

*Increase Mather's Confutation of
Solomon Stoddard's Observations
Respecting the Lord's Supper
1680*

Edited with an Introduction by
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I

MUCH of the ecclesiastical history of early Massachusetts can be summarized under the headings of accommodation and resistance. Whether or not there was a decline in religious piety during the second half of the seventeenth century, there was a decrease in the percentage of fully covenanted church members, and for some, this declension called for accommodation and modification of church custom to attract more to church membership.¹ But these same years witnessed the creation of a myth about the heroism and pure piety of the founders of Massachusetts Bay, with the result that some regarded change as infidelity to the faith of the Fathers.² The focus of this disagreement between the accommodators and the resisters was the enlargement of rights to baptism proposed by the Synod of 1662.

¹Perry Miller, 'Declension in a Bible Commonwealth,' *American Antiquarian Society, Proceedings*, LI (1941), 87-94; Robert C. Pope, 'New England Versus the New England Mind: The Myth of Declension,' *Journal of Social History*, III (1969-1970), 301-318.

²Robert Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals* (New York, 1971), pp. 96-112.

The fifth proposition adopted by the Synod, when ratified by individual congregations, created two types of church membership: fully covenanted members, who could receive the Lord's Supper, and a new class of 'half-way' members, those who had been baptized but who had not produced the relation of an experience of regeneration required for full membership. Those in this second class could have their children baptized and were subject to church discipline provided that they renewed the baptismal covenant made for them by their parents. But these second-class or half-way members could not vote in church affairs or receive the Lord's Supper. For many years, the autonomous New England congregations debated whether or not to accept this new category of membership.³ In Northampton, Massachusetts, for example, Eleazar Mather, the son of Richard and brother of Increase, resisted the accommodation until his congregation rebelled in 1668 and moved to admit into half-way membership not only the baptized but also 'setled inhabitants that give us ground to hope in charity ther may be some good thing in them towards the Lord, tho but in the lowest degree, understanding, and beleeving the Doctrine of faith, Publickly, seriously, and freely Professing their assent therunto, not Scandelous in life, sollemnly takeing hold of the [church] Covenant.'⁴ But Eleazar Mather died in July of 1669, and the church had to wait until 1672, when a new minister was ordained, to adopt the new practice, which went well beyond the accommodation of the 1662 Synod.

The new minister, Solomon Stoddard, followed the practice adopted by his congregation, and he therefore dutifully kept a record of membership in two columns of his ledger book. But in 1677, he proposed to go a step beyond the church's established practice: he would baptize anyone who accepted the creed and would admit all godly persons to the Lord's Supper

³Robert C. Pope, *The Half-Way Covenant: Church Membership in Puritan New England* (Princeton, 1969), passim.

⁴Pope, *Half-Way Covenant*, p. 148, quoting Northampton Church Records, pp. 7-8.

without evidence of a regenerating conversion experience. Though he did not immediately implement this new practice, word of what he had in mind spread rapidly, and in 1677 Increase Mather preached against the new liberalism.⁵ In 1679, Stoddard and Mather had the opportunity to confront each other in another Synod, where they began a debate that extended well into the next century. Unfortunately, little record of what transpired at the Synod of 1679 has survived, so that historians have had to rely on accounts of the synod published by participants in later years. Stoddard, for example, summarized the controversy in this way:

The words of the Synod [of 1679] are these, *It is requisite that Persons be not admitted unto Communion in the Lords Supper, without making a Personal and Publick Profession of their Faith and Repentance.* . . . I shall give the World an Account how the matter was acted. Some of the Elders in the Synod had drawn up a Conclusion, That persons should make a Relation of the work of Gods Spirit upon their hearts, in order to coming into full Communion. Some others of the Elders objected against it, and after some discourse it was agreed to have a dispute on that question, Whether those Professors of Religion as are of good Conversation, are not to be admitted to full Communion, provided that they are able to Examine themselves, and discern the Lords body. Mr. [Increase] Mather held the Negative; I laboured to make good the Affirmative: The result was, That they blotted out that clause of Making a Relation of the work of Gods Spirit, and put in the room of it, *The Making a Profession of their Faith and Repentance*; and so I Voted with the Rest, and am of the same judgment still. . . .⁶

Among the guns fired on the two sides were a number of controversial publications; however, all of these come after Stoddard's writing of *The Safety of Appearing at the Day of Judgement* (Boston, 1687), a document that contains, for the

⁵Increase Mather, 'A Discourse Concerning the Danger of Apostasy,' in *A Call to Heaven* (Boston, 1679); Pope, *Half-Way Covenant*, pp. 253-254.

⁶Solomon Stoddard, *An Appeal to the Learned. Being A Vindication of the Right of Visible Saints to the Lords Supper . . . Against the Exceptions of Mr. Increase Mather* (Boston, 1709), pp. 93-94.

first time in print, the principle of Stoddard's free admission standards. The Lord's Supper, he asserts, is one of a number of guarantees which believers have and which qualifies them for the 'safety of appearing.' He goes on to say

but God no where requires a faith of assurance in those that partake of that Ordinance: this Ordinauce [i.e. Ordinance] is a special help to those that are in the dark with a good conscience: and though it must be granted that to partake of it without Faith is a sin: and so deserves damnation, and so it does to pray or hear without Faith: yet when the Apostle says that *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation or judgment to himself*, I Cor. 11. 21. he intends particularly that evil of not distinguishing this eating and drinking from common eating or drinking: doing it either ignorantly or profanely.⁷

According to Thomas M. Davis, who has performed an exhaustive study of Stoddard's relations with other ministers of the Connecticut River valley, particularly Edward Taylor of Westfield, Stoddard made his views on open communion known long before he was successfully able to institute the practice. After an examination of the Taylor-Stoddard correspondence and the Westfield church records, Davis concludes:

Whatever Stoddard's views may have been between 1677 and 1690, Taylor indicates that his actual practice did not begin until the 'winter of 1690.' His concern with his neighbor's innovations, his obtaining notes of the specific sermon, his proximity, and so on, make it almost certain that whatever the Mathers and others thought, Taylor, in a position to know, was not much disturbed during the eighties because, whatever Stoddard may have proposed, he did not begin the practice of 'unregenerate' communion until 1690.⁸

The pamphlet war has commonly been thought to commence with Stoddard's 1687 treatise, *The Safety of Appearing*

⁷ Pp. 338-339; see Thomas M. Davis, 'Introduction to Church Records of First Congregational Church of Westfield,' forthcoming.

⁸ Thomas M. Davis, 'Introduction,' p. xix.

at the Day of Judgement. This was followed closely by Cotton Mather's treatise, *A Companion for Communicants* (Boston, 1690), which argues against the notion that the sacrament might be a converting ordinance for the unregenerate. Little apparently was done during the 1690s, but in the first decade of the eighteenth century, the hostilities broke out into the open. Stoddard's *The Doctrine of Instituted Churches Explained and Proved from the Word of God* (London, 1700) was answered in detail by Increase Mather verbally and in writing. The climax of the debate was a treatise published in 1708 called *A Dissertation, Wherein The Strange Doctrine Lately Published in a Sermon, The Tendency of which, is, to Encourage Unsanctified Persons (while such) to Approach the Holy Table of the Lord, is Examined and Confuted*. It is highly significant that Increase Mather's *Dissertation* was published in Boston by reputable printers, while Solomon Stoddard's liberal treatise was issued from London. With the Mathers in firm control of Boston publishing, Stoddard no doubt had difficulty finding a printer willing to issue his controversial work. By 1709, however, Stoddard's position was sufficiently strong that Benjamin Green of Boston, Mather's own publisher, printed the rejoinder to the *Dissertation*. This piece Stoddard called *An Appeal to the Learned*, and subtitled it: *A Vindication of the Right of Visible Saints to the Lords Supper, Though they be destitute of a Saving Work of God's Spirit on their Hearts* (Boston, 1709).

There is no evidence that Increase Mather answered in print this attack on his position. In Boston in the same year of 1709, however, there appeared an anonymous pamphlet from the Mather camp called *An Appeal, Of some of the Unlearned, both to the Learned and Unlearned; Containing some Queries on a Discourse Entitled, An Appeal To The Learned; Lately Published by Mr. S. Stoddard*, but this document should not be considered Mather's own response to the Stoddard position since it attempts to summarize both sides of the question. Thus the

pamphlet war apparently had ended. Although the Mathers continued to oppose open communion in theory and in practice, and though Stoddard and his successor, Jonathan Edwards, continued their liberal practice in Northampton, the bitter attacks on one another seemed to have peaked.

Both sides had supplied readers with ample evidence by 1709. But one attack on Stoddard, the first scholarly effort by Mather to refute Stoddard's practice, had gone unpublished. It is much earlier than any of the published documents, which have been closely studied in recent years by a variety of scholars. This hitherto unprinted work is Increase Mather's Confutation of Solomon Stoddard's Observations Respecting the Lord's Supper, and was written in 1680, the year following the controversial Synod. The manuscript is at the American Antiquarian Society.

II

Although the manuscript is complete and relatively easy to read through, it has not been cited in any of the scholarship pertaining to the Mather-Stoddard controversy, nor has it been included in the exhaustive bibliographies of the Mathers prepared by Thomas Holmes. There are several possible explanations for this. First, the document is stitched with a contemporary cover paper, on which the title appears, with the words "Belonging to C. Mather" written across the top. The full title follows mid-way down the page:

~~Cotton~~ Mather's Confutation of the
 Rev. M^r Stoddard's Observa-
 tions respecting the
 Lords Supper
 1680

A separate hand has prefaced 'Mather's' with the name 'Cotton,' as indicated here. This, in turn, has been struck through,

possibly by Samuel Foster Havens, Librarian of the Antiquarian Society from 1838 to 1881, who has definitely added these lines further down the page:

'The above is the handwriting of Cotton Mather and is a copy of his father's manuscript. *quod vide.*'

S.F.H.

The manuscript to which Havens refers is either lost or no longer extant.

In August of 1972, when the editors discovered the manuscript in the Increase Mather Diary box at the Society, they were fortunate to have available some expert advice in attempting to explain the apparent mystery of this manuscript's previous disappearance. It had been placed in the Diary box because its manila case carries the words, 'from Increase Mather Diaries 1680-1721,' inscribed in the twentieth century. James Mooney and the Society's Director, Marcus McCorison, agree that it was probably this notation that occasioned its having been placed in the Diary box. The full text of the treatise does not, however, appear in the diaries themselves. The 'Confutation' appears to have been written separately. As Director Emeritus Clifford Shipton explained, Thomas Holmes had worked with the boxes in the extensive Mather manuscript collection exactly as they are grouped today. So it is possible that the manuscript was placed in the Mather Diary box after Holmes, who would not have missed it, completed his work on the Mathers in 1940. Finally, the editor of Cotton Mather's letters, Kenneth Silverman, corroborated Havens' view that this was Cotton Mather's transcription of his father's treatise, and expressed confidence that the transcription had been made relatively late in Cotton Mather's career, after 1700. Thus it seems that the document was not known to be Increase Mather's for some time, but may have been grouped with Cotton Mather's materials until Samuel F. Havens specified it to be a transcription, and that it

may have been separated from the Mather materials when Thomas Holmes did his work in the Society library in the 1920s and 1930s. Needless to say, the editors are indebted to all those who have helped explain this fascinating mystery.

A second reason for this early treatise not having appeared may lie in the origins of the controversy itself. As the scholars have noted, little direct engagement took place during the 1680s and 1690s, though both Stoddard and the Mathers were simmering, readying for the controversy that would erupt in print in the early 1700s. Though it is risky at best to speculate about these matters, one suggestion does emerge from the 'Confutation' itself. A reasoned and deliberate treatise, the document is an occasional piece, a direct response to several specific points elaborated by Solomon Stoddard in his presentation to the Synod of 1679. It would be most useful to have an exact record of those arguments which Mather here refutes; however, none of the records of that Synod contain an exact account of Stoddard's argument.⁹ There appears to be no extant document that would provide a systematic Stoddardean argument to corroborate those points here debated by Mather. We must therefore assume that what Mather says here about Stoddard's position was true, and that while his refutation would obviously carry a biased representation of the Stoddard position, he nevertheless registered Stoddard's position in its entirety. To assume this gives Mather's 'Confutation' the format of a dialogue between the two antagonists, and it provides a very early summary of the two positions that were to appear so prominently later. Whatever Mather's reasons for not having published the 'Confutation' near the time of its writing, its existence allows us to view the controversy as having crystallized much earlier than many of us had previously assumed.

⁹See Williston Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (New York, 1893), and Peter Thatcher's *Journal*, in John G. Palfrey, *History of New England* (Boston, 1858-1890), III, 330, 331.

Obviously, the importance of this treatise rests not so much in what it contains, since many of the arguments were to be used again in the printed controversy of 1700-1710, but in the date it has been assigned. It should not be assumed that the date appearing on the cover page is necessarily accurate, though it was probably written by Cotton Mather at the time he transcribed the document. It is quite clear, however, that the original manuscript was composed in 1680. First, the confutation opens with a specific reference to Stoddard's arguments as they appeared in manuscript, probably for delivery to the Synod of 1679:

Concerning my brother *Stoddard* his manuscript, designed against that custome, of enquireing into the spiritual estate, of those who are admitted unto Lords Supper; which hath from the beginning been practiced in these (as well as many other) churches of Jesus Christ, I have read his arguments, and (according to the measure of light and grace received) weighed them in the ballance of the sanctuary, (and *apud conscientiam meum,*) and I am greatly mistaken, if they be not found wanting, yea, farr from being of weight enough to carry the cause they aim at. . . .

As Williston Walker has noted, this is the kind of response that Mather made to Stoddard's position as it was articulated at the 1679 Synod. Second, the manuscript is not only prefaced by the date 1680 in a contemporary hand; it is also concluded by the same date, this time unmistakably Cotton Mather's handwriting. Finally, and perhaps most convincingly, Increase Mather refers throughout to contemporary circumstances that are pertinent to his argument, e.g., the controversy over the Half-Way Covenant, and at one point, gives us a reference that establishes the 1680 date as accurate:

To prove that they are visible saints, my brother alledgeth sundry particulars; and moreover refers unto what is expressed by the synod in 1662, and by myself, in a discourse about baptism, published five years agoe, where I mention several things as evincing

the persons in question, to be in charitable judgment, beleivers. But this pains to confirm his *minor* might have been spared. I am of the same mind still. Only I deny his *major*. I do in no wise own it to be a true position, *that every one that is in judgment of charity a beleever, is immediately to be admitted to the Lords Supper, without any examination, whether he be a beleever or no* (manuscript page 5).

The 'discourse about Baptism' which was published five years prior to the composition of the 'Confutation,' was printed by Samuel Green of Cambridge in 1675, and was titled: *A Discourse Concerning the Subject of Baptisme Wherein the present Controversies, that are agitated in the New English Churches are from Scripture and Reason modestly enquired into*. Thus the evidence for a 1680 dating of this treatise is corroborated not only by the various external clues that have gathered over the years, but by a precise internal reference that fixes it unmistakably.

III

The controversy between the Mathers and Stoddard regarding the admission of communicants to the Lord's Supper has been the subject of much scholarly debate. As always, Perry Miller led the way in an article he published in the *Harvard Theological Review*, XXIV (1941), 277-320, called simply 'Solomon Stoddard, 1643-1729.' This seminal essay was expanded slightly for inclusion in *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, 1953), and these together provide a sound foundation for study of the Mather-Stoddard controversy because they not only evaluate the primary sources as they originally appeared, but provide historical connections between the episodes that give a narrative framework to the debate. More recently, Thomas A. Schafer examined Stoddard's theology of conversion in 'Solomon Stoddard and the Theology of the Revival,'¹⁰ a perceptive

¹⁰ *A Miscellany of American Christianity* (Durham, 1963), pp. 328-361.

assessment of Stoddard's thought. It touches the Mather-Stoddard problem prominently in showing how Stoddard insisted that the sacrament could indeed induce a conversion experience and should therefore be opened to all (p. 340).

Very recently, three essays and two books have appeared that include treatment of the Mather-Stoddard affair. James Walsh's article in the *New England Quarterly* ('Solomon Stoddard's Open Communion: A Reexamination,' XLIII [1970], 97-114), shows that on some specific ecclesiastical matters, Increase Mather and Solomon Stoddard were not as far apart as we have always assumed them to be. This attempt to provide a reconciliation between the Stoddard and Mather positions on certain specific issues seems to characterize some contemporary attitudes toward the debate, but in E. Brooks Holifield's 'The Renaissance of Sacramental Piety in Colonial New England,'¹¹ we find the following: 'Stoddard believed that the absence of "uncertain rule given in the Scripture to the guides of the Church" ensured that the ministers would always lack "certain knowledge who have Sanctifying Grace." But Stoddard also found inadvisable the generosity with which the Mathers defined conversion; he did not think it wise to encourage conscientious absentees from the Lord's Supper to enter the circle of the presumably regenerate on the basis of an ambitious perception or an anxious hope of saving grace' (p. 45).

In a more recent publication, Holifield has investigated 'The Intellectual Sources of Stoddardeanism.'¹² As he points out, there were earlier colonial precedents for open admission to communion. And Robert Pope's book, *The Half-Way Covenant: Church Membership in Puritan New England* (Princeton, 1969) contains evidence (pp. 255-256). But scholars have been chiefly interested in the 'pamphlet war' between Increase Mather and Solomon Stoddard that took place in the first decade of the eighteenth century, the climax of unspoken, or at

¹¹ *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, XXIX (1972), 33-48.

¹² *New England Quarterly*, XLV (1972), 373-392.

least unwritten, tensions between the two ministers that had been brewing since the Synod of 1679. For example, Robert Middlekauff in *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728* uses the printed documents exclusively in assessing the Mather-Stoddard controversy. A more extensive treatment of the subject is in an excellent dissertation by James Goulding, *The Controversy between Solomon Stoddard and the Mathers: Western Versus Eastern Massachusetts Congregationalism* (Claremont Graduate School, 1971). According to Goulding, the controversy did not really erupt until after 1690, climaxing in the published documents of 1700-1710. He writes:

With the exception of John Russell's letter to Increase Mather in 1681 and Mather's refusal to write a prefatory letter for Stoddard's *The Safety of Appearing in the Righteousness of Christ*, the decade after the Reforming Synod of 1679-80 was uneventful. The Mathers and Stoddard both refrained from attacking each other. Even during the next decade, 1690-1699, the scene was relatively quiet. The Mathers especially in the person of Cotton made several attacks, but did not mention Stoddard by name. Only in the period 1700-1709 did they actively attack each other by name (p. 439).

Goulding generally follows the historical account provided by Perry Miller in his 1941 essay on Stoddard. Similarly, David Hall's recent book, *The Faithful Shepherd: The New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, 1972), devotes little attention to the beginnings of the controversy immediately following the Synod of 1679 (see pp. 242-245,) and considers the essential argument one that took place in the first decade of the eighteenth century. The evolving scholarly attention to the controversy itself had provided an increasingly clear analysis of the issues. But one document, Increase Mather's 'Confutation,' pertinent to the origins of the debate has been consistently overlooked, presumably because it was not known to exist.

Textual Note

Because of eccentricities in the handwriting of the manuscript, the text that follows is not a letter-for-letter transcript. The modifications knowingly made here are these:

1. Since the manuscript does not always make a distinction between capital and lower-case letters, capitalization has been modernized.

2. Although all punctuation marks used in the manuscript are represented in this transcript, some few have been changed where the obvious intent was a full stop or period. Thus where in the manuscript something like a dash is frequently (but not consistently) used instead of a period, in this transcript a period is used throughout.

3. In the manuscript as in many seventeenth-century manuscripts double nasals are indicated by the use of a tittle over a single *m* or *n*; here the two letters appear.

4. Where the manuscript uses conventional abbreviations, the words are spelled out in the transcript. Thus *y^e* becomes *the*, *o^r* becomes *our*, *judgm^t* becomes *judgment*, the ampersand becomes *and* or *et* except in the expression *&c.*

Otherwise the editors have attempted to follow the spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and paragraphing of the manuscript. To indicate pagination of the manuscript, a bracketed figure appears at the beginning of each new manuscript page, thus [17].

*Mather's Confutation
of the Rev. Mr Stoddard's Observations
respecting the Lords Supper 1680¹*

Concerning my brother *Stoddard* his manuscript, designed against that custome, of enquireing into the spiritual estate, of those who are admitted unto Lords Supper; which hath from

¹This title, which appears on a separate sheet, appears to be in a different hand from what follows.

the beginning been practiced in these (as well as many other) churches of Jesus Christ, I have read his arguments, and (according to the measure of light and grace received) weighed them in the ballance of the sanctuary, (and *apud conscientiam meum*,²) and I am greatly mistaken, if they be not found wanting, yea, farr from being of weight enough to carry the cause they aim at; before I proceed to give a particular answer unto the reasons by my brother insisted on, which have induced him to appear in this controversy, some things are necessary to be premised.

1. That none but such as are in the judgment of rational charity, truly gracious, ought to be admitted unto the Lords Table, is an holy truth, so abundantly, clearly, convincingly held forth and demonstrated from the Scriptures by the first and chief of the fathers in these churches, especially by my father *Cotton*, in his book of the way of the churches, and in his discourse of the Holiness of Church-Members,³ and by Mr *Hooker* in his Survey of Church-Discipline,⁴ and by Mr *Shepard*, and Mr *Allyn* in their defence of the nine positions;⁵ and objections against that principle so fully answered, as that it is wholly needless to add any thing more upon a [2] a subject so largely and irrefragably confirmed by those blessed worthyes of the Lord. Nor doth my brother directly oppose or deny it.

2. As for the question about *relations* or *examinations*, concerning a work of grace, before admission to the Lords Supper, (which is the subject under debate) wee do not plead for any rigid, or unscriptural imposition in things of that nature. e.g. to impose this or that mode, or to insist upon a relation of the time and manner of conversion; they that can do it, may with comfort to themselves, and edification to others declare that

²In the presence of my conscience.

³John Cotton, *The Way of the Churches of Christ in New-England* (London, 1645); *Of the Holinesse of Church Members* (London, 1650).

⁴Thomas Hooker, *A Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline* (London, 1648).

⁵Thomas Shepard and John Allin, *A Defence of the Answer* (London, 1648).

also. But many (if not the most of) sincere Christians, especially if advantaged with a religious education, and kept from scandalous evils, do not know the precise time when faith and repentance was first wrought in their souls. Mr *Baxter* in his treatise of Infant Baptism saith,

Hee was once at a meeting of very many Christians, most eminent for holiness, where also were diverse ministers of great fame, for their piety and ability, and when it was desired that every one of them would give an account, of the manner of their conversion, there was but one of them all that could conjecture at the time of their first conversion.

See Mr Baxter of Infant Baptism—p. 129.⁶

So again, to impose upon every man that joins in full communion, that hee must needs *orally* declare before all the congregation what his experiences have been, is more then wee require. Our fathers do not in their writings rigidly urge these things. Nor do I apprehend myself called to appear in the defence of such impositions, as are not justifiable by the word of God; and this may serve to answer a great part of my brothers discourse, which is directed against relations as so circumstanced. [3] 3. The great end of examinations concerning a work of grace, is, that so the church may be satisfied concerning the persons fitness for all church-priviledges. Hence wee do not say that in all cases this is necessary; only in some cases, and indeed ordinarily. There may be a man, that his knowledge and orthodoxy is so well known, that there's no need that hee should pass under an *examination*, concerning his faith, that is to say, his knowledge in the doctrine of faith; yet ordinarily this is needfull. So there are some of such known integrity, and holiness, that every man judgeth them fitt for all ordinances; and altho, such out of respect to the glory of God, and edification of others, may do well to declare what God hath done for their souls, if the church desire it, yett wee do not say that it is

⁶Richard Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof of Infants Church-membership and Baptism* (London, 1651). The passage is paraphrased rather than quoted.

absolutely necessary, that persons so qualified should pass under an examination, since the principal end of this examination—viz, the churches full satisfaction concerning the person, is already attained.

4. As it doth not belong to my brother to state the question, in this controversy, where hee is only an *opponent*, and not the *respondent*, so I do utterly dislike his stating of it, inasmuch as the *terms* by him expressed are *ambiguous*. Hee hath thus proposed the question,

Whether all such as do make a solemn profession of faith and repentance, and are of a godly conversation, having knowledge, to examine themselves, and discern the Lords body, are to be admitted to the Lords Supper.

If the terms of this question, have such an interpretation putt upon them as they will bear, or as they are usually understood amongst us, I know no man that will hold the negative.

[4] Those words, making a solemn *profession of faith and repentance*, ought not to be inserted, into the question. For in the Platform of Discipline, and in the writings of our New English divines, to make a profession of faith and repentance, is as much as to make a *relation of a work of grace*. The question, is, whether men ought to be admitted without any examination concerning their faith and repentance. Now to express it in such terms as do imply they must hold forth faith and repentance, is very incongruous. Again, that expression of a *godly conversation*, is putt into the question, instead of a *non-sandalous conversation*. And the word [*immediately*] is left out, though that was expressed, when the dispute was first entred upon in the synod. And it is of no small importance unto a true stating of this controversy, that that word be expressed.

The question then between us, if rightly stated, is this, *Whether all that are orthodox in judgment, as to matters of faith, being able, doctrinally to discern the Lords body, and not scandalous in life, ought immediately to be admitted unto the Lords*

Supper, without any examination by those that are to admit them, *concerning a work of grace upon their souls*. My brother doth affirm, I defend the negative. Lett us then (as in the fear of God) proceed to examine his arguments.

The first argument, if framed directly to the question, is thus disposed.

All visible saints, being able doctrinally to discern the Lords body, are immediately to be admitted to the Lords Supper, without any examination concerning a work of grace. But this is true concerning the persons in question. Ergò—

[5] To prove that they are visible saints, my brother alledgeth sundry particulars; and moreover refers unto what is expressed by the synod in 1662, and by myself, in a discourse about baptism, published five years agoe,⁷ where I mention several things as evincing the persons in question, to be in charitable judgment, beleevers. But this pains to confirm his *minor* might have been spared. I am of the same mind still. Only I deny his *major*. I do in no wise own it to be a true position, *that every one that is in judgment of charity a beleever, is immediately to be admitted to the Lords Supper, without any examination, whether he be a beleever or no*. Wee must either be very uncharitable, or else have large admissions to the Lords Supper, if this position be granted, that all persons that are in charity beleevers, are forthwith to be admitted to that holy ordinance. It is a known rule, that charity supposeth every man to be a keeper of the Law, untill the contrary doth appear, *cum de contrario nobis non constat*,⁸ wee are bound to hope the best—as Dr Ames in his Cases of Conscience hath judiciously determined—⁹ charity hopeth all things, and beleeveth the best of every man. I Cor. 13. 7. They that come amongst us as strangers, wee ought in

⁷Increase Mather, *A Discourse concerning the subject of baptism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1675).

⁸Until it does not strike us as contrary.

⁹William Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof* (London, 1643), Bk. II, pp. 33-37. The next eleven words appear to have been inserted by another hand.

charity to hope they are beleevers, untill they manifest the contrary, but it doth not follow, that wee must immediately admit them to the Supper, without any examination concerning their spiritual estate, and consequently, fitness for such an ordinance. The children of the church that walk inoffensively, wee are bound to hope they are beleevers, yett if wee examine these or those of them about their regeneration, it may be wee shall find otherwise, and see cause to change that charitable judgment which before was our duty. A godly man, whom I am bound

[6] in charity to judge that hee is a true beleever, yet may justly for some time be suspended from partaking at the Lords Table. Mr *Hooker* taketh it for indubitable, that one soundly brought home to Christ; may be so weak as at present to be unfit to be admitted to the Lords Supper; surely then, as to those who have not as yett passed under a trial concerning their fitness, they are not immediately admittable to that ordinance, though wee charitably, and regularly suppose them to be saints. Moreover, the being of faith doth only give an *habitual* and *remote* right, to partake at the Lords Table. In order to immediate participation it is necessary, that there should be some growth in faith, and the lively exercise thereof; and that this should by positive evidences be made manifest unto the charitable judgment of the church. Mr *Mitchel*¹⁰ doth somewhere illustrate it by this comparison: hee that hath the faculty of reason and speech, may be said to be habitually and remotely qualified for the work of preaching; but he must have gifts of learning, judgment, &c. that he may be actually fit; so tis here, to have (saith hee) in charity the being of faith and grace, doth not render a man a subject of full communion no more than you would admitt a man into the pulpit, because hee hath the faculty of speaking, yea of speaking like a Christian. For all that, diverse things may be wanting to qualify him for full communion—viz.—such positive testimony both

¹⁰Jonathan Mitchel (1624-1668), Massachusetts clergyman.

in respect of the holiness of his conversation, and his experience concerning Gods gracious dealings with his soul, as must be in order to a being nextly fitt to a worthy and profitable partaking at the Lords Table. And this answers what my brother alledgeth, for the confirmation of his proposition. Scilicet: that visible saints having knowledge are able to partake at the Lords Table with profit, and that they are such as the Lord will hold communion with at his Table.

[7] Answer: When there is sufficient evidence that they are able to exercise grace at the Lords Table, then wee are bound to think that they will partake with profit to their own souls, and enjoy blessed communion with Christ at his Table. But there is many an one, that hath a standing in the visible church, and upon that account is ecclesiastically, and charitably a saint, and a beleever, that yett sufficient evidence doth not appear to show that hee is able to exercise grace at the Lords Table; nor will this appear untill he be examined concerning both his knowledge and experience. And therefore notwithstanding this argument (which yett is the weightiest of all the nine which my brother hath produced) examination concerning a work of grace, may in some cases be necessary, before admission to the Lords Supper.

My brothers second argument, if framed directly to strike at the question, as stated; must be thus disposed.

If persons were admitted unto communion in all ordinances in the Jewish church, without any examination or declaration of a work of grace, then there is no necessity of any such examination before admission to the Lords Supper in Gospel churches.

A.— Ergò—

Answer 1. The consequence of this proposition may justly be denied. For under the dispensation of the Gospel more holiness is required of professors, then was under the old Testament. Luc. 12.48. Heb. 12. 14, 18. And consequently a greater visibility and more clear discovery of grace and holi-

ness may be required of men now, then in those dayes was necessary. Mr *Cotton* speaketh judiciously in saying, that more

positive fruits of regeneration are required in churches under the New Testament, then can be said with respect unto the Old Testament.

Treatise of Holi-

[8]ness of Church Members, p. 93.

My brother doth truly affirm that the church of Israel, did consist of saints as well as Christian churches, and that their sacraments and ours did seal the same spiritual mysteryes, but that proveth not his proposition. For he acknowledgeth that there's a new qualification, added in the time of the New Testament, i.e. ability in those that are to partake at the Lords Table, to examine themselves, and discern the Lords body, which evidently implyeth, that they must have the matter of self examination, viz., faith and repentance. Wherefore the church must know that they have this ability, and that cannot ordinarily be known without such examination as wee plead for. 2. This assumption may likewise be denied. The members of the church of Israel of old, were putt upon that which was equivalent to a profession of a work of grace before admittance to the passeover. They were to make a very solemn declaration of their being made sensible of their misery by nature, and their need of a sacrifice—(i.e. Christ) &c—which things when done in sincerity are evidences of grace. Deut. 26. 5. And the Jews were exceeding strict in examining proselytes, before they did admitt, them, to full communion among them. Their Rabbi's (as *Buxtorf*, in *Lexic: Talmud: p. 408*,¹¹ and others have noted) confess, that in former ages, if anyone desired to join to their church; he was strictly examined whether hee had not any mercenary or carnal end in his proposals, and if they could find out that hee had so, they would in no wise admitt him. And it is by them affirmed that few pro-

¹¹Johann Buxtorf, *Lexicon Chaldaicum Talmudicum et Rabbinicum* (Basil, 1639).

selytes were received in David's and Solomon's time; because the nations then were under temptation of falling in with the church upon

[9] carnal grounds; on which account, the church was less forward to admit them, then they would have been in a time of persecution. Thus do the Jews themselves profess. Hence their בוי צרק *proselyti justitiae*¹² are also called *proselyti αυθματοι*,¹³ such as out of pure respect to religion, and the name of God became proselytes. Were the Jews of old thus careful in enquireing into the spiritual estate of those whom they admitted into their holy fellowship, and shall Christian churches become remiss and careless in a matter of so great concernment unto the purity and comfort of their communion.

The third argument is to this purpose

They that are qualified for church-membership, if able doctrinally to examine themselves, are to be received unto the Lords Supper, without any examination concerning a work of grace. But they that are orthodox in judgment, and not scandalous in life are qualified for church-membership. Ergo—

Answer: That term of church-membership is ambiguous. It may be meant concerning membership in the church general visible. All orthodox and non-scandalous professors of the Gospel, have a standing in the visible church, but it doth not follow that they are immediately to be received to the Lords Supper, which is not to be administered but in some instituted church. Or, if the church-membership, which the argument mentions, be understood of of [sic] membership in some particular church, both the major and the minor is to be denied. A man may be qualified for church-membership, and yett not to be admitted unto the Lords Supper, without that examination wee plead for.

[10] Yea, hee may be qualified for full communion, and yett not to be admitted unto full communion untill such time as his

¹² Wise proselytes.

¹³ Acting on their own.

qualifications have passed under the churches examination. Nor must it be granted, that all that are orthodox in judgment and not scandalous in life are qualified for admission into particular churches, as a particular church is taken (and commonly it is so taken with some judicious authors) for a company of professing covenanting beleevvers, entrusted by Christ with the power of the keyes of the Kingdome of Heaven. A particular church, is a body-politick, or a spiritual corporation, unto which ecclesiastical jurisdiction doth entirely belong. Men had need to have grace, and therefore more then meer orthodoxy in judgment, and non-scandalousness of conversation, before they be admitted as members into such holy corporations.

The 4th argument is,

They that do in the judgment of charity make a sincere profession of that faith which the church is built upon, if able to discern the Lords body, are to be admitted to the Lords Supper without any examination concerning a work of grace; but they that are orthodox in judgment, and non-scandalous in life do in charitable judgment make a sincere profession of that faith upon which the church is built. Ergò—

Answer: This argument though it differ in words, is the same in substance with the first, and therefore the same answer may suffice for them both.

The fifth argument, is,

If the Apostles did admitt men unto the Lords Table without examining them concerning their spiritual estate, then so must wee do. A.— Ergò—

[11] Answer: The assumption is denied. The Apostles did require true faith and repentence to be in those whom they admitted unto full communion, therefore without doubt, when need did so require, they examined those whom they admitted, whether they had the qualifications which were necessary in

order to a profitable partaking in the holy ordinances of Christ. Before the church would admitt Paul to their communion, there was strict enquiry made about his effective conversion. Philip did examine the Eunuch concerning the work of God upon his heart, before he would apply the seal of the covenant unto him. Act. 8. 37. And there is great weight in that which my brother seems to make light of, viz., that an external profession of the name of Christ was in the Apostles time, a greater evidence of sincerity then it is at this day. Then if a man did but say before the world, *Jesus is the Son of God*, there could hardly be a greater evidence of one truly converted, since he was for that profession immediately exposed unto the loss of his estate, liberty, life, and all. I: Joh. 4. 15. It doth not follow, that if an external profession of the name of Christ be enough to admitt unto ordinances at one time, that then it is so at all times, because at some times, and in some places, such a profession is a great and satisfactory evidence of regeneration, but it is not so at all times and in all places. Nor doth this any way prove that relations, or examinations concerning spiritual experiences are no ordinance of God. For the Lord doth require that all due means should be used that so wee may know (so farr as men are able to judge) that those unto whom wee administer the Lords Supper be meet subjects of such an ordinance. But amongst us, where religion and profession is in

[12] credit it cannot ordinarily be known, that these or those are meet subjects of such an ordinance, without some relation of, or enquiry into their spiritual estate. Therefore the Lord requireth relations, or examinations, so farr as hath been expressed, in the true stating of the question.

The sixth argument runs thus.

If men that are orthodox in judgment and not scandalous in life may be admitted unto baptism, then if they have knowledge doctrinally to discern the Lords body, they are immediately to be admitted unto the Lords Supper without any examination concerning a work of grace upon their souls. A.— Ergo—

Answer: The consequence of this proposition is utterly denied; nor is it possible to devise any thing more contrary to the Synod in 1662. and to the great design of those blessed Worthies, who had the principal hand in the answer to the question about the subject of baptism, then debated, and in that way concluded on. Their care and endeavour, was, that the grace of the covenant, with respect unto baptism, should be duely extended unto those that have a visible interest in the covenant, and yett that the interest of holiness, and the power of godliness, might be upheld in these churches by an utmost regular strictness as to admissions to the Lords Table. It is not baptism but laxness in admissions to the Supper that will corrupt churches. And this argument tends that way. Much might be said to refute it. There is a great deal may be spoken, to evince, that membership in the church general visible, doth give immediate right to baptism, whether there be actual membership in a particular church, or no. But it is not true, that membership in

[13] the church general visible doth give immediate right to the Lords Supper. It is a known distinction among divines, that baptism is a sacrament of initiation, but the Lords Supper for confirmation. My brother rejects this distinction, because (saith hee) by baptism the covenant is confirmed. But the meaning of the distinction, is, that the Lords Supper is not a sacrament of initiation, whenas baptism is so. That ordinance of baptism doth seal regeneration. Tit. 3. 5. And indition [sic] into Christ. Gal. 3. 27. I: Cor. 12. 13. Therefore is properly called a sacrament of initiation. Hence of old there was a superstitious custome taken up of giving milk, honey, salt, &c to those that were baptized, *ad infantandum*—as *Tertullian* expresseth it, to signify their spiritual infancy and regeneration, in imitation of the Jews, who used so to act towards new born infants, as seems to be indicated by those Scriptures, Isa. 7. 14, 15. Ezek. 16. 4. Hence also, was that practice of placing the *font* at the doors of churches (as meeting-houses have been

catechrestically styled) for that baptism is a seal of entrance into the church. But the Lords Supper doth seal growth in grace, and not regeneration only. Mr *Hooker* speaketh judiciously, when hee saith, that *baptism is the entrance into Christs family, but* (saith hee) *there is more to be looked at to make one capable of the Lords Supper. Hee must not only have grace but growth in grace.* And indeed, that is one thing which a Christian should examine himself about every time that hee comes to partake at the Lords Table. Scilicet: How he doth grow in grace; which is more than can be said with respect unto Baptism. And therefore it doth in no wise follow that if men have right to baptism, that then they are immediately to be admitted

[14] unto the Lords Supper. A late learned writer speaketh according to Scripture and reason when hee thus expresseth himself, *This argument* (viz., from admission of persons so or so qualified unto baptism) *doth not fully reach admission to the Lords Table, where some further and more exact proof must be had of ones fitness and qualification for the communion of saints, even those of age when they are baptised are but incipientes, when they are come to the Lords Table they are proficientes, there is more required in proficientes then in novices, and beginners, as there is more required to fitt one for strong meat then for milk.* These are Mr *Gelaspy's* words,¹⁴ and I take them to be both true and weighty, for the Scripture tells us that men and their houses were upon their beleiving baptized *παραχρημα*, *dum resibsa geritur*—immediately—without any delay—or *straightway*, as the word is translated—Act. 16. 33. But the Scripture no where saith, that men upon beleiving were admitted to the Lords Supper *παραχρημα*, without any more adoe. Again, it is evident from Scripture, that *disciples as such*, and therefore all disciples, or all that have a visible interest in the covenant, be they infants or adult persons, are the subjects of baptism. But it is not true, that disciples as such, or that all who are interested visibly

¹⁴George Gillespie, Scottish divine.

in Abrahams covenant, are the subjects of the Lords Supper. Both John and the Apostles did baptise many, who never heard any thing about the Lords Supper. It is also certain, that in ages near unto the Apostles, it was a common thing to baptise those that were not for the present admitted unto the Lords Supper. Nay, they would not permit the *catechumeni* so much as to behold the administration of the Lords Supper, nor preach about it

[15] in their hearing. Its a known, celebrated assertion among the antients, 'That a baptised person is not a perfect Christian (i.e. one that may be admitted to full communion) untill such time as hee be *unctus & confirmatus*.['] and no man, that hath made it his concern, to be acquainted with things of this nature, can be ignorant, that our protestant divines do generally make the subject of the Lords Supper, by much narrower, then that of baptism. And practice in all reformed churches hath been according to this principle. Whoso pleaseth to consult the harmony of confessions agreed upon by the reformed churches abroad, will be satisfyed concerning the truth of this.¹⁵ And whereas, my brother alledgeth that all adult persons whom the Jews did admitt to circumcision, were received to the passover, therefore all baptised persons should be admitted to the Lords Supper; Both the assertion, and the consequences from it (supposing it to be true) is to be denyed. Those ceremonial infirmityes would keep men from the passover, that did not debarr them from that ordinance of circumcision, and why then should not some moral defects be sufficient to detain from a present participation at the Lords Table, that are not enough to prohibit baptism? And sure it is, that the Jewish masters (some of them) say, that those proselytes whom they called שנידים¹⁶ were circumcised, but not admitted to further privileges. frà R: Levi Barzelonita, ex niente Rabbinonim. V.

¹⁵*An Harmony of the Confessions of the Faith of the Christian and Reformed Churches* (Cambridge, England, 1586), especially pp. 411-63.

¹⁶Drunkards.

Hottinger. Thesaur. philolog. p. 18.¹⁷ Moreover, by way of reply to this argument I shall add one word further here, namely, that though it be true, that wee may and should hope that those whom wee administer baptism unto, are beleevers on Christ, yett a greater visibility of faith,

[16] or more satisfactory evidence concerning the regeneration of one that is admitted to the Lords Supper, is necessary, then can be affirmed of one that is admitted to baptism only, as if a man be chosen into office relation, a greater satisfaction concerning his true piety is necessary, then if hee were only to be admitted into the church as an ordinary member. The same is true with reference unto the Lords Supper and baptism.

My brothers seventh argument is to this purpose.

They that have all the qualifications, which the Scripture doth require in order to admission unto the Lords Supper are to be admitted thereunto, without any examination concerning a work of grace. But they that have knowledge, and make an orthodox profession, and are not scandalous in conversation, have all the qualifications which the Scripture doth require to be in those that are admitted to the Lords Supper. Ergo—

Answer: The assumption is denied. This threefold enumeration is imperfect. There is another thing which, though my brother saith nothing at all of it, the Scripture saith, ought to be in those whom we admitt to the Lords Supper, i.e. *experience of a work of grace*, without which, they that come to the Lords Supper, will but eat and drink damnation to themselves. I: Cor. 11: 28, 29. Men may be of an orthodox persuasion, and make a doctrinal profession of the truth, and be blameless before the world, and yett strangers to a saving work of regeneration upon their soules; but then they are not fitt to approach unto the Table of the Lord, to eat the the [sic] bread of God there. Ezek. 44. 7. And therefore examination concerning that qualification is no less requisite then examination concerning their knowledge, or orthodoxy.

¹⁷Johann Hottinger, *Thesaurus Philologicus* (Tiguri, 1649, 1659).

[17] Inasmuch as my brother amongst all his qualifications fitting to partake at the Lords Supper, saith not a word about regeneration, one would think that he looketh upon the *sacrament* as a *converting ordinance*. An opinion which hath been maintained by papists, Erastians, and some prelatial men, but is abundantly refuted, not only by those of the Congregational persuasion, but by godly learned presbytereans; especially by Mr *Gelaspy* in his *Aarons Rod*, and by Dr *Drake* against Mr *Humphrey*. And by Mr *Vines* in his *Treatise of the Lords Supper*.¹⁸ So that I shall not need to vindicate the truth in that controversy, others having done it so fully; and indeed this one argument is enough to satisfy mee in that point, viz. if the sacrament were a converting ordinance, then scandalous persons, yea, very heathens should have it administered to them, for wee may not withhold from them converting ordinances. Likewise the Scripture saith, Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread. I: Cor. ii. 28. which plainly intimates that if upon examination he finds himself in a state of sin, and unregeneracy he ought not to eat of the bread, or drink of that cup, and that therefore the sacrament is not a converting ordinance, albeit that, or anything else, may possibly be an occasion of conversion.

The eighth argument, is,

If wee do not admitt the persons in question, to the Lords Supper, without examination, concerning a work of grace, wee lay them under church-censure. But wee ought not to lay them under church-censure. Ergò—

Answer: The consequence is denied. A church-censure is, when a man is cutt off from such priviledges as once hee did partake in, or had a right unto. Whereas the persons in question never did partake of the Lords Supper, nor ever had (*in*

¹⁸George Gillespie, *Aarons Rod blossoming* (London, 1646); Roger Drake, *A boundary to the holy mount* (London, 1653); Richard Vines, *A Treatise . . . of the Lords Supper* (London, 1657).

*foro soli*¹⁹) a right thereunto. If any that are truly godly, and therefore such as have a right *in foro poli*²⁰ (as some express it) be kept from the enjoyment of such a priviledge, they may thank themselves for it, because they submitt not to an orderly examination. I do not see that churches are (in our dayes) too strict, but rather that

[18] their doors are too wide, as to what concerns admission to the Lords Supper. Moreover, since it is not in the power of any man to regenerate himself, meer non-regeneration doth not make all that live under the means of grace the subjects of a formal excommunication, yet it is a truth, that non-regeneration is ground enough to keep those in whom upon examination it doth appear, from the Lords Table.

My brothers last argument, is,

They that are to be confirmed members of the church ought to be admitted to the Lords Supper without any examination concerning a work of grace. But the persons in question are to be confirmed members of the church. Ergo—

Answer: That expression [confirmed members] is usually taken amongst divines for the same thing with being admitted to the Lords Supper. Then the argument would be a meer *idem, per idem*.²¹ They that ought to be admitted to the Lords Supper, ought to be admitted to the Lords Supper. I suppose therefore, my brothers meaning is, that they concerning whom it is true, that wee ought to suffer them to continue members in the visible church, are to be admitted to the Lords Supper, without any examination. Then this argument is much what the [sic] same with the former, and the proposition is denied. There are multitudes belonging to the visible church, whom wee are not bound by any rule to cast out, that yett wee are bound to enquire into their spiritual estate before wee bring them to the Table of the Lord.

¹⁹ In the forum on earth [?].

²⁰ In the forum of the heavens [?].

²¹ The same by means of the same.

Under this ninth (as also under his seventh) argument, my brother answers diverse objections referring to the necessity of relations. Many things which hee taketh notice of, respect rather the rigid

[19] imposition of this or that mode, or the requiring an account of the time and manner of conversion, then a regular examination concerning the thing itself, and therefore I am not concerned in the defence of those particulars. Yet there is one expression I cannot but sett a remark upon. The words are these. *It will hardly be made to appear that one divine from the Apostles dayes till within these forty years did ever plead for relations in order to church communion.* If by relations be meant examinations concerning a work of regeneration in order to full communion in all church-priviledges, this assertion of my Brother is a most grand mistake. Tis near upon fifty years since these churches in New England did begin to practice in that way which is still attended in most places. It is seventy years since Mr *Aynsworth*, and other learned men in Holland did as these New English churches in that matter have, and do practise.²² And within a few ages, after the Apostles were gone, the churches were rather too rigid then too lax as to their examinations of those whom they admitted to their communion. They would hold men a long time as *competentes*, such as did earnestly desire to join unto the church before they would receive them. *Justin Martyr* (who lived 150 years after Christ) in his Second Apology for the Christians, writeth that they did examine men, not only concerning their perswasion but whether they had attained unto such a work of God upon them as to be able in all things to conform themselves to the word and will of God, (which none but truly converted ones can do) before they would admitt them into their fellowship. *Cyprian* (who lived in the next century to *Justin*) hath these words, *vi x plebi persuadeo, ut tales patiantur admitti, de quorum sincerâ poenitentiâ*

²²On Henry Ainsworth's contribution to congregational polity, see Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York, 1963), pp. 73-75.

vix constabat. That hee could not easily perswade the brethren of churches to consent to the admission of such whose sincere re-[20]pentance they did at all doubt of. Cyprian: Epistle 3. *Tertullian*, and other ancient doctors in the church, declare that the *catechumeni* were a long time kept under examination before admission unto full communion with the church. There was then required not only *nomini professio*, and *fidei professio*, but men were to renounce their former sins and vanities, and submit themselves to a *scrutinium*, about these matters. *Fiant scrutinia ut sepius explordentur, an post renuntianunem Satanae, sacra verbã date fidei radicitiùs corde defixerint.*—Alcinus. They were to be examined again, and again, to find out whether the words of the faith, which they professed were indeed fixed in their hearts. Amongst our late reformers, *Chamier* highly commends the strictness which was in former ages attended in examining those that desired to join to the church, *nè quantum fieri poterit lateant Simones*, that so Simon Magus may not creep into the church, if it be possible to prevent it—*Chamier de Bapt: L. 5. c. 15.*²³ *Beza* in Epistle 14. bewayleth the remissness of most reformed protestant-churches in this matter, concluding that there will never be such a reformation as should be, *nisi conversione cordium et evtaëla initium instaurationes sumatur*—except men with converted hearts he laid in the foundation. *Bucer* complains of that laxness which he observed in the English churches formerly, in admitting children that had been baptised, unto the Lords Supper, upon too low terms. Hee saith that there should be manifest signs of regeneration appearing in them first; that they should appear to be such as had upon their hearts a sense of this word of God, and that did use to pray in secret, &c. And how should such things be known without enquiry into their spiritual estates. Vide *Bucer*, Script: Anglic: cap. 17. p. 482, 483.²⁴ *Comenius* testifyeth that in the churches of *Bohemia*

²³ Daniel Chamier, *Panstratiae catholicae*. Vo. IV: *De sacramentis* (Frankfort, 1627).

²⁴ Bucer, *Scripta Anglicana* (Basil, 1577).

[21] there was an *examen conscientiarum* before participation at the Lords Supper. Rat: Discipl: Bohem; p. 47.²⁵ Mr *Hildersham*, in his Treatise of the Lords Supper, in answer to that *Quaere*

whether people are to make known their spiritual estate to their pastor before admission to the Lords Table,

answers, *Yes verily*, and giveth solid reason from Scripture for it.²⁶ When Mr *Norton* in his Answer to *Apollonius* doth assert that 4 things are to be required of those that desire admission into church-fellowship—1. A confession of faith. 2. A declaration of their experience concerning a work of faith. 3. A blameless conversation. 4. professed subjection to the Gospel and the order of it;²⁷ that learned and worthy professor of Leyden (Dr *Hornebeck*) professeth his concurrence with him in those particulars, withal declaring that wherein those of the congregational way, agree with some other reformed churches as to the manner of receiving members into the church—*Epist: ad Duremi*, p. 299.²⁸ It appears then, that such examinations as wee plead for, are no singular, or any novel practice. Nothing but what is confirmed by reverend antiquity and hath been strenuously asserted by the great reformers, both of the former and of this present age.

These things may suffice to be spoken *ανασκευαστικῶς*²⁹ in answer to my brothers arguments. It remains that wee proceed briefly to conclude *κατασκευαστικῶς*³⁰, by producing some reasons

²⁵Comenius, 'Ratio disciplinae ordinisque ecclesiastici, in unitate Fratrum Bohemorum,' part 2 of *De bono unitatis et ordinis* (Amsterdam, 1660).

²⁶Arthur Hildersham, *The Doctrine of Communicating worthily in the Lords Supper* (seventh edition, London, 1623), p. 10; published as part 2 (with separate title page) of William Bradshaw, *Directions for the weaker sort of Christians* (London, 1623). The quotation is only approximate.

²⁷John Norton, *Responsio ad totam questionum syllogem à Guilelmo Apollonio propositam* (London, 1648), translated by Douglas Horton as *The Answer* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp. 25-43.

²⁸Joannes Hoornbeek, *de independentismo, epistola* (Utrecht, 1661).

²⁹By way of finishing up.

³⁰By way of preparation.

which seem to overthrow my brothers *position*, and to evince the contrary.

Argument 1. If no persons are fitt to come to the Lords Supper but such as have experienced a saving work of grace upon their souls, then it is necessary that they that do come should be examined concerning that matter. The consequence of this proposition is manifest. For other[wise]

[22] it would be duty to admitt persons to the Lords Supper, and yett not examine whether they are fitt to come or no, which cannot in reason be supposed. Mens right to priviledges is to be tryed. Rev. 2. 2. If a man claims a priviledge and proveth no right unto it, or if he pleads right, and yet sheweth no sufficient reason, hee ought to be kept back untill he can prove his claim. If it should be said, wee are bound in charity to hope they have grace, without examining them whether it be so or no, you may as well say, that wee are bound in charity to hope that they have knowledge, and are orthodox in judgment, before wee examine whether it be so or no; and that therefore wee should admitt men (under pretence of being charitable) unto the Lords Supper, although they be ignorant and heterodox, as well as admitt them, though unregenerate, hoping better things concerning them without any trial.

But no persons are fitt to come unto the Lords Supper excepting such as have experienced a saving work of grace. They that have not the wedding garment (which implyeth faith and sanctification) are unworthy guests. Math. 22. 11, 12. Are they that are dead in trespasses and sins (as all unregenerate men are) fitt to have spiritual food given to them? No more then they that are naturally dead are subjects meet to receive natural food.

Argument 2. That principle, which tends to bring those into the Lords sanctuary, who are uncircumcised in heart; is against the Scripture. There is a most solemn charge to the contrary. Ezek. 44. 9. The Lords servants must distinguish between the precious and the vile. Jer. 15. 19. That soul doth but defile the

sanctuary of the Lord, that hath not the water of separation (the blood of Christ through faith) sprinkled upon him. Numb. 19. 20. And all those Scriptures which declare how persons admitted into full communion in the Lords house, have been (or ought to be) qualified, confirm the truth of this proposition. They ought to be in a state [23] of salvation. Act. 2. 47. Such as the Lord Himself hath received. Rom. 14. 1, 2, 3. Such as are united unto Christ. I: Cor. 12. 27. Living stones. I: Pet. 2. 5. I: King. 6. 7. Effectually called. Eph. 4. 1. I. Pet. 2. 9. Whenas, none of all this, can be said of unregenerate men. Therefore such principles as tend to fill the Lords sanctuary with unconverted ones, cannot be according to the mind of Christ. Moreover, it is evident that the churches in the Apostles times, did endeavour what they might to keep hypocrites out of their holy communion. Hence when such were found amongst them, tis said they kept in privy, and unawares. Gal. 2. 4. Jude. 4. Which plainly intimates, that they did not willingly admitt such into their fellowship. And therein they followed Christs own example, who would not receive some that had a common faith, into near communion with Himself, because Hee discerned their hypocrisy. Joh. 2. 23, 24. And the Scripture chargeth Christians to turn away from those that had not the power of godliness appearing in them, although they should have a form, making an outward profession and being free from gross scandals (for so it may be with those that have no more than the form of religion) 2. Tim. 3. 5. If wee may not make such our familiars, certainly wee ought not to admitt them unto the Lords Table.

But the principle, or position, wee dispute against, tends to bring men that are uncircumcised in heart, into the Lords sanctuary; if this principle, that persons may be admitted to the Lords Table without any examination concerning their knowledge, doth tend to bring ignorant persons thither, then this principle, that persons ought to be admitted without any examination concerning their regeneration, doth tend to bring

unregenerate persons thither. But the former is true. Ergò, the latter. And therefore not to be received.

[24] Argument 3. If wee find in the Scripture that the church hath refused to receive one into their communion, who was not scandalous in life, and an orthodox professor of the faith, and able to discern the Lords body, until such time as they were satisfied by his own relation and other testimony concerning his sound conversion then for churches in some cases to enquire into the spiritual estate of those whom they receive into their communion, is both lawful and necessary. But for this wee have an instance in the Scripture. Act. 9. 26, 27. Ergò.

Argument 4. That practice which God hath owned with his special presence and blessing ought not to be decried as an humane invention, but rather owned as a divine institution. The Lord blesseth his own ordinances, and not mens inventions. Was not Gods blessing Aarons rod, an effectual demonstration that his ministry had a divine approbation? Is not Pauls calling to the ministry and Peters also proved from this argument, that God owned and blessed them both. I: Cor. 9. 1, 2. Gal. 2. 7, 8, 9.

But this practice of enquireing into the spiritual estates of those that are admitted into full communion in all church-priviledges, the Lord hath owned with his special presence, and blessing. Some have been converted by hearing others relate the story of their conversion,—others have been comforted, and edified thereby. Our fathers who did bear witness to this truth, did also testify that they found much of the presence of Christ, in attending unto his will in this matter.

[25] Nor did ever these churches experience more of the Lords presence, then when they were most careful and conscientious as to admissions unto the Lords Table. Wee shall not act like wise children, if wee seek to pull down with our hands, that house (or any pillar principle whereon it is founded) which our fathers have built.

Argument 5. To use all lawful means to keep churches pure

is a duty, and most eminently, our duty. It is well known that purity in churches and church-administrations was designed by our fathers when they followed the Lord into this wilderness. And therefore degeneracy on that account in us would be a greater evil then in any people. And sure it is, that as those principles which tend to debase the matter of particular churches have a tendency unto church-corruption, so whatever principle or practice doth indeed help to keep the matter or members of churches holy, will maintain purity therein. Unregenerate persons shall not enter within the gates of the New Jerusalem, Rev. 21. 27. Now although wee cannot as yett attain thereunto; nevertheless, it is our duty to come as near unto the New-Jerusalem-estate of the church as possibly wee can. And therefore to abide in the profession and practice of those Scripture-principles, which will keep churches from being corrupted. That man of reknown Dr *Owen*, hath evinced that the letting go this principle, that particular churches ought to consist of regenerate persons, did occasion the great apostacy of the Christian church. De Theolog. Lib. 6. Cap. 8.³¹

[26] But that examination concerning a work of grace before admission into church-fellowship, doth tend to keep churches pure, experience hath sufficiently evidenced, in all places where this holy custome is diligently and conscientiously attended unto. And it will undoubtedly be found, that if once this principle of truth be deserted, a world of unfit, and unqualified persons will fill and pester the house of God, and cause him to go farr off from his sanctuary. Wee may then justly fear, that these golden candlesticks will no longer be so, but become dross, and tin and reprobate silver until the Lord hath rejected them. It is a weighty and a solemn word which my father *Cotton* hath in his Treatise of the Holiness of Church-members, p. 60. 'Methinks (saith hee) the servants of God should tremble to erect such a state of a visible church (in hypocrisy

³¹John Owen, Θεολογουμενα Παντοδαπα. *Sive de natura . . . et studio verae theologiae . . .* (Oxford, 1661). The running title is *De theologia evangelica*.

and formal profession) as whose very foundation threateneth certain dissolution and desolation.'

Argument 6. That laxness in admissions to the Lords Table which godly presbytereans elsewhere durst not approve of, would be a sad degeneracy in New England, and no small dishonour in these churches. But to admitt persons to the Lords Table without examining them concerning their experiences, is that which many godly presbytereans elsewhere durst not do. I have known some of that perswasion in England that would strictly enquire, not only into the knowledge and perswasion, but conversion of those

[27] whom they suffered to partake of the body and blood of Christ at his holy supper. That learned professor of Leyden, before mentioned (though a presbyterean) speaking concerning those of the congregational way, hath this passage, *Si accuratius aliquod examen observent, et puriorem inde habeant populum, et casus suos, nil invidemus,*³² ubi supra, p. 294. So that hee approved of their strictness in examinations as to those whom they admitted into their holy fellowship. And without offence be it spoken, it is a sign that watchmen begin to fall asleep, when they are not willing to do what they can and ought to do, that tares, that hypocrites, that unregenerate persons may not spring up in the church of Christ. Math. 13. 25.

1680

³²If they should test them somewhat closely and consider thereby the people and their experiences purer, we have no objection.

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