

CHRIST'S CHURCH



EDWARD DRAPES
(c. 1650)

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CHRIST'S CHURCH

1. Christ's Church Made Up of Baptized Believers

The first thing being made manifest, that all believers are to be baptized,¹ I come to the second thing I promised to discover² to you, which was the command of Christ for those that were baptized to be added to the church.

The Duty of Baptized Believers to Join Themselves to the Church

By *church*, I here understand some particular, visible church, which every believer ought to be a member of and add himself to. It is not enough to be baptized, which visibly enrichts³ him into any church, but he must be taught to observe all things commanded, whereof this is one, to join himself to some particular church or congregation. Therefore, it is said, "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Act 2:42). Mark it, they were not only baptized, but walked in the visible fellowship of the gospel. And again, it is said, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (v. 47). And again, it is said, "Some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas" (Act 17:4). They embodied themselves together and cleaved to the apostles (v. 34).

That it is the duty of saints thus to do, I shall manifest by two reasons:

1. From the nature of the saints as one in Christ

They are all one in Christ Jesus. They are Christ's sheep, the nature of whom is to flock together. They are members one of another. Now it behooves the members to be fixed in their own body. They are the soldiers of the Lord, who ought to be in continual order.

¹ Addressed in prior chapters of Edward Drapes, *Gospel-Glory Proclaimed before the Sonnes of Men, in the Visible and Invisible Worship of God*.

² **discover** – show.

³ **enrichts** – puts into or invests with a right or title.

2. From the nature of the doctrine of Christ

It appears from the nature of the doctrine of Christ, which points at unity: “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph 4:5), one body, whereof Christ is the Head. God is one, they are one, the gospel is one—all which proclaim it to be their duty to walk together as one in the church, which is Christ’s body.

But to make things appear more plainly, I shall show you what the true church of Christ is, to which every believer being baptized ought to be added.

The Definition of the Gospel Church

It is a company of people called out and separated from the world by the word of the gospel to believe in Christ, being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, walking together in mutual agreement in the visible profession of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ their Head and King.

The Visible Church Versus the Invisible Church

I am not now treating of the church of Christ as it is invisible consisting of all saints in all ages, making up one body, but of a particular, visible society or congregation of people. I have already described who belong to that church, in which description there are these things observable:

1. That Christ’s church consists of *people*.
2. That it consists of people *called or separated from the world by the gospel*.
3. They are a *company of believers*.
4. They are believers *baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*.
5. That they are united together by *consent, in the fellowship of the gospel*.

All of these I shall handle briefly.

The Church Made Up Only of People

First, that Christ’s church are only people. I mind this in a way of opposition to that carnal apprehension of ignorant souls, who esteem houses of stone or timber to be the churches of Christ, not considering that the Most High “dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Act 17:24), but in the contrite and broken heart. Though heaven and earth cannot contain Him, yet He dwells in men. This blind conceit has

begotten such superstition in their hearts that they esteem such houses to be holy, and so making an idol of them, they fall down before them. That is to say, they attribute that to them which is peculiar to the saints.

The Church a People Called Out of the World

Secondly, the church of Christ consists of people called out of the world, wherein you may observe that the very same men and women who were in the world are the subjects of Christ's kingdom. It is not something added to man, which is saved in man, but the same man is the subject of salvation who before was in the state of wrath. It is not something besides men's natural souls and bodies, which are the subjects of Christ's church, but their bodies and souls, which before were in an old state of sin and death, therefore called old men; but now, in a new state, therefore called new creatures. They are Christ's members. These, I say, are called or separated from the world. The word *church*, in the Greek, signifies "called out." The church is called out or separate from the kingdom of Satan. Therefore says Peter, "Who hath called you out of darkness" (1Pe 2:9), and again [Paul in] Colossians 1:13: He "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Saints are said to be delivered from the power of darkness and translated into another kingdom. Saints were once as others are, but now are they separated from the world in a twofold consideration.

Separation from the Wicked Conversation of the World

First, from the wicked conversation of the world. Therefore are the saints said to be redeemed from the vain conversation of the world, received by tradition from their fathers (1Pe 1:18). Therefore Paul says, We had our conversation amongst children of disobedience in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, but God who had mercy on us, hath quickened us, when we were dead in sins (Eph 2:2-5). They are to be separated from all the abominations thereof; for the church of Christ is or ought to be a pure kingdom, into which nothing that defiles should enter. They are called from the works of the flesh, as lying, stealing, covetousness, drunkenness, swearing, blaspheming, railing, adulteries, and the lusts of the flesh, wherein formerly they were conversant, as is evident in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. No such persons that are known to be such are to be admitted into the church which is the kingdom of heaven upon earth.

Separation from the World's Ways of Worship

They are separated from the worship of the world. Now, by the worship of the world, I mean that seeming worship which men perform to the Lord without a lawful warrant from the Lord, even all the commands of man, in the things of God. The world, through the mighty operation of the man of sin, who works in the children of disobedience, has set up a worship among men that has the name of the service of God, when indeed God never commanded them any such thing.⁴ We are commanded to come forth of Babylon, out of confusion, and to touch no unclean thing; therefore, says the Lord, "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?...Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (2Co 6:16-17).

Separation from All False Churches

We are to separate from all assemblies who say they are churches and yet are not built upon the Rock Christ and the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone. There is much ado made about churches this day, but there is but one true way of entering into a true church fellowship. Therefore, are we to separate from all those seeming churches who never were admitted into the church through the preaching of the Word and believing the doctrine of Christ, being baptized into His name, but were naturally born into it, as all those are who stand in any church by right of infant membership, or infant baptism.

Christ's Church Made Up of Persons Professing Faith

Christ's church consists of a people visibly professing faith. All in Christ's kingdom must be able to declare Whose they are, Whom they profess, Whose subjects they be, and to Whose laws they conform. Therefore, we shall find the eunuch not to be admitted to baptism except he believed with all his heart (Act 8:37).

Objection: But may some say, "Many may profess faith and yet not be believers, so that if faith be absolutely necessary for the fitting of a man

⁴ Drapes is here referring specifically to Roman Catholic traditions of worship, but the principle applies to all manmade additions to God's perfect design. See *The Regulative Principle of the Church* by Sam Waldron; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

to be a member of a church, you will be able to prove few churches to be true, because many may be hypocrites.”

Solution: What I said before, I say now again, that visible appearances are the true ground of visible administrations. With the heart man believeth, but with the mouth he confesseth unto salvation (Rom 10:9). Had election or a real interest in the love of Christ been the only ground of receiving members into fellowship or of baptizing them, as some may suppose, the apostles did very evil in baptizing Simon, who was in the gall of bitterness (Act 8:13-23). Yea, if that should be true, Christ did very ill in suffering Judas to go in and out so long with His disciples undiscovered, when He knew he was a wicked man. But yet Simon, professing he believed, ought not to be denied baptism. So that I say whoever shall say that he believes in the Lord Jesus, that is to say, profess that he depends upon Christ for salvation, and upon Him alone, and desires to be baptized in the name of Christ, professing he believes it to be his duty, except we *know* that he has only a form of godliness and denies the power thereof, he ought to be baptized and be received a member with the church. I confess there is a doctrine spread abroad that we must know men’s hearts before we can walk visibly with them, which truly never was nor shall be the ground of a visible fellowship; neither ought we to examine men’s spirits or principles so much as their doctrines.

Christ’s Church Consisting of Baptized Believers

The church of Jesus Christ consists of believers baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, it is said, “They that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added [to the church] about three thousand” (Act 2:41). This was a doctrine to be preached, commanded to be practiced, and was observed by the saints of old.

Objection: “But do you think there may not be a visible church of Christ without baptism of water? Surely all the churches in the gospel were not baptized persons.”

Solution: To this I plainly answer: First, *the Scriptures nowhere hold forth any church to us without being baptized*. For this we find: as soon as they believed, they were commanded to be baptized with water (Act 10:48). And to Paul himself, believing, was it said, “Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized” (Act 22:16). If we look into the Acts we shall find there very many examples for it, and not one to prove or tolerate any other practice.

Secondly, I say, *there can be no true visible church except it has its bottom or foundation from Christ*, but there is no church approved of by Christ consisting of others than baptized persons; for Christ, giving forth a rule of visible dispensations, bids His disciples first teach and baptize them, afterwards teach them to observe all that He had commanded them (Mat 28:19-20).

Again, if we consider the nature of the ordinance of baptism and of the church of Christ, it will be evident, for *the nature of the ordinance is a clear manifestation of putting on Christ*. Therefore, says the apostle, Know ye not, that “as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27). And the nature of a true church is of a spiritual nature, visibly holding forth that government Christ our head has in us.

Again, *baptism is the first act visibly representing our union with Christ, which gives us a visible right to all other ordinances of Christ*. But if any shall yet say there may be a true visible church of the gospel approved of by Christ without a submission to this ordinance, let them produce their grounds from the Scriptures, and I shall more thoroughly consider the matter. In the meantime, let this suffice us, that while men walk in other ways doubtfully, without a rule for their practice, we walk according to the Scriptures in being baptized and added to the church. And whereas they say many churches were planted without baptism, it is an easy thing to say so, but hard to prove. I am very confident all churches were baptized, else the disciples of Christ had very ill observed their commands, “Go, teach, and baptize.”

Fifthly, it is not enough that saints be baptized, but likewise *they ought to join themselves together, first to the Lord, then to one another*. Therefore is it that we find it recorded that the saints are a body compact together, and that when many saw the judgment of God upon Ananias and Saphira, they durst not join themselves to them (Act 5:13). Now this joining after baptism is nothing except the mutual consent of each other, giving up themselves to the Lord and one to another, to watch over one another and walk before the Lord in His own ways. This of necessity must be done or else the saints would be disabled from knowing each other, watching over each other, and admonishing or reproving each other (1Th 5:12-14; Heb 13:17). Thus did Paul join himself to the churches at Jerusalem (Act 9:26-28). But this will appear more plain if you consider what I shall say when I come to speak of the true nature and divine excellency of this church, which I have already in a measure described unto you.

2. The Nature, Power, and Authority of Christ's Church

Having thus described to you, what the true church of Christ is, I will now show you its excellent privileges and duty, which I shall unfold to you in eight particulars:

1. The nature of this church.
2. The power of this church.
3. The duty of this church.
4. The gifts of this church.
5. The ordinances of this church.
6. The order of this church.
7. The ministry of this church.
8. The communion and fellowship of the church.

The Nature of the Church

The nature of this church I shall first handle, which I shall demonstrate to you from the several names that God has given it in the Scriptures:

The House of God

As first, it is called the house of Christ, or “of the living God” (1Ti 3:15). Paul gave many instructions to Timothy how to behave himself in the house of God. God dwelleth in the midst of the church. The church is God’s household (Mat 24:45). Herein may we see the nature of the church to be a compact and united body, a house of living stones (1Pe 2:4). It is not a company of unpolished stones, lying scattered up and down, but a house built up, whose foundation is Christ. Yea, Christ is the cornerstone thereof. It is a household whose master is Christ, Who is the Lord of the family that is called by His name. The children of this household are saints—those that appear in their wedding garment. The servants are the ministers of the gospel, who are placed there to serve the family. Their food is the Word of God, the body and blood of Christ Jesus. From [this house], all unprofitable and wicked servants are to be cast forth. It is a household wherein every son and servant is enrolled by the bond of unity.

The City of God

Secondly, it is the city of God (Psa 46:4), in which city every member is a fellow citizen (Eph 2:19). It is a spiritual city that descends from heaven. It is a flourishing city, whose inhabitants are made glad through that river whose streams flow from the fountain of life. It is a city walled with the almighty power of the Lord Jesus. It is a city defended with an innumerable company of angels whose merchandise is not of gold and silver but of bread and water of life, of glorious garments of needlework, the clothing of whose inhabitants is wrought gold. It is the city of Zion, of which it is said, "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following" (Psa 48:12-13). It is a city incorporated, whose citizens have one and the same charter from heaven, whose head is the Lord Jesus, whose foundation and gate of entrance is Christ, in which mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other.

The Body of Christ

Thirdly, the church of Christ is Christ's body. Christ is the church's head. Yea, He is the very life and soul of the church. It is His Spirit which quickens all. It is Christ's body, consisting of several members. Every one is placed in the body for the service of the whole. Therefore says Paul, "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom 12:5). It is a "body fitly joined together...compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part," making increase thereof, edifying itself in love (Eph 4:16). Hence it is that saints are said to live in Christ, and Christ in them.

The Mountain of the Lord

Fourthly, Christ's church is the mountain of the Lord (Psa 2:6), a mountain looking towards heaven, ascending from the earth; a mountain visible; a city on a hill, which cannot be hid (Mat 5:14).

The Vineyard of the Lord

Fifthly, it is God's vineyard. "I am the vine, ye are the branches," says Christ (Joh 15:5). As the branches are all upon one tree, so Christ and His are members all of one body, branches of that stock which is Christ Jesus, Who lops off all withered branches (Joh 15:1-2).

The Garden of Christ

Sixthly, it is Christ's garden that Christ takes delights in to walk in. "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse," says Christ (Song 5:1). "He feedeth among the lilies" (Song 2:16; 6:3). He delights even in His church to gather His pleasant fruits. It is a walled garden, in which is an everlasting fountain to water and refresh it. It is a garden well-trimmed, continually weeded, wherein are all manner of fruits, both new and old. It is an orchard of precious plants, set by the waterside.

The Tabernacle of God

I might further show you it is God's tabernacle in this world, moving from place to place till it attains to its own country. It is God's temple, wherein His holiness dwells (1Co 3:16). His presence is there, the Ark of the Covenant, the mercy-seat, the incense of a sweet-smelling savor unto God, are there. God is prayed to, praised, and admired there. "In the midst of My brethren," says Christ, "I will sing praise unto Thee" (see Psa 22:22 and Heb 2:12).

The Bride of Christ

It is Christ's friend, sister, and spouse. She is "the king's daughter...all glorious within" (Psa 45:13). Her beauty is excellent; her relation is noble. She is a queen (Psa 45:10), united to Christ, the King of kings; and [she is] married unto Him in everlasting bonds of lovingkindness. It is "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation" (1Pe 2:9), born of God, united under one King, subject to one and the same laws, being a pure and undefiled people. She is Christ's love, dove, and undefiled one. She is all fair; she is "but⁵ one" (Song 6:9).

The Flock

It is a flock of sheep feeding together, having one Chief Shepherd, Who separates them from the goats and keeps them from wolves. He knows them by name. It is His sheepfold wherein all His sheep are folded together, not straggling up and down, but in flocks together, that follow the Lord Jesus, knowing His voice (Joh 10).

A Candlestick of Gold

It is a candlestick of pure gold, to hold forth the true light of the Lord.

A Dove

It is a dove, innocent and gentle, feeding on the choicest food.

⁵ but – only.

The Communion of Saints

It is the communion of saints, wherein Christ and saints mutually communicate each to other: Christ to them, light, life, joy, freedom, and glory; they to Christ, praise, honor, reverence, and songs of deliverance. It is a communion wherein they communicate each to other of all those treasures the Father of Spirits has communicated to them.

A Ship, Tossed but Safe

It is a ship, in this world tossed up and down, yet safely arrives at the haven of everlasting glory, through the guidance of their skillful Pilot, the Lord Jesus.

The Lord's Kingdom of Priests and Kings

It is the kingdom of priests, a kingdom of kings, a kingdom from above, the Kingdom of heaven, whose Head, laws, and inheritance are all heavenly.

Thus, may you see its nature to be spiritual: pure, peaceable, mighty, gracious, and glorious, being one with the Father and the Son, and with each other visibly in the Father and the Son. I might dwell longer here, but I must pass forward.

The Power of the Church

The next thing I shall handle is the power of this church, which is very large. Consider what power a kingdom, family, city, or body has for the well-ordering, governing, and increasing of itself; this church has the same. I shall branch its power forth in several particulars.

1. Receiving Members

In receiving of members, it is a household that can admit none to be of the family except such who are enrolled as household servants. That this power is in them is evident, for Paul went to Jerusalem and “assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him” (Act 9:26). Yet they were persons with whom he endeavored to join himself, which he had ignorantly done had not they a power to receive him (Act 9:26-27). Again, Phoebe, a servant of the church of Cenchrea, going to the church of Rome, Paul commends her to them, desiring them to “receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints” (Rom 16:1-2). Where note, Paul commends her to the whole church, to all the saints there who were to receive her. But that the church has this power is evident, for as I shall show you presently, they have power to cast out also.

Now this receiving in of members ought to be discharged faithfully. Any baptized person who desires, according to his duty, to walk with any particular congregation ought to be received, except any should know by a visible demonstration that he was unworthy.

Question: “But how ought the church to receive them that are members of another congregation?”

Solution: If a member of one congregation should have occasion to go to another, they ought to be recommended from the church of some particular brethren to them, which is plain in the case of Phoebe’s going to Rome. Paul wrote a commendation to the church at Rome, desiring them to receive her (Rom 16:1-2). So in the case of various others, as when he sent Tychicus to the church of the Colossians, he writes to them that he was “a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord” (Col 4:7).

Question: “But what if, by a providence unknown to the church or unexpected by him, a member should be cast into another congregation, having no such letter of recommendation, may not the church receive him.”

Solution: To this I say, first, if any member knows him or her to be a brother or a sister, his declaration or testimony is sufficient to the church, as is evident in the case of Paul’s joining with the church at Jerusalem. While he abode there, it was upon Barnabas’s testimony of him (Act 9:27ff). Secondly, but if none knows him, the church upon the profession of his faith and obedience to the commands of Christ, and of his orderly walking, may, except they know anything to the contrary, receive him; for the reason why the church at Jerusalem received not Paul was because they had heard what mischief he had done. But here the church needs much wisdom; and I judge that, if they can, they would do well to inquire about him, if he intends to remain among them, lest he be one that should come in privily⁶ to sow tares among the wheat.

2. Admonishing and Reproving of Members

Secondly, the church has power in admonishing and reproving their members. Now admonition is twofold, either in instructing of them, or a warning of the church, or any member thereof, from all evil, showing them the dangerous consequence of it. Therefore the apostle, in the first sense speaking to the Colossians, bids them admonish one another with psalms, etc. In the last sense, he writes to the whole church of the

⁶ **privily** – secretly.

Thessalonians, saying, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn [or admonish] them that are unruly” (1Th 5:14).

Private or public offenses

Now in the church’s warning them that are unruly, they ought to consider the nature of the offense, for offenses of sins are either private or public. A private offense is that which is committed against a particular person. Now this, every saint offended ought to reprove privately (Mat 18:15). This is an offense that is not a public scandal to the gospel.

But public sins are such as are open and manifest, which in their own nature are of a public scandal or offense. These are to be rebuked, admonished, or reproved publicly. As we see in the case of Peter’s dissembling, Paul withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. Yea, he blamed or reproved him before them all (Gal 2:11-14). So that offenses that are publicly known to the church, the church should openly reprove them. Herein Paul’s rule holds good: “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (1Ti 5:20).

As for those sins which have been of a private concern, the persons offending should be dealt with according to Christ’s command, saying, “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” (Mat 18:15-16). And if they who have committed the offense shall refuse to hear them, they may bring it before the church, as Christ says, “If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church” (v. 17). Then the church may and ought to take notice of it and admonish him for it.

Question: “But is there no difference between admonition, reproof, and rebuking in the Scriptures? Because you seem to put no difference between them, and the Scriptures does; for Paul bids Timothy reprove and rebuke (2Ti 4:2).”

Solution: Sometimes some one of these words, being used alone, comprehends the rest, as in the case of heretics being cast forth after twice admonition (Ti 3:10). The word *admonition* includes rebuking or reproof. But when we find them distinguished, it is after this manner, to *admonish* is to advise another or forewarn him of some danger. To *reprove* him is to blame him for some evil, manifesting the nature of his evil and the greatness of his fault, as Paul did blame Peter (Gal 2:11-14). But to *rebuke* signifies a more powerful way of reproof. Therefore he says, “Rebuke them sharply” (Ti 1:13). So, to rebuke them is to command them

to desist their evil courses in the name of the Lord Jesus, with great authority. Therefore, an elder is not to be rebuked but entreated (1Ti 5:1). This rebuking is for them who are unruly. Therefore, when Christ cast out devils, He is said to rebuke them. So, if any shall make commotions in the church and be unruly, the church must silence them, stop their mouths, command them to be silent; for this the church has power to do.

Directions for reproof

Now in reproof I shall give these few brief directions.

1. That it be done *without partiality* (1Ti 5:21), to the highest as well as to the meanest, the richest as the poorest. For we must not have the faith in respect of persons (Jam 2:1). Husbands must not plead for their wives. Fleshly relations must not mingle themselves with spiritual affairs.

2. Let it be done *in love*. Therefore is the church commanded, having noted a disorderly brother, to “admonish him as a brother” (2Th 3:15). So says the apostle, “Let all your things be done with charity” (1Co 16:14).

3. Let it be done *seasonably*, with good advice⁷ and caution, minding always the frame of his heart whom you reprove.

4. Let it be done “*with all authority*.” Let none despise it (Ti 2:15).

5. Lastly, *the church may choose whom she pleases to declare her sense and mind*. If the church has officers chosen, this is most fit to be performed by them.

3. Judging Civil and Indifferent Matters

Determining civil things in the church

Thirdly, the power of the church appears in determining all controversies in the church in civil things. If there should arise any difference in the church between the members, they ought not to go to law, especially before the unjust, but to permit the church to determine it. To [the church’s] determination they are bound to subscribe. “How dare you,” says Paul, “go to law before unbelievers? It is utterly a fault so to do” (see 1Co 6:1-4). It renders the church to be exceeding weak, and [those who make lawsuits] exceeding carnal. We ought rather to suffer wrong than go to law.

Objection: “But what if the church should order any of them to give satisfaction to the other, and he refuse it. What should then be done?”

⁷ **advice** – prudence; deliberation.

Solution: If he should refuse to hear the church, he refuses to hear the Lord from heaven, and the church may cast him forth, and look upon him as a heathen and a publican, and so leave him to the world, to be liable to the law of the nation wherein he lives.

Determining indifferent things such as meats or drinks

Secondly, they have a power to determine matters of differences about indifferent things. As, suppose there should arise disputes about clothing,⁸ or meats, or drinks. The church has power to end them. God in His wisdom has so ordered the matter, that He has given us many commands plainly and particularly. But yet, we have many occasions of dispute about things simply neither commanded nor forbidden. Now the church may determine these according to Paul's rule: "If there be any thing of good report, virtuous, praiseworthy, think of these things" (see Phi 4:8). The church has power to appoint their times of meeting, their continuance when met, of choosing their own officers or servants, as is evident from the case of the seven deacons (Act 6).

4. Casting Out Members

Fourthly, they have power to cast out members, to deliver them to Satan, as it appears from 1 Corinthians 5:7: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump." Now this was written by Paul to the whole church. Now his casting forth, or delivering up to Satan, is the returning of his person into the kingdom from whence he came (1Co 5:5). We, while dead in sin, are in the kingdom of Satan (Eph 2:1-3); but being made to believe in Christ, [we] are translated into His church, the kingdom of heaven (Col 1:13). Now, when any declare their hearts not to be right, but visibly to belong to the kingdom of Satan, they are to be put forth from the church into their own kingdom, this world, whose god Satan is (2Co 4:4).

This ordinance [of casting out those who belong to the kingdom of Satan] is an ordinance of Christ, to be done in Christ's name, power, and authority "for the destruction of the flesh" (1Co 5:3-5), for the rooting out of corruptions. It must be pronounced with love, and yet with faithfulness.

Question: "But for what causes ought any members to be cast out of the church?"

Solution 1: First, for being a *heretic*. Now if anyone ask me what a heretic is, I answer, he is one that preaches a doctrine which denies the

⁸ Originally, *habits*, which was commonly used to denote clothing.

faith (1Ti 1:3, 20). Of this sort were they that denied the resurrection (2Ti 2:18), Christ come in the flesh (1Jo 4:3), dying at Jerusalem for our sins, and the like (Ti 3:10).

Solution 2: Secondly, for open, scandalous wickedness, as adultery, idolatry, theft, lying, drunkenness, swearing, or the like (1Co 5).

Solution 3: Contempt of the church. Thirdly, for refusing to hear the church (Mat 18:17). As Christ says, “If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” And again, if any man among you walk disorderly, “have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (2Th 3:11, 14).

The case of those who repent before being cast out

Question: “But what if anyone falls into some open sin and should manifest his repentance to the church before he be cast out. Ought the church to cast him forth?”

Solution: No, verily! For if the church can judge their repentance to be true, they may not do it. Because the purpose of the ordinance is their repentance, if the Lord see it good. Now if the Lord makes them repent without [casting them out], to what purpose will you do it? This appears to me clear from Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 12:21. He says he is afraid he shall be humbled among the Corinthians and bewail them which have sinned already and have not repented of their uncleanness and fornication which they have committed. Which words, I say, intimate to me that they ought to have repented of their evil deeds. And if they had done so, Paul need not have bewailed them. But their not repenting made him to be afraid.

5. Receiving Again the Repentant

They have power to receive in members (who were cast out) upon their repentance. Consider 2 Corinthians 2:5-11. We may there see Paul writing to them to forgive a wicked person lest he should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow, and to confirm their love towards him.

True repentance

Now if this repentance be true, it causes the soul to be humbled for his sin, to acknowledge it before the church, to mourn for it, and to desire again to be received by them. For if in truth he sees his evil, he will desire to be entertained again by that people that cast him forth, that they may have cause of joy in him, as well as once they had of sorrow.

Does the whole church, or only the elder, exercise this power?

Question: “But this is not the whole church that has this power, but the representative church, the officers in the church. So that when Christ says, ‘Tell it to the church,’ He means the elders.”

Solution: To this I briefly answer that the church—the whole church—has this power, as is evident in the casting forth of the incestuous person (1Co 5). Paul writes to the church, bids them, “Purge out...the old leaven” (1Co 5:7). He does not write to the officers of the church only, but to the whole church. So in Acts 15, when the whole church at Antioch sent to the church at Jerusalem to advise concerning a difference, the whole church came together, and gave their advice. It is said, “The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting” (Act 15:23). Some bring this passage up to prove a national synod. But if it should prove such a thing, behold the whole nation must be this synod, for the whole multitude of the church was there with the apostles and elders, where every brother had his liberty to speak.

Question: “But the Apostle Paul cast out Hymenaeus and Alexander, and delivered them to Satan; so that excommunication is to be performed by an officer (1Ti 1:20).”

Solution: Behold a thing here considerable: that which Paul did in his own person by himself is likewise done by a church with his consent. Therefore he says, “I...have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan” (1Co 5:3-5). Paul’s spirit is his will, approbation, or consent; so that what the apostle might do in person, they might do by the same power and spirit that was in him and them. So that this is no argument at all to prove any such thing. Now the end of this power given to the church is not for destruction, but edification.

3. The Duty and Gifts of Christ’s Church

The Duty of Christ’s Church

Having thus finished the nature and power of the church, I come to show them their duty, and that under a three-fold consideration.

Individuals to Individuals: To Watch Over Each Other

First, of members to members. Their duty is to watch over each other. Under the Law, God placed watchmen over His people, at whose hands the blood of them that miscarried⁹ through the watchmen's negligence was required (Eze 33:6). Christ has set the saints in one body to be careful of¹⁰ each other, to watch over their words and actions at home and abroad, wherever they have opportunity.

They ought also to cover the infirmities one of another. There is a great fault among Christians this day who delight to spread abroad the infirmities of their brethren. If your brother offend you, it is your duty, O man, to tell him of it first, between thee and him. If he hears you, you have gained him; you ought to forgive him (Mat 18:15). If he refuses to hear thee, take two or three more with thee; and if he refuse to hear them (and not before, if you expect to be freed from the charge of violating the command of the Lord Jesus), tell it to the church. And if he refuse to hear them, let him be unto thee as a heathen and a publican (Mat 18:16-17).

Yet further, it is the duty of every member to assist, exhort, advise, counsel, and help his fellow member, to relieve his necessities (Rom 12; Heb 3:13; Heb 10:24-25). It is our duty to study to please one another in the Lord (Rom 15:2). This watch should be over one another in all things, in all places, at all times, in all relations.

Individuals to the Whole Church: To Frequently Assemble

Secondly, the duty of the saints in the church is to frequent their assemblies, not to leave them (Heb 10:25); not to burden, or trouble, or offend them (Heb 12:15; Rom 16:17); to contribute their utmost assistance to them (1Co 16:15); to help forward the building (Rom 15:2; Eph 4:16); to warn the church of anything that may endanger it.

The Whole Church to the Individuals: To Watch over Each Member

Thirdly, the duty of the whole is to look to each member, to inquire how it is with them in soul and body, to administer to their wants, to reprove, rebuke, admonish, receive in, cast out. This watch of theirs ought to have an eye into all relations. Many may live well in the church, but we must inquire after everyone concerning their behavior towards wives or husbands, parents or children, masters or servants; for many may at home be passionate, careless, give ill examples, be idle, or the like,

⁹ **miscarried** – came to harm or destruction; perished; died.

¹⁰ **be careful of** – take care of; be watchful over.

which cannot be discerned in the church. But this ought we to look after (2Th 3:14; Gal 6:1-2; 1Th 5:14-15).

Question: “By virtue of what authority have you to do to meddle with one another in civil things?”

Solution: By virtue of that authority whereby we exhort each other to life suitable to the gospel in civil things. How shall we see the power of the doctrine preached except in their conversation, and how shall we know that except we be conversant with them or inquire of them. Paul tells us, “A bishop...must be...no striker” (1Ti 3:2-3; Ti 1:7), etc., which qualities must be known to the church, or else how can they choose him? Paul took notice of a man’s idleness (2Th 3:11) and of others’ disobedience (2Th 3:14), which makes him urgent in these relations to press conformity to the law of the Lord Jesus. I say, the church ought to strengthen, build up, and edify each other in love (Eph 4:16).

The Gifts of Christ’s Church

I am now come to speak of the spiritual gifts given to this church, which are diverse.¹¹

Wisdom

First, a “word of wisdom” (1Co 12:8). Now a word of wisdom is a gift, whereby a soul is made able, not only to behold the great mysteries of the Lord, but is also able to bring them forth seasonably, orderly, advantageously for the whole. It is a word that is able well to rule, order, manage, and dispose of the things of the church for the edification of the whole.

Knowledge

Secondly, a “word of knowledge” (1Co 12:8). Knowledge is that gift whereby we understand the truth of God. There are many sayings dark in the Scriptures. Now the word of knowledge makes them clear and evident, resolves doubts, and teaches the ignorant. Knowledge and wisdom differ

¹¹ Manifestations of some of these gifts in the apostolic era may have included direct revelation from the Holy Spirit, but Drapes appears to be naming these gifts as continuing in a mode of illumination by the Holy Spirit to understand and apply God’s written Word, without providing direct revelation of truth. See Drapes’ brief comments about the revelatory gifts under the heading “The Special Gifts” at the end of this chapter, where he assumes revelatory gifts do not continue past the apostolic age.

(as I judge) only in this, that the true ordering and wise disposing of knowledge itself, for the benefit of the whole, is attributed to wisdom.

Discerning of Spirits

Thirdly, “discerning of spirits” (1Co 12:10). Here must be knowledge in this also, for this is that by which we are enabled to try¹² spirits by their doctrine, for this is the very way that the Lord prescribes for the trial of spirits, by their doctrine (1Jo 4:1-3). This discerning of spirits is not, as many conceive, that we should immediately¹³ know whether their spirits be right or no, any other way than by their doctrine and conversation.¹⁴ This gift is not given to all, but to “those who by reason of [spiritual] use have their senses exercised to discern [between] both good and evil” (Heb 5:14).

Prophecy

Fourthly, “prophecy” (1Co 12:10). This prophecy is twofold: either a foretelling of things to come, as Philip’s daughters and Agabus did (Act 21:9-11); or else it is a speaking in the church to edification, exhortation, and consolation (1Co 14:3). “Ye may all prophesy one by one...and let the other judge” (1Co 14:29, 31). This prophecy is an excellent gift whereby the church is edified, the Lord glorified, and Satan put to flight. I shall in this show you the true ground and power of prophecy, the persons who are to prophesy, and the true use and end of prophecy.

True ground of prophecy

The true ground of prophecy is the true knowledge of the testimony of Jesus, which is the doctrine of Christ. Except a soul be led through the inspiration of God in the light of God, he cannot truly prophesy. The power enabling to it is the power in the new creation. “We...believe, and therefore [we] speak” (2Co 4:13).

Many conceive saints are not to prophesy till they have such an immediate power seizing upon them which may force them to speak whether they will or no. This, for my part, for these two reasons, I judge contrary to Scriptures.

¹² **try** – test; examine.

¹³ **immediately** – by direct revelation, without any use of means; opposite of “mediately” or through some means.

¹⁴ **conversation** – lifestyle; habit of life.

1. Because we are commanded not to quench the spirit nor despise prophesying (1Th 5:19-20). Now if prophecy did so move in a man who could quench the spirit of it, surely it would work irresistibly.

2. A second reason why I so judge is because it is said, “The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (1Co 14:32). Now herein are they subject, that one must stay¹⁵ till the other holds his peace, and the rest must judge what is delivered. Now, I say, these two things would be frustrated if prophecy was by such a power as some plead for. For what need [is there for] any to be judge if it comes with such a power? And how could they wait one for another, or keep silence one for another, if such a power was in them. But this I say, there is or ought to be such a power as may enable them to speak to edification, exhortation, and comfort—and that “by course,” that there be no confusion (1Co 14:3, 27). And this is prophecy upon a good ground.

I shall only add this word to this particular, that we are nowhere commanded to judge the principle of a brother’s actings, neither his acting by his principle, but his principle by his actions.

The persons who may prophesy in the church

Secondly, the persons who may so prophesy are all the brethren, all the prophets. Therefore, says Paul, “Ye may all prophesy” (1Co 14:31). This *all* he interprets to be the prophets, saying, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge” (1Co 14:29).

What about women prophesying in the church?

“May not women prophesy in the church? Surely, it is said, A ‘woman that prayeth or prophesieth’ (1Co 11:5), which implies she may prophesy as well as others.”

In answer to this, consider the same apostle that says, “Let the prophets speak,” in the same chapter also says, “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak” (1Co 14:29, 34). From this, and from that in Timothy, [which says], “Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority” (1Ti 2:11-12), I conclude, a woman may not so prophesy as the brethren may in 1 Corinthians 14. That is for these reasons:

¹⁵ **stay** – wait; refrain from speaking.

1. Because she was first in the transgression, through her forwardness to teach, and aspiring above her place. She was first deceived and did deceive her husband (1Ti 2:14).

2. She is more subject to temptation and to be deluded by reason of the weakness of her nature. Now God will have her “learn in silence.” She that taught the man to his fall, must now be taught by him, and be in subjection (1Ti 2:11-15).

3. That hereby she may manifest her humility in willingly becoming subject, who subjected her husband through her enticement to so much misery (1Ti 2:11).

But yet, notwithstanding, when I consider the reason of their being commanded silence to be taken from the law (1Co 14:34), and yet, under the Law, Miriam and Deborah were prophetesses (Exo 15:20; Jdg 4:4); and when I mind that God made a promise that his “sons and daughters” should prophesy (Joe 2:28); and that Philip “had four daughters...which did prophesy” (Act 21:9); and when I weigh Paul’s saying, “A woman praying or prophesying with her head covered” (see 1Co 11:5-6), it makes me believe that a woman may prophesy, and that in the church also.

So that, I say, we must necessarily consider the *manner* of her speaking to be here forbidden. She may prophesy, as prophecy is considered an immediate gift from heaven, for the revelation of some great secret or mystery that the brethren are ignorant of; or for the foretelling of things to come, she may speak, being carried out thereunto by a power from the Lord; yet in this, her head, her own honor and glory, must be covered. Without controversy, when Paul says he permits not a woman to speak in the church, he forbids not *all* manner of speaking. For then if the church should demand any question of her, she might not answer, which certainly she may. So that, I say, this speaking that she is debarred of is teaching, as the brethren who are prophets may all do, one by one. She must not so teach in the church to dishonor her head.

But what if God has given greater gifts to the women than to the brethren? I shall show them how they ought to improve¹⁶ them: by taking a brother home to their houses, as Priscilla did Apollos, and there instructing him in the way of the Lord more perfectly (Act 18:26),¹⁷ or by teaching one another modesty, sobriety, meekness, humility, love, and

¹⁶ **improve** – employ or take advantage of.

¹⁷ Note that this is to be done in a pure and appropriate manner. Priscilla did not teach Apollos alone in her house, but together with her husband Aquila, and under his headship.

holiness (Ti 2:3-5). This I am sure is their duty. Therefore Paul says to Titus, “The aged women...[must be] teachers of good things,” teaching “the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Ti 2:3-5).

The Purpose of Prophecy

Thirdly, the end¹⁸ of prophecy. It serves for the church, for building up in faith, knowledge, fear, and love; for exhortation from sin to righteousness; for comfort in fears, doubts, terrors, temptations (1Co 14:3). The end of that, as of all other ordinances, is to glorify God and serve our spiritual generation. Our city is built on Mount Zion, compact within itself (Psa 122:3; Eph 4:16).

The Spiritual Helper

Fifthly, the gift of being a helper in the gospel of Christ (1Co 12:28). Aquila and Urbane and many more were Paul’s helpers in Christ (Rom 16:3-9). This is a gift whereby saints are made able to be helpful, either in accompanying of the ministers of the gospel in preaching to the world or in any service of the church.

Governments

Sixthly, “governments” (1Co 12:28). This is a special gift given to some persons in the church for the ordering its affairs in due order without confusion, whereby they are able to know when the members in the church are confused, and to rectify them. I say, this gift is useful in any church of Christ. This gift is called “ruling” in Romans 12:8, wherein they are enabled to rule the church of God as a well-disciplined family.

There are other gifts spoken of in the Scriptures, as faith, charity, prayer, praise, and the like, some of which I shall speak of by and by.

The Special Gifts: Tongues, Healing, Miracles, and Interpretation

Objection: “But there was in the apostles’ days other gifts than these: tongues, miracles, healing, and interpretation; and, surely, if there be a true church, there must be the same gifts now.”

Solution: That is a great mistake. It is not required that all these several gifts should be in every particular church, but these are gifts distributed as the Lord sees good (1Co 12:11). We have “gifts differing according to the grace...given to us” (Rom 12:6). The Lord is the

¹⁸ **end** – purpose; goal.

dispenser of gifts to every man severally¹⁹ as He will, to one one thing, to another, another. And though we say it is needless for every church to have all the gifts they had in the Corinthian [church], yet we are not without sufficient gifts for the being of a true church, “the manifestation of the Spirit” being given to everyone “to profit withal” in his own place and order (1Co 12:7). There is a gift of wisdom, of knowledge, of discerning spirits, of prophecy, of helps, of governments, of charity, of teaching included in knowledge, wisdom, and prophecy, so that we will not murmur for what we have not, but bless God for what we have, and pray for more to Him Who gives liberally and upbraids not (Jam 1:5).

4. The Ordinances, Order, Ministry, and Communion of Christ’s Church

The Ordinances²⁰ of Christ’s Church

I shall now speak of the ordinances of this church (having spoken already of prophecy, which is a gift and an ordinance to be practiced), which are these following:

Prayer

First, prayer. All things are to be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. This was practiced in the church with an audible voice (Act 4:24). And so Paul kneeled down and prayed with the disciples (Act 20:36). Now prayer is the pouring out of the soul to God, by way of supplication, for the supply of our wants²¹ by Jesus Christ. This prayer is, or ought to be, the continual posture of saints’ spirits, according to that of Paul: “Pray without ceasing” (1Th 5:17). Therefore we shall find the church continuing in prayer (Act 2:42). This is a special part of divine worship, whereby we acknowledge God’s preeminence, our relation, subjection, and obedience unto God. I might here show you the prevalence²² of the prayers of the saints with God had I time, but I shall conclude this with these three things which I desire may always accompany prayer:

¹⁹ **severally** – separately; individually.

²⁰ **ordinances** – a religious practice prescribed by God’s authority. Sometimes *ordinance* is applied more narrowly to baptism and the Lord’s Supper; sometimes, as here, it is applied more broadly to various practices God has enjoined on His churches by scriptural command or example.

²¹ **wants** – needs.

²² **prevalence** – efficacy; power.

First, *faith*, believing that God is, that He hears us, and is gracious and merciful, and will answer (Heb 11:6).

Secondly, *watchfulness*. “Watch unto prayer” (1Pe 4:7). “Watch and pray” (Mar 13:33). Watch over thy heart, thy corruptions, to suppress and subdue them.

Thirdly, *constancy*. Continue in praying (Col 4:2), for He will in due time answer. Cast not away thy prayers but expect their return laden with blessings.

Praise

Secondly, praise. Praise is what the Lord takes delight in, and yet has in Himself no addition of honor by it. The true praise of God is the acknowledgment of the glory and excellency of the Lord (Psa 148:13). It is the declaration of the goodness of the Almighty. This praise is to be in the mighty congregation. “I will give thee thanks,” says David, “in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people” (Psa 35:18; 145:1). Christ and the saints both sing praises in the church together unto God the Father (Heb 2:12; Psa 22:22). This true praising of God from the power of the Spirit did the Psalms, sung upon musical instruments under the Law, point at.

The gift of singing psalms is not a composition of David’s Psalms into meter, through a natural faculty, which psalms the priest or the clergyman names and all the people must sing together. This begets a confusion, and is a mere tradition, for such a practice has no more bottom than organs or choristers or singing men and women in the church of the gospel. Surely, we would not plead for these now. The melody of psalms is not in the ear, but in the heart to the Lord (Eph 5:19). To sing psalms in the gospel is a special gift given to some particular member in the church, whereby he does bless, praise, or magnify the Lord, through the mighty operation of the Spirit (Eph 5:18-19), which is to be performed, I say, by one alone, at one time to the edification one of another, and therefore it is an ordinance flowing from a cheerful heart. “Is any merry? let him sing psalms” (Jam 5:13), that is to say, let him bless God. That all should sing together is denied by Paul, who says, “How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm” (1Co 14:26). They must speak orderly one after another, “for God

is not the author of confusion, but of peace,” in all the churches of Christ (1Co 14:27, 33).²³

Fasting

Thirdly, fasting. Now true fasting flows from the apprehension of some great want, whereby the soul is engaged to give up himself to seek the Lord, separating himself from outward employments from meat and drink, so far as nature will permit, that he may wholly without distraction be earnest with the Lord by prayer, for the obtaining of his request. The true nature of this will appear evident if you consider Acts 13:2-3, Acts 14:23, and 1 Corinthians 7:5.

Charity

Fourthly, charity, which is more acceptable than hope or faith (1Co 13:13). This is that virtue without which all other gifts are nothing. It is a grace which is rooted in the heart and is a true spiritual love and endeared affection towards his Lord Jesus and all His saints, poor and rich. [Charity] composes the spirit in a right temper, subduing covetousness, trampling under foot vauntings,²⁴ loving another as himself. We read the praise of charity in 1 Corinthians 13:3-8. It “suffereth long...is kind...envieth not...vaunteth not itself, 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,” etc.

²³ We disagree with Drapes’ apparent claim that Christ’s churches should not practice congregational singing. In attempting to recover a pure church untainted by inventions of men, some seventeenth century Baptists, such as Isaac Marlow (*A Brief Discourse Concerning Singing in the Publick Worship of God in the Gospel-church*, 1690; and *The Controversie of Singing Brought to an End*, 1696), argued that congregational singing was a carnal innovation imposed on Christ’s churches by Roman Catholic usage. In their view, New Testament “singing” should be primarily a spiritual activity, but can possibly take a visible form in the congregation as an individual member man sings to the edification of the body, similar to how a man might lead in prayer or preaching. Other Baptists of the period, such as Benjamin Keach (*The Breach Repaired in God’s Worship: or, Singing of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs Proved to Be an Holy Ordinance of Jesus Christ*, 1691), mustered many scriptural arguments to prove that congregational singing is a command of Christ to His churches. The controversy dissipated early in the eighteenth century with most Baptists approving congregational singing.

²⁴ **vauntings** – boasting; bragging.

But I shall only mind²⁵ it here, as it shows itself forth in the relief of the saints' outward necessities. It is an ordinance of God to relieve the poor saints. It is the duty of the church to see that no member in it do want of or lack anything necessary. It is not enough to say, "Be warmed," but they must administer to the supply of their wants according to the ability God has given them (see Jam 2:16; 1Co 16:2).

Objection: "But all saints are to have all things common, so that there must be no difference between them, as it was in the days of the apostles."

Solution: Mistake not the Scriptures. It is nowhere commanded. It is true there was a time when all things were common, yet so, that every man had but according to his need (Act 2:45; 4:34-35). And whereas they sold their possessions, they then testified their great charity and thus far it is a precedent for saints to imitate, that if they have possessions, and their brethren be in want, and they cannot be relieved without selling their possessions, they ought to sell them. Yet not so as to destroy their natural relations, for he that provideth not for his family "is worse than an infidel" (1Ti 5:8). But this was not their constant practice, for afterward they had "gatherings"²⁶ as God prospered them (1Co 16:2). And indeed, had that been always commanded to be their practice, wherein could there have been a ground to press to charity and to reprove for covetousness? There always has been and yet will be a difference among men in this world. There was an elect lady, one of reputation (though few noble are called, 1Co 1:26), who lived accordingly, abounding in hospitality (2Jo 1:1, 10). Yet we are always to mind this: that we ought not to have the faith in respect of persons (Jam 2:1).

Breaking of Bread

Lastly, breaking of bread. Now I will show you very briefly four things considerable in this.

First, Who was the *author* of it, that is, the Lord Jesus, that said to His disciples, "This do in remembrance of me" (Luk 22:19).

Question: "What does that speech concern us, being spoken only to His disciples before His death?"

It was not a command only to them, but to others also; therefore says Paul, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you...As often as ye eat this bread" (1Co 11:23-26).

²⁵ **mind** – focus on; consider.

²⁶ **gatherings** – collections; taking up offerings.

Secondly, the *persons* for whom He ordained it. And they are visible believers in church fellowship, such as could examine themselves, such as could discern the Lord's body.

Thirdly, the true *nature* of this ordinance, which is spiritual holding forth Christ's death unto one another. For it is not an ordinance for the world, but for the church. And likewise, it holds forth our union with Christ. For the bread we break is the body of Christ, and the cup is His blood, the blood of the covenant. And it manifests our union one with another. "For we being many are one bread" (1Co 10:16-17). It is a visible seal to us of our interest in the Lord Jesus, which is to be performed in knowledge, faith, discerning Christ's body. That is to say, seeing Christ to be the true bread and only food of a saint. He that performs it not so²⁷ does it not truly. Some say, we are not to do it till we see ourselves above it and live in the clear apprehensions of light and life, being only to hold forth Christ's death to others, and not an ordinance wherein we feed on Christ. But to me it is clear we are to do it when we see ourselves most barren and empty, for then are ordinances fittest for us, so that we by faith see Christ to have all fullness in Him, and by faith meet Him in that ordinance in a way of subjection, for it is an ordinance appointed for our souls' refreshing, as well as the holding forth His death one to another.

Lastly, the *duration* or continuance of this ordinance is till Christ comes: "This do in remembrance of me" (Luk 22:19); and, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup," says Paul, "ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1Co 11:26).

Objection: "But, say some, we are only to practice [the Lord's Supper] till Christ come in the Spirit, so that He being already come in the Spirit, we are not any longer to use it."

Solution: The apostle's meaning is not till Christ come in the Spirit, but till Christ's second coming without sin to salvation when He shall reward both good and bad. For if you observe it, Christ was come to Paul and to the Corinthians in the Spirit, yet they practiced it. And he that truly conforms to that ordinance must have the Spirit, for he must discern the Lord's body, that is to say, the fullness, love, excellency, and virtue of Christ, which he cannot do without the Spirit. So that for any to say, "Christ's coming in the Spirit puts an end to it," he says more than Christ or the apostles ever said. And if what such men say should be true,

²⁷ so – in this way.

then this would unavoidably follow, that that dispensation²⁸ which only gives a true being to an ordinance, and without which an ordinance cannot be rightly embraced, must be that which puts an end to it, which is contrary to religion and right reason. For I say again, the dispensation of Christ in the Spirit is that which only gives a true right to it and enables spiritually to conform to it and receive virtue from Christ in it.

As for those objections against this which plead it to be a knowing Christ after the flesh and the like, I have answered them already in the doctrine of baptism of water.

The Order of Christ's Church

I shall now speak a word or two to the order of the church, which is that sweet, decent,²⁹ and due administration of everything in its right season (1Co 14:40).

This is that which directs how to speak, when to speak, and what to speak. It forbids all confusion; many may not speak. It forbids all confusion; many may not speak at once.

This puts the administration of every ordinance in its right place. It first commands faith, after that baptism, then church fellowship, and breaking of bread. It does not turn things upside down and set the cart before the horse, as we use³⁰ to say, as many men do in matters of religion, who will first break bread, which is an ordinance for their building up, before they be baptized, which visibly demonstrates their new birth. This heavenly order does not first baptize and then preach conversion, but baptizes those that are already converted. This is that which the apostle rejoiced to behold in the churches (Col 2:5).

The Ministry of Christ's Church

I should now speak of the ministry of this church, which is a service committed by the Lord into the hands of some particular members of the church, for the due and orderly edification thereof to whom He has given the gifts before mentioned for discharge of their said trust. This ministry, first, is evident in the brethren generally, afterwards as occasion requires is committed in a special way, a way of office, to some particular [individuals]. I should show you the true nature, ground, use, and end of

²⁸ **dispensation** – distribution or sharing; in this context, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in fulfilment of the promise of Christ.

²⁹ **decent** – appropriate; suitable.

³⁰ **use** – are accustomed.

a ministry in the church, but I must now hasten a period to this discourse, intending hereafter if the Lord affords opportunity to enlarge myself on it.

In the meantime, know that there may be a true church without officers, which I shall evidence by this demonstration: If you search the Scriptures, you shall find all officers of any particular church are to be chosen out of the church. This is evident in the choice of the seven deacons (Act 6). And so for elders, they were to be ordained in the churches (Ti 1:5), which clearly holds forth the churches were to be before the officers. For if the church was not first, how could it be said that officers must be chosen out of them or ordained in them?

The Communion of Christ's Church

The last thing I shall now handle is the communion of the church, and that is threefold:

First, *with the Father and the Son*, as John says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son" (1Jo 1:3). That is, in prayer, praise, breaking of bread, and prophecy. "The cup of blessing which we bless," says the apostle, "is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1Co 10:16).

Secondly, their communion is *one with another*, which is in the light and truth of the Father and the Son, communicating light, knowledge, wisdom, relief, support, succor, and assistance, each to other, joying, rejoicing, and sorrowing each with each other; "for we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1Co 10:17).

Thirdly and lastly, the communion the church has *with other churches*. All the churches of Christ have but one Head, and as members of that Head, receive influence from it, and ought to seek the good and preservation each of other. Their visible communion appears in their union in the doctrine of Christ. There are two things principally belonging to churches to communicate to each other:

First, *advice in matters doubtful*, as is evident from Acts 14 and 15. The church of Antioch sent to the church of Jerusalem for their advice, wherein we see a liberty for every brother to give their judgment till they were agreed. Now, this we must not understand to be a dependence one upon another, but only a sweet unity and agreement they have each with [the] other.

Secondly, *in contributing to each other's necessities*, as, if one be overburdened, it is the duty of another church to contribute, as is evident in Romans 15:26-27, 2 Corinthians 8-9, and Acts 11:29-30.

The glory of the church of Christ in all these gifts, privileges, and spiritual immunities to which it is born by the Word of God are innumerable. Many of them I might here unfold to you, but of all which with our apostle I must conclude, saying, I “cannot now speak particularly” (Heb 9:5).

Consider seriously what I have written, and the Lord give us understanding in all things.

