

THE PURITANS ON  
LOVING ONE  
ANOTHER

## THE PURITANS ON...

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# THE PURITANS ON LOVING ONE ANOTHER

*Essays by*  
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Edited by Don Kistler



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# The New Commandment Renewed

or

**Love One Another,**

Being an endeavor after the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, by several uniting principles, among which there are ten rules for a right understanding of Scripture, very useful for these divided times

by

**Ralph Venning**

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” Psalm 133:1

# Letter to the Reader

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*To all who profess love for the Lord Jesus, and yet  
love not one another, according to His  
example and command.*

Beloved,

I wish I could say of you, as Paul did say of the Thessalonians, “as touching brotherly love you need not that I write unto you, seeing you yourselves are taught of God to love one another” (1 Thessalonians 4:9). But alas! There is need, yea, never *more* need, that I should write unto you of brotherly love; for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are you not carnal and walk as men, as taught of men, and not of God? (1 Corinthians 3:3).

What am I to such an undertaking as this? Many (the unworthiest of whom I am unworthy to follow) have gone before me, calling you to your calling to love one another. But do they not all say, “Who has believed our report? To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” Do they not all say, “We have labored in vain! We have cried indeed in the chief places of concourse, yea, in the concourse of the chiefest, even in the city and in the high places of the city we have uttered our words, and our lips drop sweetness. Our voice was love, love, live in love. But no man regarded; all our counsels were set at naught”?

Alas, beloved! What hope is there left for me to prevail? If Paul’s, if Apollos’s, if Christ’s words have not



taken with you, can mine expect to find acceptance? And yet I think I hope beyond hope because I know that God has all hearts in His own hand, and can turn them when and by whom He pleases. Therefore, though many out of their abundance have cast in much, I hope my mite will not be rejected. I must confess I have for a great while forborne lest I should be a reproach and derision daily, but I am now overcome, and that by importunity, not so much from without (which yet was much) as from within (which was more). For these words were within my heart like a burning fire shut up, and I was weary with forbearing. I could not contain myself. For while I held my peace from this good, my heart was hot within me; and while I was musing the fire burned, so that I could not but first speak with my tongue and now with my pen (most of these heads were preached at the Tower of London).

I said yea to myself and others. I often said I was few of days, and therefore I was afraid and dared not show forth my opinion. I said days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom; but the spirit within me constrained me, and I spoke and must speak that I may be refreshed. My belly! Should I hold my peace at such a time as this? If this wine should not have vent, it would be ready to burst like new bottles.

But let me not, I pray you, accept (nor except) any man's person; neither let me give flattering titles nor upbraiding language unto any man. Should I do so, my Maker would soon take me away. I know God would lay it to my charge.

Censures, perhaps, I may undergo, and I indeed expect them, but not from you. Let the world scoff. I

care not, having learned to pass through their good report and bad. I am not ignorant in what a narrow way I walk, how it concerns me to be cautious, both what I speak and how; for who would undertake to moderate the extreme immoderation of our days? And yet, for my own part, I am not solicitous (good intentions and innocence are careless, and seldom do I plan what to say). My conscience, yea, God Himself, bears me witness that I would not write a syllable which should give offense. "Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of those which observe me" (Psalm 27:11).

I would willingly blot out any expression which might be liable to suspicion; for truly, as Caesar said concerning his wife, it is not enough not to be at fault. But things relating to love, as Caesar's wife, should not be suspected to be at fault. I hope therefore if anything escapes me (seeing it is against my will that anything should escape) which may seem to deviate from the scope, that is, love, that your love will cover it with a charitable construction (for love of that which I write for and from, that is, love).

I have forborne to instance in anything touching any part or parties which might but occasion a prejudice against any of the principles. For, as Solomon says, he who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates very friends (Proverbs 17:9). And we find it confirmed by experience that such proceedings do but (as Paul said of profane and vain babblings) increase to more ungodliness, and their words (2 Timothy 2:16–17) will eat as a gangrene. I would therefore (and I wish all would) forget that which is behind, that which is past, miscarriages arising from

strife and envy (not looking so much how they came in, as how we may get them out, as one said of original sin), and press to that which is before and yet to come—love among brethren (the more excellent way). I have not in the least made it my study or endeavor to dress the matter in any habit, but plain; and I will give you my reason: I would not have words stay the readers from attending the things. That eloquence offers injury to things which draws us to observe it, seeing words are only for the matter's sake, and should be no other than would promote it.

Octavius Augustus had a special care to express his mind and meaning most plainly, and reprehended Marcus Antonius for writing such things that men rather wondered at than understood.

Zeno was wont to say that he had two sorts of disciples. The one he called "logophilas," who respected nothing more than language; these he liked not so well. The other he called "philologos," curious to learn such words as were fit to express things by; and these were his darlings.

I think the Apostle's discourse in 1 Corinthians 14 should silence all tinkling cymbals—such as affect such words and phrases as rather tickle the itching ears of men than affect their affections, or leave any impression on the heart and conscience.

For my own part, I acknowledge it my principle, and I would be loath that my practice should give it the lie, to speak to the lowest, and then I am sure the highest understand me; whereas should I, if at least I were able, speak to the highest, I should be to the lowest as a barbarian. In short, I rather choose to speak shortly, though but five words, which may be edifying

than to use ten thousand which, when men hear or read, they understand not.

I had thought to have collected the several heads, and have set them before you by themselves, but the whole book, being but little, will soon be run and read over, and therefore I shall spare you the labor of reading, myself of writing, and the printer of printing.

Thus, my beloved friends, having given you a foresight of what I have done, why and how, and hoping that these things which are cast in by the way are not cast away, I shall say no more, but pray that it may come unto you with a fullness of blessing, and be instrumental to unite your hearts in love, which will satisfy the desire and fulfill the joy of him who can rejoice in nothing but in being the servant of Christ,

*Ralph Venning*

# The New Commandment Renewed

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## Part 1

God's one and only design is, by the words of His mouth and the works of His hands, to bring forth His own image (Genesis 1:27) in all times and dispensations; and that is oneness. When He created man, He made him in the likeness and image of Himself, one. Yea, though He created male and female (Genesis 2:24), yet were they not two, but one flesh.

When this image was defaced, and man continued not in his uprightness, that is, in his simplicity and oneness, that which God aimed at in the restoration of man was the reparation of His image: oneness, that God and man might be one again. Yea, that in Christ all things in heaven and earth, which were fallen out with and fallen away from man upon his falling away from God, might be gathered together into one (Ephesians 1:10).

Yea, all the dispensations and dispensators which God has left in the world are to disappear and be no more once the saints come in (or, more emphatically, *into*) the unity of the faith (Ephesians 4:13).

That is (as I with submission conceive) when the Jews and Gentiles, the fullness of them shall be called in and come to the knowledge (or rather the acknowledgment) of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, or the man at age (He without us is not made perfect), and the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Christ, I mean mystically, is not yet a perfect man at age, is not yet in fullness, nor will be till all His members, both Jews and Gentiles, are brought forth. Now when these shall be brought into the unity of faith, which is the acknowledgment of the Son of God, then is God's design of oneness accomplished.

Now to the effecting hereof, God has promised to bestow on His people one heart (Ezekiel 11:19), which is not only in relation to their being newborn, and so being one with God, but as the Jews went with one heart to Jerusalem that they might build the Temple, so, in relation to this design of the unity of faith, God will knit together the hearts of His people that they shall fly together like doves to the windows (Isaiah 60:8). Yea, and before they are aware, I believe, they will find their souls made like the chariots of Amminadab, or a willing people (Song of Solomon 6:12). In a word, the top and consummation of all the happiness which Christ prays for His own is that they all may be one, "as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us" (John 17:21). Indeed, the glory of all our hereafter glory will be oneness of communion with the Father, Son, Spirit, and one another in God, who is one in all and all in one.

But seeing that as yet there seems to be a breach not only between the Jews and Gentiles, but between them who have attained to the knowledge and acknowledgment of the Son of God, I shall endeavor to bring the saints to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; for there is but one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all, and in you all (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Now that we may walk together in one way, it is requisite that we be of one true heart, and that which is most conducive thereunto is that we be of one mind. For the more unity there is in judgment, the more there is likely to be in affection (because likeness produces liking); and the more oneness there is in affection, the more there will be in practice and conversation. The more union there is, the more communion there will be, and the better. The less union there is in judgment and affection, the less and worse will our communion be.

And seeing we can hardly live together unless we love together, or, as the prophet said, "Seeing we cannot walk together unless we be agreed" (Amos 3:3), I shall, as God enables me, lay down some principles which if read as written—without prejudice and partiality—will not a little provoke and conduce to union and agreement.

**PRINCIPLE 1.** That we may meet to agree together, let us agree to meet together, and that is meet: for the prophet says, "How can two walk together unless they meet and come together?" (Meetings are "meet" things). Thus I would read "unless they agree together", for meetings are the porch or entry into agreements. And I think Christians should be greatly entreated to meet together; surely it is to be feared that they are loathe to agree who are loathe to meet about an agreement.

**OBJECTION.** But what makes the saints so backward to meet about an agreement?

**ANSWER.** These three things: self-conceit, pride of heart, and Satan's policy.

First is a self-conceit that each of them is in the

right. Every man has a good opinion of his own opinion. Every man puts it off from himself, and instead of saying, as did the disciples when Christ told them, "One of you shall betray Me," "Master, is it I?" most are ready to say, "Master, it is *not* I." Having exhorted to love in Romans 12:10, Paul adds in verse 16, "Be not wise in your own conceits." Most men, instead of confessing their blindness, ask, like the scornful Pharisee, "Are we blind?" So loath are men to suspect their own defects. It was just so in the time of the division between the Roman and Grecian churches that each justified themselves, and neither would acknowledge themselves to be in error. But, Christians, hear a little: if you think yourselves in the right, I hope you think so on good grounds, and not that you are in the right merely by thinking so. Now if the grounds are good upon which your conceits are built, you need not be afraid, nay, you may be encouraged to produce them with boldness. It is to be suspected that they who refuse to bring forth their strong arguments have no strong arguments to bring forth. Christ tells us that he who does truth, and he who holds truth, comes to the light that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God (John 3:21).

If men's arguments are pure and good, they will not be the worse, but the *more* confirmed by being weighed. If they are found either base metal or counterfeit, the discovery will engage them to part with them and to take their part no longer lest they deceive their soul. In short, if they are good, they may do good; they may help others to see the light. If they are bad, it will be a mercy they were produced, for you are losers while you follow darkness and lying vanities.



The second hindrance to a meeting about agreement is pride of heart. Men are loath to be the first movers lest they should be thought timorous and willing to yield. But, beloved Christians, Christ Jesus did not do so. God and we would never have met nor been reconciled together had not God come to us first. Though God was offended by us, and had just reason to be forever offended with us, yet He sounded a truce and made the first tender of agreement. Shall we not walk as we have Him for an example?

It is very observable that, while any one party is low, he pleads for moderation and reconciliation; but when he has the staff in its hand he scarcely minds, much less practices, either. Ah, Christians, the very heathens will shame us! For Aristippus, a heathen, though older than Aeschines who began the strife, sued first for peace. "Shall we not be friends?" he said to Aeschines. Christians, I beseech you go to one another, and say as Aristippus, "Shall we not be friends?" And oh, that every one would answer as did Aeschines, "Yes, with all my heart."

A third hindrance to a meeting about an agreement is Satan's policy. We may take up Paul's words when he wrote to the Thessalonians: "We had come unto you once and again, but Satan hindered us" (1 Thessalonians 2:18). Christians, why do you not come one to another? Why are you not in your journey? It is to be feared that Satan stands in your way and stays you.

**PRINCIPLE 2.** Having met, labor for a right understanding of each other's mind. There is nothing that makes men stand at such a far distance as a misunder-

standing. It is with men now as with the men at Babel: the languages are confounded and they understand not one another. At your meetings, seek God about these three things for a right understanding.

First, seek that God would be pleased by His own Spirit to declare and make clear His truth unto you—that He would make known to you, and make you to know, what is His good, perfect, and acceptable will that you may walk before Him in all well-pleasing.

Second, entreat God that He would deliver you to the truth as well as deliver the truth to you. Not only that He would open His truth to your hearts, but also open your hearts to His truth, so that you may close with every truth, embracing and welcoming it as your joy, though it should open you to never so many reproaches in the world.

Third, entreat God to remove all obstacles and take that out of the way which stands in the way, and keeps you from understanding and owning truth. Some of those obstacles are as follows:

*Beware of self-interest in holding any opinion.* Nothing more hinders men from going to or going from an opinion than the interest they have by holding it. Men do not care so much for the opinions they hold as for what they hold by their opinions. I am confident that many a man thinks what Demetrius said, “This craft by which we have all our wealth is like to be set at naught, and then we are like to come to naught” (see Acts 19:27).

Hence they begin to fly in the face of truth, and oppose it with outrageous rage, so dearly sweet and sweetly dear is their darling gain. They see that they cannot have the honey unless they burn the bees, and

therefore they fire them forthwith. They cannot possess the vineyard unless Naboth is put to death, and therefore he must be dispatched. When once the estate of gain and honor is touched, men begin to look about them, and will never call godliness gain because gain is their godliness.

*Beseech God therefore that you may be "un-selfed" and may lay down all your interest of gain and honor.*

*Let the truth of God be ten times dearer than tenths, or any income of gain and honor which comes in by any opinion.* For, as some say, where gold grows no plant will prosper; so certainly no truth will be dear nor have heart-room where the love of money or honor has taken place.

*Entreat God to keep you from passionate discourses and disputations, or from passion in discourses and disputations.* For so much passion as there is, so much there is to no purpose, yea, to an ill purpose. The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God.

Passion usually arises more from and for self than for Christ.

Passion hinders the efficacy of the argument, for the tingling of passion hinders the sound of truth.

Passion makes a man unfit for discourse and confounds both memory and understanding, so that, as Aristotle has observed, "They who are in passion cannot discern nor judge truth."

Christ loses more by the passion than He gains by the disputation. For while you seek to honor Him, He finds Himself to be dishonored. When two dispute, and the one begins to rage, the other not retorting is more sage.

*Entreat God to remove prejudices, for they very much*

*prejudice the entertainment of truth.* Ahab had such a prejudice against Micaiah that he would not call him “prophet,” but “Micaiah, the son of Imlah” (1 Kings 22:8). “There’s one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, but I hate him, for he never speaks good concerning me but evil.” But as Jehoshaphat said to Ahab, “Let not the king say so.” Even so would I say to you, Christians. Let not Christians say of one another, “This is a rigid man, I will not hear him,” or, “This is a sectarian, I will not hear him.” Beg God that prejudice may not hinder closing with truth.

PRINCIPLE 3. When God is sought, and you begin to discourse, deal faithfully as in the presence of God. Do not use policy and sophistry to veil the truth. Speak plainly and clearly; fit words are better than fine. Do not equivocate nor mince your meaning, hiding it under dubious terms, but propose all things clearly. Affect not novelty or nicety of language, but speak in known and familiar phrases.

Many times there is such ado made about terms so that, before the discourse is ended, men lose themselves and the question too. Therefore speak plainly and not in parables. It is no little vanity to speak such words as will constrain you to use twenty times more words to explain what you meant.

PRINCIPLE 4. Be as willing to hear as to speak. A man should hear twice as much as he should speak, as it seems to be intimated by his having two ears but one tongue. Were there in times of discourse more hearers and fewer speakers, there would probably be easier and speedier determinations. Much talk hinders ob-

servation, and keeps things from being weighed. A man shall meet with such talkative persons as are able to beat some men out of their wits, or at least their patience, like the beating of an unbraced drum. They are so confusedly busy, and so busily confused.

PRINCIPLE 5. Weigh not who speaks, nor how it is spoken, but *what* is spoken. You should not overvalue nor undervalue a truth because you like or dislike the party or his manner of speaking. Sometimes (according to the proverb) we handle the child for love of the nurse, and take up an opinion for the sake of the one who brings it; others refuse an opinion because such a one holds it. Maldonate stubbornly said of an interpretation of Philippians 4:15 that it was most agreeable to antiquity, but that, because Calvin had so interpreted it, he would choose a new one.

But, Christians, consider what you do. Would a man take poison though from a father, or refuse a cordial though from an enemy? It was better said, "Love Plato and love Aristotle, but above them love truth." And the Apostle rejoiced that Christ was preached, though they who preached Him did it out of envy and to add to Paul's bonds. Go from any man to go to truth, but go from no truth to go to any man. As Christ said that the pollution is not from without, neither indeed (in this sense) is the purity. What is the word the better for being in Paul's mouth or the worse for being in Apollos's? What is the heavenly treasure the worse for being brought in an earthen vessel or the better when handed to us by an angel? Is the word of wisdom the better for the wisdom of words, or is truth less beautiful because naked and not arrayed with satin

words and silken phrases? What if a man has neither silver nor gold to give you, is not Christ worth the receiving?

It is strange to see how men are led in and out of opinions merely by an opinion of a man. The philosopher (though he was the same man and of the same mind) in his squalid rags could not find admission when better robes procured both an open door and reverence. Boldness and readiness of speech with most (though not with the most judicious) bears away the bell. To go from Aristotle (though a man go to reason) is, or had wont to be, no small disgrace in the schools.

If Herod speaks, then it is the voice of God and not of man! But if Paul speaks, then it is, "What will this babblers say?" Some cannot hear unless a doctor preaches; others will not hear *if* a doctor preaches. Surely, Christians, these things ought not to be so. Truth should be welcome to us though the devil, the father of lies, brings it to us; and nothing but truth should be welcome to us, though an angel from heaven is the messenger.

PRINCIPLE 6. Let not custom bear sway for or against an opinion. Christ called Himself truth, not custom. Let not antiquity or novelty make you respect or disrespect a truth; honor truth for truth's sake, whether old or new. Though all truth is old, yet our sight of truth may be new. "Old truths may come newly to light. God is not tied to time for the gift of illumination," said Dr. [Joseph] Hall. Why then should new light be a trouble to some or tradition a burden to others? Why should divine or orthodox or orthodox divine grow out of date? Or why should not a gospel

preacher be in season? Some like words and practices because of custom; others have no other reason for their dislike. Never walk by what has *been* done or what *is* done unless it is what *ought* to be done. Reduce things to their primitive institution and then see what God says of them, as our Savior told the Pharisees, “Though Moses for the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives, yet from the beginning it was not so” (Matthew 19:8).

Men do nowadays with opinions as many do with their clothes. Some will keep to their great-grandfather’s habit and fashion; others, as changeable as the moon, think they are never in fashion unless they are ever changing fashions. Some cannot like a truth because it is not of ancient standing; others like it because it is of yesterday. Some can reverence none but gray-haired opinions; others like none but youthful and smooth-faced ones. It is true that the multitude of years teaches wisdom, and so may the youth of days; it is truth, and nothing but the truth, and all the truth, which should have our esteem, whether it is old or young, whether it is the firstborn of time or the last.

**PRINCIPLE 7.** In all discourses and disputations, use proper media or arguments by which to prove your tenets. Bring not Scriptures to your reason, but your reason to Scripture, or judge reason by reason and Scripture by Scripture. Moral arguments are not fit and proper by which to prove natural principles, nor in many things are rational arguments fit by which to prove or disprove Scripture. Prove spiritual things by spiritual arguments, as the Apostle hints to us: “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s

wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:13). The Apostle did not borrow words or arguments from without, but fitted spiritual arguments to prove spiritual things. Never draw ecclesiastical conclusions from political premises.

PRINCIPLE 8. Discourse not to cavil, but to convince or to be convinced. Many discourse and dispute more for faction than satisfaction, and hence come so many factions.

Many, yea too many, discourse and dispute to show themselves forth more than truth. They take more care to show what *may* be said than what *should* be said, ever carping and making objections when none need to be made.

PRINCIPLE 9. When truth is spoken, yield to it. Men think it a shame to submit and surrender themselves after they have so long and so stoutly stood in the defense of their opinion. And therefore, though they are convinced that their tenet is at least suspicious, like so many sophists in the schools they study to evade by distinctions rather than give glory to God in confessing their sin.

But, Christians, it is no small conquest and victory that you obtain when your error and darkness are overcome and taken captive by truth. It is an honor to be overcome by truth, but to overcome the truth is a shame. Plutarch makes it a great discovery of proficiency in virtue when a man does not take it ill that he is confuted.



PRINCIPLE 10. When you are convinced, and as far as you are convinced, practice what you are convinced of. Go together as far as you can. What need is there for you to part until you must? You can agree to preach, hear, and pray together though in other things you differ. I have seen such sweet success upon the prayers of Christians met together who have differed in several opinions that I cannot but beseech Christians that they would not forsake the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some is.

“Let us therefore, brethren, as many as are perfect, be thus minded; and whereto we have already attained let us walk by the same rule. And if in any thing you be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you” (Philippians 3:15–16).

## Part 2

In the meantime, let us like Christians observe these ensuing principles. They are as salve, and you may guess at the nature of our wounds by them. I shall leave the application of them to the blessing of God.

PRINCIPLE 1. Let us bear with one another, and forbear one another in love. We are commanded to bear one another’s burdens that so we may fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). And we shall undoubtedly be commended, for it is according to the good will of Christ, if we bear one another’s burdens. I am confident it is a burden to many a soul that they are not in all things like-minded with their brethren. Yea, it is not without some fear and trembling that in anything they

disagree with so many worthy and gracious men who are otherwise minded. Oh, help to bear, or at least bear with, the burden.

You cannot keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace unless you forbear one another in love, as appears most plainly by their connection—forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:2–3). This endeavor for unity and peace will be lost unless God, who bears with us, teaches us also to bear one with another.

Take these reasons for forbearance.

First, you all pretend, yea (I hope) *intend*, the same end. You profess one and the same design, the advancement of the gospel of peace and the peace of the gospel. Should you not therefore, in relation to this end, rejoice that Christ is preached, though some should preach Him out of envy and on purpose to add to your bonds? It was Paul's joy (Philippians 1:15–18).

Why, my dearly beloved, are you Ephraim against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim, seeing both are for Judah? Oh, that Ephraim might not envy Manasseh, nor Manasseh vex Ephraim any more. See that remarkable passage in which John says, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us, and we forbade him, because he followed not us" (Mark 9:38). Christians, is this not a man's language? Forbid him, silence him, out with him, down with him. Why so? Why, "because he follows not us." But Jesus forbade John to forbid him. Jesus said, "Forbid him not" (Mark 9:39). And He gives two reasons for it. First, He said, "No man who shall do a miracle in My name can lightly speak evil of Me."

Second, “he that is not against us is on our side” (Mark 9:40). Christians, can he be against you who is for Christ? What if he follows you not? Notwithstanding, he carries on Christ’s end. Blessed God, forbid that we should forbid one another to do Thy work.

Second, you agree in the most and the best things. The fundamentals and essentials of religion (in which you to whom I write agree) are of far more worth, and therefore of far more concernment to engage you, than circumstantials and accidentals (the things in which you disagree) are to disengage you.

Third, consider that you also are men subject to the like passions, and have also your failings and aberrations. “In many things we offend all” (James 3:2). Who is there that sins not? Good Lord! If Thou should be so soon angry with us as we are with one another, who could stand? I beseech you to read this Scripture with all lowliness and meekness of mind. “Brethren, if a man (or, as the margin reads it, “although a man”) be overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness” (Galatians 6:1). Why so? “Considering yourself, lest you also be tempted.” If you are tempted, that which you find fault with may be your fault.

**PRINCIPLE 2.** Until you are agreed, have charitable thoughts, not hard and harsh censures, of each other’s walking. Judge it rather to be conscience than stubbornness which engages men to walk in different courses. You would have others think so of you; why will you not think so of others? Who would not think but that to have every man’s good will, to keep the love of relations, to enjoy their liberties, men would comply

with anything, were there not an blight upon their consciences? Whence it may arise, I will not question.

Love thinks no evil of others as well as towards others. Love banishes jealousies and suspicions, and so consequently censures.

PRINCIPLE 3. Draw not away your love when God draws not away His love. Dare any man deny his love to that man where God grants His love? "If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha" (1 Corinthians 16:22). But is any man beloved and a lover of Christ? Oh, take heed; deny him not your love. Let that of the Spirit which appears in him draw your heart more towards him than you let that of flesh which appears take off your heart from him.

Many times we take notice of that which will divide and not of that which will unite. A small error was soon spied in certain pictures of Apelles when a thousand excellent touches were not at all observed. One hour of eclipse causes the sun to be more gazed upon than a thousand fair days. Those soldiers who followed Caesar's triumph published his vices, but concealed his virtues. But, dear Christians, let us rather say one to another, as Queen Elizabeth said to Lord Burleigh, "Sit down, my Lord; we make much of you, not for your bad leg, but for your good head." Let us make much of each other and sit down together, not because there is badness in the feet, but because there is goodness in the head and heart.

PRINCIPLE 4. Censure no man's intention until his practice, either by words or works, reveals his mean-

ing. Many times by their fears, jealousies, and suspicions men create that in their hearts which had never a place in the suspected parties' imagination. Jacob was needlessly troubled and causelessly afraid of his brother, Esau, when nothing gave him occasion to suspect his brother but his own guilty conscience which told him he deserved it. Jacob feared that he came to execute revenge when he really came to welcome his brother home and entertain him honorably.

Jealousy is as quick as martial law: it arraigns, condemns, and executes all in a moment.

Nothing more hurts and wrongs friends than jealousies. Some cry out about some, "These men intend nothing but anarchy and confusion, so that shortly there will be no difference of nor respect to persons." Others cry out about others, "These men intend nothing but lordship and tyranny, to encroach all power into their own hand, and so to be masters over our faith, and to lord it over the Lord's inheritance." But why have you become evil judges of thoughts? Are you the searchers of hearts? You would judge more righteous judgment in this to judge according to appearance.

**PRINCIPLE 5.** Do nothing to incense and exasperate one another. Provoke one another to love as much as you can, but to wrath as little as you may, nay, not at all. It is becoming of Christians to use soft words, and they turn away wrath. But many words stir up strife. Bitter words are like sharp swords: they pierce to the very soul (Proverbs 15:16). But let the passion of others provoke your compassion. It was sweetly said of Calvin concerning Luther, "Though he calls me devil, I will

call him saint." Oh, that Christians would learn that lesson of Christ: when you are reviled, revile not again!

Alas! Do not men speak bitterly against bitter speaking, and write bitterly against bitter writings, becoming inexcusable thereby? "For wherein they judge others, they condemn themselves, being doers of the same things" (Romans 2:1). Oh, that Christians would overcome evil with good, passion with meekness, and bitterness with sweetness, for a soft tongue breaks the bone (Proverbs 25:15)! Oh, how did Abigail's affection conquer David's passion, though heated sevenfold! And how did David's kindness to Saul make Saul confess his unkindness to David! However others carry themselves toward us unbecoming Christians, our carriage toward them should be no other than is becoming Christians. A publican will love where he finds love and salute when he is saluted. But you (ah, you Christians!) are to exceed and excel in love, to love when you are not loved (though the more you love, the less you are beloved), to speak fair when you are ill spoken of, not to render railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing, knowing that you are thereunto called.

Christians should be as the angels who are greater in power and might, yet bring no railing accusations before the Lord. Michael the archangel, disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, dared not bring (hark you Christians) a railing accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 9). Let us do for the future as John's disciples did by their master when Herod slew him. They took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus (Matthew 14:12). Let us bury in oblivion all railings and injuries. Only go and tell Jesus, and say, "Lord, rebuke them."

PRINCIPLE 6. Go not about to make one another odious by representing things as being worse than they are. Many times the picture of the lion is more dreadful than the lion himself. Good Lord! In what black, ugly and deformed shapes do men set forth one another, as if they were monsters and not men?

*I blush to tell it,  
That I can speak it,  
But cannot resell it.*

Tertullus never strained his oratory against Paul, nor Tobias and Sanballat theirs against Nehemiah, more than Christians (if at least they are as they are called) strain theirs to bring one another under disrespect and odium.

PRINCIPLE 7. Draw not conclusions from other men's principles and then say that they are their opinions. We may make the same complaint as David: "They wrest, torture and wrack my words." Alas! Men set everything on hooks, and stretch and twist every principle like a nose of wax.

Alas! What a pity it is to see men invert and pervert one another's words, and at length to draw such conclusions as would make one think they meant what they never meant! It is a good thing to interpret candidly, and, when a thing will bear a double construction, to take it in the best sense. But we see by sad experience that sophistry makes more syllogisms than does logic.

So some mistook and misreported Paul as if he had said that we might do evil so good might come thereof

(Romans 3:8). So the Jews depose that Christ said He would destroy the temple at Jerusalem in three days and raise it up again, when He spoke of His body (Matthew 26:61; John 2:21). What words thus wrested and perverted may not be called heresy and (as they said of Christ's words) blasphemy when, if taken as meant, and in their proper sense, they may be found very sound and consistent with truth? Take heed therefore of glossing or commenting upon another's text.

**PRINCIPLE 8.** Grant to others what you would have others grant to you. We are usually better at receiving than at giving. We care not how much we receive, nor how little we give, though it is more honorable to give than to receive! When we are inferior and others superior, we beg (as did the servant in Matthew 18:26), "Have patience a little." Have a little patience! But when we are superior and others inferior, we have no patience at all.

Jesus Christ sums up the Law and Prophets in this principle: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12). This is all that the law requires: to love your neighbor as yourself; and the doing of it is the fulfilling of the law. It is indeed a golden rule, a royal law, the standard of equity, according to which we must converse with all men.

Ah, Christians! Did we make other men's cases our own, we should say the case is altered. Job pleads thus with his friends: "I could also speak as you; if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake my head at you. But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should



assuage your grief" (Job 16:14–15).

Many great commanders have upon this very consideration shown themselves to be exceedingly merciful and kind to their captives, considering that it might be their own case, and then they would be glad of mercy. And, indeed, victory to generous minds is only an inducement to moderation.

See how Adonibezek's conscience flew in his face for his cruelty, when he himself was served by others as he had served others, when he said, "Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table; as I have done, so God hath requited me" (Judges 1:7).

**PRINCIPLE 9.** Do nothing in prejudice or partiality. The one will make you an enemy of good; the other will make you a friend of evil. Prejudice will take in nothing; partiality will take in anything.

Alas! Such is our misery that men part religion, and love by parties. Men love not as God loves, without respect of persons, but men love such because they take part with them and their designs, and have prejudice against others because they are not their followers.

Till we love one another according as Christ has given us command and example, as He has loved us, that is, as His, we cannot expect so sweet a concord as then we may.

**PRINCIPLE 10.** Ascend or descend, go higher or lower, do anything (sin excepted) that you may agree. Become all things to all men, if at last by any means you may win some. There is no greater way to win one another's love as by denying ourselves to seek one an-

other's wealth.

Nature is so in love with unity that particular beings will forsake their own interests, their elements and centers which are their rest and happiness, rather than there should be a breach or vacuity in nature. And it is but reasonable that particulars should serve the universal (for they who so lose, shall save), seeing that unless the vessel be preserved their cabins cannot.

Alas, Christians, how will you thus seek every man his own and not the things of Jesus Christ? "My joy is now fulfilled," said John at Christ's increase, "though His increase be my decrease." And Paul would rather starve himself and never eat flesh while he lived, than do anything which should offend or sadden his weak brother.

Bodies ductile and tensile (metals that will be drawn into wires, wool and tow, which will be drawn into yarn or thread) have in them the appetite of not discontinuing so strong that they will force the wire which draws and pulls them out rather than discontinue or forsake their own bodies.

Cratisiclea, the mother of Cleomenes, when he was loath to send her for a pledge into Egypt, said unto him, "Come, come, put me into a ship, and send me whither thou wilt, that this body of mine may do some good to my country, before crooked age consumes my life without profit."

Oh, that there were such a heart in us to lay aside our own particular relations and interests, that there may not be so many a breach in public. Let us be weak with the weak as well as strong with the strong that we may make up breaches.

### Part 3

For a further help to unity I shall lay down some other principles to unite our judgments, and submit them to the judgments of the saints whether they speak according to God or not.

**PRINCIPLE 1.** Seeing there is nothing to be practiced, believed, or taught which is not agreeable to the mind of God, let us make the Word of God our judge.

The Scriptures are the touchstone by which all religious principles and acts are to be tried. "To the Law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this rule, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). Let nothing pass for currency which has not this stamp upon it.

Certainly no Christian will refuse to make the truth of God contained in the Scriptures the judge of all he holds and practices, it being the basis of both if they are laid on their true foundation. It is the trial which tries all; therefore bring your opinions to the light to see whether they be of God or not.

If the Scriptures write "divine right" upon any opinion, then it is authentic; but all other authority is not sufficient to command either faith or practice. The Bereans were called more noble than they of Thessalonica because they did not take things upon trust, and believe implicitly, but searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so (Acts 17:11). "If any man or an angel from heaven bring you any other doctrine, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

Certainly the Scriptures are the undoubted, perfect, and infallible rule for all matters of faith and practice, or God could not judge the world by them at