

**OF THE HOLINESS OF
CHURCH-MEMBERS**

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by

John Cotton
(1585-1652)

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A
SERMON

Preached by the Reverend,

Mr. JOHN COTTON,
TEACHER OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN
Boston in New-England.

Deliver'd at Salem, 1636.

To which is prefixed,
A Retraction of his former Opinion
concerning *Baptism*, utter'd by him
immediately Preceding the Sermon
here Emitted.

He dyed on the 23. day of *December*,
1652. Enting on the 68 year
of his Age.

1 Cor. ii. 4, 5, 6.

And my speech, and my preaching was not with enticing words of mans wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit, we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wosdome of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought.

BOSTON: PRINTED IN THE YEAR, 1713.

Sermon Delivered at Salem, 1636

By the Reverend,

Old Mr. *JOHN COTTON*,

At Salem, June, 1636

Having been moved by your Reverend Elders, and some Others, to Speak a Word of *Instruction* and *Exhortation*; I thought it meet to begin with some word of *confession*.

At the first coming over of some of our Honoured Magistrates, it so fell out, That they did Arrive at this Congregation, the Sacrament being near to be Administred, and a Child being Born to one of them; they themselves could neither be admitted to the Lord's Table, nor their Child to Baptism: When I myself heard of this, I Wrote unto the Pastor of this Congregation (now Deceased) doubting of the Lawfulness of that practise; Thinking then, That the Faithful and Godly Men coming where the Seals

were to be dispensed, and having right unto the Covenant, had right also unto the Seals thereof, and so that their Children had right unto the former Seal of Baptism: Something I wrote to that purpose, as I conceived, then requisite. It pleased God that He sent me a large and loving Answer; but through the extremity of Sickness then upon me, I could not Read it; and afterwards being shuffled among other Papers, I could never find it to this very day: But what might have been for Instruction to me from his Letters, the Lord hath since showed unto me by diligent search of the Scriptures.

So that however I apprehended the Matter at that time, there was just Reason for what was done: and now lest I should seem to alter my judgment herein without some weighty Cause, Let me tell you what prevailed with me, to cause me to assent to the judgment and practise of the Churches here.

The Reasons are Two.

Reas. 1. The first is taken from the Covenant unto whom it doth belong. I formerly conceived, That unto all the Faithful the Co-

venant did belong, and unto their Seed also, not considering that which since I have learned and found, That the Covenant which is made to Me, and to my Seed, *is not made to the Righteousness of Faith at large, but to them that are righteous by the faith of the Seed of Abraham; that is, to such Believers as are confederate with Abraham.* And therefore it was, That though Circumcision the old Seal of the Covenant (answerable to our baptism) was Administered to all the seed of Abraham, *Yet not unto those godly Men that believed in his Age:* For Abraham and his Family were then the only visible Church of God upon the Face of the Earth. And though Melchizedeck lived at that time, who was an heir of the Righteousness of Faith, yet not of the Covenant of Abraham, unless he will join himself to the Family of *Abraham.* Nor *Job* himself, though he was a Man none like him upon the face of the Earth; nor his friends; *Men fearing God,* in their Generation, were yet incapable of Circumcision, unless they had joyned themselves to the Family of *Abraham.* And therefore you shall never read that the Covenant belongeth to Me, and to my Seed,

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unless I be of the Seed of Abraham, or joined to the Family of Abraham. So we shall find it in the Sanction of the Second Commandment, *That the Lord showeth Mercy to thousands of the Generations of such as Love and Fear Him*: that Commandment hath respect to God's Instituted Ordinances. Let *Jonah* go to *Nineveh*, and by the blessing of God prevail with Thousands, then the Covenant of Grace belongs to them; but What? to Their seed also? No, verily not, unless their Parents were Confederate to the Seed of Abraham. So that if you desire Mercy to you, and to your Seed, *Keep then to the Ordinances, and to the God of the Ordinances, and so you shall keep a constant intail of the Covenant to you, and to your Seed; for unless Men enjoy the Covenant this way, it doth not belong unto their Seed*. This being not considered, I fear, hath brought great Mischief to all the Churches that have not attended unto this Principle, and hath been an occasion of much Mistake to many godly Parents, who plead their Covenant for their Seed, and many times so find little blessing; for though God hath made a Covenant with them, yet it is but

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as a Scattered Stone, not laid orderly in any building; so that truly they may plead; but when God cometh to Answer, He will make it appear, That He did never open His Mouth for a Covenant with their Seed until they be Confederate with Abraham.

And therefore seeing my Letter, as I understand, is in many of your hands, I rather make a Plaister bigger than the Sore, than that it should be pleaded against my practise after my Departure.

Reas. 2. The Second Reason is this, Unto them that are not in Covenant, a Minister may not dispense an act of Power and intrude himself, neither hath he any Power until he be Called; and then only over such as Call him: And therefore if you should come to crave Baptism for your Children, or the Lord's Supper for your selves, of a minister whom you have not Called over you, he hath no Power, and therefore unto you he cannot dispense an act of Power: So that although the hearts of God's People might be enlarged many times, to do such things, *Yet the Law of the Lord's Gospel*

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doth restrain them, until Men have entred into Covenant, and not their own strait lacedness that keeps them back from dispensing such things.

A Third Reason which is Coincident with the Second, and serveth to amplify the Point, That they have no Power over you, it will plainly appear from this ground; They that have no Power to Excommunicate you, they have no Power to Admit you to Communion with them; But till you join yourselves in Covenant with the Church, they have no Power of Excommunication; Therefore till then, they have no Power to Admit you to Communion with them, for there is the like reason of both.

Now having expressed this Word of *Confession*, together with my acknowledgement of my dependence upon the Lord for grief and sorrow; I this desire, That if my Letter Remain Written in any of your hands, you would not now look at it as my judgment; though sometime it was, yet now you have heard it retracted again by me, Professing also, that if any thing which I

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have since Written or Spoken, God give me to see it, appear different from the Truth, I will retract it also; in the mean time blame me not, if I do not retract it.

Jeremiah L. 5

—Come, and let us cleave unto the Lord in a Perpetual and Everlasting Covenant which shall never be forgotten.

Some Translations reads it:

—Come, and let us joyn our selves to the Lord in a Perpetual Covenant that shall never be forgotten.

THESE be the words which were foretold by Jeremiah, which the people of God Returning out of Captivity of Babel should use for the encouragement of one another to return to Sion, and there to bind themselves in Church Covenant with the Lord; for so you read it in the verse foregoing: *In those days (when the Lord shall destroy Babel) the Children of Israel shall come, and the Children of Judah together, going, and weeping as they go; and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us joyn ourselves to the Lord in a Perpetual Covenant, that shall not be forgotten.*

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In these words of encouragement or exhortation, you may observe.

1. The encouragement to the Work, *Come, and let us joyn our selves to the Lord.*

2. This joining is set forth.

(1.) By the means of it: by a Covenant.

(2.) That Covenant is here amplified by a double adjunct of a double Eternity.

1. Here is the Covenant itself, that is Perpetual.

2. Set forth not only by the durance of it, but by the Report and Memory of it unto all Ages: *that shall never be forgotten.*

To speak to joining to the Lord at large, is neither the Principal intendment of my Text, nor may it be so convenient to speak only to it. I shall have occasion to open it in showing the way in which they do join to the Lord.

The doctrine which I would Commend to your Christian consideration, is this;

DOCTRINE

That the church Covenant, where-with the People of Israel & Judah did join themselves to the Lord, especially after their return from Babel; and yet more especially under the days of the New Testament, was a Perpetual Covenant.

Come,

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Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord. Israel and Judah spake this as they were a Church, and as they were about to renew Church Fellowship; *let us join ourselves to the Lord in a Perpetual Covenant that shall never be forgotten.* You read the like Expression, Jer. 31. 31, 32, 33, 34. *This shall be my Covenant with the House of Israel, saith the Lord, I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my People.* And verse 34, *I will forgive their Iniquities, and remember their Sins no more.* It is therefore an Everlasting Covenant; and He doth make the main difference between this and the former Covenant to lie in this; whereas they break that Covenant, v. 32. *This Covenant shall not be broken.* The Lord made a Covenant with them before, but that Covenant they brake; *and I regarded them not, saith the Lord:* as it is repeated, *Heb. 8.8 to 13.* But in this latter Covenant, He will remember their Sins no more, and therefore He doth speak of the Old Testament, as of that which doth vanish away, but for the New Testament, He will establish that; according to what is written, Jer. 32.40. *I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, to do them good: but I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.* The like we also read, *Ezek. 16.60.* *Tho' they have despised the Oath in breaking the Covenant; nevertheless, I will remember my Covenant with thee in the days of thy Youth, and I will establish unto thee an Everlasting Covenant.* And

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wherein doth it differ from the Old Covenant? I know not better how to explain it than by laying both of them together, both the Old Covenant and this New Covenant, which he doth more renew in the days of the New Testament. In the Old Covenant you may observe a four-fold act of God, and a double act of the People.

First. The Lord doth prepare his People, and calleth them to Mount *Sinai*, and there revealeth Himself in Thunderings and Lightnings, and flames of Fire, so that the stoutest Spirits amongst them quaked; and *Moses* tho' a Man full of faith, yet he saith of himself, *I exceedingly tremble and fear*; and so did all the People; and when they heard the voice of the Thunders, and saw the Lightnings: *Exod. 20.18 to 21.* They said to *Moses*, *Speak thou with us, and we will hear, but let not God speak with us lest we die.* Thus did the Lord prepare them by breaking, for if the Lord do intend some real and serious work, He will then shake the foundation of the stubbornness of their hearts, and bring them to see their own stubbornness and baseness, for else they would despise it.

Secondly. The Second act of God is a Commandment which He doth put forth, wherein He doth require an exact obedience unto all the Commandments of the Law, and to his Statutes And Judgments: *Exod. 19:5.* *If you will obey my voice indeed, saith the Lord, and keep my Covenant; then you shall be my peculiar treasure above all People.*

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Now this Covenant of God consisteth of Moral Laws, and Statutes and Judgments, unto all which He doth require Obedience, even to all that is written in the Law, *Deut. 27.27.*

Thirdly. The Lord doth profess unto them all that should keep Covenant, That they should live by keeping Covenant. And this is the Grand and Principal Promise wrapping up all other, *Lev. 18.5.* And the Apostle doth Interpret the meaning of that Promise: *Gal. 3.12. The Law is not of faith, but the man that doth these things shall Live in them:* and this is the Promise of Life which God giveth to those that keep Covenant.

Fourthly. The fourth act of God in making this Covenant is, a heavy threatning of a curse to any that shall break these Commandments, *Deut. 27.22; Gal. 3:10. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the Law to do them.*

Now there are two acts of the People.

1. They do profess universal Obedience unto all the Commandments, *Deut. 5.27; Exod. 19.8.* Twice they repeat it, *All that the Lord shall say unto us, we will hear it, and do it.* Only consider this, They Promise it in some kind of opinion of their own Strength, without any sense of feeling of their own Insufficiency; like men under pangs of Conscience, they do believe that they shall be able to keep and do all that the Lord shall say unto them. *O that there were such an heart in them!* saith the Lord, *Deut. 5.29.* Or as

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the word is in the Original; *Who shall give them such a heart?* But this they Promise.

2. They yield themselves to be accursed of God, if they shall not keep that Covenant; and therefore when it was pronounced, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the Law to do them, all the People did say, Amen;* and so their faith lay upon a curse: This is the Old Covenant that God made with his People, and is called a Covenant of Works; the Lord requireth Righteousness and Works, He Promiseth Life to their Works, and they say, *Amen,* to enter into a curse. Now this was a temporal Covenant; this my Covenant they brake, saith the Lord; and they did quickly turn aside from the wayes of the Lord, and therefore *Moses* when he cometh and seeth the Calf which they had made, he brake the Tables of the Covenant.

Now for the Covenant that is Everlasting, we may observe therein also four acts of God towards his People.

First. Look as He prepareth the other by a Spirit of Bondage, so he doth prepare these for His Everlasting Covenant, by a Spirit of Poverty; and they are Poor and Afflicted in Spirit, in sense of their own Unworthiness & Insufficiency that which the Lord doth wish to the other, *Deut. 5:29.* He worketh in these, *Zeph. 3:12.* *There shall be brought home to Zion a Poor and an Afflicted People:* He meaneth not in respect of their civil Estates, for there was not a feeble People among

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them; but as they stood in their Spirits, they were empty, and as they thought destitute of God, and therefore should seek the Lord and his Face, and his Strength, like those that had lost both Church and Covenant; unto those the Lord will have an Eye, and He will dwell with men of a contrite Spirit, *Isa. 57.15, 16*. And therefore with a blessing unto these, the Lord Christ doth begin his sermon in the Mount: *Matt. 5.3. Blessed are the Poor in Spirit*. He doth not only afflict them with a Spirit of Bondage; but when he cometh to make a Covenant of *Grace*, the People are insufficient to do all which the Lord requireth; and this is a Spirit of Poverty.

Secondly. When the Lord hath brought His People to be Poor in Spirit, He doth then Promise them,

1. *Christ*: He giveth Him for a Covenant: *Isai. 42.6. I have called thee in Righteousness: I will give thee for a Covenant unto the Gentiles*. When the Lord maketh a Covenant of *Grace*, this is the gift of God; his is the Principal blessing of the Covenant, *Isai. 49.8*. And the Lord will not give Life in them to keep, and by them to uphold, but Jesus Christ for both.

2. In Jesus Christ He doth give Everlasting Communion with Him. Through Christ He will take away the Stony heart, and give a heart of flesh; and He will bring with Him Everlasting Righteousness, *Dan. 9.24*. That is to say,

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Such Pardon of Sin as He will never revoke more, that Justification which He will work in Christ, He will never repent of; and therefore He saith, Jer. 31.34. *He will remember their sins no more:* and for their Sanctification He Promiseth, Jer. 32.40. *I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.* And so in all the blessings of the Covenant, the Lord will give an Everlasting Union and Communion with Him, in the injoyment of them.

Thirdly. These three things the Lord doth require.

1. *Faith:* That is to say a yielding of the Soul to the Lord, as unable for this work, and yet to wait upon Him for Righteousness, Ezek. 36.37. *I will be enquired for this of the house of Israel to do it for them.* Not only to be sought unto for the Mercy, but I will be sought, that is, They shall seek me, they shall seek his face and his strength to do it all for them.

2. He doth require the *Obedience* of Faith: and this is expressly called for, *Rom.* 16.26. That is, for such Righteousness, as none can work by any Graces of their own; but which being wrought in them doth put life and strength into all their duties.

3. He doth require of his People that they should be of a Melting frame of Spirit, in regard of all their Whorishness, whereby they have profaned His Name; they shall wail and be-moan this: and therefore it is said of them in

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the verse before the Text, That Weeping they should go, for all the Evils that they have wrought in God's sight: And this is that which we read, *Ezek. 6:9. They that escape of you shall remember me among the Nations whither they shall be carried Captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.* This doth the Lord require of his People: but observe this withal, that He doth not require it in a way of a Legal command, but with an alsufficient Vertue, whereby He will work in them what He doth require; so that doth He require, that they should walk holily before Him, He Himself doth also work this, for in this Everlasting Covenant, the Commandments of God are Promises; for this will I be inquired, even to do all that He doth require, *Zeph. 3.12. They shall trust in the Name of the Lord.* And so for the Obedience of Faith, *Ezek. 36.27. I will cause you to walk in my Statutes, and you shall keep my Judgments and do them.* He will make us able to do it, and willing to do it, and so to do it. And this is the true meaning of all that the Lord doth require in the Everlasting Covenant; when He doth Command He doth Promise. Doth He require seeking of Him? He will put his spirit within us: Doth he require weeping and mourning? He will pour down a Spirit of Grace and

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Supplication, and they shall seek him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him, *Zech.* 12. 10. So that this is the Everlasting Covenant. The Lord prepareth the heart: certain duties indeed he doth lay upon them; as to believe in his name, to yield the obedience of faith, and to mourn for Him; and He doth convey an effectual Power to work them.

Fourthly. The fourth act is an act of Cursing belonging to this Covenant.

1. To them that do not receive it.

2. To those that do Apostate from it: To them that do not receive it, *Heb.* 2.2,3. If the word spoken by Angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience, received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if neglect so great Salvation? The neglecting of it brings desperate Misery.

To those that do Apostate from it, *Heb.* 10. 29. *Of how much sorer Punishment shall they be thought worthy of who have trodden under foot the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing, & have done despite unto the Spirit of Grace.* This Covenant is that which is spoken of, *Deut.* 29.1. beside the Covenant made in Mount *Horeb*: and to this Covenant belongeth a heavy curse, *Deut.* 30.17, 18. *If thy heart turn away that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them, I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the*

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Land wither thou passest over Jordan to possess it. And that it is the Covenant of Grace, we may perceive by comparing, *Deut. 30 v. 11* to the 14 with *Rom. 16.6*. So that we may see the Lord doth threaten a heavy curse to fall upon them that transgress this covenant.

Now for the People's part: Their acts are two.

1. They fall down before the Lord confessing their Unworthiness of any Mercy.

2. Confessing their own Inability and want of Strength; and this is that which Joshua laboreth to possess the People with, *Josh. 24:19*. There he telleth them, *Ye cannot serve the Lord your God*; that they might not trust in their own Strength: and therefore when the Lord doth make this Covenant with *Abraham*, he fell on his face, *Gen. 17:3* in sense of his own Unworthiness.

Why this Covenant is such an Everlasting Covenant?

Reas. 1. Is from the Root & Fountain of it: *Jer. 31.3. I have loved thee with an Everlasting love, therefore with Mercy have I drawn thee.* What moveth the Lord to be thus earnest and zealous in drawing men to Christ? *No man can come to me, saith Christ, except the Father which hath sent me draw him, Joh. 6.44.* How cometh this to pass? *I have loved thee with an Everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee.* Now He will carry his work an end in His with a mighty Power, thro' all the backwardness of their own Spirits:

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And this is the ground mentioned, Psal. III. 4, 5, 9. *The Lord is Merciful and full of Compassion, He will be mindful of his Covenant forever: He hath sent Redemption to his People, and commandeth his Covenant forever.* And how cometh this to pass? His Redeeming love is the cause of it; as the Covenant of works springeth from his Justice; and hence it is that the Apostle saith, *Rom. 7.12. The Commandment is holy and just and good;* if the Creature keep Covenant the Lord will reward; but if not He will punish; but to whom his Covenant is from love and mercy, them he will draw with Everlasting Mercy.

2. Another principal Reason is taken from the Surety; though the Israelites had *Moses* for a Mediator, yet they had him not for a Surety. Now Jesus Christ is made the Surety of the Covenant, *Heb. 4.6.* A Surety is not for a Testament, but for a Covenant; no need is of a Surety on God's part, He never brake Covenant with any: but if a Surety be needful, doubtless it lyeth on our part; and therefore it is said, *I will give thee for a Covenant,* even Christ Himself: *Isai. 55.2,3. I will make an everlasting Covenant with thee, even the sure Mercies of David: Behold, I have given him for a witness to the People.* And hence it is that all the Promises of this Covenant are made directly to Jesus Christ; the Old Covenant was made to the People, but this is made to Christ. To *Abraham* and to his Seed were Promises made, he speaketh not of his Seeds, as

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of many, but as of one even Christ, *Gal.* 3.16. And in Him the Promises are yea and Amen to us; yea, that is affirmed, *Amen*; that is, confirmed: so long therefore as this Church keepeth her to Christ, and holdeth Christ for her head and Husband, the Lord doth keep Covenant; and He hath Promised to the Elect Seed, that they shall keep Covenant, for He hath said, They shall not depart from Christ, and then they can never depart from the Covenant, and though they break Covenant, yet if they keep close unto Christ, they have the Covenant, although they break it. And though you read of a Temporary faith, that doth endure for a season, *Matt.* 13.20, 21. And so in the parallel place, *Luk.* 3.13. you shall read, That they are of the Stony Soyl, that receive the word with joy, and for a time believe; and so for a time receive sundry Spiritual gifts, and that with joy; and some with fear and trembling also, as the thorny Soyl, for they want not depth of Earth, but are deeply humbled, and yet bring forth no fruit unto perfection, because they are not brought to that faith in Jesus Christ by which they are Sanctified. Now therefore so long as this Covenant is kept, and so long as the Members of the Church keep close to Christ, so long this Covenant is not broken. And hence it is that when the Jews had committed the greatest Sin that ever was committed upon the face of the Earth, yet the apostles did not break Communion with them,

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notwithstanding that fearful injury of putting to death the Lord of Life; because they might have done it of Ignorance, and therefore, *Act. 3:1.* they went and joined with him in Prayer; why did not they know that they had Crucified a just Man? and is not this a horrible Profanation of the Covenant? No, no, Brethren, this will not break an Everlasting Covenant. *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do;* our Saviour Prayeth for them, the Apostles keep Communion with them; here is the spirit of a Saviour, and of his blessed Apostles: but when they do put away known Christ, *Act. 13.45,46,* when they contradicted and blasphemed, then what says the Apostles? *It was necessary the word of God should first have been spoken unto you, but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* And so also it was a dreadful proceeding which they use in this case: *Act. 19.7, 8, 9. He went into the Synagogue, & spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing & perswading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the Disciples,*—So mark you what it is that doth dissolve this Everlasting Covenant; not this that they Kill the Messiah; it was a horrible Murder; but yet they may not separate for murder: What! if it be the Eternal Son of God! You may not separate for that neither

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so long as you do not Sin against Knowledge; but when they do Sin against Knowledge, and after they have been taught and convinced, do yet rebel, then is this Everlasting Covenant broken, else it is not broken till they come to this desperate extremity.

USE I. The Use of this point in the first place, may show us from hence, a ground of that which some of us (yet but few) saw the truth of, in our Native Country, namely the Necessity of a *Church Covenant* to the Institution of a Church, *Come, and let us join our selves to the Lord:* that which doth make a People a joynd People with God, that doth make a church: What is that? The Covenant of Grace doth make a People, a joynd People with God, and therefore a Church of God: and therefore you shall find that when the Lord Establishes Israel for a Church unto Himself, He maketh this Covenant; not only that in Mount *Horeb*, but He doth make another Covenant with them in the Plains of *Moab*, *Deut. 29.10, 17.* And so by this means they come to be established to be a Church unto the living God.

For further clearing of this, consider this one Argument.

That whereby a Church is at first Established to be a Church; That whereby being fallen, a Church is restored, that which being broken, a Church is broken; That giveth being to a Church.

But by this a Church is at first established, and by this it is restored when it is fallen, and by breaking this, the Church is broken. This therefore giveth the being to a Church. By this a Church is at first established. You are here this day that the Lord might establish you to be his people, *Deut.* 28.12, 13. And how was the Church renewed, but by renewing of this Covenant in the days of *Asa*, 2 *Chron.* 15.12. And so in the days of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, *Chap.* 9.38, *Chap.* 10.29. And afterwards when the Lord would cast off his People, *Zech.* 11.10, 14. *He brake the staff of Beauty, and the staff of Bands:* This now followeth, that so many of us, as have come to the Ordinances of God, and have partaken of the Seals of the Covenant, and have not entered into a Covenant, have violated the Seals of the Covenant which have not been given to the Elect of God in general, but to the Church of God; and therefore look at the Covenant by which you have entered here, as the ability of your State, which by no changes you are for ever to be removed from, but may forever keep it by fellowship with Jesus Christ.

USE II. In the Second Place, let me provoke my Self, and all my Brethren, and all the Churches to Consider, What kind of Covenant you have entered, or will enter into: If you shall come hither into this Country, and shall here confess your Sins, that you have profaned the

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Name of God withal, if you take Christ for your King, and Priest & Prophet, and if you shall profess to walk in all his ways, this may all be but a Covenant of works.

The Elders of the Church propound it, Will you renounce all your Sinful Pollutions? Will you keep Covenant? And enter into a Covenant with the Church, and take Christ, and promise to walk after all God's Ordinances? You Answer, All this we will do; all this is no more than the Old Covenant: For you are much deceived if you think there was no speech of Christ in the Covenant of works. What were the Ceremonies but shadows of Christ? What was the laying the hand on the head of the Sacrifice, but the laying hold upon Christ Jesus? What was the blood of the Sacrifice? Was it not the blood of Christ? And what was the Atonement by that blood? Was it not the Atonement which is by Christ? All the understanding Israelites did see that these things did point at Christ. Now, if we do enter into a Covenant to keep the Ordinances of the Law, of the Gospel, and of the Civil State, (for that was the tripartive Covenant) all this may be but a Covenant of Works. What then must we do? We must fall down before the Lord in our Spirits, and profess our selves insufficient to keep any Covenant, and profess our selves unworthy that the Lord should keep any Covenant with us; as to say, *Lord! who am I? Or what is my Father's house, that the Lord should ever*

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look upon such a poor Soul as I am? What doth the Church lay hold upon duties, and there's an end? No, no, There are no true Servants of Jesus Christ, but they must be drawn out of themselves by a Spirit of Bondage, and unto Christ by a Spirit of Poverty; and then a Soul seeth there is much in Christ, but he cannot hope there is any thing for him: Now the Lord doth draw a man on to Christ Jesus, and calleth him to believe in Christ, but yet he is not able to reach Him. Now then, if the Lord draw the Soul to depend upon Christ, and shall go forth, and not undertake any thing in his own Strength; so you will keep it by the Strength of the Lord also; now the Lord will have Peace with you, and the gates of Hell shall never prevail against you. Build a Church upon any other foundation but Faith, and the profession of Faith, and it will break into manifold distempers. But if the church be built upon this Rock; Storms and Winds will not so much as shake it, it being built upon Faith, and Faith upon Christ Jesus: by this means the Covenant will keep us constantly, sweetly, and fruitfully, in an everlasting kind of Serviceable usefulness one to another.

USE III. The Use in the third Place, is of Direction, Upon what terms you may Separate. Suppose the church promise never to defile themselves more with any Pollutions of the Sons of men, but they do defile themselves, then Covenant is broken; they did Covenant they would

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not come into false Assemblies, & that they would have no fellowship with them, that did allow of false Assemblies; but this Covenant cometh to be broken: if this be your Covenant, it is but a Covenant of Works, and then no marvel tho' it do break & fail, seeing it stands upon duties, and keeping of duties; for being built upon the condition of duties, and standing upon performance of duties, & being broken upon neglect of duties, this is but a Covenant of Works; and yet you may be Married to Christ in this. You come and resolve to walk in all Ordinances, and undertake to reform both Church & Common Wealth; in such a Covenant the Lord is content to take you by the hand and become a Husband to you, *Jer. 31:32*. And what will a Husband do, he will rejoyce with you, and you will find comfort in duties; your heart hath been refreshed that you may see you have Jesus Christ in your bosom, He will also reveal Secrets unto you, he will cast in Seeds of sundry good things among you, so that you shall Prophecy in his Name, and have a Seed of Prayer, and many good things, and yet may want Everlasting love; you may find much comfort, and yet you will find some or other to give offence, or some or other to take offence, and you will break with breaking upon breaking, until you be like Sheep without a Shepherd. This is not the Covenant, therefore Brother, upon which thou & I must live in Church-fellowship everlastingly, tho' herein thou hast had

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comfort, & that unspeakable; such thou mayest have & yet run upon a Covenant of Works.

2. A second branch of this use may be to teach us whereupon a Man may build Separation. Not upon breach of duty though they transgress, & prostrate their Sabbaths, defiling themselves with unclean devices of men. Is the Covenant of Grace broken? It is not broken until you have convinced this People of their Sin, *Act. 3.17*. Because, if the Covenant be a Covenant of Grace, Jesus Christ doth step in, & all the breaches are fastned upon him. When then is the Church of Christ broken from Him? Not when she doth Crucifie Him, nor when she doth pluck the Crown of Sovereignty from His Head; these things she may do of Ignorance: but when they are convinced that they have broken his Will, and transgressed the rule of His Gospel: Now, if out of haughtiness of Spirit, they will not see an error, but will have their own ways still; now it is no Sin of Ignorance, no Sin of Infirmary. Now when men sin not in Infirmary, not in Pang of a Passion, as *Peter* denied his Master, nor in Pang of a Lust, as *David* when he committed Adultery, but when in cool blood, Men do reject the word of Life: Now, since they have put the word of God from them, you may break off from them and the blessing of Him that dwelt in the bush will be on your heads. When it cometh to this that the Church doth separate from Christ, not from Christ but from known Christ, & not from known Christ

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in weakness of Passion, or Lust, but in cool blood; now the Lord in Heaven will speak a blessing to your Separation; but if you will separate upon any other ground, you go upon a Covenant of Works: and if there have been any transgression of this Nature, Return, and Return again unto the Church. And this let me further commend unto you, let the church look to her covenant, and let no Member come in but he that *Knoweth Christ*, and that knoweth he is a *Child of Wrath*; and let him go on, not in his own strength, but in a depending frame upon Jesus Christ, and then all the World will know that you have made an Everlasting Covenant: hold Christ, and hold the Covenant & Promises, and Blessings of the Covenant.

USE IV. The fourth Use may serve, to teach any Private Christian, whether thou be-est joined to the Lord in an Everlasting Covenant. If thou buildeth upon a Covenant of works, the end of all thy faith will be to say *Amen* to a curse, *Deut.* 27.21. If thou hast entered into a Covenant of Grace, the end of thy faith will be the Salvation of thy soul, and this is the faith of the Gospel, *1 Pet.* 1.8,9.

Quest. *But how shall I know whether I have built upon an everlasting covenant, or no?*

Ans. 1: The Lord hath drawn thee to make this Everlasting Covenant, thou didst not take up upon thy own accord: Mind therefore what I say, The Lord draweth partly by a Spirit

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of Bondage, partly by a Spirit of Adoption: If you never found yourself a fire-brand of Hell, if your Conscience were never afflicted with your dangerous Estate by Nature, you were never yet in Jesus Christ. You will say, *I trust in Christ, and look to be saved by his Righteousness.* Were you ever afflicted with sense of your own unrighteousness? If you say, No, I Pray you read, Joh. 8. 30. *As He spake these things, many believed on him. They trusted on Him for Salvation. Did you then take the Covenant? See what followeth; Jesus saith unto them, If you continue in my word, then are ye my Disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, & were never in bondage to any man: They were never acquainted with bondage; they hoped bondage belonged to any rather than to them, and was more fit for Gentiles than for Jews. But what saith Christ? Whosoever committeth Sin, the same is the Servant of Sin. If the Son shall make you free, then shall you be free indeed. And afterwards he telleth them, You are of your Father the Devil. For if a Soul were never yet bruised with Sin, and with the sense of Sin, he never yet laid hold upon Christ, with a true Justifying Faith; such an one will not continue in God's house forever.*

Object. *You will say, those that are brought up under Christian Parents, they are not affected with such Terrors as others are, that have lived in roaring distempers of them, it is great reason that God should*

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so bring them on by showing them their fearful Misery; but these have been well trained up, and I for my part, saith one, cannot tell whether ever God did work this upon me?

Ans. If the State of such Persons be good, I profess, I do not know how to Interpret the speech of Christ. These men are the Children of Abraham, and yet if they do not see their bondage, they are not free by the Son; there is difference in the measure of the spirit of bondage; as there is difference betwixt the Launcing & Pricking of a Boil, and yet both let out the Corruption, the one with a lesser, the other with a greater issue: therefore if the Lord doth not cut thee off from all thy good Education, believe it, thou art not yet in Christ, this faith of thine will fail thee, if thou so livest, and so dyest.

Object. *But thou wilt say, I know the Pangs of Conscience, and the terrors of it, and I have seen the error of my way, and have cast off my lewd Company; and since I know that the Lord requireth that I should seek him in Church Estate; I have come some thousands of miles for that end, and I could not endure to see such things as are done by the devices of men: will not this hold?*

Ans. I beseech you consider it, you have fallen upon this Reformation, you have undertaken a Covenant, yet now you have failed, and what then have you done? I go to Christ, and desire him to sprinkle me with the blood of his

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Covenant. Is not this a safe Estate? Truly this is no more than the very Covenant of Works, which the People of Israel entered into at *Horeb*, the Lord shook the foundations of their hearts; upon it they entered into a Covenant; *All that God commandeth us, we will hear it and do it*; and if they did offend, they then go to the appointed Sacrifice; and what, saith the Soul in such a case? *I thank God, I find some Peace to my Conscience*. All this you may do, you may reform your Selves and Families, and Churches; and when you fail at any time, you may return to Christ, and He may give you some remorse, as he did to the Israelites, *Psal.* 78.34, 35, 36. All this may be by a Spirit of Bondage: *He in Mercy forgave their Iniquities, and destroyed them not*. So they may come to have their Sins Pardoned, but this kind of pardon is but a reprieve; it is not in everlasting Righteousness & Mercy: they Pray for Christ, and Mercy, and He doth sprinkle them, and then they see & find, that the Lord hath been Merciful unto them: but this will not do, the Lord will soon call back such Pardon, as may plainly appear: *Mat.* 18.28. A certain man owed his Lord ten thousand talents, but when he had nothing to pay, he fell down at his Master's feet, and said, *Have Patience with me, and I will pay thee all*; his Master had compassion on him, and loosed him, and let him go; was this in everlasting Mercy? See what followeth, This fellow would pay all; and thus it

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is with these men, that have been under a Spirit of Bondage, they will cry hard for Mercy, and Promise to pay all in time; and now in their dealings with their Brethren they are full of Sensoriousness, and will not bate an inch of any Covenant; and they will take a man by the throat, though it be but for an hundred Pence: and then what saith the Lord of such a Servant? Oh! thou wicked Servant, I forgave thee that great debt, shouldest not thou have had compassion of thy fellow Servant? He is then wroth, and delivers him up to the tormentors, until he hath paid the utmost farthing; even so shall my heavenly Father do unto you. When men have received ease from God, and then are strait laced towards their Brethren, then doth the Lord revoke his Pardon. So that Reformation is no assurance that God hath made an Everlasting Covenant with us. And mind you further, All the Graces that you have laid hold upon, have sprung from your own Righteousness. Thou hast taken a Promise, did it belong to thee? If not it will fail you; you say you have been humbled, and come to Christ, and He hath refreshed you, mark whereupon it is built; upon your humiliation? No, but I come to Christ, Do you so? Who brought you to Christ? He saith, *No man can come to me except the Father draw him.* Now, come to such an one, and say, Go to Prayer; saith the poor Soul, I cannot Pray; Be humbled, I cannot be humbled; apply Pro-

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mises, they belong to any rather than to me: Such a frame of Spirit there is in every one whom the Father draweth: if you come to Christ by virtue of anything which is in you, it is but a legal work. And I pray consider, what it will amount unto, you will find, that these men will breed distraction in your Churches, such Members will make no choice how they hear, or how they deal with their brethren; look to it therefore carefully, when they come into the Church, for otherwise you will find everlasting confusion, rather than an everlasting Covenant.

2. Now then, doth the Lord draw you to Christ, when you are broken in the sense of your own Sins, and of your own Righteousness? When you look at duties you are not able to do them, not able to hear or pray aright. If the Lord do thus draw you by his Everlasting Arm, He will put a Spirit into you, that will cause you to wait for Christ, and to wait for Him until He doth shew Mercy upon you; and if you may but find Mercy at the last, you will be quiet and contented with it. And whilst you do with Patience & Constancy wait, you are drawn with Everlasting Love; now you have Christ in you, though you do not feel Him: for as the Earth is hanged upon nothing, *Job* 26.7, so now there is a Place for Christ in the heart, when it is emptied of everything besides; and such a man hath Christ, and is blessed, and the Covenant of

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Grace is his, you may safely receive him into your Church fellowship; and though he do neither know Christ nor his Covenant to be his, yet he will wait for Him, knowing there is none in Heaven but Him, or in Earth in comparison of Him. And you shall find such Meek in Spirit & Merciful, and Mourning for Sin: These kind of Christians will spring & grow, and will not prophane the Covenant of God, nor the Covenant of the Church by any unmerciful Separation. Such neither stray on the right hand nor on the left; but when you convince them, that they have sinned against Christ and his Church, they will go & complain bitterly of all the wrong they have done to Christ, & his Church or Covenant, and Mourn for all the Profanation of his Name: and for the grief that they have put upon the Spirits of his Brethren; and these are true Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile. Now cometh the Son with his Personal work, (as He saith, Joh. 6.44. *No man knows the Father but the Son, & he to whom the Son reveals him:*) in which he doth show the Soul, that all this former work was the mighty Hand of God, whereby he hath drawn the Soul unto Jesus Christ, & afterwards doth assure and clear it unto the Soul in some measure, that this way is the way wherein God leadeth all his Elect Ones. Now where the Son leadeth, the Holy Ghost beginneth to work his proper work in the Soul, and Sealeth all this to the Soul; for the Soul will not rest in a weak

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hope that Jesus Christ is his, but doth seek for more & better security of Jesus Christ. If he have a Promise never so clear, yet it doth not quiet his Spirit fully, it doth stay him from sinking, but not from searching. When *Nathan* told *David*, 2 Sam. 12:13. *The Lord hath put away thy Sin, thou shalt not dye*; as plain a Promise as any could be, and *David* knew that he spake it from the word of the Lord. And what doth he now? Doth that satisfy? No verily. But many men who had run upon a Covenant of works, would have took it to themselves: If they had been humbled, and after received; but a Child of God, tho' a Minister should so convince him, that he could not deny but the Promise belongs to him, yet he searches further. And so *David*, Psal. 51.1, Doth still beg for Mercy, *Have Mercy upon me, O Lord, &c.* Why, had not *David* been told that the Lord had put away his Sins, (for this Psalm was Penned when *Nathan* had spoken to him, as appears by the title:) What would he have? Surely he saw need of further Mercy; *Make me to hear the voice of joy & gladness, & establish me with thy free Spirit*: And thus he wrestles with God and prays for it; according to what the Apostle speaks: Eph. 1.13. *In whom after ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of Promise*. And when the Soul hath received this, then doth he Sleep in quietness, and hath full contentment, and still he doth yet depend on Christ Jesus, fearing lest he should grieve & quench the

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Spirit; and such a Soul it is unto whom the Lord hath made an Everlasting Covenant.

If this man have broken any Law of God, you shall soon bring him about to see his errors; and all this doth show a man, he is a poor empty creature; and this soul is brought lower and lower, and nearer and nearer to Jesus Christ. So if we do wisely consider this, it may serve to give us a taste of discerning whether we be in an Everlasting Covenant, or no.

Use V. The Use in the fifth Place, is of *Consolation* unto all the faithful Servants of God, whom God hath made this Everlasting Covenant withal: you will find that this will never be forgotten. You have entered into such a Covenant, wherein Christ is yours, and the Covenant yours, and all the Promises yours; and all the Blessings yours, and the whole World yours; and that which is the strength of the Consolation, they are yours Everlastingly, if the Lord bring you out of yourselves, by a spirit of bondage, and unto Christ by a Spirit of Poverty; so that you wait upon him and cannot rest, until Christ hath revealed Himself to you by his Spirit: here is your Comfort, the Lord hath made with you an Everlasting Covenant which shall never be forgotten. This was David's comfort, 2 Sam. 23:5. *Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for that is all my salvation,*

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and all my desire, although He make it not to grow. Though my house do not flourish with Ordinances, not in Ruling justly, as the Lord requires; though my House be out of order, and Common Wealth out of order, yet He hath made an Everlasting Covenant. God hath laid hold upon Christ, and Christ hath laid hold upon me, and this is his stay and comfort, although God make it not to grow. And I beseech you consider it, all those that have temptations to Separation, and some that have conceits of too much liberty: It is not hearing that makes a man clean, as we may see, *Act. 17.32,33,34.* When they heard the Apostles speak of the Resurrection from the Dead, some mocked, and some said, we will hear thee again of this matter, and some clave to him and believed; all that heard him did not cleave to him, but only some of them. And if you have heard in *England*, you do thereby neither cleave unto your Covenant, nor Order, unless you partake of the Seals of the Covenant, then indeed you join unto them. Now, this is the nature of the comfort of an Everlasting Covenant, tho' we fail in Families, and in Churches, yet if Christ be ours, the Everlasting Covenant is ours. Indeed when *Moses* came and saw the Israelites worshipping the golden calf, *Exod. 32. 19,* because he saw they had broken Covenant with God, therefore he brake the Tables of the Covenant; to show the Lord would have no fellowship with them; and if the Covenant had

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not been renewed, they had perished. But come you to *Davids Covenant*, Psal. 89.28 to the 34. *verse*. *My covenant*, saith the Lord, *shall stand fast forever: if his Children forsake my Law, I will visit their transgressions with a Rod; but my loving kindness will I not take from them*. This Covenant doth not stand on keeping Commandments, but this is all our delight, That the Lord will not break Covenant with us, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his Lips. Consider therefore, for here is a great deal of difference, your Covenant is not a point of order only, but the foundation of all your comfort; and therefore look not at it as a complement, for it is the well-ordered Covenant of God, even the Security of your Souls.

Object. But some will say, this would indeed much comfort me, that hath been delivered, but if a man touch any Unclean thing, he is defied, and if I touch him that hath touched any Unclean thing, I am defiled also, Numb. 19.13, 14. Therefore sadness is upon me night and day for the Sins of the Church, and this doth eat up all my Comfort?

Answ. I Pray you to consider it. I will but Interpret what it is to touch a dead man, and to touch dead Ordinances. I cannot give you a better Interpretation than by that expression, which the Apostle useth, 2 Cor. 7.1. *It is good for a Man not to touch a Woman*. If so be a Man touch

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a strange Woman, so as to be familiar to plead for her, and to connive with her, this Man is defiled; and if I now touch this man so as to be familiar with him, and to keep fellowship with him, I am also defiled. So in case the Church do tolerate these, that do defile themselves with any Sinful Pollution, do not I make myself Unclean now by touching this Church? God forbid, unless it be by touching them with familiar connivance. But if I do now touch them, with a sharp reproof, this doth indeed touch the Church, but it is so far from defiling, as that it doth hold forth the Purity of his heart that toucheth them: and if you do forbear Communion with the Church when you know the Church hath defiled herself, if you shall not come home to the Church, and bewail your Separation, your not touching the Church hath defiled you, *Lev. 19:17*. You see the Church lye in Sin, you will not touch her, then you sin against her, and have broken your Covenant. Will you suffer your Brother's Ox to lie in the Mire? and will not pluck it out? And are not brethren more than Oxen. And I beseech you consider another place of Scripture, (and the Lord be Merciful to those that have perverted the sense of it:) in *Hag. 2.12,13*. where it is said, *They were all Unclean, as by the touch of a dead man, both Prince and Priest, and People were Unclean*. Very Godly men they were, yet so busy with the World, that Temple work was

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neglected, expressly against the Commandment of God; for they did not only leave it off when the king restrained them with a strong hand, but in the days of *Darius* also (the Successor of *Artaxerxes*) they did forbear and cease from Temple work; and therefore now they are neither accepted of God, nor prospered in the outward man, they were all Unclean, as by the touch of a dead man: but do *Haggai* and *Zechariah* now separate from them? No, no, Brethren, they touch them to the quick, and so recover their Brethren, and deliver their Souls, tho' they be dead and defiled; yet it is not for the People of God to say, we will touch them; you shall be Unclean if you touch them not: Touch them, how? With dalliance, and familiarity and closeth with them: Not so, for that was the Sin of old *Eli*, that he did bear with his Children too much, and touched them no more sharply. But herein stood the faithfulness of these two holy Prophets, that they did touch their Brethren, and that throughly, so that the Lord did stir them up to set about Temple Work; and then He doth Promise all that they went about should be clean and pure. I Pray you therefore consider it: I am marvellously afraid of Separation from Churches upon any breach of duty; they who do Separate for such causes, think they are sprinkled with the water of Separation: but believe it, they are Separ-

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ted from Christ Jesus forever, if they so live and so dye. Therefore if you belong to Christ, He will shew you it is not the water of Separation that will serve your turn, but getting Christ Jesus, and sitting closer to Him, and to your Brethren, by Admonishing and Reproving them, if you see them defiled. This will keep you clean, and your hearts clean, and your Souls comfortable: That the Lord hath made an Everlasting Covenant with you that shall never be *Forgotten*.

FINIS.