboring knight, he came to London to seek justice. There, he gained the favor of King Henry VIII and eventually rose to the Archbishopric of York. He thought he benefited from the knight's litigiousness. But if the strifes of men lead you to providences and duties that are blessed to you, furthering your favor with the high God and the soul-satisfying sweetness of peace with Him, what cause you have to admire free grace, which has brought you such great good from such great evil! If these strifes have moved your heart Godward for making peace with Him, let them also urge you to further, confirm, settle, and maintain your peace with Him.

When the wind and storm rise, the traveler pulls his cloak closer about him. These dividing times are stormy times; labor to get your souls to the harbor under shelter. Labor to ensure that one necessary thing; the more strangely men look upon you, let your hearts be stirred up to seek God's face with more strength so that you may never look upon it but with joy. You hear harsh notes abroad, things that grieve your heart; labor all the more to keep the bird always singing in your bosom.

7. If your peace is made with God, bless God for it. It is a great mercy for a man in these times of trouble to have rest in his own spirit. While others are tossed up and down in the waves of contention, you may sit quietly in the Ark of a good conscience, blessing the Lord that you ever knew Him and His ways.

8. Labor to make up for the lack of good and comfort you once had in Christian communion with a more close and constant communion with the Lord, who has been pleased to speak peace unto you. Although I do not

have that comfort in communion with the streams, I may find it fully made up in the fountain.

9. By way of Antiperistasis, let us labor to be more united with the Saints as we see others divided. "Men make void thy Law," says David, "therefore do I love it above gold." We tend to put a price on rare things: what makes jewels valuable but their rarity? Unity, hearty love, and sweetness of communion among brethren are now very rare, a scarce commodity; let us prize it more, and you who enjoy it, bless God for it.

10. The more confused, broken, and troublesome we see things to be, the more let our hearts be stirred up in prayer to God, reminding Him of all those gracious promises He has made to His Church for peace and union: "Lord, is it not part of thy Covenant with thy people that thou wilt give them one heart? Hast thou not said that they shall serve thee with one shoulder? Hast thou not told us that thou wilt make Jerusalem a quiet habitation, that thou wilt take away violence, that there should be no pricking brier nor grieving thorn?"

11. Those whose consciences can witness that it has been their great care not to enwrap themselves in the guilt of these divisions but can appeal to God that they have endeavored after peace as far as they could with a good conscience, let them bless God for this mercy. It is a great deliverance to be delivered from the guilt of these divisions. Deuteronomy 33:8 says of Levi, "Let thy Urim and Thummim be with thy holy One, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah." Massah signifies temptation, and Meribah, contention. Places and times of contention are places and times of temptation. Now if God shall prove us at those places in those times, and we are found upright, this will bring a blessing upon us. At those waters where the people murmured, contending

even with God Himself, Aaron (though there was some weakness in him) yet kept himself from being involved in the guilt of that sin of contending with God. And Sol-farchi, along with other Hebrews, say that the Levites were not involved in that sin either; they think Malachi 2:5 refers to this: "My covenant was with him of life and peace for the fear wherewith he feared me and was afraid before my name." The fear of God was upon Levi at that time; he dared not contend as others did then, and therefore my covenant of life and peace was and is with him.

We have been these three or four years at these waters of Massah and Meribah; God has tried us. How happy are those who have held out, who have kept their consciences free, upon whom the fear of God has been, and through that fear have walked before Him in truth and equity? The Blessing of the Covenant of Life and Peace be upon them forever.

Chapter Thirty-One

The Cure of our Divisions.

What gracious heart is not torn with grief for the severe and fearful evils that arise from our divisions, and is not again troubled with careful thoughts about what may be done to heal them? In Matthew 6:25, Christ forbids the anxious care that burdens our hearts when it concerns matters of ourselves, even our lives. The Greek phrase μὴ μεριμνᾶτε translates to "do not worry about your life," but it signifies, "Do not take such thought as should tear your heart apart." Similarly, in verses 28, 31, and 34, Christ repeats this charge against anxious, dividing thoughts about ourselves.

However, for uniting the hearts of the Saints for the good of the Church, this heart-concerned care is not only allowed but required, as stated in 1 Corinthians 12:25: "That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another." The word for care here is the same as in Matthew 6, where it is forbidden. The expressions of my thoughtful cares about this work are the subject at this time. When I set myself about it, my heart aches at the apprehension of its difficulty.

There are some diseases called opprobria medicorum, the disgrace of physicians, because they know not what to say or do to them; or if they do anything, it is of little purpose. If there is any soul-disease that is opprobrium Theologorum, the disgrace of Divines, it is this of contention and division. How little has all that they have studied and endeavored to do prevailed with the hearts of men? What shall we do? Shall we join in this one thing: to sit down together and mourn over one another until we dissolve our hearts into tears and see if we can thus get them to unite? Oh, that it might be so, whatever sorrow it costs us!

We read in Judges 2:1-5 that the Lord sent an angel from Gilgal to the men of Israel, who told them how graciously He had dealt with them. Yet they had made a league with the inhabitants of the land contrary to God's command, for which the Lord threatened that they would be as thorns in their sides. When the angel spoke these words to the children of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept. They called that place Bochim, a place of tears. Their sin was too much joining—joining in league where God would not have them. Those whom they joined with were to be thorns in their sides. Upon this, they wept so sorely that the place received its name from their weeping.

But oh, that the Lord would send His angel, even His Spirit, to us to convince us of our evil—that we have not joined in a sure league with one another but are thorns in each other's sides. After so many mercies and great deliverances from our bondage and from the rage of ungodly men, we are so false to one another, though the Lord has never broken covenant with us. This was the heart-breaking argument used by the angel in verse 1. The Lord has done abundantly for us beyond our hopes, desires, and thoughts. Yet after all this, there are only breaches and divisions among us. We are

not only thorns but spears and swords in each other's sides, piercing each other's hearts.

Are we the children of Israel? Let our hearts break for the breaches among us. Let them break, melt, mourn, bleed, and resolve that nothing shall comfort them but peace with our God and peace with one another.

That one text, 1 Thessalonians 4:9, is enough alone to pierce our hearts thoroughly: "As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you," says the Apostle, "for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." Oh Lord, are we in these days such Christians as these were? Oh that it were so with us—that we had no need to be written to or preached to concerning this. Does it appear by our actions towards one another that we are taught of God to love one another? But that God may teach us this day, attend to what shall be said to you in His name, which I shall cast into these five heads:

1. Joining Principles.2. Joining Considerations.3. Joining Graces.4. Joining Practices.5. Conclude with Exhortation.

We shall endeavor to set before you the beauty and excellence in the heart, union, and mutual love of Christians.

I shall not need to be long on these: For take away Dividing Principles, Dividing Distempers, Dividing Practices, and be thoroughly convinced of the evil of divisions, and one would think our hearts should naturally unite. But that I may not seem to leave our wounds open so that air should get into them but endeavor their closing and healing, I shall speak something to these five heads.

The first joining principle:

In the midst of all differences of judgment and weaknesses of the Saints, it is not impossible for them to live in peace and love together.

If despite differences from God's mind and many weaknesses there may be peace and love between God and His Saints, then surely despite these things, the Saints may be at love and peace among themselves. Let this be laid as a foundation; let our hearts be much possessed with it. We shall find it very helpful for our reconciliation.

Away with that vain conceit which has been the great disturber of Churches in all ages: if men differ in their judgment and practice in matters of religion—even if it is only due to the weaknesses of godly men—there must necessarily be heart-burning and division. Let all peaceable men deny this consequence. Let us not say it will be so and then make it so by our actions. Certainly, any connection between them is more due to the corruption of our hearts than to the nature of things.

I have read of two rivers in the East—Sava and Danube—that run along in one channel for sixty miles together without any noise and yet keep themselves distinct; their waters remain distinct all along. Why should we not think it possible for us to go along closely together in love and peace even though in some things our judgments and practices differ? I will give you who are scholars a sentence to write upon your study doors—a necessary one in these times:

Opinionum varietas et opinantium unitas non sunt Ἀσύστατα.

Variety of opinions and unity among those who hold them can coexist.

There has been much ado to get us to agree: we labored to unify our opinions, but they will not come together. It may be that in our endeavors for agreement, we have begun at the wrong end. Let us try what we can do at the other end; it may be we shall have better success there. Let us labor to join our hearts and engage our affections with one another. If we cannot be

of one mind so that we may agree, let us agree so that we may be of one mind.

Eusebius records a letter that Constantine sent to Alexander and Arius, before he realized the grossness of Arius's heresy. Believing they differed only in minor matters, he endeavored to reconcile them: "For that," says he, "the things wherein you differ do not concern any weighty substance of our religion, there is no reason why it should breed any division in mind or discord in doctrine; and this I say not to compel you in this light question, of whatever sort it may be, altogether to condescend to the same sentence: and though you dissent among yourselves about a matter of small importance (for truly neither are we all in all things like-minded, nor do we all have the same nature and gift engrafted in us), nevertheless, for all that, the sacred unity may be soundly and inviolably retained among you, and one consent and fellowship conserved between all."

I have read of a similar peaceable disposition among various German divines, meeting to confer about religious matters in difference, in Marburg. The conclusion of their conference was this: Although we see we cannot fully agree about the corporal presence of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine, yet both parties ought to declare Christian love for one another, as far as each can with a good conscience. Oh, that this were the conclusion of all our debates and conferences, where we cannot fully align with one another's judgments. If we wait for peace and love until we achieve unity of faith in all things, we must wait for it, as far as I know, until we come to another world. Ephesians 4:11-12: "He gave some apostles, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man." The unity of the faith and the perfect man will

be together; and when they are, there will be no more need for any ministry; there shall be no more preaching after we all come to this unity: when that is done, our work is done for this world.

The Second Joining Principle

That shall never be got by strife which may be had by love and peace.

We would all gladly have our wills: now what lies uppermost upon many men's hearts, what is the first thing they do if their wills are crossed, is presently to strive and contend. But this should be the last thing after all other means are tried; this should never be used except in a case of pure necessity. We should first think: Is there any way in the world whereby it is possible we may have our desires satisfied with peace? Let us try this way, and another way, a third, a fourth, even a hundred ways if they lie between us and the way of strife before we come to meddle with that.

This rule will be of great use to order all our business in churches and commonwealths, towns, families—indeed, whatever concerns any of your persons in reference to any other. The Apostle, in 1 Corinthians 12, rebukes the divisions of that church, which they were guilty of more than any other because they had many among them with raised parts and eminent gifts and therefore were puffed up more than others. Except God joins eminency of grace, men with eminent gifts join less than others whose gifts are meaner. Among those means he directs for union when he speaks of love: "I will show you," says he, "a more excellent way," verse last; καθ᾽ ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν [a way of surpassing excellence], beyond any expression. The way of love, of engaging hearts with one another, is the only way to bring men to unity of judgment; indeed, the only way when all is done for men to have their wills. I may give you this or that rule to bring you to think and do the same thing, but what has an excellence in it with a hyperbole is the way of

love. If you could get your minds by other ways, certainly you cannot enjoy it with that sweetness and comfort as you may if you have got it this way.

Marcus Cato repented that he ever went by sea when he might have gone by land (it seems the skill of those times for navigation was not great), but certainly there is no man living who has cause to repent that he ever got that by strife and contention which he might have got by love and peace. What hinders why soft and gentle words may not prevail as well as hard and bitter language? Why may not a loving winning carriage do as much as severe rigid violence? If it may, you provide ill for your own peace and comfort to leave this way and betake yourself to the other.

Tell me, would it be a sign of valor in a man to draw his sword at every whippet that comes near him? Yes, at every fly that lands upon him? Wouldn't it be folly and madness? Why? He may by putting forth his finger put them off from him. Your rebellious choleric spirit is ready to draw at everything that you dislike. This is your folly: you may with less ado have what you desire. If I would put a feather from me, I need not strike violently at it; a soft gentle breath will do it better. Why should a man labor and toil until he sweats again to pick up a pin? Have none of you sometimes made a great stir in your families about something which when the stir is a little over you plainly see you might have had as well with a word speaking? And hasn't your heart secretly upbraided you then? Try next time what you can do by fair and gentle means.

Why should we let the strength of our spirits run waste? Let this be a constant rule: never make use of severity until you have tried what clemency will do. There is more power in that to conquer the hearts of men you would gladly have yield to you than you are aware of.

Plutarch reports of Philip of Macedon that when a man named Arcadion spoke harshly against him, some of the courtiers urged Philip to punish him severely. But Philip chose a different path. He summoned Arcadion, spoke kindly to him, and showed him great affection and respect. This completely changed Arcadion's heart, so much so that afterward, there was no man in the world who spoke more honorably of Philip than Arcadion, wherever he went. Later, Philip met with those same courtiers and asked them, "Well, what do you now say of Arcadion? How does he conduct himself?" They replied, "There is no one living who speaks more highly of you than he does now." "Well then," said Philip, "I am the better physician. My method has achieved what yours never could."

Plutarch tells a similar story about Fabius, who was called "The Shield of Rome." When Fabius learned that a valiant soldier had plotted with others to defect to the enemy, he summoned the man—not to punish him—but to honor him. Fabius told him he had not been properly rewarded for his service, gave him honorable gifts, and won him to lasting loyalty. Plutarch concluded: just as hunters, horse trainers, and tamers of wild beasts can more effectively calm and control their subjects through gentleness than by beating or chaining them, so governors of people should correct by patience, kindness, and clemency, rather than by harshness or severity. Only a cruel and coarse-spirited man would say, "I would rather be feared than loved." But God values what He receives from us through love most of all.

The Third Unifying Principle:

It is better to do good than to receive good.

Active goodness is greater than passive reception. Only God Himself, His angels, and His saints do good; all creatures are able to receive good. This principle would quickly bind us together. If people had this mindset in their

hearts, they would seek to do as much good as they could to one another, and in doing so, they would win each other's affection. The more good we do to others, the more our hearts incline to love them. True goodness, when it flows from a sincere spirit, draws the heart toward those it blesses. The more good God bestows on someone, the more He loves them—not because they first deserved it, but because they are the objects of His goodness. When He gives His grace, His Spirit, and His Son, He gives His heart. His gifts are not only expressions of love—they also deepen it.

So it is with us, in our own measure. If you were to take a poor child from the street or an almshouse and adopt him as your heir, you would not only do him good because you loved him—you would grow to love him more because he had become an object of your generosity. Titus, the Roman emperor, considered any day wasted in which he had done no good. This principle would make men not only good but great. It is God's glory that He does so much good. And if men viewed goodness as true greatness—if they found satisfaction in doing good—the world's bitterest contentions would cease. For what do men strive after more than greatness?

The Fourth Unifying Principle:

The good of others is my good as well.

We are all members of one body. Whatever good others receive is good for the body. It enables them to accomplish the kind of good that we ourselves would want done—or at least ought to desire. Plutarch says that Solon enacted a law whereby any citizen could prosecute someone who wronged their neighbor, just as if they had been personally wronged. His reason: "There is no good that one man has in a commonwealth, but it is another man's as well."

In the church, this is even more true. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:22: "Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death or things present or things to come—all are yours. You are Christ's, and Christ is God's." If you are godly, then you share in the gifts and graces of all the godly in the world. Whatever they have or do, it belongs to you spiritually. In fact, even what is evil will ultimately serve your good.

Paul cites this as a reason for peace among the Corinthians. Some said, "I follow Paul," others "I follow Apollos." Paul says, in effect, "Why argue about who to follow? They're all yours! All their excellence is the shared inheritance of each one of you."

One reason people quarrel so often is that they wrongly believe someone else's good is their own loss. So they must either seize it for themselves or diminish it in others. But such thinking reveals a petty and impoverished spirit. A truly enlarged soul is satisfied in the infinite goodness of God—and because that infinite good is their portion, they can rejoice in the good wherever they see it. Even if the blessings pass through winding paths or unexpected channels, they still flow back to the same Ocean of goodness that fills the believer's heart. Therefore, they can rejoice in the good their brethren possess, bless God for it, and do what they can to promote it.

Surely such a person will be full of peace and love.

The Fifth Unifying Principle:

My good is more in the public than in myself.

The strength, safety, and beauty of a cabin on a ship does not lie in the paneling or painted trim of the cabin, but in the strength and seaworthiness of the ship as a whole.

It is because we are so inwardly focused—so privately spirited—that there are such bitter contentions among us. If we were more public-spirited,

these conflicts would vanish. When I read about the selflessness of many heathens, I am ashamed of how selfish many professing Christians are. Paulus Aemilius, upon hearing of the death of his children, responded with courageous composure: “The gods have heard my prayer—that calamities should fall upon my family rather than upon the Commonwealth.” The public-mindedness of this man made him a beautiful and noble example. It is said of him that he treated even those he had conquered with kindness and generosity—advocating for their causes as if they were his own allies, close friends, or family. Those who are truly public-spirited tend also to be sweet-spirited and peaceable people.

The Sixth Unifying Principle:

What I would want others to do for me, I will strive to do for them.

Would I want others to bear with me? Then I will bear with them. Would I want others to show kindness to me? Then I will show kindness to them. Would I want others to treat me with love and respect? Then I must treat them likewise. Would I want others to live peaceably with me? Then I will live peaceably with them.

This rule—doing unto others as I would have them do unto me—is a law of justice, the kind of justice that keeps peace. The Roman Emperor Alexander Severus greatly admired this Christian ethic. When dealing with common soldiers who did wrong, he punished them. But when addressing men of honor and dignity, he often needed nothing more than this gentle rebuke: “Do as you would be done by.”

Chrysostom, in his 13th sermon to the people of Antioch, applies this same principle: After Christ had spoken of many blessings, He concludes, “Whatever you would have others do for you, do for them.” As if to say, “Let your own will be your law.” Do you want to receive kindness? Then

bestow kindness. Do you want mercy? Be merciful. Do you want to be praised? Then praise others. Do you want love? Then love. Be your own judge; be the lawgiver of your own life. If you hate something being done to you, do not do it to another. Can't endure being reproached? Then do not reproach. Hate being envied? Then do not envy. Hate being deceived? Then do not deceive.

The Seventh Unifying Principle:

It is as honorable to yield my will in humility as it is to prevail in argument.

Many people in anger will say, "I'll get even with him." But I'll tell you a better way: forgive him. By yielding and pardoning, you demonstrate mastery over yourself—and that's greater than mastery over someone else.

In Numbers 14:17–19, Moses appeals to God: "Let the power of my Lord be great... pardon, I beseech You, the iniquity of this people." In this way, Moses seeks not only divine forgiveness but demonstrates true spiritual greatness.

Two famous philosophers, Aristippus and Aeschines, once fell into conflict. Aristippus went to Aeschines and said, "Shall we not be friends again?" "Yes, with all my heart," Aeschines replied. Aristippus added, "Remember, although I am the elder, I sought for peace." "That is true," said Aeschines, "and for this I will always acknowledge you as the better man—for I began the strife, but you began the peace."

The Eighth Unifying Principle:

I will never engage in conflict unless peace is the goal.

No war is good, no matter how just its cause, unless its aim is peace. Bellum minime bellum—war is least like war when it seeks peace. A soldier who sheds blood without aiming at peace is a murderer. The swords and

banners of soldiers ought to bear this motto: “Thus we seek peace.” Even Hercules’ club was said to be carved from an olive branch—the symbol of peace.

The Ninth Unifying Principle:

No one will be my enemy unless he is more an enemy to himself—or to God—than to me.

If a man offends me out of weakness, it is his affliction. He is not an enemy to himself or me. He mourns his fault, and I will pity him in his mourning. He is more grieved for what he has done than I am for what I have suffered.

If he offends willfully and knowingly, he is a greater enemy to himself than to me. When Hugh Latimer was cheated in a transaction, his friends told him how he had been defrauded. But Latimer mourned for the man who had deceived him. “He has the worst of it,” he said.

If my heart rises up against someone for such a thing, it may still be out of love—for I oppose not the man, but his enemy—his own sin. He has wounded me slightly, but himself more deeply. I am grieved a little by the wrong, but more so for the wrongdoer’s soul.

If his ways are enmity against God, then I oppose him for love of God—and only in such a way that shows I hate his sin more than I hate him. When Servetus criticized Zwingli for being harsh, Zwingli replied, “In other things I will be gentle, but not in blasphemies against God.” Let us keep our enmity within these bounds, and the peace of God will remain unbroken.

The Tenth Unifying Principle:

I would rather suffer the greatest wrong than commit the least sin.

If, when others wrong you, you respond by sinning in return, you are a fool. “He has pricked me with a pin,” you say, “so I’ll stab myself with a

knife in response." That is madness.

If we ensure that our response to suffering never involves sinning to get revenge, there will be far less broken peace in the world. Someone may be your enemy—but will you make yourself a second, greater enemy? Will you harm your own soul in retaliation? The worst that others can do is wound your body or reputation. But only you can wound your conscience. No man in the world can force you to sin—except yourself. I will labour to doe good to all, but provoke none.

The Eleventh Unifying Principle:

I will strive to do good to all, but provoke no one.

A father does not even have the right to provoke his own child. As Paul exhorts in Colossians 3:21, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath." If a man does not have that power over his child, he certainly doesn't have it over a friend, a neighbor, or even a superior.

Yet how many people take delight in provoking others! They say, "This will definitely make him angry—and I'll make sure he gets it!" Oh, what a wicked heart! Do you see this as a temptation for your brother, and yet will you place it before him deliberately? Do you not pray for yourself and for him, "Lead us not into temptation"?

We should consider it the greatest of afflictions—not just to suffer evil ourselves, but to be any cause of sin in our brother. And how much greater the evil, if we intentionally provoke him to sin!

If we must provoke anyone, then let it be in the way the apostle commands: "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Hebrews 10:24). Let us not observe each other out of envy, fault-finding, or competition—as Hyperius says, leading to bitterness, pride,

hatred, and factions. Instead, let us observe one another for the sake of encouraging one another—to stir each other up toward zeal and goodness.

The Twelfth Unifying Principle:

Peace with all men is good; but peace with God and with my own conscience is necessary.

How does this help unify us with others? In two ways. First, by showing the value of peace with all men. Second, by leading the heart strongly toward peace with God and one's own conscience.

That kind of inward peace sweetens the whole heart and makes a man gentle toward everyone. A soul satisfied with God can endure hardships from without. But when there are breaches between God and the soul, or within one's own conscience, the spirit turns sour.

When Saul broke peace with God and with his own heart, he became irritable and cruel toward others. Before his apostasy, he was meek and patient—but now he was harsh and unstable. This is often the cause of bitterness in families and neighborhoods: private unrest with God or a wounded conscience.

The Thirteenth Unifying Principle:

If I must err, I would rather err by too much gentleness than by too much severity.

Human nature leans more toward harshness than leniency. But God will more easily excuse excessive kindness than excessive cruelty.

Those with sour spirits tend to imagine that God must be harsh too. The Spartans, being a warlike people, depicted their gods armed for battle. But Scripture says, "God is love." The Bible never says God is anger, or hatred, or even that He is justice itself—though He possesses all these perfectly. Yet it delights to say, "God is love."

If God had intended everything in His church and in the world to be run with perfect strictness, He would have entrusted government to angels—beings who are pure, impartial, and righteous. But instead, He appointed men—whose judgment is often flawed, biased, unstable, and even guilty of the very sins they punish in others.

The Fourteenth (and Final) Unifying Principle:

Peace is never too costly—except when it costs righteousness or integrity.

It's often said, "Gold can be bought too dearly." So can peace—if we purchase it at the cost of sin or moral compromise. But anything short of that is a good bargain.

Suidas tells us that the Emperor Trajan would tear pieces from his own garments to bind up the wounds of his soldiers. Should we not, in the same way, be willing to suffer personal cost to bind up the wounds of the church and the nation? If we are willing to bleed for physical peace, how much more should we labor for spiritual unity?

Indeed, peace is a rich treasure—but we must never go so far for it that we leave holiness behind. In 2 Kings 23:13, Mount Olivet was renamed "the Mount of Corruption" because of idolatry committed there. We must not allow our pursuit of peace to become spiritual corruption. We may give up peace to preserve truth, but we may not give up truth to preserve peace.

We are free to yield in matters that are personal—but never in matters that belong to God. Still, we must not be cowardly or self-serving in our yielding. That too is base.

If our concessions are driven by ignorance, fear, or laziness—not by wisdom or love—then our peace is disgraceful. But if, after prayer and examination, we find that our desire for peace comes not from avoiding

trouble but from a readiness to suffer when necessary, then we can proceed in faith.

If God would receive more glory and our brethren more benefit through our yielding, then—even at the cost of our own reputation or comfort—we are willing. And if, in our hearts, we know we are still ready to deny ourselves in other things for God's sake, then our concession is not weakness but wisdom. The peace we purchase in this way—through personal suffering but spiritual faithfulness—is never too expensive.C

Chapter Thirty-Two

Joining Considerations.

The first. The consideration of the many things wherein God has joined us.

God has joined us together as we are men: we are not dogs, not wolves, let us not be so to one another. Acts 7:26. Moses speaks thus to those who strove with one another: "Sirs, ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one another?" The words in Greek are, ἀνδρὲς ἀδελφοὶ ἑστε, meaning "men yet are brethren." There is a consideration in this, that ye are men: if there were no more, yet ye should not strive with one another, but much more considering ye are brethren. If we are men, let us be humane. What is the meaning of humanity but courteousness, gentleness, pleasantness in our interactions with one another?

But still, the consideration grows higher, as we are the same countrymen, of old acquaintance, in the same employment, of the same family and kindred, but above all, joined in such a blessed root, the fountain of all love and peace. Ephesians 4:4 presents this consideration most fully to us. The reason the Apostle gives why we must keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is because there is one body, and one spirit; ye are called in

one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Here you have seven Ones together in two or three lines. It is very significant that the Spirit of God should join so closely together seven Ones; surely it is to be a strong argument for us to unite.

First, one Body. The meanest member is still part of the body. Is it comely for the body of Christ to be rent and torn? Any reference to Christ might persuade unity, but union with Christ as the members with the body—what heart can stand against the strength of this? What can cause one member to tear and rend another but madness?

2. One Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:11 states that one and the same spirit: he does not only say, "The same spirit," but "The selfsame spirit": and as if that were not enough, he adds "One" to the selfsame; and that yet not enough, he says, "That one," all this is in the Greek, τὸ ἓν καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα. The repeating of the article has great elegance in it. And is not this one Spirit the Spirit of love and meekness? What does a rebellious contentious spirit do in thee, who professes thyself to be a Christian? What, says Cyprian, does the fierceness of wolves, the madness of dogs,* the deadly poison of serpents, the bloody rage of beasts have in a Christian's breast?

3. Called in one hope. Are you not heirs, joint heirs of the same Kingdom? And do you contend as if one belonged to the kingdom of light and the other to the kingdom of darkness?

4. One Lord. You serve the same Lord and Master. Is it for the credit of a Master that his servants are always wrangling and fighting with one another? Is it not a tedious thing in a family that the servants can never agree? Mark how ill the Lord takes this: Matthew 24:49-51 describes that evil servant who begins to smite his fellow-servants and provokes his Lord against him so as to come upon him with such severity as to cut him

asunder and appoint his portion with the hypocrites; διχοτομήσει, he will dichotomize him, divide him in two; he by his smiting his fellow-servants makes divisions, but his Lord will divide him. It may be he pretends that his fellow-servants do not do their duty as they ought; as if he were more careful of the honor of his Lord than others who are of a different way from him. But in the meantime he inveighs against others, smiting them with the tongue and otherwise as he is able. He sits at full tables, eats and drinks of the best with such as are carnal and sensual, but they are great men; to have their countenance is brave; this is extremely suitable to a carnal heart who yet keeps up a profession of Religion and has some form of godliness; he is afraid to lose his fleshly contentment, therefore he smites those who stand in his way. Thus divisions and troubles are made in God's family: The Lord, the Master of it will reward accordingly; he will divide such by cutting them asunder and appointing them their portion with the hypocrites.

5. One Faith. What though we agree not together in some things of lesser moment, yet we agree in one faith. Why should we not then keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? The agreement in faith one would think should swallow up all other disagreements. We should rather bless God for keeping men sound in faith than contend with them for lesser mistakes. When the Pharisees, Acts 23:9, understood that Paul agreed with them in that great doctrine of the Resurrection, they presently overlooked his other differences, saying, "We find no evil in this man." Our brethren agree with us in more fundamentals than this, and yet we can find evil in them and aggravate their evil beyond what it is and improve it all we can against them. This is worse than Pharisaical.

Master Calvin in his Epistle to our countrymen at Frankfort,* fled for their lives in witness to the truth yet miserably jarring and contending with

one another there to the scandal of all the Churches of God in those parts begins his Epistle thus: "This does grievously torment me; it is extremely absurd that dissensions should arise among brethren, exiles fled from their country for the same faith and for that cause which alone in this your scattering ought to be to you as a holy band to keep you fast bound together." Their contentions were about Church worship.

6. One Baptism. We are baptized into Christ's death, and is not that to show that we should be dead to all those things in the world that cause strife and contention among men? Our baptism is our badge, our livery; it furthers somewhat the unity of servants that they wear all one livery.

7. One God. Though there be three Persons in the Divine Nature and every Person is God, yet there is but one God; here is a union infinitely beyond all unions that any creature can be capable of; the mystery of this union is revealed to us to make us in love with union. Our interest in this one God is such a conjunction as nothing can be more.

Joseph's Brethren, Gen. 50:17. looked upon this as having very great power in it to make up all breaches, to heal all old grudges. After their father was dead, their consciences misgave them for what they had done to Joseph. They were afraid old matters would break forth and that Joseph would turn their enemy. Now, how do they seek to unite Joseph's heart to them? "We pray thee," say they, "forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father," and the text says, Joseph wept when they spoke unto him.

Oh, this was a heart-breaking speech to Joseph: "The servants of the God of my father; shall my heart ever be estranged from the servants of the God of my father? The Lord forbid." Their offense indeed was great, but their God is my God, and He was my father's God. This argument had more in it

to draw Joseph's heart to them than if they had said, "We are your brethren; we came from the same loins you did." True, that is something, but "the servants of the God of thy father" is much more.

Let us look upon all the godly, though they have many weaknesses, though they have not carried themselves towards us as they ought, yet they are the servants, yea the children of our God and of our father's God; let this draw our hearts to them. If they be one with us in their interest in one God, let them be one with us in the affections of our heart, to love them, delight in them, and rejoice in communion with them.

One God and Father. Mal. 2:10. Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother? Job 31:15. Did not He that made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb? Is it seemly that one man's children should be always contending, quarrelling, and mischiefing one another? Do you think this is pleasing to your Father?

It follows in that 4th of Ephesians: who is above all, and through all, and in you all. You have enough in your Father to satisfy your souls forever, whatsoever you want otherwise; He is above all. He that is so glorious and blessed, infinitely above all things, has put honor enough upon you that He is your Father; why will you contend and quarrel about trifles? He has absolute authority to dispose of all things as He pleases; let not the different administrations of His, to some in one kind, to some in another, be matter for you to contend about. And He works in all.

Those gifts and graces especially that are in His children are His workings; that some have more than others is from His working. You may see the workings of your Father in the hearts of your brethren. He is in all. Men may have children in whom little or nothing of their father appears,

but God is in all His children, notwithstanding all their weaknesses; therefore our hearts should be in them and with them. This Scripture is one of the most famous Scriptures for the union of the Saints in one that we have in all the Book of God.

You will say, "If indeed we could see God in such, if we could see grace and holiness in them, our hearts would close with them, but we see not this."

Answer: 1. Take heed thou dost not reject any from being thy brother whom Jesus Christ at the great day will own for His, and God the Father will call Child.

2. Suppose thou canst not be satisfied in their godliness, yet the gifts of the Spirit of God that are in them should cause some kind of closing; common gifts are of a middle nature between nature and grace, as the spirits of a man are neither of the same nature with the soul nor of the body but between both and serve to unite the soul and body together, which otherwise are of natures very different. The common gifts that men who are not yet sanctified have may and should cause some union between the godly and them while they live in this world so far as to be useful one to another in what God has given them.

The Second Joining Consideration:Let us consider how far we can agree.

We differ thus and thus, but what do we agree in? Do we not agree in things enough wherein we may all the days of our lives spend all the strength we have in glorifying God together? Many men are of such spirits as they love to be altogether busied about their brethren's differences; their discourse, their pens, and all their ways are about these, and that not to heal them but rather to widen them. You shall not hear them speak of or meddle with their agreements; their strength is not bent to heighten and strengthen

them. If at any time they do take notice of their agreements, it is to make advantage of them to render their disagreements the more odious or to strengthen themselves in what they differ from them; they desire to get in men and to get from them only to serve their own turns upon them; this is an evil spirit. No marvel therefore though some be so loath to discover to them how near they can come to them.

Pliny tells us of Apelles,* that drawing the face of Antiochus the King who had but one eye, that he might hide this deformity, he devised to paint him turning his visage a little away so he showed but one side of his face: and from him, says Pliny, came the invention first of concealing the defects and blemishes of the visage. But the painters of our time are quite another way; if there be any deformity or defect on any side, they will be sure to paint that side in all the lineaments of it; that must be set forth fully to the view of all men; yea if it may be made to look more ugly and monstrous than it is, all the skill they have shall be improved to do it.

But my brethren, this ought not to be; God does not so with us: He takes notice of the good of His children but conceals their evil. There was but one good word in Sarah's speech to Abraham, Gen. 18:12; she called him Lord. The speech otherwise was a speech of unbelief, yet the Holy Ghost speaking afterwards of her in reference to that speech, 1 Pet. 3:6, conceals all the evil in it and mentions only that reverent title she gave to her husband, commending her for it. Thus should we do; had we peaceable hearts, thus we would do: all the good of our brethren we would improve to the uttermost and what is evil so far as with a good conscience we might we would conceal. When I shall see this temper in men's spirits, I shall hope there will be peace.

The Third Joining Consideration:Let us consider men's tempers, spirits, temptations, education, years, gifts.

There must be due consideration of all these, and we must accommodate something to them all. This would alleviate much strife: as we read in Numbers 31:23, "Everything that may abide the fire, you shall make it go through the fire, and all that does not abide the fire you shall make go through the water." We must deal with every person according to their temperament.

Some people are, by their nature, of a more harsh and rugged temperament than others. Consider what is the best way of dealing with such individuals: in the main, they are faithful and useful; they will join with you there and spend their lives for you. If the harshness of their nature causes some unpleasant behaviors, consider their temperament. Though no evil in them is to be justified, yet deal tenderly with them and accommodate them as much as you lawfully can.

Some people's spirits, though upright to God and you, have a fervor that is not tempered with the wisdom, meekness, and humility it ought to have. Do not immediately take advantage of them for this; do not attack them as if those unjustifiable expressions that come from them stem from a spirit of malignity. You know the person and the manner of their communication; overlook weaknesses and accept uprightness.

Some people face very strong temptations; perhaps their hearts are burdened with disappointments or they lack many comforts you have. They have family temptations and personal temptations from which you are free. You do not know what you might do if you were under similar temptations. Bless God that you are delivered from them, but do not add to your brethren's affliction by taking advantage of them. Instead, follow the

Apostle's rule in Galatians 6:1: "If a man is overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted." Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Consider their education. Some people have been brought up entirely among Prelatical men, perhaps among Papists; some have lived all their days in wicked families and never were acquainted with the society of the Saints or with that way of godliness that has the most strictness and power in it. You must not deal with them for all things you see amiss in them in the same way you would deal with those who have had godly education and acquaintance with the most strict and powerful ways of godliness but now manifest a spirit against them.

Consider people's years: old age looks for respect, and justly so; especially those who have gone through hardships and suffered much for your good. Though some infirmities may break forth that are incident to old age, we must cover and overlook what we can, not forgetting the reverent respect due to the hoary head found in the way of godliness.

Consider people's gifts: it may be they are not able to rise to your level or understand what you do; thank God for your strength but do not be angry with your brother because he is weaker. This was one of the arguments for peace that Constantine used in his aforementioned letter to Alexander and Arius: we are not all like-minded in everything, nor do we all have the same nature and gift ingrained in us.

The Fourth Joining Consideration:What we gain by contention will never justify the cost.

A merchant thinks it an ill venture if, when he calculates his accounts, he finds the cost of his voyage exceeds his income. If you have so much

command over your spirit, if you can overcome your passions enough to take time in cool blood to calculate your accounts truly—what good you have done or what you have gained by such contentions—and on the other side calculate what harm you have done, what sin has been committed, what evil has entered your spirit, I fear you will have little cause to boast or rejoice in your gains. To be freed from the expense that comes with strife is no small gain, says Ambrose.

In strife, you will find there is a great expense of time, gifts, and talents. Many people, because of the good gifts God has given them, might have become shining lights in the Church, but due to their contentious spirits, they become nothing more than smoking firebrands. It may be that despite all the commotion you cause, you shall never get your way; if you do, it will not justify the cost—the expense incurred for it far exceeds its worth. God deliver me from having my way at such a dear rate.

The Fifth Joining Consideration:The strongest need the weakest.

Let not the hand say it has no need of the foot; nor the eye say it has no need of the hand. God has so tempered the body that every member needs every other member.

It was a sweet spirit in Peter, that great Apostle, writing to the scattered Christians; he begins his Epistle thus: "Simon Peter, a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us." Little nails may be useful where great wedges can do no good. Little chips may help set great logs on fire.

The Sixth:Consider when anything arises that occasions strife; it may be this is just a trial or temptation.

When people provoke us, we are ready to attack them without looking beyond those with whom we are displeased. But if you look a little further,

perhaps you may see the Devil is on the other side of the hedge and has been the chief agent in this business. Augustine emphasizes this with an excellent analogy: When a fowler sets his net to catch birds, he sets it at a distance from the hedge and then throws stones at the hedge. The birds fly out and flutter about. The fowler does not intend any harm to the hedge nor does he expect to hit any birds with his stones; his aim is at the net on the other side of the hedge—he hopes to drive the birds into it.

Similarly, says Augustine, the Devil prepares his net to catch people; he raises contentions and causes much trouble in churches and among brethren. You think all the evil lies in your present contentions' trouble. Oh no: the Devil is behind it; he intends to bring some of you into great sin through these contentions. He has set his net for you; when you are troubled and vexed by such contentions, the Devil sees you as ripe for temptation: now he hopes to get you to do things which otherwise he could never have persuaded you to do. Oh that we had hearts to consider when we find contentions stirring: Is there not a temptation in them?

The Seventh:Consider how God's heart is set upon making peace with us and what it cost Him.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself: this work has occupied the thoughts, counsels, and heart of God from all eternity above anything else He has done. This is the chief masterpiece of all the works of God. There is more of the glory of God in this than in all that God has done. This will be the object of the admiration of Angels and Saints, the matter of their praises for all eternity. The heart of God was so invested in this that He was resolved to have it, no matter the cost; it cost more dearly than anything else in this world; indeed, the price was more than ten thousand worlds are worth: it was no less than the blood of the Son of God, of Him who is the

second person in the Trinity, God blessed forevermore. Col. 1:14: In whom we have redemption through His blood, who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: by Him were all things created, He is before all things: by Him all things consist, in Him all fullness dwells: and having made peace through the blood of His Cross, ver. 20. What God has done for peace with us calls aloud to us to value peace with one another. It is the Apostle's argument, 1 John 3:16: He laid down His life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. It cost His life to make our peace with God. We should be willing to do anything we are able, even to the hazard of our lives, to make peace among the Saints. Christ laid down His life even for this peace also. Ephes. 2:14: For He is our peace who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, to make in Himself of two one new man, so making peace, and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross. Christ reconciles both unto God: but how? It is in one body. Lay this consideration warm at your hearts, and it will comfort your hearts and so preserve and increase peaceable dispositions in you towards one another.

Consider how unworthy we were when Jesus Christ received us into union with Himself.

What uncomely, what loathsome creatures we were! Yet Christ took us into His bosom, into His heart, and resolved that nothing should separate us from Him again. But shall every trifle take us off from one another's hearts? Shall every jealous suspicious thought, every little difference, be enough to separate us and that almost irreconcilably? Do we have the spirit of Christ in us? Is the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus?

Consider that we are called to peace.

God has called us to peace, 1 Cor. 7:15. The case upon which the Apostle mentions our calling to peace is as difficult a case to preserve peace in as any can occur in one's life. It was the case of a man and wife unequally yoked; one is a believer, the other an infidel, yet being man and wife, the Apostle determines that the believer must be content to live with the unbeliever as it becomes a wife or a husband; except he or she chooses to depart on their own accord, but they should give them no occasion for departing, but rather by their holy humble conversation seek to convert them: this no doubt was considered a hard task, but it must be, says the Apostle, and upon this he grounds it, for God has called us to peace. There is another case almost as difficult as this, where patience and quietness of spirit are very much tried, and that is when a servant meets with a harsh, rugged, cruel master who abuses him very injuriously; if anything would provoke one's spirit into a rage, one would think this would do it. No, says the Apostle, such must be the command you must have over your spirits as you must patiently bear this: and he grounds it upon this, For hereunto were ye called, 1 Pet. 2:21-22. But though husbands and wives should live at peace, though they suffer one from another; though servants should endure wrongs from their masters, yet it does not follow that similar patience should be required in us when we are wronged by our equals, by those to whom we have no such bond of relation to tie us. Yes, this argument of calling is strong in this case also: 1 Pet. 3:8-9: Love as brethren, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing, knowing that ye are thereunto called.

Consider the presence of God and of Christ.

Our God, our Father, our Master, our Savior stands by looking on us. It is a most excellent passage that I find in an Epistle of Luther to the Ministers

of Nuremberg. There were great divisions amongst them: he writes to them that he might pacify their spirits one towards another. Suppose (says he) you saw Jesus Christ standing before you,* and by His very eyes speaking thus unto your hearts: What do you, O my dear children, whom I have redeemed with my blood, whom I have begotten again by my Word, to that end that you might love one another? Know that this is the note of my Disciples. Leave this business; ye wholly cast it upon me; I'll look to it; there is no danger that the Church should suffer by this though it should be stilled; yea though it should die; but there is a great deal of danger if you dissent amongst yourselves if you bite one another: Do not thus sadden my spirit; do not thus spoil the holy Angels of their joy in heaven; am I not more to you than all matters that are between you? than all your affections? than all your offenses? What? Can any words of a brother or any unjust trouble penetrate your hearts and stick so fast in you as my wounds, as my blood, as all that I am to you—your Savior Jesus Christ? Oh that we had such real apprehensions of Christ looking upon us and speaking to us!

Consider what account we can give to Jesus Christ of all our divisions.

When Christ shall come, will you stand before Him with scratched faces, with black and blue eyes? 1 Thess. 3:12, 13. The Lord make you to increase and abound in love towards one another, and towards all men: To what end? To the end, says the Apostle, He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His Saints. It will be a sad thing to be found in our divisions at the coming of Jesus Christ, Matt. 24:50. The coming of Christ is mentioned as a terror to those who shall but begin to smite their fellow-servants. We may wrangle and stand out against one another in our contentions now; but it will not be so easy to answer Jesus Christ as it is to

answer one another. In the Name of Jesus Christ, I now speak unto you, yea as from Him charge you, let no reason move you to contend with, dissent or separate from your brethren, but that which you are persuaded in your conscience, and that after due and serious examination will hold out before, will be approved of, Jesus Christ at His coming.

The Twelfth,

Let every man consider his own weaknesses.

You are ready to take offense from others; within a while, you are as likely to be offensive to others. There will be as much need for them to bear with you as there is now for you to bear with them. The common law of those who intend to live at peace with one another is, Veniam petimus, damusque, We desire pardon, and we do pardon.

The Thirteenth,

Let us consider our mortality.

It is but a little time we have to live; shall the greater part of it, nay why should any part of it be unraveled with contentions and quarrels? I have read of Pompey, that upon a time passing over diverse hills, where there lived many people in caves, but their order was that the man lived in one cave and the wife in another; he asked the reason, they said, In those parts they live not long, therefore they desired that the little time they did live, they might have peace and quiet, which they had found by experience they could not have if man and wife lived constantly together. Though the means they used for their quiet was sordid, yet the good use they made of the shortness of their lives was commendable. Virgil says if swarms of bees meet in the air, they will sometimes fight as it were in a set battle with great violence; but if you cast but a little dust upon them, they will all be

presently quiet. Sprinkle upon your hearts the meditations of death, that within a while this flesh of yours will be turned to dust; this will quiet you.

The Fourteenth,

Consider the life of heaven.

There is and will be perfect agreement there. We are here as bees, flying up and down from flower to flower all day, but at night they come all into the same hive; that is a place where Luther and Zwingli will well agree. Shall not we whom God from all eternity has ordained to live co-heirs in heaven, to join together in praises there, agree together here on earth?

Chapter Thirty-Three

Joining Graces

1. Wisdom

The deepest seas are the most calm, so men of the deepest judgments are most quiet. A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit, Prov. 17:27, or thus, is of a cool spirit, for so the word signifies; his spirit is not heated with passion, there is a cool dew of examination and deliberation upon his spirit. He weighs the circumstances, consequences, and issues of things; he orders and disposes of things so that jars, contradictions, and oppositions are prevented. The wisdom that is from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, James 3:17. Reason and wisdom have a majesty in them and will force reverence. Let passion reverence the presence of reason, says Basil, as children doing things unseemly are afraid of the presence of men of worth.

2. Faith

1. This unites us to Christ and God, and in them to one another. 2. Faith commits all causes, all fears, injuries to God. 3. Faith lays hold upon and improves those gracious promises that God has made to His Churches for union. Faith sues out the bond. 4. Faith is able to descry the issue of

troubles and afflictions; though sense says, it will not be, reason says, it cannot be, yet faith gets above and says, it shall be, I descry land: and thus quiets all in the soul; all being quiet there, the turbulent motions that are in our spirits one towards another are soon quieted.

3. Humility

Colossians 3:12: Put on as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind. Ephesians 4:2: With all lowliness and meekness, and long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Philippians 2:3: Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. We may say of humility, as Tertullus, Acts 24 said of Felix, By thee we enjoy great quietness. A humble heart looks upon every truth of God as infinitely above itself; therefore it is willing to receive it from any; a child may lead it, Isaiah 11:6. One Baldassar, a German Divine, writing to Oecolampadius, has this notable expression: Let the Word of the Lord come, let it come, and we will put under six hundred necks if we had them. Such a disposition as this would make much for peace. Isaiah 32:18-19: we have a promise that the people of God should dwell in a peaceable habitation and in quiet resting places, and the city shall be low, in a low place. When the heart lies lowest, it is quietest.

4. Self-Denial

The joints in the body cannot join unless one part is hollow and gives way to the other. Condescension of one to another is a principal thing in friendship. Philippians 2: The example of Christ emptying Himself and making Himself to be of no reputation is set before us as an argument for our union; that therefore we should do nothing through strife but be like-minded, having the same love, and be of one accord and one mind. It is

indifferent to a heart emptied of self whether it conquers or is conquered so that truth may triumph. In other conflicts, the conqueror has the honor and the conquered is disgraced; but in the conflict for truth, both conquered and conqueror are honorable; the mercy is greater to him that is conquered; but he must have a self-denying heart to make him think so.

5. Patience

The olive, the emblem of peace, will continue green though overflown by waters for a long time together. After Noah had been so long in the ark, the dove brought an olive leaf in her mouth to him. It may be an emblem of patience as well as peace. Patience and peaceableness are near akin. Ephesians 4:2-3: Long-suffering is among the graces where the unity of the spirit is to be kept in the bond of peace.

There is a notable story I find in the lives of the German Divines: One Vitus Theodorus, a Divine, sends to advise with Melanchthon what he should do when Osiander preached against him; Melanchthon writes to him and beseeches him for the love of God, yea charges him that he should not answer Osiander again but that he should hold his peace and behave himself as if he heard nothing. Vitus Theodorus writes back again that this was very hard, yet he would obey. Let not men be too hasty to oppose oppositions but let them go on patiently in a constant way, resolving to bear what they meet with, and God at length will make their righteousness break forth as the light. Confute evil reports by thy life. He that knows not how to bear calumnies, reproaches, injuries knows not how to live, says Chytræus, another German Divine.

6. Joy in the Holy Ghost

Romans 14:17: The Kingdom of heaven is righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost. This grace in the heart puts a grace upon all a man's

conversation; it makes it lovely and amiable. The beams of the sun shining upon the fire will put it out; the beams of this spiritual joy will put out the fire of our passions.

7. Meekness, Gentleness

Milk quenches wildfire; oil (says Luther) quenches lime which water sets on fire. Opposition will heat and fire men when meekness and gentleness will still and quench all. Cicero says sweetness in speech and carriage is that which seasons friendship; severity in everything and sadness must not be among friends in their converse; such a kind of carriage may have a seeming gravity but friendship must have a remissness; it must be more free and sweet, disposed to all mildness and easiness. Ephesians 4:2-3: Meekness comes in as a special grace for peace and unity, so Colossians 3:12.

8. Love

That is the special uniting grace; Faith indeed has the preeminence in our union with Christ our head, but Love is the grace that unites the members. In 1 Corinthians 13, the Apostle shows many of the fruits of this grace, all tending to union and peace: It suffers long, it envies not; it is not puffed up, it behaves not itself unseemly, it seeks not its own, it is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Bearing all things and enduring all things seem to be the same. Therefore, some would have it that it covers all things, for so the word also signifies; but there is a greater elegance in it, in the translation, bears all things. It is like the cross main beam in a house, supporting the whole building: and were it not for some who have the love of God and his truth, and the good of the public, enabling them to undergo what they do, more than any

encouragement from men, all things in Church and State would be ready to fall into confusion, to be nothing but a heap of rubbish; but this love enables them to bear all things.

But if they have no encouragement, but see that though they hazard themselves ever so much, be of ever so great use, do the greatest services that can be expected from men, yet when men's turns are served, they are little regarded, but envied and narrowly watched to spy out anything that may have some show of exception against them, and left to shift for themselves as well as they can, when they might justly expect a great reward for their services, yet are disappointed, their hearts are grieved. But yet because they are acted by a principle of love to God, his cause, the public, they therefore still hold out, go on in their way, labor to be as instrumental as they can for good, commit themselves and all their endeavors to God, expecting encouragement from him, and so they endure all things: such men are worth their weight in gold: here is a heart that has much of the spirit of God in it. God is love, and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him. No wonder though these men act so swiftly in their way; no wonder though their motion in public service be so speedy, for their chariot is like that chariot of Solomon's, Canticles 3:10. The middle thereof is paved with love, and this is for the daughters of Jerusalem. Now may the love of God be forever with these his servants; the blessing of the Almighty and all his Saints be with them, upon them, in them and theirs forever.

Where men are acted by love they may do anything without offense. If you be silent, and be silent out of love; if you cry out, and you do it out of love; if you spare, and it be out of love; if you correct, and you correct from

love; let all be for amendment for good, all from the root of love; love, and do what you will. Thus Augustine in his 7th Tractate upon John.

These with other uniting graces that might be mentioned are the graces that God expects should be in a special manner acted in these times; and this is in a holy manner καῖρω δουλεύειν (to serve the time), as some copies have it, Romans 12:11. This is the most suitable work for the times wherein we live. What is more seasonable for divided times than uniting graces? And that union that comes from the acting of these graces is a spiritual, holy, truly Christian union—a raised union to a far higher pitch than any natural excellencies can raise unto. It is an excellent saying of Clemens Alexandrinus: If the spiritual man be in us, our humanity is fraternity. What then is our fraternity? It is raised to that which has no name to express it: the union of the Saints in heaven is beyond the union of fraternity; this which is of grace is of the same nature.

Chapter Thirty-Four

Joining Practices

The first practice of the tongue.

A soft answer turns away wrath, Proverbs 15:1. In your disputes let your arguments be as hard as you will, but let your words be soft. Soft words and hard arguments make a good dispute. Gentle language gains much upon the hearts of men. 1 Chronicles 28:2 says David: "Hear me my brethren, and my people." This was better and tended more to union between King and people than the rugged churlish answer of Rehoboam: "My Father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke." But what came of it? Ten Tribes were rent from him. As good a man as he could say: "Hear me my brethren and my people." Good words are as cheap as bad. Gentle courteous language is as easy as rough and bitter. Genesis 49:21 says Naphtali gives goodly words—sayings of goodness or fairness; so the Hebrew has it—that is fair, pleasing words: this Tribe were fair-spoken men. Now compare this with Deuteronomy 33:23: there Naphtali is said to be satisfied with favor and full with the blessing of the Lord. Fair courteous language has an acceptance among men, and the blessing of God is with it.

The second joining Practice.

Let us humble ourselves for our divisions.

That is a rule: Whatever sin you have been guilty of, though you have for the time left it, yet if you have not been humbled for it, there is a high chance you will fall into it again. Yes, say some, it is fit we should humble ourselves for our divisions; we will have days of fasts that we may do it. But take this note with you: In your days of fast or at other times when you would thus humble yourselves, let it be principally for your own guiltiness herein. Many in their humiliations make great complaints of others as the cause of divisions whom it may be God will own and acquit; take heed of being too forward in meddling with others in your fasts lest your fasts prove like those in Isaiah 58:4: "Ye fast for strife and debate and to smite with the fist."

The third joining Practice.

Where we see there have been mistakes and differences through human frailty, and a willingness to be otherwise, as far as God gives light, let all former unkindnesses be forgotten, so as never to bring up old things to charge them against one another. Let there be a line of forgetfulness drawn over them; let them be buried in oblivion.

This was the Athenians' Amnestia, a law made by Thrasybulus with the consent of the people, that former injuries should be forgotten. It was made upon this occasion: After Lysander had conquered the Athenians, he set thirty governors over them who tyrannized exceedingly. Thrasybulus, with many others, was banished; but after a while, Thrasybulus gathered together his banished countrymen, formed an army, and delivered the Athenians from the yoke of these thirty tyrants. Now, because when the banished men returned to their former possessions, Thrasybulus feared there would be great heartburning among the Athenians—that those who had been banished

would seek revenge upon those they judged responsible, and the others would be enraged against them—Thrasybulus got the people to join him in this law, which they called Amnestia, that all former wrongs should be forgotten and that they should live lovingly and peacefully henceforth with one another, as if such breaches had never occurred among them.

Whenever God shall deliver these kingdoms from bondage and settle things among us, the addition of such a law, which we may call our English Amnestia, will be very necessary. Otherwise, oh, the abundance of the fire of malice that will remain raked up under the ashes, ready upon any occasion to burst out! One will look upon another with eyes full of revenge, with scorn, hatred, and disdain; one will charge the other as the cause of all our miseries and curse him; the other will charge him and curse him as deeply. Every time men think of what they have suffered, their hearts will be enraged. Such now is that extreme bitter exasperation and deadly rage of men's hearts one against another that whenever peace shall be concluded, if it is not made exceedingly sure, our pacification is likely to be the foundation of far greater evils to us than yet have befallen us. If this Amnestia is not strengthened with what is in the wisdom and power of man to do, and with the blessing of the Almighty also with it, we are an undone people.

The Fourth Joining Practice

Never contend unless you are sure you understand one another about what it is you contend for.

I have read of a quarrel between the Eastern and Western Churches; the Eastern Churches said there were three subsistences in the Trinity but not three persons; the Western said there were three persons but not three subsistences. Athanasius came and reconciled them both. It is true that the

contentions among us are more than verbal, yet for anything a great part of the kingdom knows (even those whose spirits are bitter enough), they may be no more than merely verbal. How many ignorant people, women, young ones do not understand where the difference lies between Presbyterians and those whom they call Independents; and yet they can with much bitterness cry out against one or the other. Perhaps you have some ministers or others come to your table; they tell you a tale of such and such, your heart is hot presently, but do you understand the matter? You begin to make a stir, but can you give an account of it? Be silent, forbear, take heed what you do; do not meddle in a way of strife until you understand where the controversy lies, and that from both parties.

The Fifth Joining Practice

Be honest; 1. do not lie in wait to take advantage; 2. make the best interpretation of things you can.

If God should take advantage against us, what would become of us? This is most unseemly when men are seeking to find out truth if they shall piddle about words, catch at phrases, get hold of expressions, and seek to make their advantages out of them; and in this shall be the greatest strength of their answer. Though this may have a specious show before men who are willing to receive anything which makes against what they would have crushed, yet this will not stand before the throne of Christ.

We read in Matthew 4 that Christ had a great dispute with the Devil, in which he had him at a great advantage in his quotation of Scripture: "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." This was quoted from Psalm 91:11: "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." Yet Christ did not catch this advantage; he did

not even upbraid him for leaving out that passage, which he might justly have done, but he answered to the thing itself. Indeed, Christ might have taken further advantage against the Devil because the words following in the Psalm are a prophecy of Christ destroying the power of the Devil: "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under thy feet." Christ did not take advantage of this either or upbraid him with it; he had enough against him in the thing itself he brought. It is a sign that men have less advantage in the matter when they seek so much to catch at all the advantages they can in the manner of expressions of those whom they oppose.

2. Make the best interpretation of things you can. 1 Cor. 13:5. Love thinks no evil. It may be that if you meet a man in the streets and he does not stop to talk with you or take special notice of you, you immediately think it is his pride or his slighting and disregarding you. This is the worst interpretation possible. Why? Is it not possible that he may be overwhelmed with business in his head that you know nothing about? May it not be that his eyes and thoughts were elsewhere, and he did not notice you passing by? Is it not often the same with yourself in respect to others?

Again, perhaps you find that a man does not behave towards you as you expected when you are with him, not looking so smilingly upon you or carrying himself in that familiar, affable way. You immediately think and say, "Surely it is his pride and aloofness," whereas it may be because his head is fuller than yours, which may later be for your good if you would be patient for a while. It may be due to some trouble of his spirit at that time; it may be due to the temper of his body, his constitution, or some weakness in it at that time. If such a fair interpretation can be made, why should not an ingenuous, candid spirit make it?

This very exception was taken against Basilius Magnus, and Nazianzen in one of his Orations, in which he highly commends Basil, answers it, and justifies him. It is hard to keep unity, love, and peace with men who are of carping dispositions. If God were strict to mark what we do amiss, what would become of us? God is strict to mark what good there is in His Saints; if there is any little good amidst much imperfection, God's way is to pass by the imperfection and take notice of the good. But our way often is, if there is a little bad, though only through a very pardonable mistake amidst much good, to pass by all the good and seize upon the mistake, making it the seed of contention, brooding over it, and thus begetting the brats of contention from it. Certainly, this ought not to be so.

The Sixth Joining Practice:So far as Reason and Conscience will give way, yield to those whom you contend with.

That standing at a distance with those who dissent from us, even to the utmost, is the way of many; but certainly, it is a false way; God is not in it. It may be some, yes many will judge this yielding to be a fair, handsome turning about to the other side; take heed of such bold censures: Is every difference from that rigid, stout spirit of yours a warping from the truth, a sinful temporizing for private ends? The Lord judge between you and His servants.

Some men who have been of yielding spirits in things that God would have them yield have stood out undauntedly when God has called them to witness to His truth when those who have been stout and harsh in their own ways have basely betrayed it when they have been tried with greater sufferings. Ambrose was a man of a sweet and moderate spirit; witness among other things that notable saying of his: "If that end of virtues be the greatest that looks at public good, Moderation is of all the most beautiful."

Ah, but I warrant you, Ambrose was a man who saw which way the times went; he was loath to hazard himself by standing out against men who had power in their hands; this temper of his made him thus plead for moderation.

No, Ambrose was a man of an invincible spirit in the ways of God. In all Ecclesiastical Story we read not of a braver spirit than his contesting with men of power in the cause of Christ. For when Theodosius the Emperor had been the cause of a great slaughter in Thessalonica, though provoked to it by sedition there, the Emperor a while after coming to Milan where Ambrose's charge was, after the usual manner he came to the Church. Ambrose meets him and forbids him entrance, reproving him before all the people: "Do you not know, oh Emperor," says he, "the barbarousness of that vile act of yours? Or do you not remember we have another Emperor above you? What bold impiety is this? Do you not fear to bring those feet of yours, polluted with the blood of innocents, into this holy place? Or to stretch forth those hands of yours, wet, yea dropping with blood, to take the most holy body of the Lord? Or to put that mouth of yours—which forgetting not only the clemency which belongs to an Emperor but also justice—gave out the sentence for killing so many innocent men—to the precious blood of the Lord? Away therefore; will you add impiety to your sin? Do not think much to come under that discipline which the Lord commands."

Upon this, the Emperor goes back to his Palace with sighing and tears and spent eight months in mourning and lamentation. Yet after this he was not received by Ambrose until again being sharply reprimanded he cast himself down in the porch upon the pavement bewailing his sin. Rising up he was about to sit in the Chancel where the Emperor's seat was; he was required to

go forth into the place of penitents. With similar boldness he dealt with Ruffinus, a great Courtier, the Master of the Emperor's Horse. Here behold a man of a moderate, quiet spirit, yielding in what he could yet when he conceived himself interested in the Cause of Christ his courage raises him above the fears or favors of men.

The Seventh Joining Practice:If you will strive, strive who shall do one another most good; who shall engage one another in the most and greatest offices of love.

This is a good combat; such striving as this God and His blessed Angels look upon and take much delight in.

I find a notable story in the life of Alexander the Great which may encourage Christians in such a combat as this: There was a great King in India named Taxiles who on one occasion came to salute Alexander and said unto him: "What need do we have to fight and make wars with one another if you do not come to take away our water and our necessary commodities for living by which things men of judgment must needs fight? As for other goods if I am richer than thee I am ready to give thee of mine; and if I have less I will not think scorn to thank thee if thou wilt give me some of thine."

Alexander being pleased to hear him speak thus wisely embraced him and said unto him: "Thinkest thou that this meeting of ours can be without fight for all these goodly fair words? No no thou hast won nothing by them for I will fight and contend with thee in honesty and courtesy because thou shalt not exceed me in bounty and liberality." So Alexander took various gifts from him but gave more to him.

Oh, that our contentions were turned into such contentions as these are! Let us rejoice in any opportunity to perform acts of love for those we differ

from, even for those who have wronged us. It was once said of Archbishop Cranmer, "If you would be sure to have Cranmer do you a good turn, you must do him some ill one," for though he loved to do good to all, he especially sought opportunities to do good to those who had wronged him. If we had but a few leading men of such spirits among us, how great a blessing of peace might we enjoy!

The Eighth Joining Practice

Let every man be diligent in the work that God calls him to.

Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, 1 Thess. 4:11. It is not an arbitrary thing; the command of God lies upon it.

I am truly persuaded that many of our divisions in opinion and otherwise, our hard thoughts of one another, are raised and fomented by those who lack employment. Hence, they go about from place to place, arguing, disputing, and quarreling about things they do not understand; yet they think they have a deeper insight than ordinary. I would be loath to add to the affliction of those who, by the rage of the enemy, have been put out of their employments and have come for shelter among us. God forbid that I should willingly grieve them; their case is to be pitied. We are to succor, comfort, and help them as much as we can. However, I also desire them to be cautious of a temptation they may be under and not think of it in their lack of employment. Now that they are here, they meet with a variety of company and all sorts of people. Having too much time to spare, the Devil may soon and unawares prevail upon them to cause an itching desire for this opinion and that way. Once these opinions take hold of their hearts, they carry around what they hear and their apprehensions of things and persons, pleading and arguing for what they have only slight and sudden

apprehensions of. By arguing, the matter gets down into their spirits before it is thoroughly examined and understood. Once it is lodged there, it must be maintained, and so a spirit of contention rises in them, sowing seeds of contention among others.

It may be that some of your callings are low and mean, which may possibly discourage you. But let it not be so, for there may be as much obedience to God in your faithfulness in that humble calling as in the highest and most honorable employment on earth. Indeed, your reward may be as great, for God looks at faithfulness in the work, not the greatness of the work. Let every man know, says Luther, that his work in any godly kind of life is a divine work because it is the work of a divine call, having God's command for it.

In all strivings with men, take care that due respect for their persons is maintained as much as possible.

It is very observable that when God manifested His displeasure against the Devil in the Serpent by cursing him, He said, "Cursed be thou." But when He would manifest it against Simeon and Levi, it was not "Cursed be ye" or "Cursed be they," but "Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their rage, for it was cruel." You may be bitter against men's sins as long as you show due respect for their persons. By denying the respect you might and ought to give to men's persons, you deprive yourself of the liberty you might otherwise take in opposing their sin, which is what you claim to aim at.

Labor to gain good from the wrongs done to us.

If we find God blessing them to us for good, our hearts will be very moderate towards those who have done them. The overruling providence of God turning the wrong that Joseph's brothers had done him into so much

good took Joseph's spirit away from practicing any evil against them. But when this good comes to us through the exercise of our own graces, it will be more effective in quieting and moderating our spirits. Philip of Macedon thanked some great men of Athens who had spread ill reports about him because both in speech and life he was better for it, laboring by words and deeds to prove them liars. The best answer to ill reports is to live contrary to them.

Turn your zeal from working against one another to zeal for God.

You will say, "Are works of zeal any help to peace and union? Who are they that make the greatest disturbances in the world but your fiery zealots? If men were of a cooler temper, we would have more peace."

Answer: Distempered zeal may cause disturbance; but true zeal—the clear flame of the Spirit of God—makes men zealous not for themselves but for God. This has the blessing of God's peace with it. Numbers 25:12-13: Phinehas there has the promise of the Covenant of Peace because he was zealous for his God.

In seeking to guide others towards good, let it appear that you seek rather to be helpful to them than to gain victory over them.

It is grievous to a man's nature to be conquered but not to be helped. Ambrose wrote to his friend Marcellus about composing some breaches between him and his brother and sister with this excellent expression: "I thought that to be the best way; I would have none conquered and all overcome." A similar practice is reported of Scipio when at the taking of New Carthage two soldiers contended over the mural crown due to him who first climbed the walls. The whole army was in danger of division over this matter. When it came to Scipio, he decided thus: He told them they both got up the wall together and so gave the scaling crown to both.

Make up breaches as soon as possible.

Take them, if it may be, at the beginning. When good men fall out, usually only one of them is at fault initially, but if such strife continues for any time, both become guilty. If you delay setting a broken bone, it cannot be done without much difficulty and great pain. Proverbs 17:14 states, "The beginning of strife is as when one lets out water; therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with." You may read it as "before it gets into you and mingles itself in your heart, or between you and your brother." If your house is on fire, you do not wait to quench it until it breaks out of the roof; divisions that start as mere sparks can grow very high and great in a short time.

I have read a story of two sons of the Duke of Florence who, after hunting, argued over whose dog killed the hare. Words multiplied, they grew heated, one drew upon the other and killed him. The servant, seeing his master killed, drew upon the killer and killed him. Do not neglect the beginnings of quarrels; you know not to what they may grow.

Let us account those brethren in whom we see godliness and carry ourselves towards them accordingly, even if they do not account us.

Let us not be too ready to take the forfeiture of our brethren. The learned and godly men who lived in the age when the Donatists renounced all Christian communion with other churches, yet seeing godliness in many of them, still accounted them part of the Church and their brethren. Thus, they sought to draw those to them who thrust themselves away.

Pliny says of the pearls they call Unions that though they are engendered in the sea, they participate more of the heavens than of the sea. Certainly, this precious union, though it is among men, has its luster and beauty,

indeed its very being from the heavens. You must look up to heaven for peace, for its preservation, increase, luster, and beauty if you would have it.

Job 25:2 states, "God makes peace in his high places." The Lord can make peace between high and low. Let us bring men's rugged, crooked, perverse hearts to God in prayer, who is the great joiner of hearts; it is He who makes men of one mind in a house; He makes wars cease. Psalm 122:6 says, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." In your prayers for the Church, this must be mentioned as a special blessing. If praying does not prevail, fighting will not. Those are the most peaceable men in Church and Commonwealth who pray most for their peace. God has more prayers for the peace of this Church and State from those whom some of you consider hinderers of it than from yours. You complain much about the lack of peace and inveigh against those you mark as hinderers of peace, but do you pray as much? You have these means presented to you for furthering peace; use whatever other means you may encounter. 2 Thessalonians 3:16 states, "The Lord of peace give you peace always by all means."

And that all may be better improved, let the exhortation of the Apostle in 1 Thessalonians 4:11 sink into you: "Study to be quiet." The words are "Love the honor of being quiet." There is great excellence in it.

That is the last thing.

Chapter Thirty-Five

Exhortation to peaceable and brotherly union, showing the excellence of it.

And now, my brethren, as the Eunuch said to Philip concerning his baptism, "Here is water; what prevents me from being baptized?" I shall say concerning our uniting in peace and love with one another: Here are Joining Principles, Joining Considerations, Joining Graces, Joining Practices; what now prevents us from joining in love and peace with one another? Surely nothing can prevent this but extremely corrupt and perverse hearts of our own.

The Apostle Paul is mighty earnest in his desires and exhortations for this: 1 Corinthians 1:10 states, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." The word translated "perfectly joined" signifies such a joining as when a bone out of joint is perfectly set right again.

So Philippians 2:1 states, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and

mercies, fulfill ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; let nothing be done through strife," etc. The Apostle pours forth his soul in this exhortation; it is a heart-breaking exhortation.

Luther, though a man of a stirring, hot spirit, yet writing to the Pastors of the Church of Strasburg, has these words: "I pray you be persuaded that I shall always be as desirous to embrace concord as I am desirous to have the Lord Jesus be propitious to me."

I find also in a letter that Martin Bucer writes to a godly minister a very high expression of his high esteem and earnest desires after curing divisions: "Who would not," says he, "purchase with his life the removal of that infinite scandal that comes by dissension?" Oh that there were such hearts in us! Christ expects it from us all but especially from His ministers, for they are His ambassadors for peace to beseech men in His stead to be reconciled to God. Reconciliation with God will reconcile us one to another. If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another (1 John 4:11).

The faces of the Cherubim in the Temple looked towards one another, which some think signified the agreement that should be among ministers of the Gospel. So the six branches in the candlestick joined all in one; those who hold the light of truth before others should be united in peace among themselves. The first thing Christ's ministers were to do when they came to any place was to say "Peace be to that place"; if any sons of peace were there, they were to abide; otherwise not. Surely then it is expected that they themselves should be sons of peace.

The contentions of private Christians are offensive, but the contentions of ministers are a scandal with a witness. Yet in all ages of the Church, corrupt clergy have been the greatest causes of divisions; they have been among the

most cruel spirits against any who differed from them. But let not such a spirit be in us; we have enough to do contending with the wicked of the world and with Satan's malice; let us not contend with one another.

Luther, writing to the Ministers of Nuremberg, quotes Christ saying to them, "Satis est vobis ob nomen meum malorum," meaning, "You are likely to suffer enough evil for my name; you need not afflict one another." It was barbaric for the priests of Baal to cut and slash themselves, but it is worse for the Ministers of Jesus Christ to cut and slash one another.

In 1 Kings 6:23, the Cherubim were made of olive wood. If you are typified by them, as we hinted before, let it appear that you are olives, not brambles. In verse 31, for the entrance of the Oracle, the doors were made of olive wood. Who will believe that you bring the Oracles of God with you when they see by your rebellious, contentious behavior that you never entered through these doors? People cannot help but think it a miserable thing to have a scratching, tearing bramble over them.

Oh, that God would set the beauty and glory of peace, friendship, and love before us! That this precious pearl, Union, might be highly valued by us! All men are taken in some degree or another with the excellence and sweetness of love and friendship. Cicero says that some men despise riches, others honors; those things that some delight in are vilified by others. But all men of all sorts have a high esteem for friendship; they think there can be no life without it.

In Genesis 34:21, the great commendation that Hamor and Shechem give of Jacob and his sons as an argument to persuade the men of Shechem to join with them in giving their daughters to them for wives and in taking theirs is, "These men are peaceable with us." A peaceable disposition is very convincing.

In Song of Solomon 6:6, "My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother; she is the choice one of her that bore her." What then follows? The daughters saw her and blessed her; yes, the queens and the concubines praised her: "Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?" Let the Saints be but one, and then they will appear beautiful and glorious indeed; yes, they will be terrible as an army with banners.

Euagrius, in his Ecclesiastical History, records an epistle from Cyril of Alexandria written to John of Antioch. Upon receiving a pacificatory epistle from John, Cyril's spirit was so moved that he exclaimed: "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; the middle wall of rancor is battered down; the boiling choler which deprived minds of quietness is purged from among us, and all occasions of discord and dissension are banished away. For our Savior Jesus Christ has granted peace unto the Churches under heaven."

The Thebans made Harmonia a goddess; they considered her the defender and patroness of their city. Harmonious, peaceable, uniting dispositions have much of God in them; if not from sanctifying grace, yet it is from a common work of the Spirit of God. There is a nobleness in such a heart. By the laws of England, noblemen have this privilege: none of them can be bound to keep the peace because it is assumed that a noble disposition will never engage in brawls and contentions. It is assumed that peace is always bound to him and that he will be careful to preserve it on his own accord. It is the base bramble that rends and tears.

Nazianzen reports of Alexander who, having taken a city and consulting what to do next, was advised by one Parmenius to raze the city to the ground if he were king. Alexander replied, "So would I too if I were what

you are; rigor may become you, but gentleness becomes me." Gentleness, mercy, goodness, love, and tenderness toward others' sufferings are the greatest ornaments to a noble spirit. If this is sanctified, the glory of God shines brightly indeed in such a heart. For God glories in being the God of peace and love.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 refers to "The very God of peace." 2 Thessalonians 3:16 mentions "The Lord of peace himself." Jesus Christ is known as the Prince of Peace; the Holy Ghost is likened to a dove that has no gall. The Gospel is the Gospel of peace; the Kingdom of God is peace as well as righteousness. The legacy Christ left is a legacy of peace; the apostolic benediction is grace, mercy, and peace. The glory of the Church lies in being a city compacted in unity within itself. This will be the glory of that glorious Church that God is raising—a new Jerusalem where there shall be no more crying (Revelation 21:4). Ezekiel 14:9 states: "The Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name shall be one." There is but one Lord now, but he is called by different names; in that day his name shall be but one.

Zephaniah 3:9 says: "Then will I turn to a people of pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one consent." The Hebrew word implies serving with one shoulder; now we shoulder one another, but then all shall serve the Lord with one shoulder.

This love and peace are compared to the most delightful and profitable things: "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity; it is like precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon Aaron's beard and went down to the skirts of his garment; as the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion" (Psalm 133).

There are many promises made to this. Matthew 5 states: "Blessed are the peacemakers." 2 Corinthians 13:11 advises: "Be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of peace shall be with you." John 15:12 says: "This is my commandment, that you love one another." In verse 14, Christ says: "You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you." By loving others, we not only gain them as friends but also Christ. It seems as if Christ pleads for love as one who deals with two men at variance, persuading them to peace and love: "Come, you shall pass by all former things; you shall be made friends. By this, you shall gain me also as a friend to you as long as I live."

Genes. 13. ver. 8 to the end, is a remarkable Scripture to show how God is with a loving, gentle, peaceable disposition. Verses 8 and 9 present Abraham's kind, gentle yielding to Lot, his inferior, for peace's sake. But note what follows, and you shall find he lost nothing by this yielding: for as soon as Lot was gone from him, the Lord came to him, verse 14, and said to him, "Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art northward, southward, eastward, and westward, for all the land that thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever: arise, walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee."

The difference in what Jacob says of Reuben when he was to die, Gen. 49:4, from that of Moses, Deut. 33:6, is observable: Jacob says, "He is the firstborn, the beginning of his strength; but he shall not excel because he went to his father's bed." But Moses says, "Let Reuben live and not die, and let not his men be few." The reason for this difference is given by some because it was fitting that Jacob, to deter his other children, should exercise the authority of a father; but Moses frees him from the curse because he was always loving to his brother Joseph.

Brotherly love has a blessing accompanying it: God loves it exceedingly, for it greatly glorifies God. And to what purpose do we live if God does not receive glory from us? Romans 15:5-7: The Apostle first prays that the God of patience and consolation would grant them to be like-minded towards one another according to Christ Jesus so that they may with one mind and one mouth glorify God. Then he exhorts: "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." Much of God's glory depends upon our union. Indeed, God values this so much that He is willing to wait for His service until we are at peace with one another. Matthew 5:23-24: "Leave thy gift before the altar, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." My worship shall wait until you are reconciled. I love my worship and desire it much, but I must have peace and love among yourselves first; I will wait for that.

But I beseech you, let us not make God wait too long. Remember, while you are wrangling and quarreling, God waits on you all this while. If children should be quarreling and one comes to them and says, "Your father waits for you," it is time for them to break off. Be not unmannerly with God by making Him wait so long upon you: some of you have made Him wait upon you for an acceptable duty of worship for several weeks, perhaps even many months, and yet your spirits are not in a state to offer any sacrifice to God. What a fearful evil it is then to stand out in a stubborn, sullen manner refusing to be reconciled.

Learned Drusius cites Hebrew writers saying that he who offends his brother ought to seek to pacify him; if he refuses to be pacified, then he must bring three of his friends with him to intercede twice or thrice, and if he shall after this refuse, then he is to leave him, and such a man quia

implacabilis est,* vocatur peccator, is called a sinner with a special note upon him.

Lastly, the saints' enjoyment of the sweetness of love, peace, and unity among themselves—what is it but heaven upon earth? Heaven is above all storms, tempests, troubles; its happiness is perfect rest. We pray that the will of God might be done on earth as it is done in heaven; why may we not have a heaven upon earth? This would sweeten all our comforts and even all our afflictions. But the Devil envies us this happiness. Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.

If you would have the excellency of love set before you more fully, read over and over again the Epistles of John. Ecclesiastical history reports of this blessed Apostle whose heart was so full of love that when he grew very old and was not able to preach, yet he would be brought into the congregation in a chair and there say only these words: "Little children flee idolatry; love one another." But the more excellent union and peace are, the more is the pity that they should be abused to serve men's lusts; our misery would be greater if we were abused in our treaties about it; if we should have a mock-peace; if we should be deceived in either offers of or conclusions about peace; if peace should lead to our ruin but prepare us for slaughter.

It has been observed by many that what the English gained from the French in battle by valor, the French regained from the English by cunning in treaties. The Lord deliver us from such French tricks. Let us all be for peace yet not be fooled into bondage by the name of peace. Now God has helped us by His mighty arm; let us not be put off with a bauble and made to believe it is this pearl. We know with whom we have to deal.

And now as the Apostle says in 2 Thessalonians 3:5: "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." Let me add: And into the love of one another. Let us all study peace, seek peace, follow peace, pursue peace, and may the God of peace be with us.