

THE FAITH
AND
PRACTISE
OF THIRTY CONGREGATIONS,

GATHERED ACCORDING TO THE PRIMITIVE PATTERN

1651

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PREFACE

Published (in love) by consent of two from each Congregation, appointed for that purpose.

1. To inform those who have a desire to know what Religious Duties they hold forth.
2. To undeceive those that are mis-informed thereof.
3. To the end that the said Congregations may in love, and the spirit of Meekness, be informed by any that conceive they walk amiss.

*Rom. 12. 18. If it be possible, as much as
in you is, have Peace with all men.*

To all the Saints and Churches of God, who walk according to the commands of Jesus Christ, in England, Wales, Army, or else-where.

Dearly Beloved, and Fellow Citizens of the household of God, Grace, Mercy, and Peace be multiplyed unto you from God, through Jesus Christ; The Lord preserve your minds and hearts by his holy Spirit, with all those gifts of his Free Grace which he hath bestowed upon you, to adorn the doctrine of the Gospel in every thing whereunto ye are called, to live to the glory and praise of his Grace.

Loving Brethren, if we could have conveniently convayed this Copie unto your hands before it went to the Press, doubtless we might have gained your Christian Advice and Assistance herein, which might have been very Beneficial to the Truth, wherein you are with us alike concerned and engaged; but by reason of the distance of place, and also being unacquainted, hath hindred our sending; but we hope our forwardness herein will not be any hinderance to you for the future, to manifest your concurrence with us, so far as we own the Truth; for the preserving our Union with God, and our Joy and Peace with each other, but the rather to give you occasion to make use of the

Ability and Power God bath betruſted you with, for our Informations in what you judge is wanting, and for our further Confirmation and Encouragement in thoſe things you approve of with us, have we published this ensuing Treatiſe; That ſo we may agree with love in peace and truth, by the Aſſiſtance of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. So with our Prayers, we ſubſcribe our ſelves Your Servants in the Lord.

[Signatures of its Sixty-one authors here.]

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Ezek. 43. 11

And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, show them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the laws thereof; and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them.

Matth. 5. 16.

Let your light so shine before men, &c.

Hebr. 3.6.

But Christ as a Son, over his own &c.

1. That that God whom we acknowledge, ought to be worshipped by all, and above all that are called Gods, and he is Infinite in power and wisdom, universal, invisible, eternal. Ps. 96. 3. 4. Jer. 23. 24. Col. 1. 17. Rom. 1. 20.
2. That God created all creatures visible and invisible, by his own wisdom and power, Col. 1. 16. Jer. 10. 12.
3. That God preserveth all creatures which are in being. Nehemiah. 9. 6. Rom. 2. 36.
4. That the creation doth plainly declare the Power and Righteousness of God; Rom. 1. 20. Isa. 40. 26.
5. That God commandeth men to take a view of his Wise, Powerful, and Righteous workes of creation. Isa. 40. 26.
6. That God by his good creatures called or calleth men to a serious consideration, or meditation, that they may further understand his Wisdom and Power. Rom. 1. 20.

7. That God doth command men to speak or declare that which they have learned by the teaching of the creatures; Psal. 145. 5.
8. That the consideration of the Lord's handyworks in creatures, is a means to beget thoughts of God, and of our selves, sutable to his greatness, and our inferiority; Psal. 8. 3, 4.
9. That whatsoever good Meditations, or serious Considerations we have of the glorious works of Creation, ought to break forth with admiration unto thankfulness to God, Psal. 136. from ver. 3. to ver. 9.
10. That those who did refuse to worship or glorifie God answerably to the teaching of the Creation, the Lord gave them over, or forsook them so far, that they became so desperately wicked, that they did things contrary to nature, Rom. 1. 26, 27.
11. God created or made Adam a living soul, and in his own Likeness in Sovereignty or Dominion; Gen. 1. 26. 27.
12. That God gave unto Adam Lawes or commands, that he might know his Will; Gen. 2. 16. 17.
13. That God declared unto Adam what penalty or punishment he would cause to befall him, if he disobeyed his Will, Gets. 2. 17.
14. That Adam did sin or disobey the righteous commands of the Lord, Gen. 3. 6.
15. That God told Adam very plainly what death it should be that he would cause to come on him, and what sorrows should attend him in the meanwhile; Gen. 3. 17, 19.
16. That all mankind are liable to partake of the same death or punishment which the Lord in his righteous judgment caused to fall on Adam for his transgression; Rom. 5. 18.
17. That Jesus Christ, through (or by) the grace of God, suffered death for all mankind, or every man; Heb. 2. 9.
18. That Christ Jesus, the second Adam, will as certainly raise all mankind from that death which fell on them, through or by the first Adam's sin or offence, as surely as they partake of it; Rom. 5. 18.
19. That Jesus Christ, his Lordly or Kingly preheminance over all mankind, is vindicated or maintained in the Scriptures account, by vertue of his dying

or suffering for them; Rom. 14. 9.

20. That God's Word, Son, or Spirit, are one, 1 Joh. 5. 7. Jude 1. Heb. 10. 29. Rom. 15. 16.

God and his Word are one; Joh. 1. 1. The Word quickneth, Psal. 119. 50. The Son quickeneth, Eph. 2. 1. And the spirit quickneth Joh. 6. 63. So they are one. God giveth Gifts, and the Son doth the same, also the Holy Ghost, So they are one. Jam. 1. 71. Eph. 4. 10, 11. Acts 2. 38. 1 Thes. 1. 5. Joh. 6. 44. Jo. 14. 6. Eph. 1. 18. 1 Cor. 12. 3. Math. 10. 40. Gal. 3. 2.

21. That the Lord of all mankind, Jesus Christ, bath the power of giving Lawes for the governing or ruling every man in the World in spiritual worship, Isa. 9. 6, 7. Math. 28. 18. 19, 20.

22. That this Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, is the only or principal high Priest, which offered up sacrifice, or made reconciliation for the Sins of the people, Heb. 2. 17.

23. That the high Priest Jesus Christ, is not onely King or Governour, but also the Apostle or Prophet of the Truth professed, or the true profession of Saints Heb. 3. 1.

24. That all the riches appertaining to a spiritual and eternal life, were treasured up in Jesus Christ. Col. 2. 3.

25. That there is not, neither ever was any man endued with any abilities and power to do the revealed will of God, but it was given him from above. Jam. 1. 17.

26. That the gifts of God spring from the pleasure of his will, or of his free grace; even the Lord Jesus Christ sprung from thence, from whom commeth all spiritual mercies: Rom. 8. 32. Heb. 2. 9.

27. That Jesus Christ was faithfull in all things whereunto he was appointed, Heb. 3. 1, 2.

28. That Jesus Christ was not only the Lawmaker, but the Law giver to every man that liveth in the world, in that he giveth every man therein some measure of light. Jo. 1. 9.

29. That God of his free love giveth several gifts unto men, dividing severally as it pleaseth him, by one and the same spirit; 1 Cor. 12. 11. Eph. 4. 7.

30. That the gifts of God given unto men of his own free grace, though never

so richly they may be furnished both with abilities and power, yet those gifts of grace do not demonstrate, or declare them to be faithfull servants; but it doth very plainly prove, that they are called upon thereby to be faithfull Servants; 1 Cor. 4. 1. 2.

31. That those gifts which God of his free grace gives unto men to the enabling or empowering them to obey or believe in his name, are called the grace of God, as they spring from the spirit of grace; Acts. 18.17.

32. That when God of his own bountifulness hath given gifts unto men to be improved by them to the praise of his grace, as to believe or obey, then those so endued are Stewards of the grace of God, 1 Pet. 4. 10.

33. That God requireth or commandeth service of men, answerable to those gifts of grace which he of his good pleasure hath bestowed upon them, Col. 2. 6. Joh. 12. 37.

34. That it is the gracious pleasure of God, that Jesus Christ his life, death, and resurrection, should be made known unto men, and by men, as arguments, or motives, to allure or provoke them to live holy and righteous in this present world; Eph. 5. 2, 10. Rom. 6. 4, to ver. 14.

35. That God requireth that man should worship him in Spirit and in truth, or with all the heart, before they outwardly make a profession of him: Acts 8. 36. 37.

36. That all actions performed by man towards God, ought to flow from a principle of Love; 1 Cor. 13. 1, 2, 3.

37. That God loves man first, and declareth, or maketh known his love to men, before any man can Act from a principle of love in obedience to him, Jo. 15. 16.

38. That whosoever obeyeth God with those gifts of his free grace, (as abilities and power to do his will) never so faithfully, Evangelically, or Unfainedly, giving him the glory of those performances; yet thus believing or obeying doth not procure salvation as eternal life, neither are they any cause at all to move God to bestow it; Ezek. 16. from ver. 3. to ver, 10. Eph. 2. 9. Rom. 4. 2. Jo. 15. 15.

39. That the ground or principal end of mens believing or obeying God, ought to be for the advancing of the glory of God, or for the Praise of his free grace; 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20.

40. That those who serve or fear the Lord, honouring or glorifying him with his gifts bestowed on them, to the praise of his free grace, do demonstratively of openly manifest themselves to be his faithful servants, or children, 1 Jo. 3. 10. Acts 10. 35.

41. That those which serve the Lord with integrity of mind and spirit, improving their abilities and power given unto them of God, to his glory and praise, are not only called faithful Servants, or the children of the living God, but they have the promises of God to be intrusted with more of the manifestations of himself, which is called the misterie which hath bin hid from many ages, and generations, which the disobedient shall not injoy. Col. 1. 26. 27.

42. That those which love the Lord Jesus Christ, so as to walke in his appointed ways with that strength of ability and power which God of his own mercy bath given unto them, they shall have peace of conscience, being freed from anguish of spirit, having their hearts comforted by the Holy Ghost; Rom. 2. 10.

43. That all those that continue stedfastly unto the end of their lives, pressing forward to the mark (Jesus Christ) that is set before them, shall not only have the comfort and joy which is a part of their portion in this life, but they shall also have a Crown of eternal glory in the life to come; Rev. 22. 14. 2 Tim. 4. 8.

44. That God of his free grace or love, called or calleth sinners to repentance, and afforded or affordeth them time or opportunity to repent or returne unto him; Rom. 4.2.

45. That all those who refuse to improve the gifts of grace which God hath afforded them, so that they repent not, neither turne to him in obedience to his commands made manifest unto them, they do despise the goodness of God or his free grace, denying the Lord that bought them, and so are liable to destruction, 1 Pet. 2. 1, 2.

46. That whosoever shall preach, teach, or practise any doctrine in the worship of God, pretending it in the name of Jesus Christ, which is not to be heard or read of in the record of God, which was given by inspiration of the holy Ghost; such teachers are lyable to the curse of God, howsoever, countenanced by men, Gal. 1. 8, 9.

47. That the Baptisme which the Lord Jesus commanded his disciples to teach, ought to be known by every one, before they submit themselves, or obey it; Acts. 2. 38. 41.

48. That the way and manner of baptising, both before the death of Christ, and since his resurection and ascension, was to go into the water, and to be baptised; Math. 3. 6. Mar. 1. 5. and 8, 9.

49. That when Baptisme is made known, or any other Action of obedience, then for men to refuse it, they are said to reject the counsel of God against themselves; Luk. 7. 30.

50. That those which received the word of God preached by the Ministrie of the Gospel, and were Baptized according to the Counsel of God, at the same time or day they were of the visible Church of God, Acts. 2. 41.

51. That the only foundation of the Church of God, is the Doctrines of the Apostles or Prophets, as they spring from Jesus Christ the chiefe corner stone, whereon this or anyother people are to be built together as the house of God; Eph. 2. 20, 21.

52. That the chief or only ends of a people baptised according to the counsel of God, when they meet together as the congregation or fellowship of Christ, are, or ought to be, for to walk sutablely; or to give up themselves unto a holy conformity to all the Laws or Ordinances of Jesus Christ, answerable to the gifts and graces received, improving them for the glory of God, and the edification of each other in love, Eph. 4. 15, 16.

53. That Jesus Christ took Bread, and the juice of the Vine, and brake, and gave to his Disciples, to eat and drink with thanksgiving; which practise is left upon record as a memorial of his suffering, to continue in the Church until he come again; 1 Cor. 11. 23, 24, 25, 26.

54. That the Church ought to call upon God, seeking him by prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, and to be thankful to him for mercies received, sounding forth his praises with understanding. Eph. 6. 16, 17, 18.

55. That if any one of the fellowship neglect the watching over his own heart, and so break out into an evill life and conversation, and all good meanes that God hath appointed hath been used towards such a one, and that person bath not performed, then ought not such a one to break bread with obedient walkers, to shew forth the death of Christ, seeing he doth deny him in life and

conversation; 1 Cor. 5. 12.

56. That the people of God ought to have a tender respect towards them, as long as there is any hope of being instrumental in the use of that means which God hath appointed for the recovering them out of the snare of sin or wickedness. 2. Thes. 3. 14, 25.

57. That there be contributions made for the relief of those that cannot help themselves with food and rayment, that are willing to the utmost to put forth their strength and skill in some lawful Way or Calling, especially those that are of the household of Faith; such as through sickness or weakness of body cannot labour. Gal. 6. 9. 20.

58. That it is the good pleasure of God, which hath given gifts of his grace to the Saints or Church of God, that some of the gifted men should be appointed, or set apart to attend upon the preaching of the word, for the further edifying of the Churches, that they may be enabled to stand against all oppositions according as necessity requires, to the glory of God and their comfort. Eph. 4. 11, 21.

59. That it is the will of God that those Saints or members of the fellowship which are appointed so to spend their labors in teaching or exhorting them in the knowledge of God to their edification and consolation, ought to have maintenance of those that receive spiritual food by them. 1 Cor. 9. 11.

60. That the maintenance of the Ministers which labour in the Word of God, ought to be the free and Charitable Benevolence, or the chearful contribution of those that acknowledge themselves members of the same fellowship; 2 Cor. 9. 13.

61. That the servants of God, or the Ministers of the Gospel, ought to be content with necessary food and rayment, and to labour with their hands, that they may not be overchargeable, 2 Cor. 11. 9. because they are to teach that doctrine to every member. Heb. 13. 5.

62. That those servants of God which labour in the word much, and well, ought to be had in very good estimation; 1 Tim. 5. 27.

63. That the Church of Jesus Christ ought not to think of any man above what is meet, lest that they give that honour to man, which properly and alone belongeth to God; Psal. 65. 1. 2 Cor. 12.6.

64. That the Church hath directions of God to set apart some men that are

suteably qualified, to oversee, or order the affairs concerning the poor distressed members of Christ, that they may not be neglected, and so perish for want of food and rayment, and to take off that work from lyjng too heavy upon the Core of those which labour in the word and doctrine; Acts. 6. 3, 4.

65. That if the podr fearing God, cannot conveniently have a competent maintenance, for the supply of their necessities in that society whereunto they must commonly resort, that then those men that have the Core laid upon them, send or give intelligence to the other Churches or saints of God, who have ingaged themselves by declaring their willingness towards the relief of such a distressed people, Rom. 15. 26.

66. That those men which the Church of God are to make such uses of as the setting them to minister unto the saints in things spritual or temporall, it is required that the Church judge those men found in the faith, that their lives and conversations be unblameable, that those which are without, cannot have any just occasion to speak reproachfully of them, that they be not covetous of filthy lucre, neither selfwilled, but loving and patient towards all men, apt to teach, and to do good works answer able to their abilities. Titus 1. 7, 8. 9. Acts. 6. 3.

67. That some men amongst the brotherhood who are able to judge in causes of difference that may arise betwixt them in the Church, may be approved or appointed to put an end thereto without partiality, that there may be no unnecessary strivings in the Law to vex one another; 1 Cor. 6. 5, 6, 7.

68. That whosoever of the Society or Church of God which shall willfully or Carelessly neglect any lawful way or calling, and to fall into hunger and nakedness, ought to be exhorted with love and meekness, to labour with their abilities in some honest way or calling for their relief which being done orderly, and he or they will not reform, so that sutable exhortations take no place, such an one shall be excluded or ex-communicated, as one that hath denied the faith; 1. Tim. 5. 8.

69. That the offended ought to proceed according to rule, not delaying or prolonging time, but out of a tender Core, that their hearts may not be hardned by a custome in sin, that thereby the reclaiming of them from sin may be done with less difficulty; Mat. 18. 15, 16, 17.

70. That if any controversie should so fall out, that the case cannot easily be determined by that society or church where it is first presented, that then use

be made of some other society which they are in fellowship with, for their assistance therein; Acts 16. 1, 2.

71. That there be an orderly improving those gifts that God of his free grace hath bestowed on the Saints, that one may not hinder another, but as occasion serveth, one by one, speaking the things that they have learned of God, that the hearers may be profited, and so put in a capacity to judge of things concerning the glory of God, and their own peace; 1 Cor. 14. 30, 31.

72. That if any one which hath been of the fellowship of Christ, and hath so far subjected himself to temptations that he denyeth to live righteously, or in the fear and love of God and makes shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience, for which he hath been excommunicated according to Order, that it be recorded, and made known to other the Churches, for prevention of evils in them; 1 Tim. 1. 19, 20.

73. That Fasting and Prayer ought to be used, and laying on of hands, for the Ordaining of servants or Officers to attend about the service of God; Acts 13. 3.

74. That we ought to behave ourselves towards all men, no otherwise then we would freely and cheerfully they in the like case (if it should fall out) should do toward us, and that we ought to seek a peaceable life with all men, as far as possibly we can, keeping faith and a good conscience; Luke 6. 31. Rom. 12. 18. 1 Tim. 1. 19.

75. That we ought to clear our selves, not only from evil Thoughts harbouring in our hearts, or the evils in life and conversation; but as far as we can, vindicate our selves from all those scandalous aspersions that daylie fall about our ears, setting our good names on fire, to the dishonour of God, whereof many are the Instruments by their wilful contrivances, or by the mis-informations of others, which father upon such principles and practises as we abhor, through ignorant mistakes cunningly suggested by some evil willers at least; 2 Cor. 2. 17.

POSTSCRIPT

That we do own a Magistratical power for the governing of this our English Nation, to be determined in a just Parliamentary way; and that we ought to pray for good Governors, and good Government; that we may live a peaceable and godly life in all honesty; standing ready at all times, as necessity may require, to vindicate such a Magistracy or Magistrates, not only with arguments of sound reason, but also with our Estates and Lives; that Righteousness may reigne, and Vice may be overthrown, without respect of persons.

FINIS