

A

Fundamental Doctrine,

OR AN ACCOUNT OF

Excommunication, Ban, Exclusion,

OR

SEPARATION FROM THE CHURCH OF CHRIST;

ITS NATURE, POWERS, TO WHOM IT EXTENDS;
ITS REASONS, OBJECTS AND DESIGN, &c.—WHY IT WAS TAUGHT
AND PRACTICED BY THE APOSTLES, AND COMMANDED THAT WE SHOULD PRACTICE IT.
FAITHFULLY COMPILED FROM SACRED SCRIPTURES, FOR THE USE OF ALL
LOVERS OF THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL TRUTH, TO PROMOTE
CHRISTIAN PEACE WITHOUT RESPECT TO PARTY.

BY

MENNO SIMON.

“Be of one mind—let nothing be done through strife or vain glory,” Phil. 2: 3.

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,”
1 Cor. 3: 11.

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ANATOMY, PHYSIOLOGY

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P R E F A C E.

BRETHREN and sisters in Christ Jesus, it is known, and evident to all the true children of God, who are enlightened by his Holy Spirit, that human reason is so depraved in Adam, that it possesses but little light which can lead to godliness; yea, it has become so unfit, haughty, ignorant and blind that it would even attempt presumptuously to alter, bend, break, gainsay, judge and find fault with the word of the Lord God; it will not yield to any spirit or gift and persists that it is right, and that all it does or says is God's word; whereby the saving truth, and blessed love and peace have often to endure and suffer much injury, infamy and disgrace.

In the second place, it is evident that also the enchanting spirit of anti-christ has made the whole world so drunk with the cup of his abominations; has so rejected the doctrine of Christ and his holy apostles, sacraments, Spirit, life, ordinances, usages, example and the true worship, that but little of a salutary nature is left among men; hence it is difficult to restore what has been destroyed to its true order and proper usage, to which the Lord had ordained it.

In the third place, it is evident that the old master, satan, the arch enemy of God and souls, is always about us, as a roaring lion, and seeks whom he may devour, as Peter says. He assails us in divers ways; now with the unclean, wicked nature of our depraved flesh, and anon with some enchanting, false doctrine and fair words; and again, by persecution, cross and fears; then with liberty and worldly life of the flesh; now with riches and abundance, then again with defects, wants and poverty. In short, he shoots his fiery darts constantly; they fly by day and by night, in secret and in public. He that does not zealously abide in the fear of God cannot withstand the

manifold assaults of his temptations. Yea when we think the end is attained, then we are assailed the most violently. Some are led to quarreling and wrangling under the semblance of truth; such are called by Paul, "Men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth," whose fruits are abominable envy, disgraceful defamation, slanderous words, unclean, perverted minds, a lamentable destruction of the holy peace of God, a grievous denial of pure, christian love, a hindrance of the saving doctrine, the fruitful mother of faction, and an easy way to ruin, as we have abundantly seen in the days of the revealed truth.

O! brethren, take warning; again I say, beware and watch; for James says that such wisdom is not from above, but it is earthly, sensual, devilish; for the wisdom which is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Yea, my brethren, where there is no peaceable, friendly, saving and impartial wisdom, there is nothing but forced appearance of good; powerless, impure and sinful prayer; an unsteady, wavering mind; a restless and troubled conscience, full of strife and dissension, no matter how much we may boast of the truth. The Lord grant that we may see this.

In the fourth place, it is evident that the community or church cannot continue in the saving doctrine, an unblamable and pious life without the proper use of the *Excommunication* or *Ban*; even as a city without a good police, or laws and regulations, or a field without any inclosure, and a house without walls and doors, so is also a church which has not the true apostolic *Exclusion* or *Ban*; for without it there would be an opening for all deceiving spirits, for all

abominations, and for proud scorers, for all idolatrous and wantonly, perverted sinners; yea, for all lewd debauchees, sodomites, adulterers and knaves, as is the case with all the great sects of the world, which call themselves, though improperly, the church of Christ; according to my opinion it is the distinguished usage, honor and prosperity of a sincere community, if they with christian discretion teach the true apostolic *Separation*, and observe it carefully in love, according to the ordinance of the holy, divine Scriptures; it is more than evident, that if we had not with due zeal insisted upon it, we would be esteemed and called, by every one, the members of the sect of Munster and all other perverted sects. But, thank God, since, in consequence of the proper use of excommunication, it is well known, among several thousand honorable, sincere persons, in different principalities, cities, and countries, that we are guiltless of, and free from all ungodly abominations, and perverted sects, and that we also do make this known, unreservedly, to the whole world, not only by our doctrines and walk, but with our possessions and blood.

Observing that now the bright light of the holy gospel of Christ shines again in refulgent splendor in these vexatious times of all anti-christian abominations; God's own and first begotten Son, Christ Jesus, is gloriously revealed, his good will and pleasure and holy word concerning faith, regeneration, repentance, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the whole saving doctrine, life and ordinance, have again come to light through much seeking, prayer, reading, teaching and writing; that now all things (God be praised for his grace) proceed according to the true, apostolic rule in the church, whereby the kingdom of Christ rises in honor, and the kingdom of anti-christ is sinking. For this reason the arch enemy of our souls violently opposes and uses his old wiles and arts most subtly against it. He appears under the cloak of a christian; understand me rightly; he proudly boasts of faith; upbraids, yea, rejects all the Babylonian deeds; is baptized; seats himself with the saints at the Lord's Supper; praises the lives of the pious; hears exhortations; gives alms; receives the poor; washes the saints'

feet; says that Christ is the Son of God. In short, in appearance he is an unblamable, regenerated, penitent and true christian. But in the mean time, he watches where he may assail us most easily and injure us the most; he pleasingly approaches the depraved and enchanted souls, some of whom, as is evident, as yet know little about the nature and disposition of the Holy Ghost; he presses them closely, for he knows how skillfully to defend his cause with the letter of the Scriptures; he speaks gently; whatever he does, he does as though out of pure fear of God, and love to the church, with the word and truth of the Lord. He commences as though in the anxiety of a distressed conscience, to argue and dispute, principally concerning the separation which he can not well tolerate and endure; here and there he raises pernicious questions and answers, whereby he so influences and inflames the perverted and enchanted, that some of them, when they cannot stand before the power of the truth, from mere partisan spirit, leave the pleasant Jerusalem of peace and return again to unclean, blind Babel; or build up a sect of their own, as I have, with much sorrow, seen it to be the case two or three times. Behold, this is the pearl which the old deceiver seeks with his ire and wrangling; for whether we stay away from the idolatrous church or not, be baptized or not, it is immaterial to him; if he can only inflame our hearts with hatred and envy one towards another, corrupt our minds, mar our love, destroy our peace; if he can but sow discord, defamation, hatred, lies, enmity and backbiting, which generally arise from such disputes; if he can but do this, then he has accomplished what he sought. Ah! dear brethren, beware, for it is more than clear, that all those who have not the meek, friendly, peaceable and affectionate Spirit of Christ, but are contentious, are not of God. Be this known to you.

Inasmuch then, that we know, that he did from the beginning of the expounded gospel, to the present moment, cause us much pain and sorrow of heart, with his cunning, unfruitful questions of contention, and other pernicious disputations, I do most affectionately and sincerely entreat all who would desire to walk peaceably and quietly in the

fear of God with a good conscience, before the Lord and his church, that they would all, before God in Christ Jesus, lay this sincerely to heart, how faithfully the Holy Spirit of Christ warns us concerning our unprofitable, foolish questions, answers, disputations, and quarrels, 1 Tim. 6; for the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of love and peace, and therefore, teaches it to all of his children, and writes it upon the tablets of our hearts with his gracious finger. Ah! do reflect upon what we teach; and that his holy kingdom and word are a word and kingdom of peace, and not of strife; that his messengers and servants, are messengers and servants of peace, in order that you, who call yourselves after his holy name, who alone has graciously called you into his kingdom of peace, through the word of his peace, may escape the snares of the devil, and that you may so conduct yourselves in all your ways after the will and pleasure of Christ, towards all men, and observe his holy word and ordinance, and defend it; that you may promote that true righteousness required of God, such as faith, love, repentance, regeneration, piety and peace with all other fruits of the Holy Ghost; gladden the hearts of all the sorrowful of heart, and the young and tender souls in Christ Jesus, and strengthen, console and encourage them in all their trials, need, temptations, tribulation and fear; so that the most holy city and temple, which lay desolated for so many centuries, may again be rebuilt, and all its usages, ordinances and services restored to primitive order. Yea, that the saving light of the true gospel of Christ may be spread among all nations, kindred and tongues, in its full splendor; and that the accursed, lying and anti-christian darkness may be dispelled.

Then observe that the powerful word of the Lord is more and more miraculously breaking forth, and that, therefore, all true hearts would gladly see and have unanimity in this part of the Ban, whereby they are sometimes so greatly troubled and perplexed, as related, that they might all orderly proceed, observing one rule, according to the Scriptures as it becomes christians; and that I, an unworthy person, the weakest of all the saints, have been severely tried

in this part by many, different spirits for twenty-two years, and have endured many an attack, whereby others are not only taught of me, but I am also taught of others, the Giver of all good gifts be praised for all this. And also that I have acquired more knowledge in some things, through length of time, and through many adventitious circumstances, examination and study; therefore, I was fraternally requested and besought, by several, pious hearts who would gladly see all things right, that before the close of my life, I would examine and revise the *Ground and meaning of the true apostolic Ban or Separation*, arrange it formally, and present it for examination to the elders and ministers of the church, and to all those desiring peace, so that if any one, after my departure, as I am now an old, feeble man, might cause any trouble, strife or dissension among the quiet and peaceable, under pretence that he heard this or that from me at any time, or might infer wrong views from some of my writings which have not yet been so fully explained by me *concerning husband and wife*, and of open, offensive, carnal sinners, as it is done here, in order that the brethren may refer them to my *conclusive ground*, after I shall have fallen asleep in God, and made my exit hence. Besides, that the pious, doubtful conscience may thereby be relieved, so that they may attain an assurance of confidence in their minds. To which request, although christian-like and just, I have undertaken to respond with diffidence, because I well know that they are not all brethren and sisters in truth and power who will read, hear and see it, but also others. And where the disposition is not friendly, nor love true, there the understanding is generally partial and the construction unjust, as I, alas, have often experienced in my days. Ah! that some of them would obtain grace. Besides, I know, that the opinions, judgments, affections and minds are different; and that the all-prevailing truth and the fear, Spirit and unction of the Lord, are not possessed by every one in their fullness; therefore, I fear that all will not receive and follow this doctrine as the *True Ground of Truth*. O that we all had the eyes of understanding, those of us who think we see, it would, according

to my opinion, soon gain a strong hold with some.

Yet I confidently expect that those, who in the true fear of God sincerely seek union and peace among the pious, and are anxious for the truth, will not despise and upbraid me for this my solicitous and brotherly labor for the edification of holy peace, and explanation of eternal truth, accepted by me in true christian faith; but that they will accept it, and give the praise to God for his grace; for it appears to me, although perhaps I may be in error, almost impossible to hit upon a more certain way according to truth, in which we may stand before God and man, than that which I have impartially, and according to my limited talents, pointed out and explained as before God in Christ Jesus, and which is according to the sacred Scriptures.

I do not serve the stiff-necked, haughty and perverse scorners, neither immovable bigots and wranglers, but those, I serve, who are of an impartial, new, christian mind, who suffer themselves to be instructed, and are under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and live in the fear of God and in pure love, who have received the Lord's holy word and truth in a pure mind; who implicitly follow it through the received unction, and are free

from all bitter, party spirit, vain honor, hatred and envy; for with such we find the amiable spirit of peace, sincere and pious disposition, an unleavened, pure heart and conversation, and, therefore, also an upright and pure understanding, and an incorrupt, saving ground and exposition, and they live no more unto their selfish flesh, but unto Christ and their neighbors, resist none, are humble, are opposed to all unscriptural contention and strife, readily acknowledge their short comings wherein they have erred; reconcile their neighbors whom they had grieved, regarding neither honor nor dishonor; heap fiery coals upon the heads of their adversaries; walk unblamably, in order that they may awaken them again unto truth with love, lead them from the way of error, bring them unto Christ, and save them eternally. Behold these are they, I say, whom I serve with my writings; for they have Christ in power with his Spirit, word and love, and thus with him, and in him they have TRUE CHRISTIANITY, which will stand before God, which is a useful, cheering, peaceable and joyful thing. Ah, children, be admonished; learn rightly to know the subtlety of the devil, and beware of discord. May the merciful Father grant unto us the wise Spirit of his grace, Amen.



EXPLANATION

OF THE

TRUE APOSTOLIC SEPARATION OR EXCOMMUNICATION.

1. *What is meant by Separation or Excommunication?* Sincerely faithful children in the Lord, whom I love in truth, Since I have undertaken, in paternal fidelity, this very critical task, for the benefit of you and all the pious generally, I say a critical task, for I am well aware that it has caused much grief among the humble for some time; and I fear that all is not over yet, I, therefore, entreat you all in general, both the afflicted and unafflicted, by the bloody wounds of Jesus, all of you, who with me bow your knees before the Almighty, great God, I exhort you by the righteous judgment, which he will hold at his future coming in the clouds of heaven, in flaming fire, with his mighty angels, that you would be pleased to judge this my work impartially, and with a pure heart of peace; read article after article, nay, every word, with sincere, christian discretion, in impartial, true love, according to the rule and foundation of truth; and, in the first place, well observe what *Excommunication* of the church of Christ is in power, which was left and taught us in the word by the Lord's holy apostles, so that you despise none ignorantly, nor say with scorners, Let them freely excommunicate; their excommunication is not dangerous, and similar unguarded expressions. I tell the truth in Christ, and lie not, that I would sooner suffer myself to be cut into pieces, till the day of judgment, if it were possible, than to suffer myself to be excommunicated, according to the Scriptures, by the servants of the Lord, from his church. O brethren, beware!

All that was cursed in Israel according to the ordinances of the law, whether man or beast, had to die, and the accursed goods had to be burnt with fire. This was a dreadful and severe curse. But in the kingdom and government of Christ, if we rightly view it in its true character; if repentance follow not, it is still more dreadful; it is not now a bodily extermination or the death of our flesh, as Moses' curse or excommunication was, nor is it an exclusion from a temple or synagogue, even as is the excommunication of the Jews or of the world; but it is a true declaration of the eternal death of the soul, made through the sincere servants of Christ, against all offending, carnal sinners, and stubborn wranglers; a delivering over to satan; yea, a common renouncing, excommunicating or separating from the congregation, church, body and kingdom of Christ, and that in the name of Christ, with the binding efficacy of his Holy Ghost and powerful word.

Since, then, this is such a dreadful and severe anathema, as related, then may every one see well to it, that he walk and conduct himself so before God and his church, as not to be eternally smitten with such a curse, either of Christ or his church that he must be an excommunicant out of the holy congregation, body, city, temple, church, kingdom and house of Christ. For all who are out of the congregation and church of Christ, must be in that of anti-christ; this is incontrovertible. And what the award of such will be, if they will not repent, may be plainly read in Rom. 1: 32; 6: 23; Gal. 5:

21; Rev. 21: 8. Ah! children, beware; be careful with all your powers; watch assiduously; pray fervently and be prepared; for God's judgments are terrible; "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. 10: 31.

2. *Over whom this Apostolic Excommunication is to be used.* We find in many places of the holy Scriptures, that the truly believing church is the spiritual body, bride, camp, city and temple of Jesus Christ, our only spiritual Head, Bridegroom, King and High Priest, prefigured by the literal Eve, Rebecca, and the camp, city and temple of Israel. In the political dominion of Israel, no leper, none that had an issue, nor those who were defiled by the dead, were suffered to come into camp as long as they were not healed and purified according to the law; none were allowed to ease themselves within the camp; neither an uncircumcised, nor an unclean person, was allowed to eat of the passover; all those (here observe well Israel's Ban) had to die without mercy, on the testimony of two or three witnesses, who despised the word of the Lord and set aside his commandments; those who were guilty of abomination in Israel, and served strange gods. For, says Moses, they were to be a holy people to the Lord. Num. 5: 2; Ex. 12: 48; Deut. 17: 6; Ex. 19: 6.

And thus it is in the Christian dispensation; for his church is a congregation of saints, or an assembly of the righteous, even as the Nicean fathers some centuries ago, did confess with us; and, as Adam had but one Eve, who was flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, Isaac but one Rebecca, who was of his own family, and Christ but one body, which was heavenly and from heaven, and was perfect and holy in all its members; thus has he also, spiritually, but one Eve, but one new Rebecca, who is his spiritual body, spouse, church and bride, namely, the believers, the regenerated, meek, merciful, dead to sin, righteous, peaceable, amiable and obedient children in his kingdom and house of peace; pure, chaste virgins in the Spirit, holy souls, who are of his divine family, and holy flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone.

From which, according to the doctrine of the holy apostles, it is evident that the ob-

stinate disturber or sectary who causes, contrary to the doctrine of godliness, offence and discord, and those who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ, who lead an offensive life, or the over-curious, inquisitive and lazy, who live at the expense of others, shall not be suffered in the holy house, camp, city, temple, church and body of Christ, which is the church; but that we, with one accord, should exclude and shun them, according to Scripture, to *our* salvation, and *their* reformation. Faithful children, be you warned. Terrible is the word which John utters, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God," 2 John 1: 9. And in another place, "He that committeth sin, is of the devil," 1 John 3: 8.

3. *The reason why this Excommunication is commanded in the Scriptures.* John teaches and says, That God is love. Since, then, as God is love, so does he also manifest the nature, of that which he is, namely, love. That this is the truth, may be readily perceived from the creation and preservation of all his creatures; the restoration of Adam and Eve; the preservation of Noah and his sons from the flood with an ark; in blessing Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; in ransoming Israel from Egypt; in sending Moses and the prophets; and more especially in the holy incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; in his gracious, efficacious doctrine, miracles, prayers, weeping, cross, blood and death; also, in the effusion of his Holy Spirit, and sending forth his holy apostles.

Since then it is evident that God is love, and will be forever, who in the beginning manifested the glorious fruit of love towards his children, he now likewise does this by his *exclusion or separation*, although it is terrible and severe, and notwithstanding that it has such a terrible consequence with the stubborn and unconverted sinner, as heard; and since he is the wise and omniscient God, who with his flaming eyes sees into the inmost recesses of the hearts and reins of men, who judges their ways and knows us best, who are his feeble creatures and workmanship, what weak vessels we are; yea, who knows that some of us can scarcely withstand a gentle breeze of decep-

tion, but suffer ourselves to be led away immediately; or that we are soon polluted with the pernicious, abominable life of the wicked; for this reason he has, through his paternal love and great mercy, given us, his poor, weak children, this means of *Separation*, approved it by the Holy Spirit and word in the beginning, and commanded it to this end, that we should exclude the restless, stubborn wranglers and schismatists, together with the offensive, carnal and lewd, from his holy congregation, church and house of peace; and, according to the Scriptures, avoid and shun them till they repent, in order that they move us not, through fair words, in the confident hope we have in the truth of Christ, for their false doctrine eats as a canker, 2 Tim. 2: 17; nor that the abominable with their impure, carnal life pervert us, nor give us a bad name among those without; this is the *first reason* why the Spirit of the Lord so earnestly commanded and taught Excommunication in his holy word. Whether this *reason* is not a special work of the love of Christ, which is of great usefulness, service, power and fruit to all the pious, I will let all the faithful consider in the fear of God.

The other *reason* is, that all those who again forsake the holy word and true way and go astray in the world, despise the holy covenant, make void their received baptism and the promise of righteousness; again hear the false prophets, love the world, walk the broad way of the flesh, or cause contention, schisms and sects and perverse things among the pious, may be deterred by means of this excommunication, and brought to repentance, seek union and peace, and thus be set free before the Lord and his church, from the satanic snares of their strife, or from their ungodly life. Behold, this is the other reason why the Spirit of the Lord so earnestly recommended and taught excommunication in his holy word. And whether this is not a special work of his love, and of like power, usefulness, service and fruit to the impious, if they will by any means observe it in fear, as the first is to the pious; upon this I will leave the faithful to reflect in the fear of God. Yea, whoever can rightly understand and see, in my opinion, the aforementioned *reasons*, ac-

cording to the Scriptures, has already found the true ground of the holy excommunication.

Since we know, then, that this our excommunication or separation is commanded us in the Scriptures, for two such highly important reasons, as related, therefore, we have reason enough, if we rightly boast of the Christian name, regularly to teach the evident and direct command, doctrine and ordinance of the Lord and his holy apostles, as a highly useful and good work of great love; and obediently to follow it; and besides, it is also evident, that those sin heinously against the word of the holy apostles, and their great love, and the fidelity and love of the church, and especially against their own souls, who call this useful, divine ordinance, in the perverseness of their sinful flesh, a contentious work of the devil, and thus trample it so shamefully under the unhallowed feet of their impious calumny, into the mire; haughty is that man who would rebuke his God, or gainsay and censure his word. Reflect upon that in which we have instructed you.

4. *The true Apostolic Excommunication has no respect to persons.* Undoubtedly, it is well known to us all, dear brethren, that it is so strongly and earnestly commanded in the Scriptures, nay, it is one of the chief commands, that we are to honor father and mother, and that all had to die according to the law of Moses, who cursed and disobeyed them. And also, that the bond of undefiled, honorable matrimony is so unchangeably bound in the kingdom and government of Christ, that neither a man nor woman can forsake one the other, and take another, understand rightly what Christ says, except it be for fornication, Matt. 19: 9. And Paul also holds the same doctrine, that they shall be bound to each other, and that they are to live in union; that the man has not power over his own body, nor the woman over hers, 1 Cor. 7: 4.

Both these rules, the first in relation to parents, and the second in relation to wedlock, stand fast and unbroken, and can never be altered or infringed by any man, so long as we can, in God and with God, in a good conscience, observe and keep them, as the aforementioned rules require, with-

out transgressing the holy word; but if this cannot be done thus, the spiritual must not, in that case, yield to the carnal, but the carnal must yield to the spiritual; this is incontrovertibly true.

I, therefore, entreat all the pious, for the Lord's sake who are sanctified with us unto Christ Jesus, through the Spirit of peace, and through faith in his precious blood, that they will impartially and spiritually examine these following grounds or reasons, which so urgently engage our attention, with God-fearing and understanding hearts, and learn, that we should unreservedly proclaim this ground with christian discretion, to such of our fellow-believers, whose lot it may be, to be thus situated, from which God preserve them, and that we should inculcate it in faithful love to the salvation of their souls, without giving offence to the young and tender minds. All who fear God, I will let judge what we teach.

The *first reason* is, that we truly know through the Spirit and word of God, that the heavenly espousal, between Christ and our souls, is made by faith, through his innocent death and precious blood, and must be voluntarily kept unbroken, in obedience to the only and eternal bridegroom, and that, therefore, a man shall not, for the sake of father, mother, son, daughter, husband or wife, in life or death, be disobedient to his word, in the smallest matter, or yield in the least; for God, the Lord will, shall and must alone be the God of our consciences, and the only Lord of our souls; and not our father, mother, husband or wife, as we may plainly see from Dent. 13: 6.

The *second reason* is, that the faithful apostles, John and Paul, implicitly teach us, that in the first place, we are to *shun* the apostates, lest they contaminate us with the impure, deceiving doctrine, and with their ungodly, carnal lives; that we do not partake of their unfruitful works, and for the reasons above assigned; and since we plainly see, that none can sooner contaminate and pollute us, than our own fathers, mothers, husbands, wives or children, if they are corrupted, and especially on account of the daily intercourse with, and natural love for them, which of necessity is existing between them; and moreover, since husband and

wife are one flesh, I scarcely know, how they will escape the snares of death, if they do not especially observe the holy word and counsel of the Lord in this respect; for now they pray and sigh, and anon they rage and quarrel. Now they slander and defame, then they weep and lament. Ah! children, take warning. Their tears are crocodile's tears, and their tongues are set on fire from hell, as James says. I forbear to mention that some of them run after idolatry and false prophets, violently revile the holy word, sacraments and ordinances of Christ, and highly recommend the abominations of anti-christ, besides, the conduct of some of them is nothing but sheer avarice, pride, wantonness, eating and drinking to excess; and how scandalously some of them live with their poor wives, especially when they are intoxicated, I will leave the Lord to judge. And that any one could live in the midst of such wanton, carnal, ungodly abominations, and not be hurt in his faith, love and unction, and have intercourse with such abominable unclean, adhesive pitch vessels, and not be polluted in his conscience, I will leave all who have an understanding of the holy word, to reflect upon with the unction of the Spirit.

The *third reason* is, because Paul teaches us that we are, in the second place, to avoid the apostate, that he may be led to reflect upon, and to repent of his wicked life or sectarian doctrine, through the shame of such shunning. Knowing then, that this is the *ground* and *object* of the Holy Spirit, in regard to excommunication, as related; therefore it is also proper, and according to the Scriptures, that we, in this matter, implicitly follow his divine counsel, love, doctrine, good will and earnest commands, and obediently follow him and observe *it*, in true love, towards our most beloved father, mother, husband, wife and children, rather than towards others, because, I say, they are our dearest friends; yea, our own flesh and bone, and we cannot by any other salutary means, lead them from evil, and again lead them in the way of the saints. Reflect upon what we teach you.

The *fourth reason* is, because we certainly know that there is but one excommunication in the Scriptures, which does not only ex-

tend to the spiritual communion, such as the Lord's Supper, and the hand and kiss of peace; but it extends also to the bodily communion, such as eating, drinking, daily actions and conduct, 1 Cor. 5: 10, 11, and that if the father is to shun the son, or the son the father, the husband his wife, or the wife the husband, only in the spiritual communion, and not in natural communion, in that event there would be two kinds of excommunications in the Scriptures; the one would only extend to the spiritual communion, and the other, both to the spiritual and natural communion; this is clear as daylight. Again, reflect upon what we teach you.

The *fifth reason* is, because pious parents, as well as the church, consent and approve of the excommunication of the apostate children; and the pious children consent that the apostate parents should be excommunicated; and the husband consents that the apostate wife should be excommunicated, and the pious wife, that the apostate husband be excommunicated, and that they be severally dealt with according to the Scriptures; and if they would then afterwards shun them only in spiritual communion, they would make void their own sentence, which they in common with the church pronounced; and thus they would not seek the salvation of their dearest friends with that spiritual love and zeal with which the word and Spirit of the Lord command them, and they would still be in great danger of perdition. In order, unmolestedly to escape this, their excommunication has been commanded, taught and left on record in the word of the Lord, to every man, woman and child, without exception. Again, I say, reflect upon what we teach you.

The *sixth reason* is, because I have known no less than three hundred married persons in my time who did not observe the ordinance, counsel, doctrine, will and command of the Lord and his apostles concerning shunning, and thus run together into perdition. We stand dismayed O God! at the thought that such an evil may in part be ascribed to our silence. We will, therefore, endeavor to so act, in the future, while the care of the church is unworthily entrusted to us, as to prevent, in a measure, all corruption

and apostasy, according to apostolic doctrine and counsel; and freely, purely and fully teach and maintain the ordinance of excommunication, as well between parents and children, man and wife, as among others; to all our brethren, if circumstances require it, in order that we, in the first place, clear our own souls, and thus stand acquitted before God and his saints in the great day of Christ; and secondly, So that none can excuse himself and say, It was never told me.

Behold, chosen brethren in the Lord, *these* are the important articles and principal *reasons* which urge us most that we willingly teach this *doctrine*, and put it into practice. Is there now a single individual under the canopy of heaven, learned or unlearned, young or old, without or among us, man or woman, who can truthfully teach us that the espousals of the spirit, made with Christ, through faith, should yield to human wedlock? Or that a husband cannot deceive or corrupt his wife, or a woman her husband? Or that a pious man is not bound according to the Scriptures, to promote the salvation of his unconverted wife, or the wife, of her unconverted husband? Or that there are two excommunications in the Scriptures; that the one only extends to the spiritual church, and the other both to the spiritual and temporal? Or that the pious husband dare not vote with the church to exclude his impenitent wife, or the wife against the husband in excluding him? Or that there is an exception in the whole Scriptures of man or wife, parents or children, in this respect? Or that spiritual love has to yield to conjugal love? If so, then we desire with all the heart to abandon this our doctrine, and acknowledge our error, and with great zeal teach the contrary before the whole world. as is christian-like and right; for we regard neither slander, nor praise, honor, nor disgrace; but we have only regard for the honor of God and Christ, and the eternal salvation of your souls; on account of which, we are considered by many as the off-scourings and filth of the world.

But if this cannot be done, as it never can, then in the first place, my sincere prayer, and fraternal admonition, is to all who might have erroneous views of this matter,

that they would not improperly meddle through impure and perverted minds, by slandering the chief stone and the builders; nor that they would persuade any to disobey the word, or keep them in the dangers of apostacy and perdition, lest they make themselves guilty of other men's sins; but that they would give the good will and ordinance of the Lord, due honor and praise in this respect; pluck out the offending eye of their misunderstanding, and pass a sound judgment according to truth; avert sin from the church, and thus observe the incontrovertibly clear word, counsel and command of the Lord, with all the pious, and assist with all deliberation to maintain it.

Secondly, I entreat all who might be at all concerned about the slanders of the irrational, that they would view the matter impartially in a divine light, and consider that not only excommunication is hated by the world but also all the doings of Christ, such as the true evangelical baptism, Lord's Supper, life and the whole divine service; yea, they are considered as an abomination, scandal and disgrace, and they, out of mere hatred of truth, are not ashamed to call all the pious, accursed heretics, anabaptists, ringleaders, whores and knaves; and in many places deprive them of possessions and life, as may be seen, although the pious are so much honored of God, that he acknowledges and adopts them as his chosen children, as his sons and daughters: as the apple of his eye; as his bride and spouse; and endues them with the gift of eternal life. For there is nothing under the canopy of heaven, that they love more than their God, as they fully testify and make known by their actions. And thus it is in this matter. For how can there be a greater love for God, and how can there be found a more praise-worthy confession, than where one is willing and ready, not only to give up his temporal goods, ease, honor and happiness, but also to shun his dearest friends upon earth in full health, out of sincere regard to Christ, in obedience to his eternal and holy truth? No abominable slander nor disgrace becomes the pure knowledge of God nor the unfeigned obedience of his most holy word.

Thirdly, I entreat all dear brethren in general, that they would always consider

with wise and sober minds, to what end they bent their shoulders under the pleasing yoke of the living and Almighty God, so that they may act and walk in a becoming manner, in the most holy covenant of grace, before Him and all mankind; and live and walk with their consorts in such piety, love, union and peace; and with such fidelity and care, observe that hereafter in eternity, we have not to hear of excommunication or exclusion; but of sincere, christian piety, delight and divine joy. Reflect upon these things which we teach you.

Fourthly, I entreat all, whose lot it should be at any time, to be afflicted with this sore punishment, that they would wisely examine themselves in the pure fear of God, that they would not seek the solicitous, selfish, lazy and idle flesh above Christ, nor cover it with fig-leaves, lest the wrath of the Lord who hates all lies, hypocrisy and subtle roguery, punish them with blindness and perversion, and assign them their portion with hypocrites; but that they might, by virtue of true faith in Christ Jesus, valiantly overcome themselves, and obediently and fully observe what the Holy Spirit of the love of Christ has commanded and taught by his holy word in this regard. Ah! let us reflect upon this.

Finally, I entreat elders, teachers, ministers and deacons, in the love of Christ, that they would not teach this whole matter carelessly and irrationally; but teach and inculcate it in the full fear of God, and with christian deliberation and paternal solicitude, in a true, apostolic manner; not too hastily, nor too slowly; not too rigidly nor too leniently; lest they seethe a kid in its mother's milk; but that they take of the first green ears of their land, dry them by the heavenly fire of pure, unfeigned love, and beat them into pieces in the mortar of the holy word, and pour upon them the oil of the Holy Ghost, which makes us willingly obedient unto Christ; pour upon them the sweet smelling frankincense of a sincere and firm faith from which all must result, to be a sweet savor to the Lord; and thus bring Him an acceptable meat-offering in his holy temple. Lay to heart, in true love, the ground of my admonition.

5. *That we are to put away from the*

church the openly offensive, carnal sinners, and excommunicated of God, and thus direct them to true repentance with the Scriptures. BEFORE I proceed to explain this article, I would earnestly admonish the reader, that about eighteen years ago, I published an admonition, in which I made no distinction of sin; but through my inexperience, directed them without discrimination, to three different admonitions. I say inexperience; for to the best of my knowledge, I neither heard nor knew at that time, any thing of fornication, adultery, and such like, among the brethren; it appeared to me impossible, that those who entered with us upon the paths of righteousness, should have any desire or will to such gross abominations, and therefore, I did not earnestly reflect upon the matter. See, before God it is the truth which I write.

I likewise wrote a book in 1549, in reply to those who would only extend excommunication to the spiritual church, and who charged us on all sides with slanderous words, that we practiced a rigid, cruel, unmerciful and Pharisaic excommunication.

Finally, I wrote a few words against Gellius Faber; and to this day I have made no particular distinction thereof, in my writings, nor could I have made it. This I acknowledge openly; for my information of it was too limited, so long as the matter was not disputed and did not again present itself to me for reconsideration. But now, having heard the ground of dispute, and having carefully weighed all the circumstances connected with it, in the balance of the holy, divine word, the six following reasons have given me such a powerful assurance in the matter, the Helper of all distressed souls be praised for his grace, that we are to exclude from the holy church of the Lord, all offensively carnal sinners, such as fornicators, adulterers, drunkards, &c.; and that all these ought to be put to open shame and reproof, with their ungodly works, without previously admonishing them, by virtue of the holy, divine word; that they may be led to repentance, I say by virtue of the word, for, in the first place, it is evident, as Paul teaches, that "neither fornicators nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves,

nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. 6: 10, but that their portion will be eternal death in the lake of fire.

Since then, it is clear, that the condemnation of God is already pronounced against them by his eternal Spirit and powerful word, both in heaven and upon the earth; that they have excluded themselves, and by their ungodly works, forsaken the church, that they are not as they were before, flesh of Christ's flesh, and members of his holy body, but have become carnal and devilish; yea, as dogs and swine, and again servants of sin; therefore we would, in fact, declare as void and unjust, the righteous judgment of the great and Almighty God, pronounced by his own Spirit and word, through his holy apostles, against such abominable defilers, if we would still admonish those who are already the children of the devil, hold them as brethren, and salute them with the peace of the Lord, and treat such miserable wretches as the children of God, and joint heirs of Christ, at the mere promise to do better, without any evidence of true repentance. I desire, that we might all impartially, and in the fear of God, reflect how such a great despising of Christ and his righteous judgment, could stand according to the Scriptures.

In the second place, it is evident that all those who are envious of us, are assiduously bent upon finding but a mote in us, because they so spitefully hate us for the truth's sake, in order that they may magnify it into a beam and defame us grossly. If we were to acknowledge such open, offensive disgrace, and receive as brethren such God-forsaken defilers, without evident fruits of sincere repentance, on a mere promise, which is, perhaps, more the result of shame and hypocrisy, than the fear of God, and break with them the peaceable, blessed bread of the Lord's Holy Supper, and thus by actions evince that they are joint members of our church; then we would, undoubtedly, expose the fair bride, honored in Christ, to all the ungodly as a disgrace and scoff to all our enemies. May the gracious Lord preserve us from this, that we may never think of it, much less do so. Take notice of this.

In the third place, it is evident, that with these three admonitions concerning such gross, offensive abominations, we would make many great hypocrites; for I hear that there were some within a few years, who carried on their horrible roguery and infamy in secret, till time and circumstances could no longer conceal them; yea, as I have understood, if some of them had not been detected by great wisdom, they would, I fear, have continued in their old course; but as soon as it was disclosed they began to wail and weep. Who could ever be so blinded, that when he has disgraced his neighbor's wife, daughter or maid, or robbed him of his money, and being seized, spoken to and admonished, that he would not say, I am sorry that I did so. Since then that experience teaches us the longer the more, as heard, therefore it is also proper and consistent with the Scriptures, that we should not foster and countenance such shameless defilers, much less are we to cherish them in their ungodly actions and wicked career with false prophets, but direct them where the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures direct and place them, namely outside of the church; so that we do not derogate from the Lord's sentence, pronounced in his word, against such people, that the community of grace, the unleavened lump of Christ, the anointed King and Priest of God, may continue to be agreeable and dignified; and also, that the transgressors may be brought sincerely to repent before God and the church, and may again present their offering and gift with a clean, pure, new conscience, as the truly sanctified saints of Christ, to the altar of reconciliation in his holy temple. Ah! reflect upon what we teach.

In the fourth place, it is evident that Paul teaches us that we are to shun a heretic, after we have admonished him twice, if he will not amend, Tit. 3: 10. Since then, we are not urged by the Holy Spirit to reprove a man more than once or twice, some of whom are outwardly yet quite pious, and perhaps some of them know no better, but suppose they are in the right, why beloved, are we then to admonish those thrice, who are not ashamed to sin against God's powerful word, but also against the law of

nature? Who premeditatedly disgrace their neighbor's wife, daughter or maid? Who frequent riotous taverns and houses of ill fame? Or those who are perfidious in their dealings? In short, all those are sentenced to eternal death, by the Spirit and word of the Lord, if they will not repent as heard.

It would, according to my opinion, be very unbecoming, if we rightly reflect upon it, that we should run after those who are already condemned, to admonish them thrice before separation should take place; and though they regard not the first and second admonition, that we should still hold them as brethren in the church till the third time; and that if they would even then evince that they were sorry, they should remain brethren; if not, that it should then be told them before the church, out of the word of God, that they had no more fellowship with Christ, but are accursed according to the Scriptures. All who are taught of God, I will let judge how such doctrine and conduct could stand the test of the justice and word of the Lord.

In the fifth place, it is evident, so far as I am able to judge, that holy Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians with such a view, as related; for he says, "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat," 1 Cor. 5: 11. He does not even mention one admonition, much less two or three; but he says, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," which is undoubtedly true; for facts have more than satisfactorily proven how often the pious, on their account, are considered rather as an offensive savor, who should otherwise be a sweet savor, were it not for those shameful members.

In the sixth place, it is evident, that Paul did not only thus teach this doctrine; but also showed it by an open example to the unclean Corinthian who sat with his step-mother in a very unbecoming manner; for without any previous admonition he judged him according to his ungodly works, and excommunicated him, by the word and Spirit of the Lord, from the church, and delivered him unto satan, into whose hands he had already fallen through his unnatural, de-

testable incontinency, in order that through this severe sentence and open shame, he might mortify and bury his unclean, shameful flesh, with its carnal lusts, and that his soul might be saved in the day of the Lord, and was not received again before the term of a year or longer, as history informs us, till they saw that he sincerely repented, and feared lest he might be swallowed up with over much sorrow.

And it would, according to my opinion, be proper that we should not so soon again admit such carnal defilers, who have beyond measure defamed the holy word, and brought such great tribulation upon the pious with their ungodly, abominable disgrace, though they may seemingly lament and promise much; but examine more closely the fruits of their repentance for some time; for it is not always repentance, though they say, We have sinned! but repentance is a converted, changed, pious and new heart, a broken and contrite spirit, from which flow the tears of sincerity, a candid confession, a true departure from the evil of our ways, an earnest and sincere hatred of sin, and an unblamable, pious, christian life; this is repentance that will stand before God. I entreat you to learn rightly to know both repentance and sin. Take heed thereto.

Behold, faithful brethren, here you have my most important Scriptures, discourses and reasons which moved me more deeply to reflect upon this matter in the fear of God. I say again, as I did above, in speaking of the separation of husband and wife: If there is one under the canopy of heaven, let him be whomsoever he will, that can convince me with divine truth, that a secret or open fornicator, adulterer, drunkard, &c., is a member of the holy body of the Lord, until he has been admonished two or three times (observe this well); or that the sentence of the Holy Spirit pronounced by Paul, and through many other Scriptures, against such deadly abominations, depends upon the condition of two or three admonitions, or that we have no cause to fear that the pious would be exposed to ridicule and slander if we had no other evidence of repentance than a mere verbal promise; or that we may, by the power of keys, retain those whom God has already excluded by

the word of his truth; or that it is consistent with the Scriptures that the church may, with the Holy Spirit and word of Christ, in such cases as mentioned, judge uncertainties, I mean without evident repentance, and retain and salute as brethren the hypocrites as well as the righteous; or that the church may also, truthfully, proclaim the grace, mercy and peace of God and eternal life, by the authority of the Scriptures, to those who are under his displeasure, curse, wrath and sentence of eternal death, on account of their deadly and wicked deeds; or that the abomination or sin which caused them to be excommunicated, does not lead them to death; or that the Spirit of grace through a sincere faith and true repentance, which avail with God, does not assure the transgressor more of the promise than the outward association with the church; if he can convince us of all this, we desire then cordially to follow him, and change and renounce our views.

But if this cannot be done, as it never can be, I therefore entreat all who are concerned, that they would not liken themselves unto vain comforts and false prophets, who strengthen the hands of the wicked, daub the wall with untempered mortar, and teach peace, peace, where there is no peace, Ezek. 13: 10, but that they would leave the sentence of the Lord which proceeded from his divine righteousness, unbroken; and tear the deceptive bolsters and pillows from under the heads of the ungodly, and keep clean and pure the holy vineyard, city, house, temple, body and church of Christ, as much as in them lies, that they may build upon a sure foundation, and direct the impenitent sinners to repentance, as heard. Deal faithfully, reflect upon these things and learn wisdom.

6. *Of secret sinners, who are again inwardly admonished of the Holy Ghost and are sincerely and truly converted.* The full desire of my heart is, that each one would so fear and know God as to say in spirit and truth with David, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there; If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost

parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me; if I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me; yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee; for thou hast possessed my reins; thou hast covered me in my mother's womb," Ps. 139: 7-13. And with Isaiah, "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? And who knoweth us?" Isa. 29: 15. Observe this denunciation, "Woe unto them," &c.

Chosen brethren, take heed; none under the canopy of heaven, can so conceal himself that he cannot be seen by the flaming eyes of the Lord, or not be found by the avenging hand of his wrath in his wickedness. Yea, the least thought is not concealed in our hearts which is not open to the eyes of the Lord. I, therefore, warn all in general, that you with all your powers watch against sin, whether secret or open; if sin is not sincerely repented of, your portion will be eternal death. Let all the impenitent and heedless sinners reflect upon this.

This I write to all beloved brethren as a christian warning, that you may fear the Lord's sentence, both openly and privately, and carefully avoid sin. Though we may not be reproved or seen of men here, still we cannot escape the eyes and punishment of God! Ah! that we all understood this.

However, should it ever happen that any one should sin against God in private, from which may his power preserve us all, and should the spirit of grace, which works repentance, again operate upon his heart, and cause genuine repentance, of this we have not to judge; for it is a matter between him and God. For since it is evident that we do not seek our righteousness and salvation, the remission of our sins, satisfaction, reconciliation and eternal life in or through excommunication, but alone in the righteousness, intercession, merits, death and blood of Christ. There are but two objects and ends why the ban is commanded in the Scriptures, which can have no reference to such an one. Because, in the first place, his

sins are private; hence no offence can follow. And secondly, because he is in deep contrition and is penitent in life. Therefore, he has no need then of being brought to repentance. Nor are we any where commanded of Christ to put him to open shame before the church. Reflect upon these things.

7. *What is the true sense of the passage in Matt. 18, where Christ says, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee," &c.* Our only and eternal High Priest and Teacher Jesus Christ, undoubtedly knew our poor, imperfect and feeble nature, that if we are not watchful, we would often fall into errors towards our neighbor, and therefore does he teach and say, "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, but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." Whereupon Peter asked him, "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," Matthew 18: 15-17, 21, 22.

It is evident that these words of Christ teach, in the first place, that if any one should err or sin against his brother through negligence, infirmity, inconsiderateness, inexperience, or ignorance, that he should not, therefore, hate him in his heart; nor conceal or connive at his transgression; but out of true, brotherly love admonish and reprove him, lest his brother fall into greater errors and perish; but by this means reclaim him, and, as Moses says, not make himself guilty for his sins. It is the nature and disposition of christians not to hate any on account of his infirmities, but they seek with all their hearts how they may lead such an one in the true way of love by instructing him; for a true christian knows nothing of hatred.

In the second place, those words teach us that he, who has transgressed, should receive the admonition of his brother, in love

and be again sincerely reconciled; as he teaches at an other place, and says, "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother," Matt. 5: 23, 24. Here it is also the nature and disposition of the anointed, those who are born of the holy seed of divine love, that if they trespass against a brother, they have neither peace nor rest of conscience till they are again fully reconciled in Christ Jesus, and that without hypocrisy. For they are a seed and generation of peace, children of love, who manifest their christianity in full power; and testify by deeds that they know God. But those who do not so, have the words of Jesus to judge them. Although the first transgression may not be of itself a sin unto death; but in the course of time, it would cause the transgressor, if he regard not love, to become estranged and carnal, therefore he should bear such severe punishment on account of his wickedness. For it is evident that he, who despises his brother, rejects the affectionate admonition, acts against christian charity, despises the church of God, rejects the word of the Lord, would rather continue unreprieved in his transgression, through his immovable stubbornness; rather walk in the crooked paths of the unrighteous; yea, sooner forsake the kingdom and people of Christ, than subdue his stubborn, proud flesh, and again be reconciled in love, according to the word of the Lord, with his brother against whom he transgressed. Paul rightly observes, "That to be carnally minded is death." Observe this.

In the third place, if the transgressing brother will sincerely receive, the brotherly admonition of his offended brother in love, be humbly reconciled, and afterwards ceases transgressing, then in that case he will no more remember, but sincerely forgive him, although he may have frequently sinned against him. Even as God for Jesus' sake, forgives all of our sins; so must we also forgive our neighbor all his transgressions in Christ, which he has committed against us. And we should not under any circumstances indulge in hatred or vengeance

against him, although he should never reform. We have a true example in Christ, and Stephen, his witness. And it is also the nature and disposition of all the anointed, who are born of God, that they possess their souls in peace and patience, to keep pure and uncorrupted their conscience, their prayer unhindered, their love perfect, their faith sound and true, their minds firm and unwavering, no matter how we behave towards them.

From all of which it is more than clear that these three several admonitions of which Christ speaks, first between him and you alone; secondly before witnesses and thirdly, before the church, do not extend to all offensive, carnal sinners, over whom the eternal sentence of death is already pronounced; but it has reference only to the shortcomings between brother and brother, and that for the following seven, *reasons*.

First, he says, "If thy brother trespass against *THEE*," observe what he says, "*AGAINST THEE*," not *AGAINST GOD*; for all the sins he commits against you, you may forgive him, so far as respects *you*; but not as it respects *God*.

Secondly, he says, "Tell him his fault between *thee* and *him* alone." Observe, "*between thee* and *him* alone." And I trust that all who understand the holy word will assent that an open transgression or sin, requires no private admonition, but is to be publicly reprieved.

Thirdly, he says, "That in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." Observe, that he says, "Two or three." And that an open transgression requires no witness, but is itself its own accuser and witness, is clear as the meridian sun.

Fourthly, he says, "Then tell it unto the church," observe, "*unto the church*." And for us to tell an open, well known disgrace to them, which is already known, is quite useless, to this all must assent who have understanding.

Fifthly, he also says in Luke 17, "And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day." Observe, he says, "Trespass." That now, any christian should commit a deadly sin against his brother, seven times in a

day, not to say seventy times seven, is not possible; much less against God.

Sixthly, he says, "And seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent." Observe, he says, "Turn to thee seven times in a day." My opinion is that if any one were to come to us two or three times in a year, not to say daily, to pillage our chests or purses, or disgrace our wives, daughters or maids, and every time say, Ah, brother I repent, he would soon be told that he is a desperate rogue and an ungodly knave. Again, I say, Observe this.

Seventhly, he says, "Thou shalt forgive him." Observe, he says, "Thou shalt forgive him." And the Scriptures plainly teach that none can forgive sins (these are the ten thousand talents which were owing to the king), but God alone. And that we alone can pay the hundred pence that we owe our brother, as the Lord teaches in the parable with all plainness.

Behold, in this sense the Holy Scripture remains salutary unto us, and proceeds in its proper order when, where one brother trespasses against another, three admonitions are given before excommunication, Matt. 18: 15—18, to a heretic one or two, Tit. 3: 10, and to an open, offensive, sensual sinner, who is already condemned by the word of God, none at all, 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 13.

Do impartially, and in love, reflect upon what the Scriptures say, without hypocrisy.

8. *That we are not to pervert the truth with David's sin, repentance and remission; but have to understand it rightly according to Scripture.* It is evident that abominable, carnal sins, such as fornication, adultery and the like, generally arise from blindness of heart; that they are committed premeditatedly; are the result of unclean, inflamed passions and carnal lusts; notwithstanding the beginning of them may have taken their rise apparently from infirmity. Of this we have a true example in David, although he was a man after God's own heart, and by virtue of his faith slew the giant, Goliath, whom all Israel dreaded, and rescued the lamb from the jaws of lions and bears, yet he was so captivated in his flesh by the sight of his eyes that he sinned greatly; for as soon as he consented, sin was committed, and his heart, which was before a temple of

the Holy Ghost, was so blinded and bewitched, that he, without any dread, fell into one deadly sin and wickedness after another; yea, as appears, he never once thought of the Lord who saved him from so many dangers, and called him to such distinguished honor, and endowed him with such a precious spirit. For when it was told him of Bath-sheba, that she was with child to him, he sought to hide his flagrant act; he had Uriah called from the field and pretended as if he wished to consult him in relation to the war, admonished him twice, that he should go into his house; why he did so, is well understood. Afterwards he invited him to a feast, pretending as if he was sincere; so that he might make him drunk, and have him go in unto his wife and cover David's shame. But when he failed in all this, he gave this truly valiant man an ungodly, treacherous letter, that Joab should place him in such a point where the danger of being killed was greatest, so that he might be slain.

Behold, thus you see how one wicked act engendered another when he consented to the lusts of the eyes, and gave place to sin. Yea, he was blinded to such a degree in his inflamed flesh, and was so deeply involved in sin, that, according to the rigor of the law, had he not himself wielded the sceptre, he would have been two-fold guilty of the ban or curse of death; first, because he was an adulterer; secondly, because he was guilty of innocent blood.

He boldly continued in such abominations till the prophet came to him, and through a parable, so wisely reprov'd him that he pronounced his own sentence as worthy of death. When he heard the word of the prophet who appealed powerfully to his heart, he was moved, sought for grace, and without delay turned to God with a broken heart, and bitterly wept over his great sin, and confessed to the Lord that he had sinned against him; prayed and sighed painfully, and said, "Have mercy upon me, O God! according to thy loving kindness, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions; wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit

within me; cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me," Ps. 51: 1, 2, 10, 11. On account of which he was again comforted of the prophet, who said unto him, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Nevertheless, he had to endure a severe punishment on account of it, for, said Nathan, "Therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me;" and the Lord said, "Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun;" because thou hast despised me. Observe, he says, "Because thou hast despised me," 2 Sam. 12.

And behold, thus the wantonness of David resulted in greatly despising God, and it was a grievous sin unto him. True are the words of James, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it hath finished, bringeth forth death," Jas. 1: 15.

Thus it is in the new state of things in Christ; for since we are not to punish the abominable, carnal transgressors with fire, stone or sword, as upright Israel did of old, but only by excommunication, as is well known to all who are taught of God; therefore, it behooves us to consign those with their wicked deeds, where the Scriptures direct them, namely, into death, and to the wrath of God, as holy Nathan did blood-guilty and adulterous David. They will then, under such a dread, severe sentence, which, according to the Scripture is pronounced upon them by exclusion, in true love, by the grace of God, go within their hearts, and are provoked, like penitent David, to true repentance; yea, that we may evidently see by all their words, works, and whole life in truth, that the gracious Father has again received and indued them with his Spirit, and pardoned their sins; then, and not till then, understand well what I say, have we the same word of promise whereby we can again comfort them and proclaim to them the grace of the Lord, namely, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die;" "thy sins are forgiven, go and sin no more;" for that a truly peni-

tent person should be left unconsoled of God or man, is impossible. O, reflect on what has been quoted.

Thus it becomes us rightly to divide the Scriptures, that we do not make the sin, repentance and remission of David as an example of encouragement to the rash, blind world, that we do not receive, as brethren, the offensive, carnal sinners, namely, those who are banished of God, at a mere promise to reform; but they should show such repentance that the church may be satisfied of their sincerity. For we must not build upon uncertainties, and comfort in vain, but like Nathan, comfort when we see true repentance, if we would not wish to flatter sinners with lies, and derogate from the judgment of God, as heard.

9. *Of the inconsiderate backsliding, and immediate recovery of Peter.* Dearly beloved brethren, beware; we have shown and explained to you, that the abominable, carnal sins generally arise from the sudden enkindling of the passions, and so it can happen that sins may be committed through infirmities. Of this we have a true example in Peter; for when the Lord said to him, "Simon, Simon, behold satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." To which he replied with much assurance: "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death."

Peter was for venturing all with his Master, as he said; but as soon as he stood alone, he could not endure a single question put to him by a maid: he openly denied Christ, although the evening previous he said that he would die with him. Yea, he was so alarmed and frightened that he began to curse, and to swear that he did not know Christ.

O God! there lay the upright, bold Peter, the firm rock, broken. Although he had been taught of the heavenly Father and honored by Christ, the beloved Son of God, with the promise of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, nevertheless, he could not endure but such a faint blow. Behold, thus man is nothing, poor, miserable, sick and impo-

tent, especially in so great need, if he is not strengthened by the Spirit of God. But what was it? Peter had to learn to know what that man is, who depends upon his own strength, and not in the full fear of God, upon Christ and his grace. Besides he learned how to be compassionate and merciful towards his poor, fallen brother, who would again be heartily converted and rise without hypocrisy from his fall.

It appears to me that this may justly be called an unexpectedly precipitate error in Peter. For he entertained not a single thought before, that he would deny his Lord and Savior. And he also rose in the very hour, went out and wept bitterly, and on the third day he was again comforted with the gospel by the holy angels of the Lord.

Observe, brethren, how Paul teaches, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken" (observe, he says overtaken), "in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted," Gal. 6: 3.

Chosen brethren in the Lord, I would then most affectionately entreat you by the words of Paul and the fall of Peter, and admonish you faithfully in Christ Jesus, that you would by all means, discriminate, by the spirit of wisdom, between backsliding and remaining in that condition. For if any one continues in a sin, upon which eternal death depends, he is already condemned by the Scriptures. But if any one falls into it unwarily, of him the prophet says, "Shall they fall and not arise?" And as Paul says, "Restore such a one." It is, therefore, just and right that we be truly circumspect; that we do not depress too much a poor, broken-hearted sinner, who would willingly be restored and rescued from his deplorable condition; but we must, in christian meekness, tender him the hand of charity, lift him up and help him to bear his burden as much as we can, and as far as our consciences and the word of God permit. Ah! take heed, be not too rash in such a case, lest you may also be tempted or overcome, as Paul says. Let holy Peter be an admonition to you, in order that you will not lose yourselves in your proud minds. "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he de-

ceiveth himself," Gal. 6: 3. In short, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall," 1 Cor. 10: 12. For the snares are more numerous than we are aware; those who would wish to escape them must be dead to sin, regenerated and true christians, be constant in prayer, be circumspect, watch assiduously, and must be led and influenced by the Holy Ghost, else they are already in the snare of death. Ah! let us reflect upon this.

Let every one examine himself fully, whether he has not sinned before God since his conversion, and became a faulty vessel. He that may think he is free, let him cast the first stone. But he that does not find himself altogether free, let him, with Peter, strengthen his weak brother, who, perhaps, has not sinned half so heinously.

Since then, it is manifest, that to *fall*, and to *remain* in that condition, and presumptuously to sin, are different; therefore, will I leave such sins, on account of which the people of the Lord are grieved, if such should be the case, to the spirit, unction, deliberation, fear of God and love of the church, to look into with wisdom and understanding. If they deem it deserving excommunication, let them judge as the Scriptures teach. If they consider it not in that light, but only as a sin, unwarily committed, that they then restore the sinner or transgressor, with a spirit of meekness and love. This is my admonition with the faithful apostle, father, teacher and predecessor, the apostle Paul, to all the pious. These words are full of power and spirit, "Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

10. *How we should understand, according to the Scriptures, the saying of James, "If any of you do err from the truth," &c., Jas. 5: 19.* In the first place, the rational law of nature teaches us, that if one sees the house or goods of his neighbor on fire, or sees his neighbor sick, or his body, his wife, his children or his cattle needing assistance, he must willingly render him aid, and extend his hand to his neighbor, in time of need.

Again, Moses says, "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them; thou shalt in any case bring them unto thy brother," Deut. 22: 1.

Thirdly, Christ says, "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it," Luke 15: 4.

Observe then, how the law of nature, of Moses and of Christ, teaches us such great love and discretion, not towards men alone, but towards our temporal goods, and to our creatures, so it is proper that we, who are born of the holy seed of love, should seek for the soul of our neighbor, whose feet we see upon the way of sin, which leads to death. Thus James says, "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," James 5: 19, 20.

Here we would entreat all pious hearts, for Jesus' sake, that they would make a distinction between those who ignorantly err, and those who willingly go in the way of death, in order that the word of James be not construed so as to become a false comfort and support, to wanton and benighted sinners; for it is clear, that they are already condemned to death by the Scriptures, as we frequently have observed; but when any of our Father's little ones, Christ's sheep err, and begin to turn their ears to false doctrine, which is adorned with fair words, who suffer themselves, through their lusts, to be led from the truth, and begin to set their feet upon the broad way, and bow their hearts, again to covetousness, pride, haughtiness, &c., entertain inordinate desires for the property, wives, daughters, maids or the ungodly, vain company of their neighbors, become old and weak in their faith, dislike the truth and err grievously, and yet suppose that they go upon the right way, such erring ones, we should not suffer to be lost, but should seek them with all our power and might, not with one or two admonitions only, as is done with heretics, Tit. 3, nor but three times, as is the case in a dissension between brother and brother, Matt. 18, but as often as the Lord gives spirit and grace, till they again conform, in all things to the truth, depart from their errors, and enter upon the right way, or till they become as ravening, biting dogs or unclean swine. Yes,

my brethren, whoever can, with the truth, reclaim such a poor, erring sinner, lead him from the way of error, and bring him back to the fold of Christ, rescues his soul from death, and covers a multitude of sins, with which, alas, he was already too much stained. From whom? From men, or from God? Not from men, but from God; for it is impossible to hide from men that which they see, and which happens before them; as adultery, fornication, murder, open idolatry, drunkenness, &c. The idolatry of Aaron, with the golden calf, the misconduct of David with Uriah and Bathsheba, and the denial of Peter are examples. For although they repented, and their sins were covered from the sight of God, yet were they manifest to the whole world as admonitions and warnings, and as examples of his grace over all who truly repent; of this covering of sin, David spake, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity," Ps. 32: 1, 2.

I will now leave to the godly for reflection, whether these words of James as here expounded, are not salutary: for those worthy of exclusion would be excluded, the erring be sought, love would exert its full power, the penitent would be rescued from death. Both their open and secret sins would be covered before God, and all would proceed according to the Scriptures. In true love observe what is the mind of the holy word.

11. *How the latter part of the twelfth, and the beginning of the thirteenth chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, are to be understood.* We find by Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, that there were many parties and sects among that people. Some boasted that they were of Cephas, others of Paul, and others again, of Apollo. On this account, Paul reproved them in love, and admonished them to be one in Christ. He writes also in the eleventh chapter of the same epistle, "When ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it, for there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." There were also some among them who said there was no resurrection, 1 Cor. 11: 18, 19; 15: 12; therefore, he also

feared that when he came, he would not find them as he desired, nor that they would find him as they desired; lest more dissension than union, more malice than love, more wrath than meekness, more strife than peace, more whispering than rebuking of wickedness, more pride than humility, more tumult than quiet, should be found among many. Such is commonly the condition where the high and proud of heart, who neither know nor love the peaceful, humble Spirit of Christ, are highly esteemed, and have attained authority over the plain, simple people. Who regard the adornment of words more than spirit and power. This I write in upright, undissembled love, without regard to party. God grant us grace to enable us to perceive it.

Again, we find that there were some impenitent amongst them such as selfish, covetous, contentious, fornicators, incontinent and unchaste. Therefore he feared that when he came, he would have great sorrow on account of those who had already sinned before, and not repented of their lewdness and unchastity. For it is manifest that lewdness at that time was so prevalent among the gentiles, that the holy apostles admonished and counseled the brethren among the heathen, in a common council, as may be seen from Acts 15; Rom. 1; 1 Cor. 5, 6, 7.

It is evident, that, at that time, some were very little concerned about the lewdness and dissensions, which were so prevalent, that the apostolic excommunication was not very rigidly enforced. This may be seen from Paul's own words, and reproving, to wit, "Ye are puffed up," &c., 1 Cor. 5: 2.

Through their heedless disobedience, they permitted the good and evil to exist among them, so that the faithful man of God upbraided them sharply, saying, "This is the third time I am coming to you. In the month of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now, I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that if I come again, I will not spare," 2 Cor. 13: 1, 2. These hard words of Paul testify clearly that in that time, although such wicked persons, as fornicators, unchaste, sectarians, &c., were held in com-

munion, yet they did not regard his writings concerning the Ban; for it is plain if the historian rightly testifies, that some years had passed away before Paul made his last journey to them, and it is against all Scripture and reason to suppose that they, in the mean time, admitted these persons with Paul's consent. It is manifest that he rebuked all iniquity both with word and writing, and directed to the ban, as had been related, yet the foul leaven which was against the holy, divine word, and which disgraced the church, they did not put away. He wrote and expressed his meaning by these words, that all those who oftentimes had sinned and had not repented, and those who sinned more recently, that if he would come the second time, that if he should find one or the other, testified to by two or three witnesses that they have been guilty of ungodliness, that he would not then spare him. Observe this.

It is also manifest that he did not write this rebuke privately to this one or that one, but openly to a whole church, in a common epistle, that the disobedient might be rebuked, as we, unworthily, at times write, and teach the word of the Lord, and there is not a syllable which tells us to admonish such once, twice or thrice, but to reprove them in round terms; that if he came, he would make known to them their merited punishment. His words are firm and immovable, that we shall not eat, or have fellowship with fornicators, idolators, &c. O! reflect upon what the Scriptures say, 1 Cor. 5.

12. *It is our duty to pass the sentence and judgment of Christ without blame, according to the Scriptures, and to make use of his keys in a proper manner.* Chosen brethren in the Lord, forasmuch, then, as I have seen in my day much ignorance and misapprehension displayed by many in regard to this point, some of whom, in my humble opinion, were too rigorous, while others were too lenient and remiss, in consequence of which some of our members have been affected, alas! with no little sorrow. And as I have now faithfully explained the true apostolic excommunication, in pure, unadulterated love without partiality, therefore, I am further impelled by the same love to offer a few remarks upon the keys and their appurtenant

use, inasmuch as they pertain to the excommunication; so that no one, misled by ignorance, may with anti-christ presumptuously place himself in Christ's seat, nor follow and execute his own judgment, design and resolution, but those of Christ, his Lord, and the doctrine, ordinance and commandment of the holy apostles, without any regard to the flesh, party or self-wisdom, lest he should reject him whom God saves by his grace, and retain him, whom he in his righteousness rejects; for, to him alone pertains the right of binding and loosing, as we shall hear more fully in the sequel. Therefore, consider our quotations.

It is to be observed, in the first place, that there are two heavenly keys, namely, the key of binding, and the key of loosing; even as the Lord said to Peter, "I will give unto thee the key of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven," Matt. 16: 19. At another time, and after his resurrection from the dead, he spoke in a similar manner to his disciples, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained," John 20: 22, 23.

In the second place, we must observe that the key of binding is nothing else than the word and righteousness of God, the directing, demanding, constraining, terrifying and condemning law of the Lord, by and through which all are locked up under the curse, sin, death, and the wrath of God, who do not by faith receive Christ, the only and eternal means of grace, hear his voice and follow and obey his will.

Again, On the other hand, the key of loosing is the abundantly cheering and delightful word of grace, the pardoning, consoling and unbinding gospel of peace, by and through which all those are delivered from the curse, sin, death and the wrath of God, who, with regenerated, new, converted, voluntary, rejoicing and believing hearts, receive Christ in power and with a firm confidence in his innocent blood and death, fear, love, hear, follow and obey him.

In the third place, it is to be observed that this binding key of Christ is given to

his ministers and people for this purpose, namely, that by and through it they shall, in the power of the Spirit, represent unto all earthly, carnal, obdurate and impenitent persons, their great sins, unrighteousness, blindness and wickedness, together with God's righteous wrath, judgment, punishment, hell and everlasting death, and thus render them contrite, dismayed, humble, broken, penitent, dejected and sorrowful of heart before God, and little in their own eyes. Wherefore, it is compared in its power and virtues to the rod of the oppressor, a hard hammer, the north wind, a sorrowful singing, and sharp detergent wine, Isa. 9: 4; Jer. 23: 29; Cant. 4: 16.

Again, On the contrary, the key of loosing is given to the end that with it the ministers and people of God may direct such contrite, troubled, dejected, sorrowful and broken hearts, as beforementioned, which are enabled, by the first key, to feel and see the deep, mortal wounds, their great defects and the profound fascination in which they were held, to the spiritual, brazen serpent; to the throne of grace; to the open fountain of David; to the merciful, compassionate High Priest, our only and eternal Offering of reconciliation, Christ Jesus; and thus heal their dangerous, malignant and deadly abscesses, stripes and the venomous wound of the infernal serpent. It is, therefore, likened in strength and virtue to the cheering olive-branch of Noah's dove; the balm of Gilead; the voice of truth; the south wind; the joyful pipe, and sweet, soothing oil, Gen. 8: 11; Jer. 8: 22; Cant. 4: 16; Luke 10: 34.

In the fourth place, it must be observed that these keys are given to us from heaven, by him who created heaven, earth and the sea with the fullness thereof, the eternal power, word and wisdom of the Almighty Father; the King of all glory, our only and eternal Redeemer, Intercessor, Bridegroom, Prophet and Teacher, Christ Jesus. We may, therefore, with the greatest propriety, be careful in regard to the ban, with fear and trembling, and not be influenced by flesh and blood, hatred or love, favor or disfavor, enmity or friendship, strife, dissension or partiality; but should execute it in the fear of the Lord, as the earnest,

heavenly command, word, and will of our Savior, in an upright, clear conscience without respect of persons. For without doubt they are precious keys since they are given us from heaven, as a present from such an illustrious friend. Ah! suffer yourselves to be told.

In the fifth place, it is to be observed that these keys are given to, and bestowed upon none but those who are anointed of the Holy Ghost, even as Christ says, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," &c. From this it is evident that they must be a believing, true, penitent, sober, chaste, humble, upright, friendly, obedient, devout, peaceful, and spiritual people; observe, a people dead unto sin, a regenerated people, who sit with the apostles in the seat of righteousness, and pronounce with them the righteous judgment of the Lord, against all stiff-necked, ungodly sinners, and teach, admonish, chastise, punish, and, in real power, judge or bind with the word and Spirit of the Lord, the unbelieving, impenitent, earthly-minded, drunken, adulterous, lecherous, unchaste, proud, haughty, unrighteous, perverse, disobedient, quarrelsome, carnal sinners. For it is evident that a carnal man cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God; but they that are spiritual, examine and judge all things aright, yet they themselves are judged of no man. Yes, my brethren, it is utterly impossible for one carnal-minded man, or for one quarrelsome person to teach, instruct or chasten another correctly through the Spirit of Christ, or in the power of his word justly to separate him from his church according to the will of God. For their fruits plainly testify that they are both impenitent, destitute of the Spirit, nature, and disposition of Christ, and subject to death and the curse.

Therefore, fear God, and know how or what you judge. For if one should sentence a ban-deserving person, such as a fornicator, drunkard, or any other carnal transgressor, to excommunication, while he himself was wrathful, avaricious, proud, haughty, uplifted, ambitious, unchaste, lying, quarrelsome, impure, envious or false hearted, and would secretly continue in his wickedness, then, according to Paul, he would sentence his own soul, for he says, "Thou

art inexcusable, O man whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself," Rom. 2: 1.

I therefore, counsel and admonish all the pious generally, who sit in judgment upon a sinner that is to be excommunicated, that they previously examine well their own conscience, heart and mind, and see whether they have the Spirit of Christ, whether they sit in the apostles seat, and also whether they do it out of pure fear of God, in obedience to his word, and out of sincere love to the brethren or out of flesh and blood through hypocrisy, to the will of men. For if they have not the Spirit of Christ, do not sit in the seat of the apostles and carry the keys of heaven, their judgment can not be of God, and will tear down more than build up. It is even in reality nothing but a sore judgment against their own souls. But if they have the Spirit of Christ, sit in the apostles seat and make use of the keys of heaven, their judgment will doubtless be righteous, will agree as the judgment of Christ, and they will not by any means make themselves guilty in passing judgment against the transgressor. Those who are born of Christ, may judge what I advance.

In the sixth place, it is to be observed that these keys must not be made use of, except in the name of Him who committed them to us, and by his power, that is with his Spirit and word, for He alone is the King and Prince of his church, the Shepherd, Teacher and Master of our souls, before whose sceptre we must all bow, and whose voice we must hear, if we would wish to be saved, as has been heard.

Since then he is both the Ruler and the Giver of this, and both the binding and loosing are in his hand, and must therefore be done in his name, with his Spirit and word alone, as related; therefore we may well take heed lest through our profaneness, inclination or foolish purpose, we loose those whom he himself has bound in heaven, or bind those whom he himself has loosed in heaven even as the sin of perdition and the man of sin, together with all his deceiving and impure prophets, O God, have done for many centuries. O, children take heed.

As far as concerns the key of binding of

this evangelic ban, it is clear that when an open fornicator or adulterer is convinced by two or three witnesses, or an abuser of himself, or an idolater, or a drunkard, or envied, or a perverse, self-willed disputer, or an impenitent, froward, lazy, fastidious and idle glutton, or a blasphemer, thief, robber or murderer, is brought before the church, they have the judging word of the Scriptures, by which they may separate and exclude him, and announce to him by the Spirit of Christ, that he is no longer a member of the body of Christ, has no more promise, but that he shall endure everlasting death, and fail of the kingdom of grace. In short that his final part and lot, unless he sincerely repents, shall be the burning lake of fire, hell and the devil. For his works show plainly that he is of the wicked one.

Behold, such are those over whom the first key has power. For the righteous judgment of God, and his firm, binding word, take hold of them, since they again forsake Christ; despise his holy word and covenant; live according to the flesh; stir up strife and dissention; break the bond of love; separate the pious; disquiet those of a gentle, peaceable disposition; introduce and establish offences and slanders, as the evident fact has frequently taught and as is known to many others, alas! as well as to myself. Ah me! what a severe stroke he receives who is bound by the people of God, with this dreadful key; and punished by his righteous Spirit, with this dreadful curse. O Father, grant them thy grace.

The same thing applies to the key of loosening in this use of the ban. For if a poor, proscribed sinner humble himself again before his God, heart broken and penitent, groans and weeps bitterly, experiences heartfelt sorrow for his sins and an earnest longing for the truth, hates perverse paths of the ungodly and walks again in the path of the pious. In short, if he conducts himself so in his whole life, that we cannot perceive any thing in him but that the Spirit of the Lord has again anointed him, and received him into his grace, and would have him included in the number of the Lord's people; they have then the cheering word of promise, by which they may again bring

him to the altar of the Lord, sprinkle him with the spiritual hyssop of God, announce to him the grace of Christ, and receive him again as a beloved brother in Christ Jesus and greet him with the salutation of his holy peace. For, says the prophet, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" Ezek. 18: 23.

Forasmuch as it is manifest and established that Jesus Christ alone has the key of David, who unlocks heaven for the true penitent, unties the knot of unrighteousness and forgives and remits their sins; and again, as it is he who closes heaven against the impenitent, carnal sinners, binds them under his judgment and retains their sins, and we are nothing more than heralds, ministers and messengers in his name, and can make it neither longer nor shorter, narrower nor wider than taught us by his Spirit, and commanded us in his word, as heard, therefore it is evident, that they greatly err, who, in the pride of their ignorance, suffer themselves to think that they have power to retain or remit the sins of any man, or who with perverse, inconsiderate minds dare separate or excommunicate any one out of carnal motives, hatred or bitterness, and not purely and solely through the Spirit and word of Christ; or on the other hand, retain him through natural affection, friendship or partiality, contrary to the word of God and comfort him with uncertainties in his sins, winking at them; for with such, after the example of the false prophets, they strengthen the hands of the ungodly, since they retain them, and appear to adjudge their life, though without true repentance they shall not live. Ah! brethren beware.

I would, therefore, brethren and sisters, in the love of Christ, have you all faithfully admonished in God, that no one attempt, in this weighty, important and spiritual matter, to act higher or lower, severer or milder than the word and Spirit require, whether it be with the binding of the first key in righteousness unto eternal death, or with the loosening of the second key in grace unto eternal life; lest, by passing an unscriptural judgment, he offend against God

and his neighbor, and so be constrained to undergo the punishment of his pride, along with the angel of the bottomless pit. Observe this!

Ah! most beloved brethren, to what an amazing extent, in my opinion, is that man taught of God, who is able in this thing so to keep the true, royal highway, that he can properly employ the intrusted keys in de-

vout, heavenly wisdom, and correctly pass and impose his Lord's judgment with a sure, sealed conscience in true, apostolic measure, to the edification of all the pious. Let all who are born of God, who are impartial and pure in heart, reflect, with the unction of their spirit, upon the grounds of my writing and admonition.

CONCLUSION AND EXHORTATION TO ALL THE PIOUS.

BEHOLD, beloved brethren, with much trouble, pains and anxiety, I have now, in the infirmity of my declining years, added another small gift to the treasury of the Lord, not of the price of a dog, nor of the hire of a harlot, which was forbidden to Israel; but of the abundant benediction of my God, namely, from the settled principles of his truth. Though it is not to be compared in value or worth with the gold, silver, metal, silk, or precious stones of the offering, yet, if it be reckoned with the rams' skins, goats' hair, and shittim wood, I have already attained my wish. For my prayer and desire before God and his church is, that the living building of the heavenly tabernacles may advance with the greatest speed to the attainment of their intended splendor and magnificence. For this cause, I have suffered not a little hardship, affliction, sadness, poverty and reproach, so that I hope I may boast in my weakness with all the pious of God, apostles and prophets, yea, with Christ Jesus himself, that the zeal of the Lord's house hath eaten me up.

I would, therefore, earnestly desire all the pious, who, with a pure, unadulterated conscience, have drank the water of love out of the fountain of God, that they do not despise this gift, but that, with candid and discerning minds, they examine, as in the presence of God in Christ Jesus, its nature, principles, vigor, cogency and virtuous tendency; and having thus passed a sound, impartial judgment upon it, that you leave it unbroken in all its parts. For it is my valedictory which I now offer, as I take my

leave of you all in this part, of the ban and retire to rest.

In this I have not sought the acquirement of human favor or honor, the indulgence of flesh, or the promotion of party purposes, but I have illustrated the principles of truth, confirmed the holy ordinance of the apostles, rendered due praise to the justice and mercy of God, assigning to each its part, have added nothing new, nor varied in the least from its principles of my plan, except that in consequence of much conversation with the pious, and meditation upon certain writings, as also on account of great dangers, actual occurrences, and heinous abominations, and in order to put a stop in some measure to all offensive, disgraceful actions, I have more deeply considered the excluding sentence of the flagrant, carnal sinner, and, in this way, placed it upon a more certain basis, as may be seen.

As we are well convinced that the depth of satan is to some but partially known and manifest, and as a consequence that he does great injury, by means of his subtle, pernicious wrangling and disputation, as may be seen; therefore, my first earnest request unto all, who are named after the name of Christ, is, that they would reflect soberly, judiciously and discreetly upon the nature, character, heart, mind, Spirit and disposition of Christ, and consider that all which he has commanded, left and taught his followers, is nothing but pure righteousness, truth, patience, love and peace. Also, that they bow their knees before him, and have received the token of his most holy cove-

nant; that they should bury their former sinful life in his death; circumcise their hearts with his sharp word and Spirit; follow him, walk in all his ways, and be one with him in both the inward and the outward man, as taught in Scripture; also, that they reflect upon the high promise, and follow his word and will, in power and in truth. For he is such a God, that he does not take pleasure in outward shadows, ceremonies, types, bread, wine, water, and nominal service, but in spirit, deed and truth.

My second request is, that they would on the other hand, consider the nature, character, heart, spirit, mind, and work of satan, that he is from the beginning a shrewd, cunning deceiver, an impudent, wanton liar, and a revengeful murderer, a malicious envier of the honor and truth of God; a falsifier of his Holy Word, and a deadly enemy of pious souls; seditious, factious, unruly, schismatic, envious, perverse, and destitute of love; incapable of conceiving and bringing forth any thing but hatred, backbiting, lies, deception, jealousy, impurity of heart, vice and shame, and all in semblance of the truth. In *semblance* of the *truth*, I repeat, for although he is the infernal satan, beelzebub, belial, behemoth, leviathan, the angel of the bottomless pit, the prince of darkness, the old serpent, and the very devil himself, yet it is manifest, notwithstanding, that he has the power of transforming himself into an angel of light, as Paul informs us.

There is nothing of an external nature oppressive or vexatious to him, if he can only gain possession of the citadel of our hearts, and expel therefrom, Christ's nature, disposition, Spirit and power; if he can do this he has already won the prize of his craftiness, yea, if a man was even baptized by Peter or Paul himself, had received the bread of the Holy Supper from the hand of the Lord, would nevermore take part in papistic idolatry, yet if he retained but one of the fruits of the devil, whether hatred, or party spirit, envy, bitterness, avarice, revengefulness, pride, unchastity, or any other vice, we must declare with the Scripture that his spirit is devilish, and his life hypocrisy. For it is very evident that the whole man must be regenerated, sincere, unsophistica-

ted, spiritually minded, godly, holy, devout, united and subject to Christ; as James says, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," James 2: 10.

Yes, worthy brethren, those who are so far taught of God, that they are able, well and truly to distinguish between Christ and the devil, in relation to their nature, disposition, doctrine, and works, and thereby perceive that the disposition of Christ is productive of life, and the disposition of the devil is productive of death, shall, and will undoubtedly, separate and depart entirely, from all vain and unprofitable disputation, schism, separation, contention, dissension, sedition, and sectarianism, and also from all deadly abominations, sins, and shameful actions; of this I am fully convinced by the grace of God.

My third request is, that they would all, with candor and sincerity of heart, meditate upon the glorious and illustrious names with which they are honored in the Scriptures, namely, Children of God, saints and beloved of God, chosen of God, regenerated seed and children of Abraham, seed of peace, plants and scions of righteousness, fruitful grafts of Christ, members of the body of Christ, flesh and bone, mothers, sisters, brothers, disciples, guests, friends, sons, daughters, maiden, virgin, bride and spouse of Christ, His holy vineyard, camp, city, Jerusalem, temple, ark, house, abode, chosen people, citizens of heaven, living stones, companions of the saints, apostles and prophets, house-hold of God, kings and priests, doves, sheep, the light of the world and the salt of the earth, &c., to the end that by such meditation, their conduct inwardly and outwardly, privately and publicly, may be such in all their ways, words, and works, before God, in the presence of the church, and before the whole world that they may, by grace, with the pious, walk worthily of all such glorious names, in love, peace and harmony, and by his paternal bounty forever escape the severe curse of excommunication, before mentioned, and not with the goats to the left hand, hear the stern sentence, Depart from me, ye cursed, but with the sheep to the right hand the cheering words, Come ye blessed, and be not num-

bered in eternity with those who are bound by the ban of the word, in the power from God, and styled in Scripture, a cursed, ungodly race, cursed children, children of wrath, and of the devil, servants of sin and perdition, mockers, revilers, wicked, carnal, perverse, unrighteous, ungodly, stiff-necked sinners, dogs and swine, for whom are reserved the eternal woe, death, fire, lake and torment of hell. O, brethren take heed!

My fourth request is, to all those to whom the charge of the word of the Lord is committed, who are fellow laborers with me in the ministry, that in all their actions, they so conduct themselves before God and his church, that no man can in truth censure or speak evil of them; as sincere ministers of Christ; faithful and true in all things; men full of the Holy Ghost, born of the incorruptible seed of God; encompassed with heavenly light; transplanted into the good disposition of Christ; partakers of his grace; taught and anointed of God; having their minds upon eternal things; hating their own fame, vainglory and impure, carnal lusts; lowly and little in their own eyes; of a meek and gentle spirit; compassionate, merciful, paternal, long-suffering, friendly, humble, chaste, given to hospitality, submissive, mild, courteous and peaceful; well versed in the sound doctrine; seeking and acting in accordance with the good nature, disposition, character, heart, mind and example of Christ; confirmed in spirit, blameless shepherds, taking oversight of the flock of God, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre's sake, nor for the sake of their own bellies, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords nor rulers, but being examples to the church of Christ, that in consequence of their faithful ministry they may run in fullness of joy upon the mountain of the Lord without fear or shame, and escape unharméd the mouths of fierce, ravenous wolves.

Yes, my brethren, if we could all proceed according to this rule in unity of spirit, unaccompanied by the destructive foxes, how soon would the bride of the lamb, shine forth in costly and variegated apparel, adorned in white and glittering robes, splendid bracelets, ear-rings and neck-laces (understand the beauty and ornament of her virtues), and with the brilliancy of her ap-

pearance, excite the admiration of the whole world; whereas now, in consequence of deceitful workers, cunning wranglers and sowers of dissension, she must sit, at times, in rags and tatters, and, oh God! be the scorn and derision of multitudes.

The anguish of my soul is oftentimes so great that I am unable to write; God omnipotent, strengthen me. And this, because I see that the house of the Lord has to endure so many offences, not only from without, but, alas! from within also. O men! men! arm yourselves! for the words of Paul are true, that the ministry of the New Testament is not a ministry of the letter, but of the Spirit. Its duties, therefore, cannot be truly discharged to the glory of God, by the proud, the arrogant, the ambitious, or the self-willed, who wish to perform every thing after their own mind, humor and inclination, for they pull down more than they build up, and do more injury than they do good. This is a necessary consequence, inasmuch as according to the tenor of the doctrine of Paul, this ministration is neither the depth of wisdom nor eloquence, nor a dead letter, with which they are generally replete, but it is God, Spirit, truth, power and life, of which they are entirely destitute. O take heed.

Arm yourselves, I repeat; for true teachers are called in Scripture, the angels of the Lord and valiant soldiers; be therefore manly; keep the commandment of God; hold fast and waver not. They are called watchmen and trumpeters; blow your trumpet to the right sound; watch over the city of God: watch wisely, I say, and neither slumber nor sleep. Spiritual pillars they are styled; O be steadfast in the truth: bear your burden willingly, waver not, neither be faint. Messengers of peace they are called; Ah, brethren live up to, and justify your name, walk in peace, maintain and break it not. They are called bishops and overseers; O take great care of the flock of Christ; take great care of them, I say, and see that you neither destroy nor neglect them. Shepherds they are called; O keep and feed the lambs of Christ, and leave them not to pine away. They are styled teachers; make known the word and truth of Christ; publish it abroad and con-

ceal it not. They are styled spiritual nurses and fathers; O nourish and cherish your young children; vex them not, neither cast them away. They should be as the parent bird to her young; gather together the young and tender ones in Christ, and scatter them not, nor hurt them. They are called the stewards of God; O perfect the mystery of the name; abuse it not, nor disgrace it. They are called the light of the world; shine and glitter in full glory, and conceal not the brightness of your virtue. They are called the salt of the earth; O let the salt penetrate through and through, and be not ill savored. Ministers in Christ's stead; Ah, brethren serve, but rule not; let no man glory in any gift, I beseech you. We are receivers, not givers of grace, not of ourselves, observe; we are servants, and not lords. Ah brethren, bow down and submit. My chosen in love and truth, the joy and delight of my soul, so long as you stand fast in the Lord, abide in the way of peace and are faithful to your brethren. Walk worthy of the vocation unto which you are called; fear your God with all your heart; love the brethren; discharge faithfully the duties of your ministry; he is rich from whom you will receive your reward. Watch and pray. Pray, I say, and that with confidence, and so the Giver of every good and perfect gift, will not withdraw from you his grace, Spirit, love and wisdom. Doubt not, neither be afraid. Let the glorious, typified breastplate of Aaron, Christ Jesus, decorated with its beautiful colors, its twelve pearls, its Urim and Thummim, be bound fast to the breast of your conscience, with the two golden chains of the two testaments, and with the two yellow laces of pure faith and unadulterated love; wash the feet of your affections, purify them in the spiritual laver, Christ Jesus, with the living water of his eternal and Holy Spirit, take of the blood of his unspotted offering, and in a true spirit, put it on the tip of your right ear, in order rightly to understand his word, and upon the thumb of your right hand, and upon the great toe of your right foot, in order to act and walk uprightly before him, and in the presence of his congregation. Have your spiritual mitres, girdles and garments made for glory and for

beauty, that, like verdant olive trees and luxuriant vines, and as burning torches and brilliant luminaries, in the firmament of the holy word, you may serve in fullness of glory, with all the faithful servants of Christ, day and night in his holy temple, to the glory of God and to the reformation of Israel; bring forth abundance of fruit, and when he shall appear with all his chosen saints, apostles and prophets, you shall receive in everlasting joy the promised reward. Sweet, gracious, and full of consolation is the word which the Lord utters, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," Matt. 25: 21. Ah brethren, from our hearts, let us be admonished, that we be faithful to Christ and his church.

Brethren and sisters, I will now in the peace of Christ, commit you all with one accord into the hand of the King of peace, and I do, with Paul, entreat you from my heart. "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind, let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves," Phil. 2: 1—3. For you well know by whom and wherunto we are called. Reflect upon this. So that no one may lose himself, on account of the shameful actions, and abominations of another, nor destroy the good works of Christ, disturb the peaceable, grieve the pious, offend the weak, give excuse to the wanton, drive the wavering again to the world, bring reproach upon the word of the Lord and his church, bring revilers into repute, and encourage the blood-thirsty; but that we be careful in all things to finish with joy, our course in Christ Jesus, and magnify his holy name, refresh one another in the peace of Christ, strengthen our sick, weak members, and young brethren, reprove the disorderly, publish abroad the truth of the Lord, and show unto all men, a blameless, christian example. To this end may the eternal God of omnipotence, grant us all, collectively

and individually, the active spirit of his grace, with perfect obedience and love in Christ Jesus, our Lord, Amen. Ah, chosen children! God knows this is my final adieu to you all. Love the brethren, and beware of dissension.

