

A
TREATISE ON,
AND
Scriptural Explanation
OF
EXCOMMUNICATION,
FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL PIOUS AND GOD FEARING CHILDREN.
BY
MENNO SIMON.

“Evil men understand not judgment; but they that seek the Lord understand all things,” Prov. 28 : 5.

“Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved; but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once,” Prov. 28 : 18.

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

ELKHART, INDIANA:
PUBLISHED BY JOHN F. FUNK AND BROTHER.

1871.

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A SCRIPTURAL EXPLANATION OF EXCOMMUNICATION.

Menno Simon wishes to all fellow-believers, brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, the grace and peace of God our heavenly Father, through Christ Jesus his beloved Son, our Lord, who loved us and has cleansed us of our sins in his blood. To him be the honor, praise, kingdom, power, and glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

DEAR brethren, since I find that, for some time, much strife has been occasioned in regard to the ban, and this so violently and indiscreetly, therefore, I fear brotherly love, christian peace and unity, with some, are more diminished than augmented, as was the case in olden times; and it appears that some, through ambition and self-conceit, are desirous of such corrupting disputation, that they entertain the opinion, in this matter that not the banned ones themselves should be shunned, but only their false doctrine and offensive life, not observing that they have already become entangled in false doctrine; for thereby they nullify the plain ordinance of Christ, "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican," and also the plain words of the holy apostles, Matt. 18: 17; Rom. 16: 16; 2 Thess. 3: 14; Tit. 3: 10.

Others think that the ban should not be practiced, further than that which pertains to the evangelical usages, as the breaking of bread and the kiss of peace; and garble the plain sayings of the Scriptures, to make their opinions good, namely: Do not keep company with such; with such not eat; "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican," and other like sayings, 1 Cor. 5: 10; Matt. 18: 17.

Again, there are some who acknowledge

the ordinance of Christ, and the doctrine of the holy apostles, in regard to excommunication, as right and just, yet they do not observe it; some, I presume, from being lukewarm, some from motives of carnal love and favor of the apostates, and others on account of being neighbors, or relatives, or perhaps on account of former attachments and favors.

And, since the express ordinance of Christ and his holy apostles, in regard to excommunication, is lamentably weakened, obscured and garbled, by the first mentioned, and visibly transgressed and dishonored by the latter, and thus the door is opened wide to all corruption, and since they thus act against *all* love; First, against the love of God and Christ, for they thereby despise and disobey his holy word, will and ordinance; Secondly, against brotherly love: For by such perverseness and disesteem, they offend and afflict their brethren; Thirdly, against the love of their own souls: For, thereby, they willfully expose themselves to the danger of being corrupted; Fourthly, against the love of those deserving the ban: For they despise the advice of the Holy Spirit, and do not seek to shame them unto repentance; Fifthly, also against common love: For, by communing with the apostates, they make the worldlings suspicious

that we are one and the same people with the apostates and perverse; and, since the precious word of God and his holy church, is thus blasphemed and profaned by many, on account of their recklessness and disobedience—therefore, in a christian spirit and brotherly love (of which God is my witness), I have endeavored to explain, for the benefit of my beloved brethren and fellow believers in Christ Jesus, the proper grounds of the ban, according to divine truth; how the ban is instituted of Christ; how it was taught and explained by his holy apostles, and what its fruits and benefits are. But this explanation I will leave to the judgment of those who seek and fear God with all their hearts, and who are enlightened and taught by the Spirit of God. Whoever seeks God and the good of his neighbor, will acknowledge that this explanation is in accordance with the foundation, meaning, word and will of God.

Dearly beloved brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, I, your poor, unworthy servant and co-partner in the faith and tribulation of Christ, trust and pray, for the sake of the precious blood of my Lord Jesus Christ, and, for the sake of love to all, that none willfully, and knowingly contend against Christ Jesus, and against his holy word; nor against his own conscience, for the sake of maintaining his error, so that he may avoid the disapprobation and shame of the world.

I trust that they, as christians, grudge not one against another, but that they seek to win again to Christ their erring brethren. In the same manner, that if the God fearing errs, he is anxious to return again to the right way; if he falls, he is desirous to rise, and if wounded he would be again healed, James 5: 19; and if, by the grace of God, he be again delivered from his error and misunderstanding, through the word of the Lord, he is not ashamed, but is exceedingly glad, and praises and thanks his God that he is led from the crooked to the right way, and from his error to a true and sound understanding. He earnestly seeks to deliver and disentangle those whom he has formerly led astray and deceived by his false doctrine and misunderstanding; for true love does not seek *self*, but God and her neigh-

bor. Whosoever has ears to hear, and a mind to understand, let him hear and understand what the word of the Lord teaches us in respect to excommunication, in great clearness.

Christ Jesus says, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven," Matt. 18: 15—18.

Here, faithful brethren, stands the firm foundation of God, as an immovable rock or mountain, at which all will be wounded and hurt, who try to overturn and nullify it, namely: That we shall shun and avoid the apostates, if they take no heed to all the brotherly services and admonitions which have, in faithfulness of heart, been rendered unto them, according to the doctrine of Christ, and the dictates of pure love, if they obstinately continue in their errors, as the Jews shunned and avoided the heathen and publicans, at the time of Christ.

In the first place, the Jews did not admit the uncircumcised heathen to their pass-over, by command of the Lord, through Moses; nor to their divine service, as appears from the acts of the apostles, for they were strangers to the citizenship of Israel, and Israel was alone the church.

In the second place, they so avoided daily intercourse with them, that they considered it as impure for them to enter their houses, or to eat and drink with them. This also applied to the publicans. As the Jews, then, did not admit such heathen and publicans to their worship, nor to their daily intercourse, but shunned and avoided them, so also, would Christ have us shun and avoid an apostate, unrepenting brother, as was said above. And that this is the proper

and natural foundation of these words of Christ, as well explained by holy Paul, 1 Cor. 2, of which more will be heard hereafter.

Behold, brethren in the Lord, all who would rightly understand the meaning of the words of Christ, above cited, should know that Christ does not point to the Jewish custom, in regard to the heathen and publicans in the time of Moses and of the prophets, but to the custom of his own times; and, he should first, make a distinction between the heathen and publicans, and not consider them as one people; and then well consider, and judge according to the Scriptures, how those two classes were dealt with at the time of Moses and the prophets, before the scepter was taken from them, and they were placed under the yoke of the Romans.

In the first place, it is incontrovertible, that the heathen were not of the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; that they were uncircumcised, without God and religion, and without law, nay, a people that was no people, as Moses says, Deut. 32:27. Thus it is, in the second place, incontrovertible that the publicans and sinners were of the Jews. For Luke says, That the publicans came to John, that they might be baptized. Again, That the publicans justified God, and that they were baptized with the baptism of John. Again, All the publicans and sinners came to Jesus to hear him, but the heathen did not come to John and to Christ. Therefore it is manifest that the publicans and sinners were not heathen, but Jews. It is also apparent from the case of the sinful woman and from the publican, Matthew, who was chosen an apostle of the Lord; and no apostles were chosen from the heathen. This is manifestly true, Eph. 2:12; Luke 3:2; 7:29; 15:1.

Inasmuch as the Gentiles and Publicans were two distinct people as has been said, and we should turn to the law to ascertain the freedom of the Jews, in regard to the Gentiles, then we must also, in the same manner, ascertain the action of the Jews in regard to the Publicans, after the law; for the one word is as valid as the other, because they are both produced and attested by the mouth of the eternal Wisdom.

We are aware, beloved brethren, that Moses, in his law, allowed a great deal of liberty to the outward Israel; to have intercourse with the Gentile nations, as in buying, trading and usury. But, besides, we also know, that he rigorously judges the willful and open transgressors, by the testimony of two or three witnesses, unto death, without mercy, according to his law, Deut. 17:6; 2 Cor. 13:1. If we were to understand the beforementioned words of Christ, Matt. 18, as being of the same nature and rigor as those of the law of Moses, then it would follow, first, from the word *heathen* that we were at liberty to deal with the apostates, as far as regards daily intercourse, as Israel was at liberty to deal with the heathen. And secondly, from the word *publican* it would follow that we should stone and kill the apostates when their apostasy was established by two or three witnesses. But it would not be proper to take too much liberty with them, and to put them to death. Taking life, is also quite inconsistent with the nature and doctrine of Christ, "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them," Luke 9:56.

Let every one take heed; for if he take the word *heathen* alone, and judge that according to the law of Moses, and except the word *publican*, then he does not wrong man, but the Son of God, and disgracefully annuls his holy word and truth. For he says not, Let him be unto thee as a heathen, but "as a heathen man and a publican." Christ says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Therefore it is very advisable not to break the word of Christ Jesus; but to set aside human understanding; to acknowledge the truth; give heed to Christ Jesus; and believe and obey him; for then he will be likened unto the wise builder; if not, his house will fall, and "great will be the fall thereof."

Further, most beloved brethren, we understand that there are some who comprehend these words of Christ, so that we are not bound to shun an apostate and impenitent brother, further than the Gentiles now shun the Gentiles, or fornicators shun adulterers and drunkards, whom they, perhaps, call the publicans. Such, I would earnestly beseech and exhort, first, to consider this mat-

ter well, before they accept, believe and teach it as a true foundation; to consider to what class of people Christ was sent from the beginning, and among what class he commenced building and establishing his church. This, Christ sufficiently explains, saying, "I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," Matt. 15: 24. Paul, also says, "Now I say that Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." Since he then, was, from the beginning, sent unto the Jews, and preached unto them and taught them, and not to the heathen, therefore these words of Christ should not be understood as meaning that we should deal with an apostate as the believing heathen now deal with an unbelieving heathen, but to deal with them as the literal Jews dealt with them at the time of Christ. For Christ, I say, did not preach unto the heathen, but unto the Jews; and therefore he did not point them, by these words, but to the Jewish ban, namely, how they shunned the heathen and open sinners in his times.

In the second place, I pray that every God-fearing heart consider what the word *Gentile* implies; and see if not all fornicators, adulterers, avaricious, unbelievers, perjurers, idolators, murderers and drunkards are included in the word *Gentile*. Yea, Paul says that they are without Christ, have no God, are dead in sins, and that they are children of wrath, Eph. 2: 11. Since, then, all sinners and Gentiles are expressed in the word "*Gentile*," for the Gentiles who have not Christ, are also sinners, and without grace, and since Christ here speaks as well of open sinners, as of Gentiles, and, moreover, as every word of Christ has its full weight and measure—therefore, the word of Christ can not be explained as meaning that we should deal with an apostate brother as we would with other Gentiles, who never received nor acknowledged the word of the Lord.

In the third place, I hope that no true brother, who is called after the name of the Lord, will knowingly and willfully adulterate the word of the Lord, but that he will give it its due praise and honor, and acknowledge that these publicans and sinners,

of whom the evangelists speak, were not of the Gentiles, but of the Jews, as is apparent from Matt. 9: 10; Mark 2: 17. Since it is incontrovertible that the beforementioned publicans and sinners were of the Jews, and were adjudged to death, according to the law; and since Christ points us as well to the publicans, as to the Gentiles, therefore it must follow that it should not be explained as having reference to the times when Israel yet exercised their liberties with the heathen, which liberties were allowed to them, by Moses, in his law; for at that time the transgressors, on proof, were adjudged unto death, according to the law. It would also follow that the lives of the apostates, on proof, should be taken at our hands. O, no, for we know that such a bloody ban is an abomination before God, neither is it known to christians, much less practiced.

If any one should assert that it applies to the present time, that is, of treating an apostate as we now treat a Gentile, and not to the time of Christ, as the Jews then treated a Gentile, he must also re-establish the Jewish people with their law and religion, and their open transgressors, which is impossible. This every one must confess.

Since the word *Gentile* can not be understood as applicable to the time when the Gentiles were not yet so strictly shunned by the Israelites, for then we should have to adjudge the apostates unto death, according to the word "manifest transgressors;" nor as applicable to the present time, for now we have not the Jewish transgressors—therefore no one can successfully contradict, according to God's truth, otherwise than that it applies to the time of Christ, at which time they did not put transgressors to death, but separated and avoided both the publicans and heathen alike, by means of the same ban.

Having sufficiently proven to the pious and God fearing, by the above mentioned reasons, that Christ spoke those words as applying to his own times, and to no other, we will now show in plain language, first, the proper cause why they so scrupulously avoided the heathen, and, secondly, why they shunned the open transgressors, and

did not inflict capital punishment upon them.

It is well known to all readers of the Bible, that the Lord God faithfully warned Israel that they should not make an alliance, nor terms of friendship, with the Canaanites, Hittites, and others; nor to intermarry with them, lest they should be led astray by them, and follow strange Gods, Dent. 7. Joshua says, "Take good heed therefore, unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God. Else, if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you; know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you," Josh. 23: 11, 13.

Israel, not taking to heart this paternal warning of God, but, contrary thereto, befriended and intermingled with these strange nations, the menace of the Lord God threatened through his faithful servants, Moses and Joshua, was verified. They became quite degenerated by the strange women and idols, with which they intermingled, and were severely scourged and punished of the Lord. Yea, so that the talented Solomon, whose wisdom was far-famed, was so enchanted by the heathen women, that he became unfaithful to the Lord, his God, (who twice appeared unto him), and inclined his heart to strange gods. I think, beloved brethren, this is the just recompense of those who despise the counsel of the Lord.

And they, deceived by the artfulness of the heathen, often sinned against their God, and being, therefore, so often chastised of God, with his just punishment, they, at last, took to heart the warning of God, given through Moses and Joshua, more than they had formerly done; they quit their intercourse with the heathen, altogether, so that they, as appears, also abandoned some liberties, which Moses had allowed them. Yea, so that they considered it as improper to enter into their houses, or to eat with them, as may be plainly observed. And

this, for the purpose that they should not, as formerly, be led astray, and turned away from their God. For this reason, the Jews so entirely avoided intercourse with the heathen. If this reason was of weight, every theologian may judge and weigh with the words of God, Num. 33: 35; Judges 3: 13; 1 Kings 11: 1; 3: 12; 9: 2.

Again, the reason why they shunned the public sinners, and did not punish them with death, is this: Because the prophecy of the patriarch Jacob was now verified—that the royal scepter, taken from Judah by Pompey, the great, was now in the hands of the Romans, and that they had officers of their own in Judea, who obeyed their superior; and therefore, the Jews did not punish with death, according to their law, those who willfully transgressed; for they were, at that time, subject to the scepter of the Romans. That this is the truth, the Jews declared before Pilate, when they said, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." According to the law they were permitted; nay, it was strictly commanded them; but the lost scepter, now, made it unlawful; for the Roman servants, Herod, Pilate, &c., who, at that time, swayed the scepter in behalf of the Romans, did not want to judge according to the law of the Jews, but according to the rights and statutes of the Romans, in whose name they ruled, and to whom they were bound by oath. When any Jew tresspassed the law of Moses, and not the Roman morals, the beforementioned functionaries did not inflict capital punishment, because the law of Moses required it. And since the Jews were not allowed to punish him according to the law, for the above mentioned reasons, they separated him from their communion, and excommunicated him from their synagogue and shunned him.

Behold, faithful brethren, for the before-mentioned reasons, the Jews, at the time of Christ, shunned both the heathen and the Jewish publicans. They shunned the heathen, lest they should be led astray and deceived; but the publicans, because, according to the law, were deserving of death, Gen. 49: 10, and yet were not allowed to kill and destroy them on account of the Roman dominion.

Perhaps some will ask, Why then, did they scourge the apostles? Stone Stephen? and why were many saints put to death by Saul? Why was their community destroyed, since they were not allowed capital punishment?

To this I answer: That all this did not transpire without the consent of the Romans, for they, themselves, confessed before Pilate, saying, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death," John 18: 31. The stoning of Stephen was not done lawfully, but merely in a riot, as Luke declares, saying, *Exclamantes autem voce magna, continuerunt aures suas, and impetum fecerunt unanimiter in eum*; and this the Zurichans have also thus translated into the German: "They cried with a loud voice, and stopped their ears and ran upon him with one accord," as they also intended to do with Christ, and also with Paul, Acts 7: 57; 10: 31; 21: 30; 23: 12; 26: 10; Luke 4: 29. Again, that Saul or Paul destroyed the church, and put to death many of the saints, as he related before Agrippa, we may be sure that he did not do so without the consent of the magistracy; for it is manifest and incontrovertible, that the scepter did not allow them to put any one to death, and, for this reason they said, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death;" the scepter was taken from them, and came into the hands of the Romans, as has been explained above. If they had been allowed to practice their own law of blood, they would not have delivered Christ unto Pilate; Lucius would not have taken Paul from the tumultuous Jews; Herod would not have imprisoned Peter, nor killed John the baptist, and James; for this would not do, in the worldly adjudication, for one to grasp the jurisdiction of another; such a policy would, doubtlessly, soon fail, Acts 21: 27—40; 24: 7.

We are well aware, beloved brethren, that there are some who call this Jewish shunning, or ban, to which Christ has directed us, a pharisaic leaven, and frankly say, We do not want to be pointed to a leaven, without the Scriptures. Whosoever these may be, we pray them for the Lord's sake, first, to consider well what they say; for, in my opinion, they do not understand

their own words. Does not Moses say, "Whosoever does not hearken unto my (God's) words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him," Deut. 18: 19. Does not Jeremiah say, That he "shall execute judgment and justice in the earth?" Does not the Father from high heaven, say, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him?" Does not Paul say, "In whom (Christ) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge?" Jer. 23: 5; Matt. 17: 5; Col. 2: 3. I am sure that the word and teaching of Christ is Scripture enough for all the pious. He it is, I say, and not I, who points his believers to the use of the ban. *Tu quis es, qui ex adverso respondes Deo?* That is, Who art thou that wouldst answer God with perverseness?

If there be any brother under the whole canopy of heaven, who can show, by the divine truth, that these words of Christ apply to any other time than to the time of Christ, without violating the Scriptures, then I will gladly hear him, and open my ears to the truth; for I desire not to contend against the truth, which is my testimony, but I desire to uphold it. For, for the sake of truth, I have had to hear and suffer much, these many years; and am yet prepared unto death, by the grace of the Lord, to testify to the truth. But I know, and am convinced, that it can not apply to any other time, without violating the word and Scriptures of Christ, as we have sufficiently shown and proven, to the reader, above, by abundance of reasons and Scriptures.

Secondly, I desire, for God's sake, that my beloved brethren will weigh with the balance of the Scriptures, what leaven is, and what the Scriptures mean by it, before they call this beforementioned ban, to which Christ directs us, a pharisaic leaven. It implies, first, the word and its power, or rather, faith and its power. Secondly, it signifies a corrupting, ungodly being or man. Thirdly, a deceiving, leavened, corrupting doctrine. If the Jewish ban and shunning, to which Christ points us, was a leaven, as some mistakenly assert, then they must show, by virtue of the Scriptures, what leavening and corruption it has caused in the pure word, and in the hearts of the

Jews; for, although God, the Lord permitted some liberties to Israel, through Moses, in their temporal transactions, as said at the beginning, yet he did not expressly command that they should deal with the heathen, but rather warned the Jews against them. They now scrupulously observed the faithful warning of God, being taught them through many perils, and for that reason, probably, they did not make use of the privileges granted them, in regard to dealing with them, lest, by these means, they should be ensnared and corrupted in their hearts by the heathen. Let the spiritual judge, now, whether it can be called leaven, by the Scriptures, since they did not neglect the law and command of God thereby, but, in fact, left it unchanged and whole and were thus shielded against the corrupter.

Sincerely beloved brethren, if we are to esteem as a leaven, this oft mentioned Jewish ban, to which Christ directs us, because they, for their consciences' sake, abandoned some of these liberties (for liberties are of a nature that we can enjoy them, or not, at our option; else they would not be liberties), not contrary to the law, but rather in conformity with the faithful warning, advice and admonition of God, contained in the law—then the holy prophet Jeremiah might, for good reasons, have reproved the Rechabites as leaven, because they, on account of the command of their father Joadab, would not drink wine, plant vineyards, sow the soil, nor build houses, although all this was free to them, according to the law of God; for to them, with Israel, were the possession of the land, and the other blessings promised, Jer. 35: 14. O, no, the Lord did not reckon it as leaven unto them, but it was accounted to their honor to have honored the command of their father, and thereby they obtained the promise of the Lord.

I would further say, that if it is to be called leaven, if we do not partake of our freedom for conscience' sake, or for the sake of the brethren—then freedom cannot be called freedom, and Paul must have been an impure leaven to have taught that we should, if necessary, deny ourselves the liberty, for the sake of the brethren, Rom. 14: 14; 1 Cor. 8: 13; 9: 14; 10: 23.

From all this, it is evident, according to my understanding of the word of the Lord, that it is a frightful blasphemy, unknown to a God-fearing christian, thus to undertake to master and instruct Christ, the eternal Wisdom of God, how he should teach us, and what he should command us; and to call that which he commands us, leaven, although it is a strong and consolatory shield against corruption and deceit; and therefore, not contrary to the law, but in conformity therewith; of this we are convinced, for if it were leaven, contrary to the law, as some say it is, then Christ Jesus would, by no means have approved of it, commanded it and said, "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican," since he, in other places, has diligently warned his followers against the leaven.

Some, perhaps, will contradict me by saying that the shunning of the heathen by the Jews, that is, not to eat with them, when the victuals were clean, was openly contrary to the express command of the law. For Moses had commanded Israel that they should keep the feast of the weeks, and the feast of the tabernacles, unto the Lord their God, with a tribute of free-will offering of their hands, which they should give unto the Lord, their God, &c., and that they should rejoice before the Lord, their God, they, and their sons, and their daughters, and their man-servants, and their maid-servants, and the Levite that was within their gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that were among them. To such, I would reply, that these strangers also had to keep the Sabbath; to enjoy the tenths of the third year, the first fruits of the land, the gleanings of the field, olive trees and vineyards with the Levites, the widows and orphans.

The stranger also had, with Israel, an offering for their sins of ignorance; also, the same punishment with Israel; they had to hear the reading of the law every seventh year, in the solemnity of the year of release. Therefore, it follows from these and other like Scriptures, that these beforementioned strangers were citizens among the Israelites, and not uncircumcised heathen. For they were already among the Israelites at the time they yet journeyed in the wilderness.

Moses says, "Ye stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel; your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water, that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day," Deut. 5: 14; 16: 13, 14; Ex. 20: 10; 23: 12; Deut. 14: 29; 24: 19; Num. 15: 27; Lev. 4: 13; Num. 9: 14; Deut. 29: 10—12.

I think, brethren, that the cited passages sufficiently show and prove that they were called strangers, because they were not of the seed of Israel, and had no part in the distribution of the land; therefore, Moses commanded the Israelites to allow them the right to the tenths of the third year, to the gleanings of the field, of the olive trees and vineyards, and the first fruits of the land, as we have shown and explained from the writings of Moses.

In the second place, it might be asked, why we should shun the apostates, since Christ said, "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican," and since it is manifest that Christ, himself, did eat with the publicans. To this I reply: What kind of sinners they were, with whom Christ ate, is well explained by the evangelists. For, when the Pharisees murmured, Christ said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; but go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." What kind of sinners Matthew, the sinful woman, and Zaccheus were, after they had heard Christ is not a mystery, Matt. 9: 12, 13.

Again, Luke says, that all the publicans and sinners came to Christ to hear him, and with such did he eat, and therefore did he say to the murmuring Pharisees, "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine," &c., Luke 15: 4.

Again, that he ate with the Samaritans, is no wonder at all, for they received his word and believed on him; but that he should have sought hospitality in a Samaritan city, is not rightly translated, accord-

ing to the Latin text. Thus it reads in Latin: *Misit nuncios ante conspectum suum, and euntes intraverunt in civitatem, Samaritanorum, ut pararent illi and non receperunt eum, quia facies ejus erat euntis Hierosolymam.* Which being translated reads, He "sent messengers before his face, and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him, and they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem," Luke 9: 52.

What kind of preparation is hereby meant, may, in my opinion, be clearly learned from the case of the seventy, related in Luke 10: 1; whom he sent before his face by two and two, to make preparation for him in all the cities and countries whither he himself would come, not to prepare a place for sojourning, but for the teaching of the kingdom of God. But here they did not receive him. He says not that the master of the house did not receive him, but *they*, that is, the inhabitants of the city, to whom he had sent them to preach, did not receive him; because, as Luke says, he was going to Jerusalem; for the Samaritans and the Jews always have had a severe strife between them in regard to worship and religious matters. Yea, so much so, that the Samaritans were considered by the Jews as being deserving of the ban, John 4: 9; and if it were true, that he desired to find a lodging-place, yet it is apparent that the Samaritans were not Gentiles, but a remnant of the ten tribes of Shalmaneser: for the Samaritan woman said unto Christ, "Art thou greater than our father Jacob?" That Jacob was not the father of the Gentiles, is manifest. She also looked for the Messiah, whom the Gentiles did not know, she said, "I know that the Messiah cometh, which is called Christ," John 4: 25. Again, after Stephen was stoned, Philip came into a Samaritan city and preached Christ unto them; and at that time they could not yet conscientiously preach the gospel unto the Gentiles and go amongst them. From this it may be safely deduced that the Samaritans, who claimed the patriarch Jacob to be their father, who looked for the Messiah, and to whom they had already preached the gospel, before they were

conscientiously at liberty to go among the Gentiles, were not heathen, but a remnant of the Israelites, as said before; therefore it is no wonder that he requested to sojourn with them. Neither did he say, Let him be unto thee as a Samaritan, but as a "heathen man and a publican."

Behold, dearly beloved brethren, however we turn these words of Christ, they cannot be made to apply to any other time than that of Christ; namely, that, as the Jews at that time dealt with a heathen and publican—so we may also, now treat an apostate who, either through false doctrine, or through an unclean, shameful life, dishonors, rejects and disgraces Christ Jesus and his holy word. I wish, most beloved brethren, that every christian would diligently consider, since we have given our understanding of these words of Christ, whether not also Paul understood these words as meaning the same as we have explained. Yea, he who closely considers this matter, will find that Paul, in his doctrine of separation, has, in every way conformed to this rule of Christ.

Thus Paul says, "It is reported commonly, that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you," 1 Cor. 5: 1, 2.

In another place, Paul teaches how Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish, Eph. 5: 25. If we admit such open profaners as this fornicator, and, moreover, adulterers, drunkards, contentious, avaricious, upbraidors and idolaters, and do not shun them, then we must ever hear this reproof of Paul, that we are "puffed up" and do not rather mourn to separate such open transgressors from us. O, brethren, brethren! I fear that this admonition of Paul is not sufficiently weighed by some. Paul says further, "For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit,

have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus," 1 Cor. 5: 3, 4, 5.

These words of the apostle teach us three things: First, The great love of the faithful servant, Paul, toward his disciples and children; for although he was not present there, yet as present in spirit, he was paternally solicitous for them, and ever taught, admonished and advised them to their own good.

Secondly, In whose name, how, and by whom this separation, shall be practiced, namely, in the name, that is, by virtue of the command and ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ. For Paul did not undertake to do any thing that he had not first received of Christ, as he says. Yea, if Christ had not first instructed Paul to do so, he would not have dared to command the Thessalonians, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they should separate themselves from every brother who walked disorderly, and not according to his ordinances. For this may well be called doing things in the name of Christ, when it is done in conformity to his holy word and will.

Again, It shall be practiced by the church; that is, every one shall not separate at his own pleasure; but it should be done by the congregation of God, after proper admonition in love, diligence and faithfulness, with the power of Christ, that is, with the binding or closing key of the Holy Spirit. For if it be practiced without the word and Spirit, without love and brotherly affability, whether it is through bitterness, anger, or a false report, not conformable to the word, for reasons not deserving of the ban,—then it is not a work of God, no medicine to the soul, nor fruit of pure love; but a contention of satan, a corruption and pestilence to the soul, and a manifest fruit of the flesh: In short, a curse, abomination and stench before God. Let every person well weigh these words of Paul, and he will, by the grace of God, find how rigidly this separation is commanded in the Scriptures,

and how orderly it should be practiced in the church, with the power of the word and Spirit of Christ.

Thirdly, That we should deliver an unrepenting transgressor unto satan. Not, brethren, that he was not of satan before separation, for as soon as he turned his heart away from the Lord and became ungodly, he became the subject of satan, even as a penitent sinner is a subject of Christ. But now the voice of man, through the church, tells him that he is deprived of the communion of Christ and his church, and that he is now delivered unto satan until he again brings forth true fruits of repentance, before God and his church, that his adulterous, avaricious, refractory and idolatrous flesh may be brought to reflection and become ashamed and repentant by such judgment and shunning of the pious, that he may thus suppress and die unto his flesh, that is, the lusts of his flesh, and that he may by these means be brought to repentance and his soul be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Here the godfearing reader may observe in these words of Paul, the first reason why the Holy Spirit ordained this ban to be practiced in the house of God, namely, for repentance and not for corruption; that, if the transgressor rejects as null and void, all fraternal services and admonitions of faithful love that are shown to him, and remains unrepentant—that, then, according to the advice of the Holy Spirit, the judgment passed upon him, should, with sorrowfulness, be made known unto him in the church and that he is separated from the church that he may thus become ashamed unto repentance.

Again, about this shame, the apostle speaks in another place, “If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed,” 2 Thess. 3: 14.

Take notice, brethren, that true, evangelical separation is an express fruit of unfeigned love, and not a law of hatred, as some, very wrongly, complain and pretend.

Ah, faithful brethren, if we rightly understood God, if we were enlightened with the Holy Spirit, and loved our neighbors with divine love, how diligently we would be en-

gaged in this matter, to follow the faithful advice of the Holy Spirit, in all reasonableness and love, without respect of persons; no matter whether it concerns father, mother, sister, brother, husband, wife, child, or any relative or friend; for how can we show more spiritual love towards them? But as it is, a great many do not seek that which is of the Spirit, but that which is of the flesh; not their neighbors, but themselves. If they do so through ignorance, then may the merciful Father enlighten them with his Holy Spirit, and guide them into all truth; but if they do so through willful perverseness, then we know that it is written, “To be carnally minded is death,” Rom. 8: 6.

In the third place, Paul says, “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,” 1 Cor. 5: 6—7.

Again, with these words Paul reproves, first, the Corinthians, and, also, all other churches with them, who glory in being the church of Jesus Christ and the spiritual house of Israel, and yet tolerate such shameful, corrupting leaven, as the Corinthians and the like defilers, in their communion. For how can we glory in the piety of the church and reprove other churches on account of their ungodly doctrine and life, so long as we tolerate the like leaven of doctrine and life among us, without expelling it? If we are unleavened, Why are we not fearful of the leaven? since the apostle tells us that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”

Secondly, He here gives us the outward Israel as an example. For when they kept the passover, they did not keep leavened bread in their houses for seven days. Yea, if it was found in any house the souls thereof had to be rooted out from among Israel. Neither was an uncircumcised or unclean one to eat thereof. Oh, brethren, if the figure and shadow were to be so pure how much more should the reality be pure? For

our passover is not a quadruped, but it is the spotless Lamb of God, Christ Jesus. Nor does our passover last seven days, as did the passover of Israel, but it lasts forever, namely, from the offering of Christ until the last day; neither is it kept by unleavened bread, baked of flour, but by the unleavened bread of righteousness and by the word of eternal truth.

Therefore, beloved brethren, let us keep this passover holy and unspotted, to the best of our ability, and let us, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, separate from us the corrupting leaven, that is, all those that walk in the foreskin of their hearts, and all impure in life (understand, open, known transgressors), that we may be the holy Israel of God, besprinkled with the blood of the lamb, free from the scourging angel of God, and that we may thus rejoice before the Lord, in sincerity and truth, and celebrate and serve it all the days of our lives.

Further, all the pious may learn from these words of Paul, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" the second reason, why this separation is so necessary and useful to the house of God, and that it can not stand without it. This has been shown in Israel. Moses, the faithful servant of God, strictly commanded the people of God, that they should, without mercy, destroy from among them the wilful transgressors, when proven by two or three witnesses; also, that if any prophets should arise among them, with signs and miracles to lead them to other gods, they should not hear them, but destroy them. Again, the father should not excuse his child, the husband his wife, &c., but their hand should be the first upon them. Also, they should level and destroy any city which went after other gods, that Israel might hear these things, fear God and no more practice such evil. I think this was a rigid separation which was commanded Israel. If they had stood firm and immutable in this, and had they followed the command, counsel, teachings and admonition of God, according to the Scriptures, and destroyed the false prophets and idolators, they would never have become so estranged from God, and come to such deadly whoring and degeneration (understand this as in the law). For

the rejection of the counsel and will of God will never go unpunished, Dent. 13: 5, 7; 17: 11; 19: 15; Heb. 10: 18.

But at present, the Holy Spirit does not teach us to destroy the wicked, as did Israel, but that we should reluctantly separate them from the church, and that in the name of the Lord, by the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit; for a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. It is a common saying, One scabby sheep mars the whole flock. The lepers were not allowed among the healthy, in Israel; but had to be separated until cured. O, brethren in the Lord! the leprosy of the soul, is a leprosy above all diseases, whether it is in doctrine, or in life. It eats like a cancer, and, as Paul says, "leavens the whole lump." Therefore the Holy Spirit has abundantly taught us to separate such from among us; not to hear the words of the false prophets, for they deceive us; to separate from such who, contrary to apostolic doctrine, cause offense and contention; to shun those who are not pleased with the salutary words and doctrine of our dear Lord Jesus Christ, but are contentious and desirous of quarreling, &c.; to guard against dogs and artful laborers and the selfish; to flee the voice of strangers; to shun an heretic or a master of sects, after having been once or twice admonished; not to greet nor receive in our houses him who does not teach the doctrine of Christ; and to withdraw from every brother who acts disorderly and walks not according to the apostolic doctrine. O, says Paul, that they be cut off who disturb you, Lev. 13: 2; Jer. 23: 16; Titus 3: 10; 2 John 10; 2 Thess. 3: 6.

I think, beloved brethren, the Holy Spirit of God has done well, and fully performed the duties of his office, and his faithful service of divine love toward his chosen people by admonishing, warning, teaching and commanding, in Moses and the prophets, in Christ and the apostles, in regard to the Shunning of heretics and apostates; but, if we through obstinacy or perverseness, still associate with the leprous, against the faithful counsel, teaching and admonition of God and intermingle with them, then we will also be infected with the same disease. It is the recompense of those who know

the nature of the disease, and yet neither fear nor avoid it.

Say, most beloved, is it not the greatest foolishness and recklessness willfully and knowingly to run into the hands of the murderer, by opening unto him your house and office; for what else can you expect but stealing, robbing and murdering?

O, that the pious reader would receive the command, teaching, counsel, and admonition, so faithfully given by the Holy Spirit. Shun all heretics (I refer to those who have been of us), and apostates, according to the word of the Lord; whether it is father, mother, wife, child, relative or friend, or whoever will try to turn you from God and his word, and to corrupt you by doctrine or by life. Whosoever loves any thing more than his God, cannot be the disciple of the Lord, Matt. 10: 37; Luke 14: 26. Therefore, believe Christ Jesus, and sincerely fear him in his word, and you will follow his counsel and teaching; but if you be offended thereat, then await your punishment, for, by the grace of God, I know what it is to despise the word and will of God, and what I have felt and seen in this respect.

In the fourth place, Paul says, "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat," 1 Cor. 5: 9—11.

From these words of the apostle we observe that he had on a former occasion, admonished the Corinthians, in an epistle, that they should shun the fornicators, covetous, &c., but they had *also* understood it as meaning the fornicators of this world. In this epistle, Paul admonishes them that this was not his meaning; for if they should shun such, and not have any dealings with them, they must needs go out of the world. But he meant those who are called brethren, as he shows in plain language, saying, "If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous," &c., with such an one

do not eat; just as the Jews did not eat with the Gentiles and publicans, at the time of Christ; neither did they keep their company; for Christ and Paul are one and not divided, John 4: 9.

I think, brethren, that this text is so plain and clear that it admits of no controversy; notwithstanding some violate and garble it.

First, they say, "Paul had no authority to burden us with any laws when it was not first taught and commanded him of Christ." To this we answer: Let every one rightly reflect upon, divide and consider the words of Christ, "Let him be unto you as a hearthen man and a publican," and he will find, by the grace of God, whether or not Paul first received this doctrine of Christ.

Secondly, they say, "Since Paul makes mention here of the Jewish passover, and adds that we should keep the passover, not in the old leaven," &c., so this passage, and also his sayings, "With such do not company, with such do not eat," must be understood as meaning a spiritual intermingling or communion. To such, we answer: Israel had a passover of seven days, but we have an eternal passover. And, as the Lamb of our passover is eternal, and his offering eternal, so we must now, perpetually sanctify and celebrate it, ever partake of its flesh; ever be sprinkled with its blood, and ever be diligently guarding against the ungodly, corrupting leaven of both doctrine and life. If our feast and passover then, is spiritual and not literal, eternal and not temporal, how can this then be applicable to the Lord's Supper, which eating does not last but for an hour or so?

In the second place, we answer: If these words were spoken of a spiritual communion then it should read in the Greek text, *choinonia*, and in the Latin, *communicatio*, for that signifies a spiritual communion, as Christ communes with us, and the members of Christ commune with Christ; also, community of property. But in the Greek text is a different word, and in Latin it reads: *commisceri sibi commercium habere*, which does not imply a spiritual communion at all, but an outward, temporal communion; and it appears the clearer from these words of Paul that he here speaks of the temporal communion and company, and not of

spiritual. For he has prohibited this communion with the apostates and allows the communion with the world, which has no spiritual communion with us, nor can they have. This is incontrovertible. Yea, if the communion or intermingling with the world were prohibited, then we could not make use of the necessities of life, but we would have to eke out our life in poverty, destitution, tribulation and misery, 1 Cor. 10: 3; Acts 2: 44; 1 Tim. 6: 18; Heb. 13: 16.

Thirdly, we reply: That Paul had reference to common eating, and not to the Lord's Supper; for he calls it in Latin, *cibum capere* (to take food), and not, *panum frangere* (to break bread); and it is manifest that the Lord's Supper is, nowhere in the Scriptures, called *cibum capere*. And if it were spoken in reference to the Supper, as some very mistakenly assert, then it would incontrovertibly follow that we are at liberty to invite the world to the Lord's Supper, to greet them with the kiss of peace and to be one body with them; for this intercourse, unclean and prohibited with an apostate brother, is, according to Paul, clean and allowable with the world. O, no, but as the Jews at that time would not eat a common meal with the heathen and publicans, and Christ having pointed his followers to that usage, so Paul follows the doctrine and command of his Lord and master, Jesus; and says that we shall not eat with such.

I think that it has been sufficiently shown to the pious, that these words of Paul should not be understood as referring to spiritual communion, nor to the Lord's Supper, but only to daily intercourse and common eating. If, now, it is not allowed in outward or carnal communion, it will be less so in inward or spiritual communion.

Dear brethren in the Lord, I would here pray and admonish you all, in humility, to consider well what the proper meaning is of this word *commercium* (intercourse), of which Paul speaks, and how we should understand it, that you may not give too much liberty to the reckless souls, to their own destruction, and that you do not too closely bind the narrow minded, since you have no binding word. For I hear and see, and have, alas, seen too much of it, these

many years, that some, on every hand, use no weight nor measure in this matter; and the result is, that there is much dispute and trouble about this separation. May the Lord grant his divine grace to the peace, unity and edification of his holy church. Amen.

Inasmuch as I am an unworthy and humble servant, called into the house of God, and sincerely seek the good of my beloved brethren and co-workers; therefore I will briefly present my views concerning this communion or intermingling, according to my talent, with which I desire to appear before the throne of my Lord Jesus Christ, at the day of judgment, and will leave it to the criticism of God's word, and all theologians. Therefore, my understanding of *commisceri* or *commercium habere*, (that is, to mix with or to commune), of which Paul here speaks, is, that it implies daily communion, company, walk, intercourse, presence, usage, conversation and dealing, and that it does not mean accidental conversation, or necessary dealings, such as dividing a legacy, liquidating debts, and such like incidental dealings, or to be serviceable in times of need; for the word *commercium* does not imply anything so strong. Therefore, in my opinion, some err not a little by attaching the same strength to the phrase "have no company with them," that they attach to "thou shalt not steal, and thou shalt not commit adultery," of which Paul testifies that those who are guilty thereof, shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven. Their argument is, That nay is nay; yea, brethren, if this were the case, who could stand before his God?

Again, if the word *commercium*, which in our language, means an intermingling or communion, is to be explained, that we are not to speak a word with an apostate, not to have any necessary dealings with him; then the word *commercium* would be violated; many a pious child be retarded, many an unscriptural action done, and the faithful Paul would be rejected. For he says, "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother," 2 Thess. 3: 15. Besides, it would make an evil report of the gospel of Christ.

It is also incontrovertible, that the publi-

cans and some heathen lived in Judea, as, Herod, Pilate, Philip, Sisanius, Testus, &c., before whom they had to appear at times. Again, they also had to pay tribute to the Romans; and, therefore, were obliged sometimes, to speak to them, and had necessary dealings with them; although they diligently shunned their daily company, conversation, intermingling, eating, &c.

Dear brethren, take heed, and do not become masters and despisers of the Holy Spirit, that you do not, through the good opinions of men, make the way narrower nor broader, than the word, Spirit and example of the Lord makes and limits it.

In the fifth place, Paul says, "What have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person," 1 Cor. 5: 12, 13. Here Paul explains his former words, that he did not apply them, in his first epistle, to those that are without; for God judges them, and not we. We ought to put away from among us the wicked persons, and commend the world to God.

Behold, faithful brethren, how unanimously Christ and Paul agree in the shunning of the apostates. And also, how earnestly Paul has taught and maintained this separation. Yea, that he has six times enjoined to practice this ban, in such a short chapter.

"Ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you."

"To deliver such an one unto Satan."

"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump."

"I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators."

"With such an one, no not to eat."

"Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person," 1 Cor. 5: 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13.

All these are found in one short chapter; besides what he has taught, commanded and admonished in this respect to the Romans, Galatians, Philippians, Thessalonians, Timothy and Titus. John also has explained himself briefly. I do not see how a godfearing heart can have doubts in regard to this matter and how he can contra-

dict it, since there are such good fruits and utility derived from this shunning. But it seems that this vine must have its worms.

Again, the refractory make another objection, and say, "When one is separated from the church it is not necessary any more to shun him, for he is no longer called a brother." To such we reply: That they should, in the first place, consider that if such an one, who has acknowledged the Lord's word and truth, and, for a time, led a pious, evangelical life, and has thus received baptism, becomes apostatized and afterwards sincerely repents, he is not rebaptized; for the Scriptures teach but one baptism. But if those who are of the world repent, they are baptized after repentance; for before, they neither confessed word, penitence, faith, righteousness nor baptism; and therefore it is a different matter. At the day of judgment, it will also be more strictly required of them than of the world, Luke 9: 5; 2 Pet. 2: 20; Matt. 24: 48.

In the second place we say that the world, notwithstanding, esteem them as brethren, and many of them would gladly be greeted as brethren; therefore it is very necessary to shun them, that both the world and they may know and understand that we can not accept such as brethren who are so unclean and blamable in doctrine or in life, lest the word of the Lord and his church be despised by the world, on their account.

In the third place we say, That Israel did not shun their open transgressors, nor the Corinthians their fornicators until they were separated from the church. It is neither a custom nor usage in the Scriptures, to shun anybody so long as he is suffered in the church; and therefore we should not shun any one, before separation; or else we practice a ban neither known nor mentioned in the Scriptures.

In the fourth place we say, That if we commune and associate with an apostate, after separation, then we show in fact that we despise the word, command, counsel, teaching and admonition of God; that we do not seek the reasonable shame of the apostate, which is to lead him to repent; and also, that we do not guard against the corruption of our own souls.

I trust that this is sufficient to appease

every godfearing heart, in regard to the words of Christ, Matt. 18: 18, and in regard to the fifth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, and that no more useless garbling, objections and artful excuses be made to turn it to the lusts of the flesh, for they can stand no better than stubble before the fire, and ice before heat. Yea, from these same words of Christ and of Paul it appears clearly how, when, where, with

what spirit, of whom, on whom, and for what purpose this ban should be practiced. I think this foundation to be so powerful that it cannot be broken by christian reasonableness nor by divine truth. Let every one fear and love his God with all his heart, and he will, doubtlessly, receive the true knowledge of this matter, and will rightly follow the scriptural and God pleasing usage.



