

DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

by Owen

Owen's concise treatise on the rules governing church fellowship and discipline, presenting seven rules for members' duties toward their pastor and fifteen rules for their duties toward one another. A masterful study of congregational principles applied to church governance and mutual Christian responsibility.

4 Chapters

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0.1. Duties of Christian Fellowship

Duties of Christian Fellowship by John Owen

"For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."—1 PET. 2:15. The text of this module was taken from a PDF created by Monergism ©For more free books like this, and other theological literature, please visit www.monergism.com

0.3. PREFATORY NOTE

PREFATORY NOTE THIS little book was published in 1647, soon after Owen had formed a church on the principles of Independency at Coggeshall, in Essex. It is designed to exhibit scriptural rules on the subject of ecclesiastical fellowship and discipline; the first part containing seven rules, on the duties of members of a church to their pastor; and the second fifteen, on their duties to one another. It was prepared by our author after he had adopted Congregational views, but is of such a nature as to be applicable and useful under any form of ecclesiastical polity. Each rule is established by a body of evidence from Scripture, and is followed by a general explanation. Several editions of this treatise have appeared; and we cannot wonder at its favourable reception with the religious public, for it is as remarkable as any work of our author, for deep piety, sound judgment, lucid arrangement, and a comprehensive knowledge of Scripture, and forms a manual on church-fellowship which is to this day unsurpassed. One feature of it can hardly escape the reader's attention,—Owen is here, for once, a master in the art of condensation.—ED.

0.4. TO THE READER

TO THE READER

THERE are, Christian reader, certain principles in church affairs generally consented unto by all men aiming at reformation and the furtherance of the power of godliness therein, however diversified among themselves by singular persuasions, or distinguished by imposed and assumed names and titles. Some of these, though not here mentioned, are the bottom and foundation of this following collection of rules for our walking in the fellowship of the gospel; amongst which these four are the principal:—

First, That particular congregations or assemblies of believers, gathered into one body for a participation of the ordinances of Jesus Christ, under officers of their own, are of divine institution.

Secondly, That every faithful believer is bound, by virtue of positive precepts, to join himself to some such single congregation, having the notes and marks whereby a true church may be known and discerned.

Thirdly, That every man's own voluntary consent and submission to the ordinances of Christ, in that church whereunto he is joined, is required for his union therewith and fellowship therein.

Fourthly, That it is convenient that all believers of one place should join themselves in one congregation, unless, through their being too numerous, they are by common consent distinguished into more; which order cannot be disturbed without danger, strife, emulation, and breach of love.

These principles, evident in the word, clear in themselves, and owned in the main by all pretending to regular church reformation, not liable to any colourable exception from the Scripture or pure antiquity, were supposed and taken for granted at the collection of these ensuing rules. The apostolical direction and precept in such cases is, that "whereunto we have attained, we should walk according to the same rule;" unto whose performance the promise annexed is, that "if any one be otherwise minded, God will also reveal that unto him." The remaining differences about church order and discipline are for continuance so ancient, and by the disputes of men made so involved and intricate, the parties at variance so prejudiced and engaged, that although all things of concernment appear to me, as to others both consenting with me and dissenting from me, clear in the Scriptures, yet I have little hopes of the accomplishment of the promise in revelation, of the truth as yet contested about, in men differently minded, until the obedience of walking suitably and answerably to the same rules agreed on be more sincerely accomplished. This persuasion is the more firmly fixed on me every day, because I see men, for the most part, to spend their strength and time more in the opposing of those things wherein others differ from them than in the practice of those which by themselves and others are owned as of the most necessary concernment. To recall the minds of men,—at least of those who, having not much light to judge of things under debate (especially considering their way of handling in this disputing age), may have yet much heat and love towards the ways of gospel obedience,—from the entanglements of controversies

about church affairs, and to engage them into a serious, humble performance of those duties which are, by the express command of Jesus Christ, incumbent on them in what way of order they walk, are these leaves designed. I shall only add, that though the ensuing rules or directions may be observed, and the duties prescribed performed with much beauty and many advantages by those who are engaged in some reformed church society; yet they are, if not all of them, yet for the most part, such as are to be the constant practice of all Christians in their dairy conversation, though they are not persuaded of the necessity of any such reformation as is pleaded for. And herein I am fully resolved that the practice of any one duty here mentioned, by any one soul before neglected, shall be an abundant recompense for the publishing my name with these papers, savouring so little of those ornaments of art or learning which in things that come to public view men desire to hold out.

1. ESHCOL:

ESHCOL: A CLUSTER OF THE FRUIT OF CANAAN ———

Rules of walking in fellowship, with reference to the pastor or minister that watcheth for our souls.

RULE I. THE word and all ordinances dispensed in the administration to him committed, by virtue of ministerial authority, are to be diligently attended and submitted unto, with ready obedience in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 4:1, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

2 Corinthians 5:18; 2 Corinthians 5:20, "God hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us." Chap. 4:7, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." See chap. 6:1.

Galatians 4:14, "Ye received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus."

2 Thessalonians 3:14, "If any man obey not our word, note that man, and have no company with him."

Hebrews 13:7; Hebrews 13:17, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

EXPLICATION I. There is a twofold power for the dispensing of the word:—1. Δ■ναμις, or ability; 2. ■ξουσι■α, or authority. The first, with the attending qualifications, mentioned and recounted 1 Timothy 3:2-7, Titus 1:6-9, and many other places, is required to be previously in those, as bestowed on them, who are to be called to office of ministration: and may be, in several degrees and measures, in such as are never set apart thereunto, who thereby are warranted to declare the gospel, when called by the providence of God thereunto, Romans 10:14-15; for the work of preaching unto the conversion of souls being a moral duty, comprised under that general precept of doing good unto all, the appointment of some to the performance of that work, by the way of office, doth not enclose it. The second, or authority, proper to them who orderly are set apart thereunto, ariseth from,—

1. Christ's institution of the office, Ephesians 4:11.

2. God's providential designation of the persons, Matthew 9:38.

3. The church's call, election, appointment, acceptation, submission, Galatians 4:14; Acts 14:23; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Acts 6:3; 2 Corinthians 8:5 : which do not give them dominion over the faith of believers, 2 Corinthians 1:24, nor make them lords over God's heritage, 1 Peter 5:3; but

intrust them with a stewardly power in the house of God, 1 Corinthians 4:1-2,—that is, the peculiar flock over which, in particular, they are made overseers, Acts 20:28. Of whom the word is to be received,—

(1.) As the truth of God; as also from all others speaking according to gospel order in his name.

(2.) As the truth held out with ministerial authority to them in particular, according to the institution of Christ.

Want of a due consideration of these things lies at the bottom of all that negligence, carelessness, sloth, and wantonness in hearing, which have possessed many professors in these days. There is nothing but a respect to the truth and authority of God in the administration of the word that will establish the minds of men in a sober and profitable attending unto it. Neither are men weary of hearing until they are weary of practising.

Motives to the observance of this rule are:—

1. The name wherein they speak and administer, 2 Corinthians 5:20.
2. The work which they do, 1 Corinthians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 6:1; 1 Timothy 4:16.
3. The return that they make, Hebrews 13:17.
4. The regard that the Lord hath of them in his employment, Matthew 10:40-41; Luke 10:16.
5. The account that hearers must make of the word dispensed by them, 2 Chronicles 36:15-16; Proverbs 1:22-29; Proverbs 13:13; Luke 10:16; Mark 4:24; Hebrews 2:1-3; Hebrews 4:2.

RULE II. His conversation is to be observed and diligently followed, so far as he walks in the steps of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 4:16, "I beseech you, be ye followers of me." Chap. 11:1, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

Hebrews 13:7, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."

2 Thessalonians 3:7, "Yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you."

Php 3:17, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample."

1 Timothy 4:12, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

1 Peter 5:3, "Be ensamples to the flock."

EXPLICATION II. That an exemplary conversation was ever required in the dispensers of holy things, both under the Old Testament and New, is apparent. The glorious vestments of the old ministering priests, the soundness and integrity of their person, without maim, imperfection, or blemish, Urim and Thummim, with many other ornaments, though primitively typical of Jesus

Christ, yet did not obscurely set out the purity and holiness required in the administrators themselves, Zechariah 3:4. In the New, the shining of their light in all good works, Matthew 5:16, is eminently exacted; and this not only that no offence be taken at the ways of God, and his worship by them administered (as hath fallen out in the Old Testament, 1 Samuel 2:17; and in the New, Php 3:18-19), but also that those who are without may be convinced, 1 Timothy 3:7, and the churches directed in the practice of all the will and mind of God by them revealed, as in the places cited. A pastor's life should be vocal; sermons must be practised as well as preached. Though Noah's workmen built the ark, yet themselves were drowned. God will not accept of the tongue where the devil hath the soul. Jesus did "do and teach," Acts 1:1. If a man teach uprightly and walk crookedly, more will fall down in the night of his life than he built in the day of his doctrine.

Now, as to the completing of the exemplary life of a minister, it is required that the principle of it be that of the life of Christ in him, Galatians 2:20, that when he hath taught others he be not himself "a cast-away," 1 Corinthians 9:27; with which he hath a spiritual understanding, and light given him into the counsel of God, which he is to communicate, 1 John 5:20; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 1 Corinthians 2:16; 2 Corinthians 4:6-7;—and that the course of it be singular, Matthew 5:46, Luke 6:32; where unto so many eminent qualifications of the person and duties of conversation are required, 1 Timothy 2:2-7, etc., Titus 1:6-9;—and his aim to be exemplar to the glory of God, 1 Timothy 4:12. So is their general course and the end of their faith to be eyed, Hebrews 13:7. And their infirmities, whilst really such, and appearing through the manifold temptations whereunto they are in these days exposed, or imposed on them through the zeal of their adversaries that contend against them, [are] to be covered with love, Galatians 4:13-14. And this men will do when they conscientiously consider that even the lives of their teachers are an ordinance of God, for their relief under temptations, and provocation unto holiness, zeal, meekness, and self-denial.

RULE III. Prayer and supplications are continually to be made on his behalf for assistance and success in the work committed to him.

Ephesians 6:18-20, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador." 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2, "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men;" 1 Thessalonians 5:25. Colossians 4:3, "Pray also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ;" Hebrews 13:18.

Acts 12:5, "Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him;" Hebrews 13:7.

EXPLICATION III. The greatness of the work (for which who is sufficient? 2 Corinthians 2:16);—the strength of the opposition which lies against it, 1 Corinthians 16:9; Revelation 12:12; 2 Timothy 4:3-5;—the concernment of men's souls therein, Acts 20:26-28; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Timothy 4:16;—the conviction which is to be brought upon the world thereby, Ezekiel 2:5; 1 Corinthians 1:23-24; 2 Corinthians 3:15-16;—its aim and tendency to the glory of God in Christ,—call aloud for the most effectual daily concurrence of the saints in their supplications for their supportment. That these are to be for assistance, encouragement, abilities, success, deliverance, and protection, is proved in the rule. As their temptations are multiplied, so ought prayers in their behalf. They have many curses of men against them, Jeremiah 15:10;—it is hoped that God hears some prayers for them. When many are not ashamed to revile them in public, some ought to be ashamed not to

remember them in private.

Motives:—

1. The word will doubtless be effectual, when ability for its administration is a return of prayers, Acts 10:1-6.
2. The minister's failing is the people's punishment, Amos 8:11-12; Isaiah 30:20.
3. His prayers are continually for the church, Isaiah 62:6-7; Romans 1:9, etc.
4. That for which he stands in so much need of prayers is the saints' good, and not peculiarly his own. Help him who carries the burden, Ephesians 6:18-20; Php 2:17; Colossians 1:24.

RULE IV. Reverential estimation of him, with submission unto him for his work's sake.

1 Corinthians 4:1, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."

1 Timothy 5:17, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

1 Peter 5:5, "Submit yourselves unto the elders."

Hebrews 13:17, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves."

EXPLICATION IV. The respect and estimation here required is civil, the motive sacred; whence the honour of the minister is the grace of the church, and the regard to him a gospel duty acceptable to God in Christ, 1 Timothy 5:17. Honour and reverence is due only to eminency in some kind or other. This is given to pastors by their employment; proved by their titles. They are called "angels," Revelation 1:20; Hebrews 12:22;—"bishops," or overseers, Ezekiel 3:17; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:7;—"ambassadors," 2 Corinthians 5:20;—"stewards," 1 Corinthians 4:1;—"men of God," 1 Samuel 2:27; 1 Timothy 6:11;—"rulers," Hebrews 13:7; Hebrews 13:17;—"lights," Matthew 5:14;—"salt," Matthew 5:13;—"fathers," 1 Corinthians 4:15. And by many more such-like terms are they described. If under these notions they honour God as they ought, God will also honour them as he hath promised; and his people are in conscience to esteem them highly for their work's sake. But if any of them be fallen angels, thrown-down stars, negligent bishops, treacherous ambassadors, lordly revelling stewards, tyrannical or foolish rulers, blind guides, unsavoury salt, insatiate dogs, the Lord and his people shall abhor them and cut them off in a month, Zechariah 11:8.

RULE V. Maintenance for them and their families, by the administration of earthly things suitable to the state and condition of the churches, is required from their flocks.

1 Timothy 5:17-18, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward."

Galatians 6:6-7, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

1 Corinthians 9:7; 1 Corinthians 9:9-11; 1 Corinthians 9:13-14, "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? It is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." Matthew 10:9-10, "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat."

Add to these and the like places the analogy of the primitive allowance in the church of the Jews.

EXPLICATION V. It is a promise to the church under the gospel, that "kings should be her nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers," Isaiah 49:23. To such it belongs principally to provide food and protection for those committed to them. The fruit of this promise the churches in many ages have enjoyed; laws by supreme and kingly power have been enacted, giving portions and granting privileges to churches and their pastors. It is so in many places in the days wherein we live. On this ground, where equitable and righteous laws have allowed a supportment in earthly things to the pastors of churches, arising from such as may receive spiritual benefit by their labour in the gospel, it is thankfully to be accepted and embraced, as an issue of God's providence for the good of his. Besides, our Saviour warranteth his disciples to take and eat of their things, by their consent, to whomsoever the word is preached, Luke 10:8. But it is not always thus; these things may sometimes fail: wherefore, the continual care, and frequently the burden, or rather labour of love, in providing for the pastors, lies, as in the rule, upon the churches themselves; which they are to do in such a manner as is suitable to the condition wherein they are, and the increase given them of God. This the whole in general, and each member in particular, is obliged unto; for which they have as motives,—

1. God's appointment, as in the texts cited.
2. The necessity of it. How shall he go on warfare if he be troubled about the necessities of this life? They are to give themselves wholly to the work of the ministry, 1 Timothy 4:15.

Other works had need to be done for them.

3. The equity of the duty. Our Saviour and the apostles plead it out from grounds of equity and justice, and all kinds of laws and rules of righteousness, among all sorts of men, Matthew 10:9-10, 1 Corinthians 9:10; allowing proportionable rectitude in the way of recompense to it with the wages of the labourer, which to detain is a crying sin, James 5:4-5,—the wretched endeavours of men of corrupt minds to rob and spoil them of all that, by the providence of God, on any other account, they are righteously possessed of.

RULE VI. Adhering to him and abiding by him in all trials and persecutions for the word.

2 Timothy 4:16, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge."

2 Timothy 1:16-18, "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well."

EXPLICATION VI. A common cause should be carried on by common assistance. That which concerneth all should be supported by all. When persecution ariseth for the word's sake, generally it begins with the leaders, 1 Peter 4:17-18. The common way to scatter the sheep is by smiting the shepherds, Zechariah 13:7-8. It is for the church's sake he is reviled and persecuted, 2 Timothy 2:10, Colossians 1:24; and, therefore, it is the church's duty to share with him and help to bear his burden. All the fault in scattering congregations hath not been in ministers; the people stood not by them in their trial. The Lord lay it not to their charge! The captain is betrayed, and forced to mean conditions with his enemy, who going on, with the assurance of being followed by his soldiers, looking back in the entrance of danger, he finds them all run away. In England, usually, no sooner had persecution laid hold of a minister, but the people willingly received another, perhaps a wolf, instead of a shepherd. Should a wife forsake her husband because he is come into trouble for her sake? When a known duty in such a relation is incumbent upon a man, is the crime of a backslider in spiritual things less? Whilst a pastor lives, if he suffer for the truth, the church cannot desert him, nor cease the performance of all required duties, without horrid contempt of the ordinances of Jesus Christ. This is a burden that is commonly laid on the shoulders of ministers, that for no cause whatsoever they must remove from their charge, when those that lay it on will oftentimes freely leave them and their ministry without any cause at all.

RULE VII. Gathering together in the assembly upon his appointment, with theirs joined with him.

Acts 14:27, "When they were come, and had gathered the church together."

These are some of the heads wherein the church's duty consisteth towards him or them that are set over it in the Lord, by all means giving them encouragement to the work; saying also unto them, "Take heed to the ministry ye have received in the Lord, that ye fulfil it," Colossians 4:17. For what concerneth other officers may easily be deduced hence by analogy and proportion.

Rules to be observed by those who walk in fellowship, and considered, to stir up their remembrance in things of mutual duty one towards another, which consisteth in,—

RULE I. Affectionate, sincere love in all things, without dissimulation towards one another, like that which Christ bare to his church.

John 15:12, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."

John 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have

love one to another."

Romans 13:8, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."

Ephesians 5:2, "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us."

1 Thessalonians 3:12, "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another."

1 Thessalonians 4:9, "Yourselves are taught of God to love one another."

1 Peter 1:22, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

1 John 4:21, "This commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

Romans 12:10, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love."

EXPLICATION I. Love is the fountain of all duties towards God and man, Matthew 22:37, the substance of all rules that concerneth the saints, the bond of communion, "the fulfilling of the law," Romans 13:8-10, the advancement of the honour of the Lord Jesus, and the glory of the gospel. The primitive Christians had a proverbial speech, received, as they said, from Christ, "Never rejoice but when thou seest thy brother in love;" and it was common among the heathens concerning them, "See how they love one another!" from their readiness for the accomplishment of that royal precept of laying down their lives for their brethren. It is the fountain, rule, scope, aim, and fruit of gospel communion. And of no one thing of present performance is the doctrine of the Lord Jesus more eximious and eminent above all other directions than in this of mutual, intense, affectionate love amongst his followers; for which he gives them innumerable precepts, exhortations, and motives, but, above all, his own heavenly example. To treat of love, in its causes, nature, subject, fruits, effects, tendency, eminency, and exaltation, or but to repeat the places of Scripture wherein these things are mentioned, would not suit with our present intention; only, it may be plainly affirmed, that if there were no cause besides of reformation and walking in fellowship but this one,—that thereby the power and practice of this grace, shamefully, to the dishonour of Christ and his gospel, lost amongst those who call themselves Christians, might be recovered,—it were abundantly enough to give encouragement for the undertaking of it, notwithstanding any oppositions. Now, this love is a spiritual grace, wrought by the Holy Ghost, Galatians 5:22, in the hearts of believers, 1 Peter 1:22, whereby their souls are carried out, 1 Thessalonians 2:8, to seek the good of the children of God as such, Philem. 5, Ephesians 1:15, Hebrews 13:1, uniting the heart unto the object so beloved, attended with joy, delight, and complacency in their good. The motives unto love, and the grounds of its enforcement from,—

1. The command of God, and nature of the whole law, whereof love is the accomplishment, Leviticus 19:34; Matthew 19:19; Romans 13:9-10 :

2. The eternal, peculiar, distinguishing, faithful love of God towards believers, and the end aimed at therein by him, Ezekiel 16:8; Deuteronomy 7:8; Deuteronomy 33:3; Zephaniah 3:17; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 1:4 :

3. The intense, inexpressible love of Jesus Christ, in his whole humiliation and laying down his life for us, expressly proposed as an example unto us, Song of Solomon 3:10; John 15:13; Ephesians 5:2 :

4. The eminent renewed of the old command of love, with such new enforcements that it is called "A new commandment," and is peculiarly the law of Christ, John 13:34; John 15:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 2 John 1:5 :

5. The state and condition of the persons between whom this duty is naturally to be exercised, as,—(1.) Children of one Father, Malachi 2:10; (2.) Members of one body, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; (3.) Partakers of the same hope, Ephesians 4:4; (4.) Objects of the same hate of the world, 1 John 3:13 :

6. The eminency of this grace,—(1.) In itself, and divine nature, Colossians 2:2; 1 John 4:7; 1 Corinthians 13; (2.) In its usefulness, Proverbs 10:12; Proverbs 15:17; Galatians 5:13; Hebrews 13:1; (3.) In its acceptance with the saints, Ephesians 1:15-16; Psalms 5:11; 1 Corinthians 13 :

7. The impossibility of performing any other duty without it, Galatians 5:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 John 4:20 :

8. The great sin of want of love, with all its aggravations, Matthew 24:12; 1 John 3:14-15, and the like;—are so many, and of such various consideration, as not now to be insisted on.

Love, which is the bond of communion, maketh out itself and is peculiarly exercised in these things following:—

RULE II. Continual prayer for the prosperous state of the church, in God's protection towards it.

Psalms 122:6, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee."

Phil: 1:4, 5, "Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now."

Romans 1:9, "Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers."

Acts 12:5, "Peter was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him."

Isaiah 62:6-7, "Ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

Ephesians 6:18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

Colossians 4:12, "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

EXPLICATION II. Prayer, as it is the great engine whereby to prevail with the Almighty, Isaiah 45:11, so it is the sure refuge of the saints at all times, both in their own behalf, Psalms 61:2, and also of others, Acts 12:5. It is a benefit which the poorest believer may bestow, and the greatest potentate hath no power to refuse. This is the beaten way of the soul's communion with God, for

which the saints have many gracious promises of assistance, Zechariah 12:10, Romans 8:26; innumerable precepts for performance, Matthew 7:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 Timothy 2:8; with encouragements thereunto, James 1:5, Luke 11:9; with precious promises of acceptance, Matthew 21:22, John 16:24, Psalms 50:15;—by all which, and divers other ways, the Lord hath abundantly testified his delight in this sacrifice of his people. Now, as the saints are bound to pray for all men, of what sort soever, 1 Timothy 2:1-2, unless they are such as sin unto death, 1 John 5:16, yea, for their persecutors, Matthew 5:44, and them that hold them in bondage, Jeremiah 29:7, so most especially for all saints, Php 1:4, and peculiarly for those with whom they are in fellowship, Colossians 4:12. The Lord having promised that "upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies" there shall be "a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night," Isaiah 4:5, it is every one's duty to pray for its accomplishment. He is not worthy of the privileges of the church who continues not in prayer for a defence upon that glory. Prayer, then, for the good, prosperity, flourishing, peace, increase, edification, and protection of the church is a duty every day required of all the members thereof.

1. Estimation of the ordinances; 2. Concernment for God's glory; 3. The honour of Jesus Christ; 4. Our own benefit and spiritual interest; with, 5. The expressness of the command, are sufficient motives hereunto.

RULE III. Earnest striving and contending, in all lawful ways, by doing and suffering, for the purity of the ordinances, honour, liberty, and privileges of the congregation, being jointly assistant against opposers and common adversaries.

Jude 1:3, "And exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

Hebrews 12:3-4, "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

1 John 3:16, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Galatians 5:1; Galatians 5:13, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty."

1 Corinthians 7:23, "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men."

Song of Solomon 6:4, "Thou art beautiful, O my love;.... terrible as an army with banners."

1 Peter 3:15, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

EXPLICATION III. The former rule concerned our dealing with God in the behalf of the church; this, our dealing with men. To the right performance hereof many things are required; as,—

1. Diligent labouring in the word, with fervent prayer, to acquaint ourselves with the mind and will of God concerning the way of worship which we profess, and the rules of walking which we desire to practise, that so we may be able to give an account to humble inquirers, and stop the mouths of

stubborn opposers. According to our knowledge, such will be our valuation of the ordinances we enjoy. A man will not contend unless he know his title.

2. An estimation of all the aspersions cast on and injuries done to the church to be Christ's, and also our own,—Christ wounded through the sides of his servants, and his ways. And if we are of his, though the blow light not immediately on us, we are not without pain; all such reproaches and rebukes fall on us.

3. Just vindication of the church against calumnies and false imputations. Who can endure to hear his parents in the flesh falsely traduced? and shall we be senseless of her reproaches who bean us unto Christ?

4. Joint refusal of subjection, with all gospel opposition, to any persons or things which, contrary to or beside the word, under what name soever, do labour for power over the church, to the abridging of it of any of those liberties and privileges which it claimeth as part of the purchase of Christ. To them that would intral us we are not to give place, no not for an hour.

RULE IV. Sedulous care and endeavouring for the preservation of unity, both in particular and in general.

Php 2:1-3, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil 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 or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

Ephesians 4:3-4, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit," etc.

1 Corinthians 1:10, "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."

2 Corinthians 13:11, "Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

Romans 14:19, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."

Romans 15:5, "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another," etc.

1 Corinthians 6:5-7, "Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? but brother goeth to law with brother. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you."

Acts 4:32, "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul."

EXPLICATION IV. Union is the main aim and most proper fruit of love; neither is there any thing or duty of the saints in the gospel pressed with more earnestness and vehemency of exhortation than this. Now, unity is threefold: First, Purely spiritual, by the participation of the same Spirit of grace;

communication in the same Christ,—one head to all. This we have with all the saints in the world, in what condition soever they be; yea, with those that are departed, sitting down in the kingdom of heaven with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Secondly, Ecclesiastical, or church communion in the participation of ordinances, according to the order of the gospel. This is a fruit and branch of the former; opposed to schism, divisions, rents, evil-surmisings, self-practices, causeless differences in judgment in spiritual things concerning the kingdom of Christ, with whatsoever else goeth off from closeness of affection, oneness of mind, consent in judgment to the form of wholesome words, conformity of practice to the rule. And this is that which in the churches, and among them, is so earnestly pressed, commanded, desired, as the glory of Christ, the honour of the gospel, the joy and crown of the saints. Thirdly, Civil unity, or an agreement in things of this life, not contending with [for?] them nor about them, every one seeking the welfare of each other. Striving is unseemly for brethren. Why should they contend about the world who shall jointly judge the world?

Motives to the preservation of both these are,—

1. The remarkable earnestness of Christ and his apostles in their prayers for, and precepts of this duty.
2. The certain dishonour of the Lord Jesus, scandal to the gospel, ruin to the churches, shame and sorrow to the saints, that the neglect of it is accompanied withal, Galatians 5:15.
3. The gracious issues and sweet heavenly consolation which attendeth a right observance of them.
- 4 The many fearful aggravations wherewith the sin of rending the body of Christ is attended.
5. The sad contempt and profanation of ordinances which want of this hath brought upon many churches. For a right performance of this duty, we must,—

1. Labour, by prayer and faith, to have our hearts and spirits throughly seasoned with that affectionate love which our first rule requireth.
2. Carefully observe, in ourselves or others, the first beginnings of strife; which are as the letting out of water, and, if not prevented, will make a breach like the sea.
3. Sedulously apply ourselves to the removal of the first appearance of divisions; and in case of not prevailing, to consult the church.
4. Daily to strike at the root of all dissension, by labouring for universal conformity to Jesus Christ.

RULE V. Separation and sequestration from the world and men of the world, with all ways of false worship, until we be apparently a people dwelling alone, not reckoned among the nations.

Numb. 23:9, "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations."

John 15:19, "Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

2 Corinthians 6:14-18, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and

what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Ephesians 5:8; Ephesians 5:11, "Walk as children of light. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

2 Timothy 3:5, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away."

Hosea 4:15, "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven."

Revelation 18:4, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

Proverbs 14:7, "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge."

EXPLICATION V. Separation generally hears ill in the world, and yet there is a separation suitable to the mind of God. He that will not separate from the world and false worship is a separate from Christ

Now, the separation here commanded from any persons is not in respect of natural affections, nor spiritual care for the good of their souls, Romans 9:3; nor yet in respect of duties of relation, 1 Corinthians 7:13; nor yet in offices of love and civil converse, 1 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:12; much less in not seeking their good and prosperity, 1 Timothy 2:1-2, or not communicating good things unto them, Galatians 6:10, or not living profitably and peaceably with them, Romans 12:18 : but in,—1. Manner of walking and conversation, Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:17-19; Ephesians 2. Delightful converse and familiarity where enmity and opposition appear, Ephesians 5:3-4; Ephesians 5:6-8; Ephesians 5:10-11; Ephesians 3. In ways of worship and ordinances of fellowship, Revelation 18:4, not running out into the same compass of excess and riot with them in any thing: for these three, and the like commands and discoveries of the will of God, are most express, as in the places annexed to the rule; necessity abundantly urgent, spiritual profit, and edification, no less requiring it. Causeless separation from established churches, walking according to the order of the gospel (though perhaps failing in the practice of some things of small concernment), is no small sin; but separation from the sinful practices, and disorderly walkings, and false unwarranted ways of worship in any, is to fulfil the precept of not partaking in other men's sins. To delight in the company, fellowship, society, and converse of unsavoury, disorderly persons, proclaims a spirit not endeared to Christ.

Let motives hereunto be,—

1. God's command.
2. Our own preservation from sin and protection from punishment, that with others we be not infected and plagued.

3. Christ's delight in the purify of his ordinances.

4. His distinguishing love to his saints; provided that, in the practice of this rule, abundance of meekness, patience, gentleness, wisdom, and tenderness be exercised. Let no offence be given justly to any.

RULE VI. Frequent spiritual communication for edification, according to gifts received.

Malachi 3:16, "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another; and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name."

Job 2:11, "Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him."

Ephesians 4:29, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

Colossians 4:6, "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

Ephesians 5:4, "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks."

1 Thessalonians 5:11, "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."

Hebrews 3:13, "Exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Jude 1:20, "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost."

Hebrews 10:24-25, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Acts 18:26, "Whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

1 Corinthians 12:7, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

EXPLICATION VI. That men not solemnly called and set apart to the office of public teaching may yet be endued with useful gifts for edification was before declared. The not using of such gifts, in an orderly way, according to the rule and custom of the churches, is to napkin up the talent given to trade and profit withal. That every man ought to labour that he may walk and dwell in knowledge in his family, none doubts. That we should also labour to do so in the church or family of God is no less apparent. This the Scriptures annexed to the rule declare; which in an especial manner hold out prayer, exhortation, instruction from the word, and consolation. Now, the performance of this duty of mutual edification is incumbent on the saints,—

1. Ordinarily, Ephesians 4:29; Ephesians 5:3-4; Hebrews 3:13. Believers, in their ordinary daily converse, ought to be continually making mention of the Lord, with savoury discourses tending to edification, and not waste their opportunities with foolish, light, frothy speeches that are not convenient.

2. Occasionally, Luke 24:14; Malachi 3:16. If any thing of weight and concernment to the church be brought forth by Providence, a spiritual improvement of it, by a due consideration amongst believers, is required.

3. By assembling of more together, by appointment, for prayer and instruction from the word, Acts 10:24; Acts 12:12; Job 2:11; Ephesians 5:19; James 5:16; Jude 1:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; this being a special ordinance and appointment of God, for the increasing of knowledge, love, charity, experience, and the improving of gifts received, every one contributing to the building of the tabernacle. Let then, all vain communication be far away. The time is short, and the days are evil. Let it suffice us that we have neglected so many precious opportunities of growing in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and doing good to one another; let the remainder of our few and evil days be spent in living to him who died for us. Be not conformed to this world, nor the men thereof.

RULE VII. Mutually to bear with each other's infirmities, weakness, tenderness, failings, in meekness, patience, pity, and with assistance.

Ephesians 4:32, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Matthew 18:21-22, "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

Mark 11:25-26, "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."

Romans 14:13, "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." See verses 3, 4.

Romans 15:1-2, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification."

1 Corinthians 13:4-7, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity is not rash, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Galatians 6:1, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Colossians 3:12-14, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving

one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfection."

EXPLICATION VII. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing," Proverbs 25:2. Free pardon is the substance of the gospel, the work of God in perfection, Isaiah 55; proposed to us for imitation, Matthew 18:23-35. Whilst we are clothed with flesh we do all things imperfectly. Freedom from failings is a fruit of glory. We see here darkly, as in a glass,—know but in part. In many things we offend all; who knoweth how often? Mutual failings to be borne with, offences to be pardoned, weakness to be supported, may mind us in these pence of the talents forgiven us. Let him that is without fault throw stones at others. Some men rejoice in others' failings; they are malicious, and fail more in that sinful joy than their brethren in that which they rejoice at. Some are angry at weaknesses and infirmities; they are proud and conceited, not considering that they themselves also are in the flesh. Some delight to dwell always upon a frailty; they deserve to find no charity in the like kind. For injuries, who almost can bear until seven times? Peter thought it much. Some more study revenge than pardon. Some pretend to forgive, but yet every slight offence makes a continued alienation of the affections and separation of converse. Some will carry a smooth face over a rough heart Christ is in none of these ways. They have no savour of the gospel. Meekness, patience, forbearance, and forgiveness, hiding, covering, removing of offences, are the footsteps of Christ. Seest thou thy brother fail? pity him. Doth he continue in it? earnestly pray for him, admonish him. Cannot another sin but you must sin too? If you be angry, vexed, rejoiced, alienated from, you are partner with him in evil, instead of helping him. Suppose thy God should be angry every time thou givest cause, and strike every time thou provokest him. When thy brother offendeth thee, do but stay thy heart until thou takest a faithful view of the patience and forbearance of God towards thee, and then consider his command to thee to go and do likewise. Let, then, all tenderness of affection and bowels of compassion towards one another be put on amongst us, as becometh saints. Let pity, not envy; mercy, not malice; patience, not passion; Christ, not flesh; grace, not nature; pardon, not spite or revenge,—be our guides and companions in our conversations.

Motives hereunto are,—

1. God's infinite mercy, patience, forbearance, long-suffering, and free grace towards us, sparing, pardoning, pitying, bearing with us, in innumerable daily, hourly failings and provocations; especially all this being proposed for our imitation in our measure, Matthew 18:23-35.
2. The goodness, unwearied and unchangeable love of the Lord Jesus Christ putting in every day for us, not ceasing to plead in our behalf, notwithstanding our continual backsliding, 1 John 2:1-2.
3. The experience which our own hearts have of the need wherein we stand of others' patience, forbearance, and pardon, Ecclesiastes 7:20-22.
4. The strictness of the command, with the threatening attending its non-performance.
5. The great glory of the gospel, which is in the walking of the brethren with a right foot as to this rule.

RULE VIII. Tender and affectionate participation with one another in their several states and conditions,—bearing each other's burdens.

Galatians 6:2, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

Hebrews 13:3, "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."

1 Corinthians 12:25-26, "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

2 Corinthians 11:29, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"

James 1:27, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," etc.

Matthew 25:35-36; Matthew 25:40, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

2 Timothy 1:16-17, "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me."

Acts 20:35, "I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak," etc.

EXPLICATION VIII. The former rule concerned the carriage and frame of spirit towards our brethren in their failings; this is in their miseries and afflictions. In this, also, conformity to Christ is required, who in all the afflictions of his people is afflicted, Isaiah 63:9, and persecuted in their distresses, Acts 9:4. Could we bring up our spiritual union to hold any proportion with the mutual union of many members in one body, to which it is frequently compared, this duty would be excellently performed. No man ever yet hated his own flesh. If one member be in pain, the rest have little comfort or ease. It is a rotten member which is not affected with the anguish of its companions. They are marked particularly for destruction who, in the midst of plentiful enjoyments, forget the miseries of their brethren, Amos 6:6. If we will not feel the weight of our brethren's afflictions, burdens, and sorrow, it is a righteous thing that our own should be doubled. The desolations of the church make Nehemiah grow pale in the court of a great king, Nehemiah 2:1-3. They who are not concerned in the troubles, sorrows, visitations, wants, poverties, persecutions of the saints, not so far as to pity their wounding, to feel their strokes, to refresh their spirits, help bear their burdens upon their own shoulders, can never assure themselves that they are united to the Head of those saints. Now, to a right performance of this duty, and in the discharge of it, are required,—

1. A due valuation, strong desire, and high esteem of the church's prosperity, in every member of it, Psalms 122:6.

2. Bowels of compassion as a fruit of love; to be sensible of, and intimately moved for, the several burdens of the saints, Colossians 3:12.

3. Courage and boldness to own them without shame in all conditions, 2 Timothy 1:16-17.
4. Personal visitations in sicknesses, troubles, and restraints, to advise, comfort, and refresh them, Matthew 25:36.
5. Suitable supportment, by administration of spiritual or temporal assistances, to the condition wherein they are. The motives are the same as to the former rule.

RULE IX. Free contribution and communication of temporal things to them that are poor indeed, suitable to their necessities, wants, and afflictions.

1 John 3:17-18, "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

1 Corinthians 16:1-2, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him."

2 Corinthians 9:5-7, "Let your gift be ready as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness. He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." So the whole eighth and ninth chapters of this epistle.

Romans 12:13, "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality."

Galatians 6:10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come."

Hebrews 13:16, "To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Leviticus 25:35, "If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him."

Matthew 25:34-36; Matthew 25:40, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

EXPLICATION IX. The having of poor always amongst us and of us, according to our Saviour's prediction, Matthew 26:11, and the promise of God, Deuteronomy 15:11, serves for the trial of themselves and others: of their own content with Christ alone, with submission to the all-disposing sovereignty of God; of others, how freely they can part, for Christ's sake, with those things

wherewith their hand is filled. When God gave manna for food unto his people, every one had an equal share: Exodus 16:18, "He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack;" 2 Corinthians 8:15. This distribution in equality was again, for the necessity of the church, reduced into practice in the days of the apostles, Acts 4:35. Of the total sum of the possessions of believers, distribution was made to every man according to his need. That every man, by the ordinance and appointment of God, hath a peculiar right to the use and disposal of the earthly things wherewith he his in particular intrusted, is unquestionable. The very precepts for free distribution and communication are enough to prove it. But that these things are altogether given to men for themselves and their own use is denied; friends are to be made of mammon. Christ needs in some what he bestows on others. If he hath given thee thine own and thy brother's portion also to keep, wilt thou be false to thy trust, and defraud thy brother? Christ being rich, became poor for our sakes; if he make us rich, it is that we may feed the poor for his sake. Neither doth this duty lie only (though chiefly) on those who are greatly increased; those who have nothing but their labour should spare out of that for those who cannot work, Ephesians 4:28. The two mites are required as well as accepted. Now, the relief of the poor brethren in the church hath a twofold rule:—

First, Their necessity; Secondly, Others' abilities.

Unto these two must assistance be proportioned, provided that those which are poor walk suitably to their condition, 2 Thessalonians 3:10-11. And as we ought to relieve men in their poverty, so we ought by all lawful means to prevent their being poor. To keep a man from falling is an equal mercy to the helping of him up when he is down.

Motives to this duty are:—

1. The love of God unto us, 1 John 3:16.
2. The glory of the gospel, exceedingly exalted thereby, Titus 3:8; Titus 3:14; Matthew 5:7.
3. The union whereinto we are brought in Christ, with the common inheritance promised to us all.
4. The testimony of the Lord Jesus, witnessing what is done in this kind to be done unto himself, Matthew 25:35-36; Matthew 25:40.
5. The promise annexed to it, Ecclesiastes 11:1; Proverbs 19:17; Deuteronomy 15:10; Matthew 10:42. The way whereby it is to be done is by appointing some, Acts 6:1-6, to take what is voluntarily contributed by the brethren, according as God hath blessed them, on the first day of the week, 1 Corinthians 16:2, and to distribute to the necessity of the saints, according to the advice of the church; besides private distributions, wherein we ought to abound, Matthew 6:3; Hebrews 13:16.

RULE X. To mark diligently and avoid carefully all causes and causers of divisions; especially to shun seducers, false teachers, and broachers of heresies and errors, contrary to the form of wholesome words.

Romans 16:17-18, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the

hearts of the simple."

Matthew 24:4-5; Matthew 24:23-25, "Jesus said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before."

1 Timothy 6:3-5, "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself"

2 Timothy 2:16-17, "Shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker."

Titus 3:9-11, "Avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself."

1 John 2:18-19, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

1 John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world,"

2 John 1:10-11, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed: for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

Acts 20:29-31, "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch."

Revelation 2:14-16, "I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."

EXPLICATION X. The former part of this rule was something spoken to, Rule iv. If the preservation of unity ought to be our aim, then certainly the causes and causers of division ought to be avoided. "From such turn away." There is a generation of men whose tongues seem to be acted by the devil; James calls it, "Set on fire of hell," chap. 3:6. As though they were the mere offspring of serpents, they delight in nothing but in the fire of contention; disputing, quarrelling, backbiting, endless strivings, are that they live upon. "Note such men, and avoid them." Generally they are

men of private interests, fleshly ends, high conceits, and proud spirits. "From such turn away." For the latter part of the rule in particular, concerning seducers, that a judgment of discerning by the Spirit rests in the church and the several members thereof is apparent, 1 John 2:27; 1 Corinthians 2:15; Isaiah 8:20. To the exercise of this duty they are commanded, 1 John 4:1; 1 Corinthians 14:29 : so it is commended, Acts 17:11; and hereunto are they encouraged, Php 1:9-10; Hebrews 5:14. "If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch." That gold may be suspected which would not be tried. Christians must choose the good, and refuse the evil. If their teachers could excuse them if they lead them aside, they might well require blind submission from them. Now, that the brethren may exercise this duty aright, and perform obedience to this rule, it is required,—

1. That they get their senses exercised in the word, "to discern good and evil," Hebrews 5:14; especially, that they get from the Scripture a "form of sound words," 2 Timothy 1:13, of the main truths of the gospel and fundamental articles of religion; so that, upon the first apprehension of the contrary, they may turn away from him that brings it, and not bid him "God-speed," 2 John 1:10.

2. That they attend and hearken to nothing but what comes to them in the way of God. Some men, yea, very many in our days, have such itching ears after novelty, that they run greedily after every one that lies in wait to deceive with cunning enticing words, to make out some new pretended revelations; and this from a pretended liberty, yea, duty of trying all things, little considering that God will have his own work done only in his own way. How they come it matters not, so they may be heard. Most of the seducers and false prophets of our days are men apparently out of God's way, leaving their own callings to wander without a call, ordinary or extraordinary,—without providence or promise. For a man to put himself voluntarily, uncalled, upon the hearing of them, is to tempt God; with whom it is just and righteous to deliver them up to the efficacy of error, that they may believe the lies they hear. Attend only, then, to, and try only that which comes in the way of, God. To others bid not God-speed

3. To be always ready furnished with and to bear in mind the characters which the Holy Ghost hath given us in the word of seducers, which are indeed the very same, whereby poor unstable souls are seduced by them; as,—First, That they should come in "sheep's clothing," Matthew 7:15,—goodly pretences of innocency and holiness. Secondly, With "good words and fair speeches," Romans 16:17-18, smooth as butter and oil. Thirdly, Answering men's lusts in their doctrine, 2 Timothy 4:3,—bringing doctrines suitable to some beloved lusts of men, especially a broad and easy way of salvation. Fourthly, Pretences of glorious discoveries and revelations, Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:2.

4. Utterly reject and separate from such as have had means of conviction and admonition, Titus 3:10.

5. Not to receive any without testimony from some of the brethren of known integrity in the churches. Such is the misery of our days, that men will run to hear those that they know not from whence they come, nor what they are. The laudable practice of the first churches, to give testimonials to them that were to pass from one place to another, 1 Corinthians 16:3, and not to receive any without them, Acts 9:26, is quite laid aside.

6. To walk orderly, not attending to the doctrine of any not known to and approved by the churches.

7. To remove far away all delight in novelties, disputes, janglings, contentions about words not tending to godliness; which usually are beginnings of fearful apostasies, Titus 3:9; 2 Timothy 4:3; 1 Timothy 2:3-5.

RULE XI. Cheerfully to undergo the lot and portion of the whole church, in prosperity and affliction, and not to draw back upon any occasion whatever.

Matthew 13:20-21, "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."

Hebrews 10:23-25; Hebrews 10:32-39, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

2 Timothy 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:16, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.... At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge."

EXPLICATION XI. Backsliding from the practice of any way of Christ or use of any ordinances, taken up upon conviction of his institution, is in no small degree an apostasy from Christ himself.

Apostasy, in what degree soever, is attended with all that aggravation which a renunciation of a tasted sweetness and goodness from God for transitory things can lay upon it. Seldom it is that backsliders are without pretences. Commonly of what they forsake, in respect of what they pretend to retain, they say, as Lot of Zoar, "Is it not a little one?" But yet we see, without exception, that such things universally tend to more ungodliness. Every unrecovered step backward from any way of Christ maketh a discovery of falseness in the heart, whatever former pretences have been.

They who, from motives of any sort, for things that are seen, which are but temporal, will seek for, or embrace, being presented, colours or pretences for declining from any gospel duty, will not want them for the residue, if they should be tempted thereunto. The beginnings of great evils are to be resisted. That the neglect of the duty whereof we treat,—which is always accompanied with contempt of the communion of saints,—hath been a main cause of the great dishonour and confusion whereinto most churches in the world are fallen, was in part touched before; it being a righteous thing with God to suffer the sons of men to wax vain in their imaginations, in whom neither the love of Christ nor terror of the Lord can prevail against the fear of men.

Let this, then, with the danger and abomination of backsliding, make such an impression on the hearts of the saints, that with full "purpose of heart they might cleave unto the Lord," and "follow hard after him," in all his ordinances; so that if persecution arise, they may cheerfully "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth;" and, by their close adhering one to another, receive such mutual assistance and supportment, as that their joint prayers may prevail with the goodness of God, and their joint sufferings overcome the wickedness of men.

Now, to a close adhering to the church wherein we walk in fellowship, in all conditions whatsoever, without dismission attained upon just and equitable grounds, for the embracing of communion in some other churches. Motives are,—

1. The eminency and excellency of the ordinances enjoyed.
2. The danger of backsliding, and evidence of unsoundness in every degree thereof.
3. The scandal, confusion, and disorder of the churches, by neglect thereof.

RULE XII. In church affairs to make no difference of persons, but to condescend to the meanest persons and services for the use of the brethren.

James 2:1-6, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor," etc.

Matthew 20:26-27, "It shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

Romans 12:16, "Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits."

John 13:12-16, "So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him."

EXPLICATION XII. Where the Lord hath not distinguished, neither ought we. In Jesus Christ there is neither rich nor poor, high nor low, but a new creature. Generally, "God hath chosen the poor of this world to confound the mighty."

Experience shows us that not many great, not many wise, not many mighty after the flesh, are partakers of the heavenly calling;—not that the gospel of Christ doth any way oppose or take away those many differences and distinctions among the sons of men, caused by power, authority,

relation, enjoyment of earthly blessings, gifts, age, or any other eminency whatsoever, according to the institution and appointment of God, with all that respect, reverence, duty, obedience, and subjection due unto persons in those distinctions, much less pull up the ancient bounds of propriety and interest in earthly things; but only declares, that in things purely spiritual, these outward things, which for the most part happen alike unto all, are of no value or esteem. Men in the church are considered as saints, and not as great or rich. All are equal, all are naked, before God.

Free grace is the only distinguisher,—all being brethren in the same family, servants of the same Master, employed about the same work, acted by the same precious faith, enjoying the same purchased privileges, expecting the same recompense of reward and eternal abode. Whence should any difference arise? Let, then, the greatest account it their greatest honour to perform the meanest necessary service to the meanest of the saints. A community in all spiritual advantages should give equality in spiritual affairs. Not he that is richest, not he that is poorest, but he that is humblest, is accepted before the Lord.

Motives hereunto are,—1. Christ's example; 2. Scripture precepts; 3. God's not accepting persons; 4. Joint participation of the same common faith, hope, etc.; 5. The unprofitableness of all causes of outward differences in the things of God.

RULE XIII. If any be in distress, persecution, or affliction, the whole church is to be humbled, and to be earnest in prayer in their behalf.

Acts 12:5; Acts 12:7; Acts 12:12, "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying."

Romans 12:15, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

1 Corinthians 12:26-27, "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2, "Brethren, pray for us, that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men."

EXPLICATION XIII. This duty being in general made out from, and included in, other former rules, we shall need to speak the less unto it, especially seeing that, upon consideration and supposition of our fellow-membership, it is no more than very nature requireth and calleth for. God delighteth as in the thankful praises, so in the fervent prayers of his churches; therefore, he variously calleth them, by several dispensations, to the performance of these duties. Now, this oftentimes, to spare the whole church, he doth by the afflictions of some one or other of the members thereof; knowing that that near relation which, by his institution and Spirit, is between them will make their distress common and their prayers closely combined. Spiritual union is more noble and excellent than natural; and yet in this it were monstrous that either any member in particular, or the whole in

general, should not both suffer with and care for the distress of every part and member. That member is rotten and to be cut off, for fear of infecting the body, which feels not the pains of its associates. If, then, any members of the church do lie under the immediate afflicting hand of God or the persecuting rage of man, it is the duty of every fellow-member, and of the church in general, to be sensible of it, and account themselves so sharers therein as to be instant with God by earnest supplication, and helpful to them by suitable assistance, that their spiritual concernment in that affliction may be apparent; and that because,—First, The will of God is thereby fulfilled. Secondly, The glory of the gospel is thereby exalted. Thirdly, Preservation and deliverance to the whole church procured. Fourthly, Conformity with Christ's sufferings in his saints attained. Fifthly, An inestimable benefit of church-fellowship enjoyed, etc.

RULE XIV. Vigilant watchfulness over each other's conversation, attended with mutual admonition in case of disorderly walking, with rendering an account to the church if the party offending be not prevailed with.

Matthew 18:15-17, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church."

1 Thessalonians 5:14, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly."

Hebrews 3:12-13, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Hebrews 10:24-25, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Hebrews 12:13; Hebrews 12:15-16, "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright."

Leviticus 19:17, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him."

2 Thessalonians 3:15, "Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

Romans 15:14, "I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another."

James 5:19-20, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

Proverbs 29:1, "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

EXPLICATION XIV. There is a threefold duty included in this rule, the main whereof, and here chiefly intended, is that of admonition; whereunto the first is previous and conducing; the latter in some cases consequent, and attending Christians' conversation. Whether you consider the glory of God and the gospel therein concerned, or the bonds of relation, with those mutual endearments wherein they stand engaged, and obligations that are upon them for the general good and spiritual edification one of another, this duty is of eminent necessity and usefulness. Not that we should curiously pry into one another's failings, much less maliciously search into doubtful unknown things, for the trouble or disparagement of our brethren, both which are contrary to that love which "thinketh no evil," but "hideth a multitude of sins;" but only, out of a sense of the glory of God, the honour of the gospel, and care of each other's souls, we are to observe their walking, that what is exemplary therein may be followed, what faileth may be directed, what is amiss may be reproved, that in all things God may be glorified and Christ exalted.

Now, admonition is twofold:—1. Authoritative, by the way of power; 2. Fraternal, by the way of love. The first, again, is twofold:—(1.) Doctrinal, by the way of teaching; (2.) Disciplinary, which belongeth to the whole church. Of these we do not treat. The latter, also, is twofold:—hortatory, to encourage unto good; and monitory, to reprove that which is amiss. It is this last which is peculiarly aimed at and intended in the rule. This, then, we assert as the duty of every church member towards them with whom he walks in fellowship, to admonish any from the word whom he perceives not walking in any thing with a right foot, as becometh the gospel; thereby to recover his soul to the right way. That much caution and wisdom, tenderness and moderation, is required in the persons performing this duty, for want whereof it often degenerates from a peaceable remedy of evil into fuel for strife and debate, is granted. Let them, then, who are called to perform this duty diligently consider these things: 1. That in the whole action he transgress not that rule of charity which we have, 1 Corinthians 13:7, Galatians 6:2. Let him have peace at home, by an assurance of constant labouring to cast out all beams and motes from his own eye, Matt. 7:5. 3. Let him so perform it that it may evidently appear that he hath no other aim but the glory of God and the good of his brother reproved, all envy and rejoicing in evil being far away. 4. Let him be sure to draw his admonitions from the word, that the authority of God may appear therein, and without the word let him not presume to speak. 5. Let all circumstances attending time, place, persons, and the like, be duly weighed, that all provocation in the least manner may be fully avoided. 6. Let it be considered as an ordinance whereunto Christ hath an especial regard. 7. Let him carefully distinguish between personal injuries unto himself,—whose mention must have far more of forgiveness than reproof,—and other offences tending to public scandal. Lastly, Let self-examination concerning the same or the like miscarriage always accompany the brotherly admonition.

These and the like things being duly weighed, let every brother, with Christian courage, admonish from the word every one whom he judgeth to walk disorderly in any particular whatsoever, not to suffer sin upon him, being ready to receive content and satisfaction upon just defence, or promised amendment; and without this, in case of just offence, a man cannot be freed from the guilt of other men's sins. Let also the person admonished, with all Christian patience, accept of the admonition, without any more regret of spirit than he would have against him who should break the weapon wherewith he was in danger to be slain; considering,—

1. The authority of Him who hath appointed it;

2. The privilege and mercy he enjoyeth by such a spiritual prevention of such a danger or out of such an evil, which perhaps himself did not discern;

3. The dreadful judgments which are everywhere threatened to despisers of reproofs, Proverbs 29:1; and so thankfully accept just admonition from the meanest in the congregation. For the last, or repairing unto the church in case of not prevailing by private admonition, our Saviour hath so plainly laid down both the manner and end of proceeding in Matthew 18:15-17, that it needeth no explanation. Only I shall observe, that by "church" there, verse 17, cannot be understood the elders of the church alone, but rather the whole congregation; for if the offended brother should take with him two or three of the elders unto the offender, as he may, then were they the church, and the church should be told of the offence before the reproof hath been managed by two or three; which is contrary to the rule.

RULE XV. Exemplary walking in all holiness and godliness of conversation, to the glory of the gospel, edification of the church, and conviction of them which are without.

Psalms 24:3-4, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."

Matthew 5:16; Matthew 5:20, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 21:19, "When he saw a fig-tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever," etc.

2 Corinthians 7:1, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

2 Timothy 2:19, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Titus 2:11-12; Titus 2:14, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.... Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Ephesians 4:21-23, "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind." 1 Peter 3:1-2, "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fears." Hebrews 12:14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Ephesians 5:15-16, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." 2 Samuel 12:14, "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die."

EXPLICATION XV. Holiness becometh the house of the Lord for ever; without it none shall see God. Christ died to wash his church, to present it before his Father without spot or blemish; to purchase unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. It is the kingdom of God within us, and by which it appeareth unto all that we are the children of the kingdom. Let this, then, be the great discriminating character of the church from the world, that they are a holy, humble, self-denying people. Our Master is holy; his doctrine and worship are holy: let us strive that our hearts may also be holy. This is our wisdom towards them that are without, whereby they may be guided or convinced; this is the means whereby we build up one another most effectually. Examples are a sharper way of instruction than precepts. Loose walking, causing the name of God to be blasphemed, the little ones of Christ to be offended, and his enemies to rejoice, is attended with most dreadful woes. O that all who are called to a holy profession, and do enjoy holy ordinances, did shine also in holiness of conversation, that those who accuse them as evil-doers might have their mouths stopped and their hearts filled with shame, to the glory of the gospel! To this general head belongeth wise walking, in all patience, meekness, and long-suffering towards those that are without, until they evidently appear to be fighters against God, when they are to be prayed for. Hither, also, might be referred the patience of the saints in all tribulations, sufferings, and persecutions for the name of Christ.

Motives for the exercise of universal holiness, in acts internal and external, private and public, personal and of all relations, are,—

1. The utter insufficiency of the most precious ordinances for any communion with God without it.
2. The miserable issue of deceived souls, with their barren, empty, fruitless faith.
3. The glory of the gospel, when the power thereof hath an evident impression on the hearts, thoughts, words, actions, and lives of professors.
4. Scandal of the gospel, the advantage of its adversaries, the shame of the church, and fierce wrath of God, following the unsuitable walking of professors.
5. The sweet reward which the practice of holiness bringeth along with it even in this life, with that eternal weight of glory where unto it leadeth hereafter;—unto which the holy Son of God bring us all, through the sprinkling of his most holy blood! And these are some of those rules whose practice is required from the persons, and adorneth the profession, of those who have obtained this grace, to walk together in fellowship, according to the rule of the gospel; towards others also ought they, with several limitations, and in the full latitude towards the brethren of the congregations in communion with them, to be observed.

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