

Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660

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General introductory note

When the Committee of the Baptist Historical Society had agreed that these records should be collected, transcribed, annotated and published it soon became clear that the work must be done in three parts. The first would include records from South Wales and the Midlands, the second those from Ireland and the English West Country and the third, the largest, those of the Abingdon Association. Each set of records in each part will include necessary introductory material, a full transcript and its own footnotes, but all three parts will be paged consecutively and it is hoped to provide an index to the whole. In the transcripts, while the spelling will be left substantially as in the original manuscripts and pamphlets, all abbreviations will be expanded. The use of ‘i’ and ‘j’ and ‘u’ and ‘v’ will conform to our present practice and, where capitals and punctuation seem to require changes for easier reading, these changes will also be made. Scripture references will be standardised wherever possible. In addition, occasional words, or parts of words, supplied by the editor when omitted by the original writer or when the manuscript has been damaged, will be included in square brackets. Since more than one source will need to be drawn upon to complete most sets of these records, the introduction of material from a new source will be marked by a footnote and the extent of the insertion, where necessary, by a vertical line in the margin. Since the sources drawn upon are so varied in type it has proved impossible for either the printer or the editor to set them out with the consistency which, ideally, they would have required. However, it is believed that careful reference to the footnotes provided will make clear both the extent and the nature of the sources used in every case.

B. R. WHITE

Part I

South Wales and the Midlands

1 Association Records of the Particular Baptists of South Wales to 1656

Editorial Note

The two sources from which the present transcript is derived are the Ilston Churchbook and the writings of Joshua Thomas to which fuller reference is made in ‘Abbreviations used in the footnotes at the conclusion of the transcript. Apparently Joshua Thomas had himself made extracts in 1752¹ from some papers at Abergavenny which do not now survive and so was able to supply material concerning the ‘General Meetings’ referred to here as the fourth, fifth and sixth, which is not preserved in the Ilston Churchbook. However, he did not print all he had found at Abergavenny in his *History of the Baptist Association in Wales*, and some additional material has been discovered in his manuscript ‘The history of the Baptist churches in Wales,’ which has been included at the appropriate places.

It would, of course, be quite inappropriate at this point to attempt to draw any conclusions from this material. Instead, two warnings may usefully be given. First, it is clear that such patterns of inter-congregational co-operation as that developed here were in part dependent upon local circumstances and local leadership. Secondly, although in the records of these ‘General Meetings’ only one significant reference² is made to the wider family of ‘Particular Baptists in Britain this further dimension of fellowship and co-operation must not be forgotten.³ The reality and importance of this further dimension is made abundantly clear in the correspondence preserved in both the Ilston and the Llanwenarth⁴ (Abergavenny) Churchbooks.

Finally, it should be noted that the headings to each ‘General Meeting’ are provided by the editor and are not part of the original records.

The first General Meeting, 6–7 November 1650⁵.

The decrees and orders of the members of the two churches of the Hay and Lanharan, assembled at Ilston, the 6th and 7th day of the 9th month

1650 who were sent thither by the said churches to the brethren att Ilston,⁶ to consult with them, concerninge such businesses as are, through God's assistance, by them now determined, and herein expressed.

The brethren, seriously weighing the great scarcity of such ministers as will soundly hold forth the word of truth in Carmarthenshire, and the seasonable opportunity now offered, by the providence of God, for the propagation of truth in those partes, doe judge it convenient, that Brother David Davies,⁷ shall henceforth endeavour to preach two first dayes of every 2 monthes, att Carmarthen towne or therabouts; and that Brother Myles⁸ doe preach thereabouts, one first day in every 2 monthes; and that Brother Prosser⁹ doe likewise preach there, one first day in every 2 monthes; and our brethren are desired to consult and agree among themselves, when it is most convenient for every one of them to be there.

And upon the like serious consideration of the present condition of our bretheren att Lanharan, it is by the brethren judged convenient, that a constant ministry bee kept there by the churches, untill the Lord shall raise up more able men among themselves. And that Brother David Davies be desired to be there present as often as he can possibly, and that when he is necessitated to bee att Carmarthen, then our bretheren of the Hay are desired to take care to send eyther Brother Prosser or Brother Thomas Watkins,¹⁰ or some other whome they shall judge convenient. Further, considering the present condition of such brethren as are nowe to bee employed in the worke of the ministry, and the duty that lyes upon each member to provide for them, it is judged necessary, and therefore it is desired, that the sume of £30 *per annum* be rayseed by the churches in equall portions, (*viz.*) £10 in every church, towards the maintenance of the ministry.

And in regard our Brother Walter Prosser is not any other way allowed any maintenance, and that we finde in him much readines to serve our Lord Jesus, and his saints in that painfull and great worke of the ministry, wheresoever he is thereunto called, and that it is our duty to take especial care of him: it is therefore desired that out of the said £30 he be allowed £25 a yeere and to this end it is further ordered, that Brother Leison Davies,¹¹ for this church; Brother Thomas Watkins for the church of the Hay; and Brother Frissell Griffin¹² for the church att Lanharan; be desired to raise the proportions allotted upon the said churches, and that it be rayseed quarterly; that is to say, £2.10 a quarter in every of the

three churches, and that out of the said £30 soe rayned they are to deliver to Brother Prosser £25, that is to say £6.5. per quarter, which comes in every church to £2.1.8. And that our brethren gather the first sume as soon as they can without burtheninge any of the bretheren.

And it is further ordered, that the brethren that are appointed to gather this money, doe keepe the other £5 in their hands, to be disposed off as the churches shall joyntly order.

Uppon further consideration of the subtilty and malice of the adversary in seekinge by all faire, and colourable pretences, to withdraw if it were possible, the very elect from their stedfastnes, it is therefore agreed, and judged convenient, that the severall churches, be desired to take especiall care to stopp and quench all divideinge principles, that shalbe broached by or among, and of the brethren, and that shall or may in any wise tend to the subversione, or hinderinge of right order, and discipline among them.

And to the end that for the time to come, we may be in a more settled condition, and that questionings and disputeings may be silenced and ended among us that should be of one minde and of one heart searvinge our God, it is further judged very convenient that the declaration already sent forth by our brethren att the Hay,¹³ be now successively taken in serious consideratione, by the three churches viz: first, by this church att Ilston, 2ly by the church att Lanharan, 3ly by the church of the Hay. And that every church be carefull to consider every particular therein declared, and amend what they shall eyther see amisse, or not fully sett downe by any of the churches that shall first peruse them. And if there shall any such questione arise as may occasion any difference, and if there be any extraordinary difficulty, that cannott well be otherwise resolved and ended, that then with all convenient speed, a generall meetinge of such members as the churches shall approve may be appointed to consider and end the same.

The second General Meeting, 19 March 1651¹⁴

The decrees and orders of the members of the 4 churches of Ilston, Hay, Lanharan and Carmarthen, assembled at Carmarthen the 19th day of the first month 1651.

The brethren takeing into serious consideration, the present condition

of the foure churches, and the great want of an able mynistry in these partes, doe with one consent determine, and order, that our brethren, who are sent fourth to the mynistry. be desired to take especiall care, that the foure churches bee as much supplied as they can, with a constant mynistry, and to that end wee desire that Brother Walter Prosser be heere att Carmarthen, 3 first dayes of every 8 weeks; and that Brother Davies be heere two first dayes; and Brother Myles one first day of every 8 weekes; and that the other two first dayes be without any publicke mynistry. It is further ordered, that when Brother Prosser is absent att Carmarthen, that then Brother Myles goe to the Hay one first day and Brother Davies goe another thither, to the end that place may not be slighted, nor the church hindered, by our Brother Prosser's absence. And that while Brother Davies is att the Hay, some brother from the Hay be sent to Gellygare or Llanharan.

And to the end that Llanharan church should not be hindered, by our Brother Davies' absence, while he is att Carmarthen, it is ordered that Brother Prosser be one first day, and Brother Myles the other att Llanharan, or Gelly Gare or thereabouts where it shalbe judged most convenient.

And that our brethren doe consult, and agree among themselves, when they are to bee att every of the said places.

Further, considering the great charg that our Brother Prosser is, and must bee att, in his often journeying and contynuance att Carmarthen, it is ordered that our brethren of the 3 churches of Ilston, Hay, and Llanharan, who were appointed to collect the sumes allotted on the 3 churches, towards the publick mynistry, he desired to deliver to Brother Prosser, the £2.10 remayning in their hands, since the 2 last quarter dayes, being the remainder of the sume of £30 over and above that which was formerly ordered to be payd to Brother Prosser, and that for the time to come they deliver him the wholle sume, which was ordered to be collected quarterly for the mynistry, in the maner that was formerly prescribed for the payment of £25 *per annum* together with the addition of £2 to bee raysed in the churches of Ilston and Hay by equall portions which comes to make upp the sume of £32 *per annum*.

It is further desired, that the brethren of the church att Carmarthen, bee desired to provide a chamber furnished, together with firing and candles, for the use of our brethren, that are to come thither to mynister to the church. And, considering their inability hitheto to bee in any

charg heerin, it is ordered, that they only take the care of provideinge these things, and that the other 3 churches, be equally att the charge thereto.

And, wheras there were 2 questions proposed to the bretheren, concerning the singinge of Psalmes, and layinge on of hands, and that wee could not att the present receive or give full satisfaction therin, it is ordered, that the brethren should recommend the said particulars to the consideration of the severall churches, and the said churches should certifie one another by letters, as the Lord shall discover to them heerein.

The third General Meeting, summer(?) 1651.¹⁵

The only record of this meeting is given in passing by a note concerning Thomas Proud¹⁶ in the Ilston Churchbook, as follows:

Thomas Proud, having grievously sinned against God by broaching that destructive opinion maintaining the mixed communion of the baptized and unbaptized in visible church fellowship, and haveing endeoured to draw other[s] to the same judgment by severall wayes and meanes and soe to rend and divide the church; and haveing diverse wayes shewen his contempt of this church, as in preaching publickly contrary to the advice and order of this church as alsoe in wilfull leaveing and contemptuous forsakeing thereof upon discontentment when hee was called to an account for his former offences together with his slighting and contemning of the generall meeting of the churches at Lanharan as was certified to us by lettres from the churches of Hay and Llanharan , the church therefore upon close consideration withdrew from him the sayd Thomas Proud.

The fourth General Meeting, 14–15 July 1653.¹⁷

Att the generall meeting of the elders, and other misseagers of the severall churches of Ilston, Hay, Lantrissent Carmarthin and Abergevenny, houlden at Abergevenny the 14 and 15th dayes of the 5th month 1653.

I The great worke of setling the church at Abergevenny was, through the help of oure Father, concluded and settled as followeth:¹⁸

1. That the constant church meetings shalbe held every Lord's Day at Abergevenny.

2. That a meeting bee kept upp twice in every weeke at Llangiby *viz.*, uppon the Lord's Day, and 4th day of the weeke, if the generall meeting of the church at Abergevenny be noy uppon the same day and that the church provide a mynistry to teach in the said meetings to the world every Lord's Day.
3. That uppon such Lord's Dayes as the members of the Hay keepe noe meeting in Ewiaslacy¹⁹ there shall be set upp hence forward a meeting of the brethren of the church at Abergevenny, at or abouts Llanihangel *viz.*, the brethren living therabouts.
4. That our brother William Richard²⁰ be sent foorth a puplick mynister of the Gospell and the 2d day come sevnicht be set apart to that purpose.

II Wee considered the condition of the church of the Hay and, uppon severall complaints and proofes made against severall disorderly persons formerly noted by the said church, in seeking to rent the church and set upp themselves (as is conceaved) as a church, wherby the church is much disturbed and unsetled which may prove much to the dishonoure of God, and the grief of brethren and the hinderance of the worke of God in the world, it was ordered and concluded:

lst, that a letter be sent to the said disorderly brethren to exhort them to consider from whence they are fallen and their present practises; and to forbear for the future to utter rash or scandelous words of the church, the receaving into or keeping in their fellowship, such as are or shal be cast out by the church or any that shall come away from them; and that they attend uppon the church ministry, not practising in their private meeting any such ordinances as are proper to the churches of Christ.

And, in case they will not hearken to this our advise, wee will at our next meeting, with one consent, declare against and disowne them; and, withall wee desire that they would at our said meeting give in their reasons unto us, why they charge the church with disorders, and what those disorders are, where they shalbe fully heard, and the buisnes discussed and judged in the feare of the Lord, according to Scripture and right reason.

2 That a letter be sent to the church of the Hay to advise them if they have any fitt members to chuse more elders to rule or teach

that church, and to advise them to submit in the Lord to such as are or shall be chosen elders among them; that also, if they can, they choose deacons in the severall parts of the church.

III There were proposed unto us these queries:

1. qu : whether such as are approved by the church to prophesy among them before the world may also prophesy among professors in the world.

Ans : that they may not goe abroad to appoint meetings before the world.

2. qu : Whether a deacon may lawfully marry after the death of his first wief.

Ans : Hee may.

IV Upon the proposalls of the church at Llantrissant for the recalling of former orders concerning the maintenance of the ministry at Carmarthin, and considering the severall conditions of the churches, it was concluded:

1. That £10 for this next halfe yeere be allowed our Brother William Thomas,²¹ who is appointed to be one weeke in every three weekes, at or about Carmarthin towne and that £2.10 thereof be rayseed from the church at Llantrissant and the like sume from the church at Carmarthin and £5 from the church at Ilston.
2. That the church at the Hay assist the church at Abergevenny in the maintenance of Brother William Richard who is shortly to be sent forth a publick minister to the world.

‘It²² is also ordered, that the next general meeting be held at Aberavon in Glamorganshire, upon the seventh day of the seventh month next. Last of all, it is desired that the fourth day come fortnight be set apart by all the churches, as a day of holy rejoicing, and praise unto our tender Father, for answering the prayers of his servants, in giving peace to, and preserving it in the poor churches, and for his gracious appearance with us in this our meeting.’

The record was signed by: John Myles, David Davis, Walter Prosser, William Thomas, Thomas Proud, Thomas Joseph,²³ Howell Thomas,²⁴

Leyson Davis, Stephen Brace,²⁵ Howell Vaughan,²⁶ Thomas Watkins, Charles Garson,²⁷ Robert Hopkins,²⁸ Thomas Edwards,²⁹ Thomas Jones,³⁰ Thomas Parry,³¹ Robert Morgan,³² Howell Watkins,³³ Thomas Lewis,³⁴ William Prichard, Anthony Harry,³⁵ Richard Rosser,³⁶ Thomas James³⁷ and (?) Francis Giles.³⁸

The fifth General Meeting, 1–2 March 1654.³⁹

‘We saw that, by appointment, the next general meeting was to be held on the seventh day of the seventh month next. But the narrative of that meeting at *Aberavon* says, that it was kept on the first and second days of the first month, 1654. It is in vain for us to enquire how that happened. At this meeting, as in former ones, the common design was the edification and comfort of the churches. To that end several queries were proposed and resolved. One query was this: ‘What are the duties of each of the officers and members in the church?’ It is then added, ‘In order to the answering of this question it is desired that our Brethren, *John Myles*, *David Davis*, *Walter Prosser*, and *William Prichard*, do severally consider this thing, and certify in writing what they shall judge concerning it, at our next general meeting.’ Another minute runs thus: It is our desire that the church at *Ilston* do spare *Brother Myles* as often and as long as they may, to be among the churches of the *Hay* and *Abergavenny*, in order to the settling of them, and helping them to judge of the several gifts of the members among them.’

‘Upon⁴⁰ the desire of our brethren at Carmarthen taking into consideration the state of the church there; it is desired that the several churches send the brethren hereafter mentioned to Carmarthen successively, so that one of them may be there one week in every four; and the first of them, viz. Brother William Prichard, the next Lord’s Day; and Brother William Thomas be there the 2nd day of the 2nd month; Brother Thomas Joseph the 30th of the 2nd month; Brother Myles the 28th of the 3rd month; Brother Howell Thomas the 25th of the 4th month; Brother Davis the 23rd of the 5th month; Brother Prosser the 20th of the 6th month; Brother Thomas Jones the 17th of the 7th month; Brother Morgan Jones 15th of the 8th month; Brother William Thomas again the 12th of the 9th month; Brother Myles again the 10th of the 10th month; the brethren

there providing conveniences there for them so long as they shall be in the town of Carmarthen.’

In another place were recorded three decisions concerning the church at Abergavenny.⁴¹ First, ‘upon the desire of the brethren at Abergavenny, it is desired of the church at Llantrisant to send often the brethren David Davis and Thomas Jones to Llanyby, or thereabout.’ Secondly, ‘considering further the inability of the said church at Abergavenny sufficiently to maintain Brother William Prichard, it is desired that the churches of Llantrisant and the Hay do assist them therein.’ Thirdly, ‘considering the several frailties in the church at Abergavenny, it was desired that they would forbear to sing Psalms in the manner they now practice, until further consideration thereof, and satisfaction be made for the offence they have given the churches, in not asking their advice and counsel therein. And that they take heed of mixed communion with unbaptized persons, or any others walking disorderly.’

Finally,⁴² ‘in consideration of the usefulness of the general meetings of the elders and messengers of the several churches, it was ordered that on the 20th of the seventh month next, there be a meeting at the town of *Llantrisant*, and so every half year after, provided that if there be any extraordinary occasion, then, upon the desire of any of the churches, all the others are to send their messengers to hold such a meeting, when need requireth.’ Thomas noted that there were seventeen signatories but only gave the names of the following new ones: Hugh Matthews,⁴³ Griffith Griffith, James Hugh⁴⁴ and Thomas Evans.⁴⁵

The sixth General Meeting, 30–31 August 1654.⁴⁶

‘The records say, that the meeting at *Llantrisant* was kept on the 30th and 31st of the sixth month, 1654. Some circumstances occasioned it to be about three weeks before the time appointed. There a query was proposed, concerning laying on of hands.⁴⁷ The answer was referred to the next meeting; and the brethren, *J. Myles*, *D. Davis*, *William Prosser*, *W. Thomas*, and *W. Prichard*, appointed “to draw up their judgment from Scripture therein, and the church at *Caermarthen* (which proposed it) was desired, by admonition etc., to prevent the broaching among them of any thing concerning it, until that meeting be past.” Provision also

was made to continue the ministry there as before.’

‘A query concerning singing Psalms, was proposed by the church at *Abergavenny*. That likewise was referred to the next meeting; and the brethren *J. Myles*, *D. Davis*, and *W. Thomas* desired to state the point severally, according to Scripture.’

‘Another query was, “Whether the fast days, as now appointed, should be continued?” The answer was,⁴⁸ “It is judged, that the appointed fast days should be continued; for that is the agreement of the churches of *England*, *Scotland*, *Ireland*, and *Wales*, and our promise to God and them to observe it; and for that most of the things desired are not yet attained”’

Concerning the *Llantrisant* church:⁴⁹

1. ‘In regard that several brethren charged the church with unjust proceedings in relation to Brother David Davies, we, having with much seriousness, considered the business, do conclude the brethren charging the church to be wrong, and that they did no less than their duty in their dealing with the said Brother David Davies, who could not be found guilty of the things charged upon him, only that he spake same harsh expressions to Brother William Davis, and was therefore by the church admonished.
2. In regard to the bigness of the church, distance of members, want of discipline and government, which necessarily followeth, for want of often meetings together; it is desired, that they should divide into three parts, and that a ministry and maintenance for the same be provided for each of them; to the end the brethren may be better edified, governed, and spared their long journeys to the church meetings, the work may more prosperously go on in each part of the country, and peace and holiness better preserved.
3. That in regard of the great jealousies that Satan hath caused between Brother David Davies and many of the brethren, by reason of which his ministry cannot be as effectual in these parts, or among them, as among others; and that their joint communions cannot be as comfortable; it was therefore judged most convenient to propose unto them that our Brother David Davis be dismissed from among them; to which the major part of the church then present consented; and thereupon our Brother Davis was advised to betake himself to

the ministry to the world, and to go anywhere that the Lord shall most clearly call him.

4. That the church, for peace sake, pass by all the offences of any brethren in this late disturbance, and that the elders exhort them to peace, requiring only an account from such as shall hereafter continue obstinate.'

'It was further here agreed, that the church at Llantrisant be desired to contribute £5 for the next half year to help supporting the Abergavenny minister.'

'Here⁵⁰ the answer was given to the query at the last meeting, respecting the several duties of officers and private members. The following is a copy thereof:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Church, after he had by himself purged our sins, ascended on high, gave gifts to his church, that each joint in the body might have its peculiar gift, and that thereby unity, peace and order might be preserved for the good of the whole. Eph. 4.8,11f., 15f.

1. He gave Apostles, who planted the first churches, and laid down infallible rules of doctrine and discipline, which we are now to observe, in the gathering and building up of churches. Eph. 2.20f.
2. Prophets who, by divine inspiration, foretold things to come; as John etc.
3. Evangelists, who were the publishers of the Gospel to the world.
4. Miracles.
5. Gifts of healing.
6. Diversities of tongues, for the further publishing and confirmation of the Gospel, by those primitive and extraordinary Apostles, Prophets and Evangelists.

All those officers and gifts were extraordinary, and therefore are now ceased; that being effected whereto they were given, only the three first may be said to remain in their writings; as Luke 16.29 and may be said likewise ordinarily to continue, while they are,

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1. Apostles or Messengers sent forth to gather churches out of the world.
2. Evangelists, or publishers of the glad tidings, which is only some men's special gift.
3. Prophets, or such as speak to exhortation, etc., of whom here-after.

Now there are to continue in the Church these officers:

1. Pastors.
2. Teachers.
3. Helps, or those who rule.

These three are called Elders, Bishops, Watchmen, etc., whose joint office is: These three are called Elders, Bishops, Watchmen, etc., whose joint office is:

1. To take care of the church, Acts 20.17, 28; I Pet. 5.2f.
2. To consult on controversies, Acts 15.1f., 6, 23.
3. To order things in the church, Acts 16.4.
4. To advise in matters of doubt, Acts 21.18f.
5. To govern, I Tim. 5.17; Titus 1.5.
6. To visit the sick, if sent for, James 5.14.
7. To care for the distribution of collections, Acts 4.37; 11.29f.

These were the duties of all the elders, though the greatest charge lay on the pastors, as appears in that, though there were many elders in the church at *Ephesus*, yet the epistle in the Revelation the second chapter, is directed but to one, viz., the angel of the church, and the charge given to, and the account required of him wholly. Now more particularly:

First, the pastor's office is to do all that tends to the feeding of the flock, Jer. 3.15; Mt. 24.45 as to

1. Exhort. Ro. 12.7f; I Cor. 12.8.

2. Reprove with all authority. Tit. 2.15.
3. Cast out. I Tim. 1.20; I Cor. 5.1 etc.
4. Lead the sheep, he is to be the mouth of the whole.
5. Watch. 2 Tim. 4.5; Heb. 13.17.
6. Administer all ordinances in the church.
7. Give himself wholly to the word and doctrine, Acts 6.4.
8. Rule well, which consists (1) in the right ordering of questions and disorderly speakings. I Cor. 14.33. Col. 2.5 etc., (2) in preserving purity of doctrine and discipline, Rev. 2 and 3. The angels are charged with it.

Secondly, the teacher's particular office is, to wait on teaching, to expound scriptures, and confute errors. Tit. 2.7f. 2 Tim. 4.2f. And this is no less the pastor's office.

Thirdly, the ruling elder's, or helping office is, to oversee the lives and manners of men: to whom also double honour is due, I Tim. 5.17; Ro. 12.8. He also must take care of God's house, Heb. 13.17. I Tim. 3.5.

Fourthly, the next officer is a deacon, I Tim. 3.8 who is to serve tables, that is, the Lord's Table, and the tables of all others in the church, that shall want his service. He also is to be dedicated to the church's service, as the word deacon imports, Acts 6.1 etc.

Fifthly, for the assistance of the deacons there are widows, of whom, see I Tim. 5.16, who are likewise to serve the church, Ro. 16.1 most probably in looking to the poor and sick.

Sixthly, there are, for the further edifying of the church, ordinary prophets, who, though they be not such as wait on the ministry, or are wholly given up to it as yet, are such as being gifted, may speak, as they be permitted, or desired, to edification; exhortation, and comfort, I Tim. 4.15; I Cor. 14.3, 29f.

Thus far of church-officers with their offices. Now follow the duties of private members, as they are related to their officers and to each other.

In relation to their elders, they are to honour them, I Tim. 5.17. Submit to and obey them, Heb. 13.17. To provide for them, especially such as labour in the word and doctrine, having dedicated themselves thereto,

I Cor. 9.7; I Tim. 5.8; Gal. 6.6. To pray for them, Heb. 13.18; Col. 4.3; Eph. 6.18f. Not to grieve them, Heb. 13.17. Nor to speak roughly to them, I Tim. 5.1. Nor hastily to receive an accusation against them, I Tim. 5.19.

In reflation to one another, they are, to have and preserve love among themselves, Eph. 4.1f. To strive for the best gifts, especially that they may prophesy, I Cor. 14.1. Taking heed that they presume not above what is meet, Ro. 12.3. To admonish, exhort and reprove each other as in Mt. 18; I Thess. 5.11, 14. To strive to excel in holiness, Heb. 12.14. More particularly — the rich are not to despise the poor, James 2.6. But to communicate freely, I Tim. 6.17; Heb. 13.16. The poor are not to be idle, nor charge the church unnecessarily, 2 Thess. 3.11f. The young are to honour and reverence the aged, I Tim. 5.1f. The aged are to be examples to the young. The strong are to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to offend them in things indifferent, but to respect them, I Cor. 10.32. The weak are not to take upon them the place of Christ in judging their brethren, who are the servants of Christ, Ro. 14.1f. etc.

So in all things, if every one would more carefully follow peace and holiness, and act his own part, there would be no jarrings or divisions, nor yet corporal or spiritual wants, but each member exercising his several gift, the whole body, as the apostle showeth, being fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, would make increase to the edifying of itself in love.⁵¹

After this, it was further ordered, “that the proposals which shall be sent, by any particular church; unto any general meeting hereafter, be delivered in writing. And in case there be any matter of controversy, that their arguments be stated, and therewith delivered.

Ordered, that the next general meeting be held (God willing) at the *Hay*, the last fourth day of the next first month”:⁵² “Then the whole is signed in the manner following,

“The elders and messengers of the church at *Ilston*:

John Myles, Morgan Jones, William Thomas, Morgan Jones,⁵³ Harry Griffith,⁵⁴ John Davis,⁵⁵ Hugh Matthews.

The elders and messengers of the church at the *Hay*:

Walter Prosser, Charles Garson, Thomas Watkins.

The elders of the church at *Llantrisant*:

David Davis, Thomas Joseph, Howel Thomas, Thomas Jones.

NOTES

The elders and messengers at *Abergavenny*:

William Prichard, Anthony Harry, Thomas James, Richard Rosser, Richard Jones.

The messengers of the church at *Caermarthen*: Robert Morgan, Rhydderch Thomas.”⁵⁶

‘At this meeting it was agreed to send a copy to each church of the answer to the query regarding the several duties of officers and members.’

Abbreviations used in the footnotes

1. *D.W.B.* — *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. London 1959.
2. ‘Iston Churchbook MS’ — the original Churchbook is possessed by Brown University, Rhode Island, U.S.A. The National Library of Wales possesses a facsimile, N.L.W. MSS 9108/9.
3. Richards, *P. M.* — Thomas Richards, *A history of the Puritan movement in Wales*, London 1920.
4. Richards, *R. D.* — Thomas Richards, *Religious developments in Wales 1654–1662*, London 1923
5. Thomas, *Association* — Joshua Thomas, *A history of the Baptist association in Wales*, London 1795.
6. Thomas, ‘History’— Joshua Thomas MS, ‘The history of the Baptist churches in Wales,’ Bristol Baptist College library Z.d.2.
7. White, Organisation — B. R. White ‘The organisation of the Particular Baptists 1644–1660,’ *J.E.H.*, vol. XVII. 2. October 1966.
8. White, ‘Structures’ — B. R. White, ‘John Miles and the structures of the Particular Baptist Mission to Wales 1649–1660,’ *Welsh Baptist Studies*, 1971

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¹Thomas, ‘History,’ 7,10

²At the sixth General Meeting, 30–31 August 1654, it was decided to continue the fast days agreed with ‘the churches of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales.’

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³White, 'Organisation,' 209–213

⁴Llanwenarth Churchbook MS, National Library of Wales, deposit MS 409.

⁵Ilston Churchbook MS,' 25f

⁶For an account of the foundation and organisation of the several congregations linked in these 'General Meetings' see White, 'Structures.'

⁷David Davies, minister at Gelligaer, was an early convert to Particular Baptist views, and led the congregation (which came to have its centre at Llantrisant) until the end of August 1654 (See the record of the sixth General Meeting). After his dismissal he became rector of Neath (Richards, *R. D.*, 184) in 1655 and remained there until his ejection in 1660 (*ibid.*, 361). He died in 1666 (*ibid.*, 505).

⁸John Miles (1621–1683) apparently became a Baptist in 1649 and it is probably correct to ascribe the structures which grew up as the result of the mission he led in part at least to his 'organising genius' (Richards, *P. M.*, 202). On the other hand it would be unwise to attribute too much originality to him since there is accumulating evidence that similar policies were being pursued elsewhere by other Particular Baptist leaders. He had apparently no scruples about acceptance of both money and official position from the Cromwellian establishment. After the Restoration he sailed to Massachusetts where he joined, in 1667, with others in founding the settlement of 'Swansey' and a Baptist church there. He eventually died there in February 1683. (See art. 'Miles, John' in *D.W.B.*)

⁹Walter Prosser had formerly been one of two elders of the Independent congregation meeting at Llanigon. When Prosser, and a number of others, adopted Particular Baptist principles, the congregation they founded met at Hay (White, 'Structures'). Prosser was eventually presented to the living of Tredunnoch, 3 July 1657 (Richards, *R. D.*, 187) but was ejected in 1660 (*ibid.*, 361).

¹⁰Thomas Watkins, who was a leader in the church at Hay in this period, was, after the Restoration, to lead a congregation centred on the parish of Olchon. In July 1668 he was to accompany William Prichard of Abergavenny to Rhydwlwym in west Wales to establish a Baptist congregation there. He was still active, although his congregation only numbered about thirty, in 1690. ('Watkins, Thomas,' *D.W.B.*, Appendix).

¹¹Leison Davies of Penmain was under-sheriff of Glamorgan 1658/59 (Richards, *R. D.*, 186) and so was evidently a fairly substantial citizen.

¹²Richards, *R. D.*, 183f. identified 'Frissell' (whom he called 'Frisson') Griffin with a certain 'Trissold Griffith' who 'seiz'd [as farmer] upon the great Tyth of Pendoylan' — according to a letter of 1709. This identification seems rather far-fetched and otherwise we have no information about the man.

¹³There is no indication, either in the Ilston or the Llanwenarth records, of what this 'declaration' contained or of the discussion which followed.

¹⁴'Ilston Churchbook MS,' 29f.

¹⁵'Ilston Churchbook MS,' 33. This undated entry follows one for August 1651 and precedes one for October. The national policy, followed by Miles and his colleagues, was to refuse church membership to any who had not been baptized as believers. It is possible that the 'General Meeting' here referred to achieved no more than this passing mention because it had been solely concerned with the case of Thomas Proud.

¹⁶Thomas Proud had been with John Miles from the first. He too was supported by state funds (Richards, *P. M.*, 153, 204) and seems to have been the settled incumbent

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of Cheriton in the Gower (*ibid.*, 161). After his ejection at the Restoration nothing more is known of him.

¹⁷'Ilston Churchbook MS,' 39f.

¹⁸A full account is given in White, 'Structures,' of the organisation of the Ilston congregation and it seems, from such fragmentary information as is afforded by this account of the organisation at Abergavenny, that the other congregations were administered according to a similar plan meeting partly as 'house churches' and partly as whole congregations.

¹⁹Ewiaslacy *may* have been, as Dr G.F. Nuttall has suggested, Ewyas Harold in Herefordshire: a short distance from the Monmouthshire border and same way from both Hay and Abergavenny.

²⁰William Richard or, more usually, Prichard, of Abergavenny was to become 'the organic link between the Ilston school and the Baptist crusaders of the south-west' by his baptism of William Jones of Rhydwylym. He attended the Assembly in London in 1689 and 1692 representing the church at Blaenau as pastor. He died in 1713 ('Prichard, William' in *D.W.B.*).

²¹William Thomas of Baglan was a leader in the eastern section of the Ilston congregation. (White, 'Structures').

²²Thomas, *Association*, 9f. The list of names which concludes this paragraph was given by Joshua Thomas at the same place.

²³Thomas Joseph accepted state support under the Cromwellian establishment at Llangeinor, was ejected in 1660. Calamy claimed that in becoming a minister 'he spoilt an ingenious husbandman to become an ignorant preacher' (Richards, *R. D.* 51, 189, 361).

²⁴Howell Thomas of the Llantrisant congregation accepted office under the Cromwellian establishment at Glyncoed near Margam. He was ejected 1660 (Richards, *R. D.* 52, 361).

²⁵Stephen Brace was a member at Hay: 'in 1660 the tempest of persecution came and scattered them grievously. It is supposed that some of the English part of them joined afterward the church that then met partly at Hereford and partly at Leominster. Stephen Brace, and some others are in the Churchbook at the latter place now' (Thomas, 'History,' 55)

²⁶Howell Vaughan. Thomas Richards (*R. D.*, 184) identifies him with Howell Yohan who signed *The Humble representation and address* (1656) from South Wales to Oliver Cromwell.

²⁷Charles Garson was apparently a member at the Hay church (Thomas. 'History,' 53)

²⁸Robert Hopkins of Aberavon was baptised 6 November 1650 and joined the Ilston church. ('Ilston Churchbook MS,' 10). Both Joshua Thomas ('History,' 97 — where incidentally, he describes the loss of the loose papers he had seen earlier at Abergavenny) and Thomas Richards (*R. D.*, 187) take it that this was the Hopkins who accompanied Will Rider when the latter visited Hay with a view to expounding the case for the laying on of hands on baptized believers. Richards even suggested that the purpose of Robert Hopkins' presence was to interpret for the Welsh speaking members of the Hay congregation.

But the Llanwenarth Churchbook (187, entries for December 1655 and January 1656) gives the impression that Robert Hopkins, like Rider, was sent from London:

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‘In answeere to their desires the church of Christ meeting in Glassiers Hall, London, sent Brother William Rider whom they judged fitt (and approved him) for the worke of the ministry, and with him they sent Brother Robert Hopkin.’ And, ‘Upon the 27th of the 11th month 1655 the said brethren William and Robert coming unto the brethren, being gathered together at the Hay, declared that they were sent unto them by the church at Glassiers Hall, London . . .’

On balance, therefore, it seems likely that the Robert Hopkins who came with William Rider was *not* the member as Ilston.

²⁹Thomas Edwards of Gelligaer signed a letter from Llantrisant to the churches at Ilston, Hay and Carmarthen. (Thomas, ‘History,’ 10–13. There the letter is transcribed in full. It had apparently been sent to Joshua Thomas by Isaac Backus and was then with the Ilston Churchbook. It must have been a loose paper since it does not now appear in the facsimile in the N.L.W.). Thomas Edwards was ‘agent to Col. Edward Prichard of Llancaiaah, another member of this church and signatory of the letter.’ (Richards, *R. D.*, 184)

³⁰Thomas Jonese had also signed the letter mentioned in the last note. It was dated 17th of the 8th month 1652’ and was, as Joshua Thomas noted (‘History,’ 69), the first occasion when the church at Llanharan was mentioned as having moved to Llantrisant.

³¹Thomas Parry lived to 1709, suffered severely during the period after the Restoration, but led the Baptists in the district round Llanigon throughout and attended the meeting of the Welsh Association at Llanwenarth in 1705. (Thomas, ‘History,’ 57,60; article in *D. W. B.*)

³²Robert Morgan was a member at Carmarthen during this period. After the Restoration the Carmarthen church broke up and Morgan became co-pastor of Ilston with Lewis Thomas. He attended the London Assembly of 1689. He died in 1710 and was buried at Llandeilo Tal Y Bont where he had lived for many years. (Thomas, ‘History,’ 21f., 75; art. in *D. W. B.*)

³³Howel Watkins of the Hay church survived the years of persecution and dies c. 1700. He continued as ‘an occasional helper in the ministry.’ (Thomas, ‘History,’ 60).

³⁴No record appears to remain concerning Thomas Lewis; it is just possible that Joshua Thomas inverted his name in his transcription. If so, for Lewis Thomas see *D. W. B.*

³⁵Anthony Harry seems to have joined the church at Abergavenny by transfer from Llantrisant soon after the foundation of the former congregation in August 1652. In February 1653/4 he was one of those considered by the church qualified to ‘preach before the world’ i.e. at public gatherings. He took a post at Llanfihangel Talyllyn paid by the commissioners for the propagation of the Gospel. (Thomas, ‘History,’ 93, 96; Richards, *R. D.*, 51).

³⁶No other record appears to remain concerning Richard Rosser although Joshua Thomas suggests ‘his surname could have been ‘Rogers’ (Thomas, ‘History,’ 96). He was given permission to preach ‘before the world’ at the same time as Anthony Harry.

³⁷Thomas James, about June 1654, was one of those given permission by the Abergavenny church to exercise their gifts privately — as the usual first step to accreditation by the church for more public preaching (Thomas, ‘History,’ 96). For the attitudes to the ministry of this group of Particular Baptist congregations see White, ‘Structures.’

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The home of Thomas James was used for the private meetings of the Abergavenny congregation in Sept. 1653.

³⁸Francis Giles was permitted to preach at private meetings at the same meeting as that which permitted Thomas James and four others to do so (Thomas, 'History,' 96). Joshua Thomas was not certain of this name — the last on the list of those who signed the report of the Abergavenny meeting — the last name was 'Francis ----' with the surname illegible. He seems to have concluded that it was 'Giles.'

³⁹Thomas, *Association*, 10f.

⁴⁰Thomas, 'History,' 91.

⁴¹*ibid.*, 96.

⁴²Thomas, *Association*, 11.

⁴³Hugh Matthews was a member at Ilston (Thomas, 'History,' 13).

⁴⁴There is no information about either Griffith Griffith or James Hugh.

⁴⁵Thomas Evans was a signatory of the letter dated 17 October 1652 from Llantrisant (see notes 29 and 30). Joshua Thomas ('History,' 73) identified him as 'Captain Evans of Dyffryn-ffrwd' who, according to tradition was, after the Restoration, 'a great succourer of many,' and who may have lived until 1686.

⁴⁶Thomas, *Association*, 11–15. He also adds the following paragraph ('History,' 53) 'There it was proposed and desired that a minister skilled in the English was wanted in the church at the Hay, and that Mr W. Prosser and W. Prichard would exchange churches and places of abode. It seems the latter understood English better than the former. It does not appear that this exchange took place, and, if it did, the continuance was very short. But English was certainly wanted in the Hay church, for it was spread to Herefordshire to Ewias Lacy and Bradwardine. These two places are mentioned in the Records in my possession.'

⁴⁷The question (from Carmarthen) was stated thus. 'Whether laying on of hands be an ordinance of Christ; and if it be so, then upon whom?' (Thomas, 'History,' 91).

⁴⁸This arrangement had resulted from the Irish initiative of 1653 which will be documented in part II of these Association records. This is the only mention in this set of records of the wider fellowship of the Particular Baptists.

⁴⁹Thomas, 'History,' 70f

⁵⁰Thomas, *Association*, 12–15

⁵¹While there is much here of interest for the Particular Baptist view of the ministry there is no discussion of the seat of final authority within the congregation. Nevertheless, there is nothing here to conflict with the London position as discussed in 'The doctrine of the church in the Particular Baptist Confession of 1644,' *J.T.S.*, New Series, vol. XIX 1968.

⁵²In fact this meeting at Llantrisant was the last such gathering of which any detailed record remains. At least one other is known to have taken place — at Brecon (Thomas, *Association*, 15) 29/30 July 1656 which produced *An antidote against the infection of the times*. As Thomas Richards has pointed out (*R.D.* 263) this document, of which the chief author appears to have been John Miles, is important 'as giving a strictly contemporary conspectus of Quaker doctrine and that in a setting almost completely different from their own London address to the Council of State two years later.' Richards also pointed out (*ibid.*) that half the churches linked with Miles, or their delegates, 'did not see fit to attend.' Since they would, presumably, have been at

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one in their reaction to the Quaker menace it seems possible, and Richards implies, that the cause of division may have been the growing controversy over state pay.

⁵³The two men named Morgan Jones, both members at Ilston, are distinguished, with some difficulty, in the article by Thomas Richards in *D. W. B.*

⁵⁴Harry Griffith is not known beyond the Ilston congregation of the 1650's.

⁵⁵John Davis was one of three appointed by the Ilston church meeting 8 July 1657 'to record in a book all church affairs.'

⁵⁶Rhydderch or Roderick Thomas may have been an episcopalian clergyman before joining the Carmarthen Particular Baptists. He accepted the living of Llanvihangel 30 April 1659 and was ejected in 1662. (Richards, *R. D.*, 187, 488).

2 Association Records of the Particular Baptists of the Midlands to 1658

Editorial Note.

Two attempts have been made to tell the story of the churches associated together over the years in the Midlands and these have both included some material from the earliest period. They are: William Stokes, *The history of the Midland Association* (London 1855) and J. M. Gwynne Owen, *Records of an old Association* (n.p. 1905). In addition, W. T. Whitely produced a useful survey which included some relevant material in *Baptist Association life in Worcestershire 1655–1926*, (n.p. 1926).

Nevertheless the great bulk of the material printed here from the esbury and Leominster Churchbooks has not been made available before. Much of it, like that contained in the Welsh Records, concerns the answers of the messengers to queries proposed by the churches. However, unlike the Welsh records, no arrangements appear to have been made at association level for preaching plans. What seem characteristic of both sets of records are the churches' two major concerns: over and over again the queries raise questions concerned with internal churchlife and discipleship on the one hand and forms of ministry upon the other.

The first General Meeting, 2 May 1655.¹

Articles unanimously agreed unto by all the messingers of the churches mett at Warwicke on the 2nd day of the 3rd month 1655.²

1. Wee beleeve that there is one only true God which is one God who is eternall, allmighty, unchaingable and incomprehensible, infinite; who is a spirit haveing³ his being of himselfe and giveth being to all creatures and doth what he will in heaven and in earth moveing all things according to the counsell of his own will.
2. That this infinite being is set forth to be Father, the Word and the Holy Spirite and these three are one. I Jn. 5.7.

3. We proffess and beleve the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testament, to be the word and reveled mind of God which are able to make men wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus and are given by inspiration of God serving to furnish the man of God to every good worke and that by them we are, in the strength of Christ, to try all things whatsoever that are brought unto us under pretense of truth. Is. 8.20; 2 Tim. 3.15ff.
4. Though Adam was created righteous yet he fell through the temptation of Satan and in his fall overthrew not only himselfe but all his posteritie making them sinners by his disobedience soe that we were by nature children of wrath and defiled from the wombe being shapen in iniquitie and conceived in sin. Ps. 51.5; Ro. 4.11.
5. That God elected and chose, in his eternall councill, some persons to life and salvation even before the foundation of the world. Acts 13.48; Eph. 1.3f; 2 Thess. 2.13; I Pet. 1.2. Whom accordingly he doth and will effectually call and whome hee doth soe call hee will certainly keepe by his powre through faith and unto salvation. 2 Tim. 1.9f; I Cor. 1.9; I Thess. 5.24; I Pet. 1.5 etc.
6. That election was free in God and of his good pleasure and not at all for or with reference to any foreseene workes or faith in the creature as the motive thereunto. Eph. 1.4f; Ro. 11.5f.
7. That Christ Jesus was in the fullnes of time manefested in the flesh being borne of a woman and being perfectly righteous gave him selfe for his ellect to redeme them unto God by his blod. Jn. 10.15; Eph. 2.25ff; Ro. 5.9.
8. That all untill they are quickened by Christ are dead in sinne and trespasses, Eph. 2.1, and therefore have not powre to beleve savingly of them selves, Jn. 10.23; Is. 26.12, but faith is the free gift of God and mighty work of God in the soul even like the raising of Christ from the dead, Eph. 1.9. Thus wee consent not with those that hould that God hath given power to all men to beleve to salvation.
9. That Christ is the onely true king, priest and prophet of the Church. Acts 3. 22f; Heb. 4.14; 7.1.

10. That every man that is justified is justified by Christ, Ro. 8.33; I Cor. 6.11 apprehended by faith. And that no man is justified in the sight of God partly by Christ, partly by workes. Ro. 3.20, 28, 30; Gal. 5.4.
11. That Jesus of Nazareth of whom the Scriptures of the Ould Testamente prophesies (*sic*) is the true Messiah and Saviour of man and that hee dyed on the crosse, was buried, rose againe in the same body in the which hee suffered and ascended to the right hande of the magistie on high and appeareth in the presence of God making intercession for us.
12. That all that have faith wrought in their harts by the powre of God according to his good pleasure should bee carefull to maintaine good workes and to abounde in them acting from principles of truefaith and unfained love looking to God's glory as the maine ende. Tit. 3.8; Heb. 11.6; I Cor. 13.1; 10.31.
13. That all those that professe faith in Christ and make the same apeare by their fruites or the proper subjects of baptisme. Acts 8.37.
14. That baptising is not by sprinkling but dipping of the person in the water representing the death, buriall and resurrection of Christ. Ro. 6.3f; Col. 2.12.
15. That persons soe baptised ought to walke together by free consent as God shall give oppertunitie in distinct churches or assemblies of Zion continuing in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread and prayers as fellow members caring for one another according to the will of God. Acts 2.42, 46.
16. That at the time apointed of the Lord the ded bodies of all men shall rise againe that they may receive according to what they have donne good or evell. I Cor. 15.53; Mt. 24.31.

The second General Meeting, 26 June 1655.

The agreement of certaine churches at our meeting together at Morton hinmarsh the 26 day of the 4 moneth 1655.

The⁴ Lord our God haveing, according to his free and infinite mercy, given us to be in his sonn Jesus Christ and in himself through him and to be baptized into his name and to walke in distinct churches and assemblies of Zion; according to the rule of his word, according to the measure and knowledg of grace which he hath bestowed upon us and given unto us to agree in the same principles as apeareth by our unanimous consenting in the same truths and especially contayned in sixteen articles of faith and order agreeable to the holy Scriptures and hath effectually taught us to endeavour to walke answerably, we do therefore, according to the will of God, clearly apeating in his word, with true thankfullnes unto him for his grace, mutually acknowledg each other to be true churches of Christ, and that it is our duty to hold a close communion each to other as the Lord shall give oppertunity and abillity, endeavouring that we may all increase more and more in faith and knowledg and in all purity and holiness to the honour of our God, and it is our resolution, in the strength of Christ, to endeavour thus to doe.

Subscribed in the name of the churches abovementioned by us the messengers of the said churches respectively by them thereunto authorised and appoynted.

Of Warwick,⁵ Daniell King⁶ and Henry Vencent;⁷ Of Morton,⁸ John Mayo, John Man; Of Bourton-on-the-Water,⁹ Henery Collins and John Mitchell, Antony Colet; Of Alchester,¹⁰ Thomas Arme and Stephen Wade;¹¹ Of Teuxbury,¹² John Brian, Samuell Toney; Of Hook Norton,¹³ James Willmote and Mathew Teyton;¹⁴ Of Derby,¹⁵ Henery Davise and William Tomlinson.¹⁶

Forasmuch¹⁷ as the churches of Warwick, Morton hinmarsh, Bourton-on-the-Water, Teuxbury, Hook Norton, Darby, Alcester doe mutually acknowledg each other to be true churches of Christ and that it is their duty to hold a clos communion each with other according to the rule of his worde and soe be helpfull each to other as God shall give opertunitie and abillitie and these churches are now desired to consider that they acknowledg each ather and are faithfully to holde such communion each with other and to endever to be helpfull each to other:

1. In giving of advice after searious consultation and deliberation in matters and controversies remaining doubtfull to any perticular church as plainly apeareth in the churches of Jerusalem and Anti-

och. Acts 15.

2. In givinge and receivinge allsoe in case of poverty and wante of any perticular churches as appeareth in the approved and due acting of the churches of the Gentiles towards the churches of Jerusalem. Ro. 15.26f.
3. In sending their gifted brethren to use their giftes for the edification of the churches that need the same: as they shall see it seasonable, as the church at Jerusalem sente Barnabas to Antioch. Acts 11.22.
4. In a joynt caring (*sic*) on of any worke of the Lord that is common to the churches as they shall have oppertunity to joyne therein to the glory of God as apeareth in 2 Cor. 8.19.
5. In watching over each other and considering each other for good in respect of puritie of doctrine, exercise of love and good conversation: they being all members of the same body of Christ, I Cor. 12.12 who therefore ought to have care one of another, I Cor. 12.29 especially considering how the glory of God is conserved in their standing and their hali conversation.

The¹⁸ churches now associated are desired to take these things into considderation and to signify by thire messengers at thire next meeting how far they close with the same and what they judg expedient to be farther considered and done for the glory of God and the good of his people. Touching marriage.

1. Whether it be not utterly and manifestly unlawfull for a churchmember to marry one who cannot be duly looked upon to be a true believer in Christ considdering: I Cor. 7.39; 9.5; I Peter 3.7.
2. Whether it be not at best a very inconvenient and uncomfortable and daingerous thinge, for a churchmember to be marryed to one who, though pretending godlinesse, doth yet stand out against the wayes of Christ refusing to yeald obedience to his command touching baptisme, and walkeing in church communion. Whether the fruit of such marriages have not beene lamentable and consequently whether all churchmembers whom this may concerne, ought not to be admonished and charged to take heed of such a snare, and that they bee farr from following the example of those sinners in Gen. 6.2

and that they be not found to tempt God by their exposing themselves to a continuall temptation or clog from a bosome companion and yoke-fellow.

Also the churches are desired to be carefull of theyer duty in this respect soe by theyre messengers to signify theyre judgment and resolution touching these things att the next meetting.

Touching the practice of any brother that doth or shall preach to the world and take maintenance from the world, whether teythes or augmentations or any other sallary or pension, the churches are intreated to consider,

1. Whether this bee not a thing of evill report and that which openeth the mouthes of the world against the people and wayes of God.
2. Whether it doth not savour of taking an enforced maintenance which was justly condemned in the Babylonish clergy, and whether such a one doth not act as one preaching for hire.
3. Whether that practise bee any way agreeable to the New Testament rule touching preachers' maintenance, which wee see in Gal. 6.6.
4. Whether it doth not commonly and principally (if not altogether) unavoidably dash him that practiseth upon other evils (*viz.*) as acting towards the world as it were the church, a countenancing of nationall worship and ministry and a hardening of the people in theyer idolizing of theyre temples.
5. Whether it doth not deprive the churches of the benefitts of those gifts given for the churches' edification, as in Eph. 4:12.
6. Whether it doth not manifest much covetousness or much mistrust in Christ's promises or provision or both.

The churches are humbly pressed to seeke the Lord for right information in the thinge, there being present need of the same and that they would signify theyre judgment touching it also att the next meeting.¹⁹ As, likewise, whether they can see it either convenient or lawfull for any churchmember to goe forth to preach to the world without any approbation or sending from the church. Alsoe that they would consider whether they have not members fitt in some measure for the offices that Christ hath ordayned in his Church and, if they have, that then they would lay to heart theyre duty to endeavour that ahey may orderly bee brought to serve Christ and his Church in these offices. And that for helpe to know and doe the will of God in these thinges there may bee an earnest seeckeing of the face of God in prayer with fasting.

The next meeting apointed at Morton hinmarsh, October 24 1655 at 9 of the clock in the morn.

The third General Meeting, 24 October 1655.

The conclusions of the messengers of the churches upon some of the quereyes at the last meeting that were sente to the churches:

In answer to the first question, what it is to bee duly a true believer in Christ, that they explaine themselves by 'duely,' that is, to be rightly and warantably in Christ in profession and conversation; that is, to have a principle of grace though hee or shee be not baptized nor in church communion, but they that are baptised are more orderly. This question was put to clear the former (viz.) whether a believer sinneth in marrying any other but a believer considering I Cor. 7.39.

It is answered affirmatively: they sinne if they marry with any other.

The seconde question, whether it bee not a very inconvenient and daingerous and uncomfotable thing for a churchmember to bee married to one who, profesing godlines, yet standeth out against baptiseme and church communion, [they] answer affirmatively: it is very inconvenient.

To the first of the 6 questiones about ministers' maintenance: whether it bee not a thing unlawfull and of evill reporte for preaching of the Gospell to take tythes, augmentations, or any other sallary or pension from the world?

Answer: as the case of the question standeth some are in the negative and some in affirmative provided the maintenance be freely given, except tythes.

Next, this following question is put to see if it will answer the former: whether it be not unlawfull for a member of the Church of Christ to goe forth to preach by the magistrate's authority and to be maintained by him accordingly.

Answer: It is unlawfull.

1. Because our Lord Christ sendeth forth his ministers by his power alone, Mt. 28.19, and hee is the head of the body the Church that in all things hee might have the preheminece, Col. 1.18; Eph. 1.22.
2. Because Christ hath left all power in his Church both to call and sende forth ministers, Mt. 28.20, saying, I am with you to the ende of the worlde, and I Tim. 3; Titus 1; Acts 14; Mt. 18 and 16.18f.
3. Because wee finde the Church only exercising that power both in chusing and sending forth ministers as appeareth by these Scriptures, Acts 1.23, 26; 8.14; 13.2f and 11.22. Wee thinke fitt to adde that wee taking this question intire consider it to be fully answered.

The 6 questions about ministers' maintenance are supposed by the messengers generally to be fully answered in the former question and therefore have waved them.

In answer to the next question whether it be lawfull for a church-member to goe forth and preach to the world without the sending or approbation of the church: it is unanimously agreed upon that it is not except in extraordinary cases.

In answer to the last question, whether it be the duty of every church of Christ to call forth those to officiate in the offices of Christ in his Church as they finde in a goode measure qualified for the same according to the Scriptures: it is agreed in the affirmative and that from these Scriptures: Mt 24.45; Tit. 1.5; Eph. 4.11; I Cor. 12.28; Acts 20.28.

There are many congregation[s] that have gifted brethren that are approved of for the publicke preaching of the worde that doe not baptise nor administer the Supper. The churches are desired to consider whether these churches may not call forth those members to breake bread and to baptise as need shall require.

Answer: in the affirmative: the churches may call forth such to baptise and administer the Supper provided they be very carefull that their effectuall endeavour after an official minister bee not hereby neglected.

1. Because preaching the word is the greater worke as appeareth, I Cor. 1.17, Paull was not sente to baptise but to preach the Gospell, which, we conceive, is he was not soe much sent to baptise. If he was not sent to baptise at all hee had donne evill to assume that authority, but his maine work was to preach the Gospell though he was sent to baptise as apeares, Acts 26.16, where God appeared to Paull for this purpose: to make him a minister and a witness, both of those things which hee had seene and would appeare to him. In Acts 9 God promiseth to tell Paull what hee must doe and hee acknowledged hee was an apostle of Christ in quality and proportion with the rest of the apostles, 2 Cor. 12.11, who had commission to preach and baptise, Mt. 28.19f., for that hee had authority, compareing the Scriptures together. It proveth his not being sent to baptise is not soe much as preaching which was the greatest worke.
2. Because, where there is abillity to preach publikely, there is authority to baptise allso, Mt. 28.19; the disciples were to preach and baptise together as apeares in Phillippes baptising the eunuch, Acts 8.38.

Signed by the messengers of the churches respectively:

Morton: John Mano;

Warwick: Daniel King, John Carner;

Bourton : John Michill, John Fox;²⁰

Tewkesbury,: John Fluck, Thomas Smith, William Haines;

Hook Norton: James Willmot, John Archer;²¹

Alcester: Thomas Arme, John Johnstones;

Derby: Godfrey Archer, Henry Davis.

The next meeting to be at Warwick on munday in ester week by 12 a'clock and to continue two days.

The fourth General Meeting, 7/8 April 1656.

The joynt agreement of the messingers of the severall churches being mette at Warwick the 7 and 8 day of the 2nd moneth 1656 after they had joyned together in prayer to seeke the Lord for theyer direction in answer to these quuries following:

Question 1. How the church ought to send forth their publike approved gifted bretheren that soe they may answeere the Scripture rule.

Answer: with fasting and praises and laying on of hands with care for their maintenance, Acts 13.3; I Tim. 4.14; Mt. 10.9f; Mk. 6.8; 3 Jn. 7; I Cor. 9.7.

Question 2. Whether in churches that are associated if they have one or two or more of able, gifted, approved brethren in one or two churches, whether they ought not rather to improve them for the good of the whole churches that are in wante than to confine him or them to any perticular church.

Answer: they ought to improve the gifts of God to the honer of God's majestie. Therefore, considering the end of members congregating and churches associating, we judg wherein perticular churches ought not to suffer other churches to wante but they ought to partake of their giftes as they apeare to have neede both in speritualles and temporalles, Acts 11.22; 8.14; 2 Cor. 8.13–18; Eph. 1.11f.

Question 3. Whether it be not a great part of a gospell minister's worke to instruct his flocke by catechizeing of them as well as preaching for their more perfect education.

Answer: by catechizeing only is meant questioning for the more perfect knowledg of the condition of members soe that by the discovery of weakenes suteable strength may bee added. Wee judge it a duty of a minister of Christ in this as in all other particulars as occasion offereth itselfe to shew himselfe a man approved in the worke of God's house, 2 Tim. 3.15, which wee conceive he cannot doe except hee enquire into the state of the flocke that hee may give everyone his portion of meate in due season and, wee judg, there ought to be a readinesse in every member to give an accounte of their state and condition to the elder or to any appoynted therunto, I Thess. 3.5ff; Prov. 27.23; I Pet. 3.15.

The conclusiones of these messengers of the things going before att their meeting att Warwirke the 7th and 8th dayes of the seconde moneth 1656.

Warwick: Nathaniel Alsop, John Turner.

Morton hinmarsh: Daniell Kinge, John Doell.

Alcester: Thomas Arme, Stephen Wade.

Hook Norton: James Willmott, John Archer.

Bourton: John Michell, Anthony Collett.

Derby: Robert Hope,²² William Tomlison.

The next meeting is to be at Morton hinmarsh, June 4th by 8 of the clock in the morning and to continue three dayes of the 4th moneth 1656.

The fifth General Meeting, 4/6 June 1656.

The conclusions of the messengers of the churches at their meeting at Morton Hinmarsh the 4th, 5th and 6th dayes of the 4th moneth 1656 to certain queries as they follow:

Question 1. Whether baptized believers may joyne in any parte of worship or publike hering the nationall ministers preach or others that are not baptised.

Answer: baptised believers ought not to here the nationall ministers preach nor joyne with them in their publike worship, their pretended ministry being Babilonish, Rev. 18.4. Neither may they soe heare or joyne with unbaptised persones, though hoped to be godly, hecause they are disorderly in carring one a publick ministry and worship without baptism, Col. 2.5; 2 Thess. 3.6 no, nor with baptised persons neither if not sounde in the faith which is the cause of those that are called free willers, Prov. 19.27.

Question 2. Whether it be the duty of churchmembers allwaies to call each other brother and sister.

Answer: it is the duty of churchmembers allwaies to owne each other in their hearts as brethren and sisters and to manifest the same by calling each other soe when it is expedient and convenient, I Pet. 2.17. But, sumtimes, wee know it may lawfully be forborne as divers Scriptures' exampl doe manifest, Col. 1.2; I Tim. 1.12; Titus 1.4.

Question 3. Whether an aproved gospell minister, who hath gathered many churches, which churches have no administrator of the ordinances but himselfe, hee may bee chosen into office by any of the said churches without the full consente of the others.

Answer: such a gospell minister cannot be orderly chosen as an officer by any church unless he be orderly a member of the same, Acts 6.3; 14.23. And that church of which he is orderly a member ought in this cause to do that and only that which shall be most for the churches good and for the glory of God, I Cor. 10.31.

Question 4. What are the spirituall duties of beleiving parents and masters to their children and servants.

Answer: for the first branch of it. In generall to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Eph. 6.4, which takes in these particulers, to instruct them in the things of God according to our abillitie and their capacitie, Prov. 22.6, to exhort and charge them to walke closly with God, I Thess. 2.11. 3rdly, to doe it in such a way as not to provoke them to wrath lest they should be discouraged Eph. 6.4; Col. 3.21. 4thly, to chastice them with severity if they be perverse or stubborne in sinne, Deut. 21.18; Heb. 12.7; Prov. 23.13f. 5thly, to pray for them (soe did Abraham for Ishmael, O that Ishmael may live in thy sight; soe did Job, Chap. 1, see allsoe 2 Sam. 12.16; Mt. 19.22).

To the seconde parte, what are the spirituall duties of beleiving masters to their servants:

1. If they be beleiving servants they are to performe duties to them as to brethren for this relation, I Tim. 6.2, but, if they be unbeleivers, thus, the master what in him lieth must not suffer them to live in sinne.

2. He may and ought to hould forth the truth of God to them to prepare them for the Lord as it is probable Cornelius did.

3rdly. Hee ought to endeavour to rule them well, I Tim. 3.4; Eph. 6.9; compared with the former verses.

4thly, soe to walke as to show them a good example himselfe, Ps. 101.2.

Question 5. Whether there be a distint (*sic*) difference betwene notteing and casting out.

Answer: agreed unto by the messengers of the churches of Warwick, Alcester, Tuexbury, Morton hinmarsh, Borton-on-the-water and Hooke Norton as their present judgment that the withdrawing, noting and haveing no company with, spoken of in 2 Thess. 3 is all one with casting out.

Question 6. What ought to be the behaviour of a church or each member to one noted or cast out.

Answer: agreed by the messengers of the churches aforementioned, wee judge that our carriage to a person cast out of the church ought to be as

towards a heathen or a publican; Mt. 18.17. If wee find him hardened and persisting in sinne then to leave him and take no more notice of him than of another wicked person. But if wee find him willing to heare us and soe likely to be gained then to use such meanes as the Scriptures affordeth for the regaineing of him.

Question 7. Whether any part of church buissines may not be done before the world and what it is.

Answer: some parts may, as preaching or prophesing in generall, I Cor. 14.24. But, if it be for triall of giftes or triall of a man before hee be chosen into office, it is most convenient to be donne before the church only: because the world is not conserved in such cases, I Cor. 2.14. 2. Baptiseme may be administred before the world for wee conseve John baptising surh multitudes as hee did and in a river, did it before the world. Acts 2.38, 41 [is] considerable to this purpose: those 3,000 wee conceive professed faith and were baptised before the world being soe great a worke done in soe short a time and the people being generally drawne together it is probable that it could not be done privately. 3. Prayer, we judg, may be made before the world, I Cor. 14.15, I will pray with my understanding, saith Paull, that is, in a knowne tongue to others that stand by and this being a church meeting, as appears vv. 18, 19, and unbelievers being admitted to heare prophesing as v. 24 wee judg they stood by at prayers also. But this wee desire may bee considered, that wee meane prayers upon common occasions at ordinary church meetings. But for prayers upon speciall occasions, particularly to the church, wee see not grounds then to admit them. 4. We judg breaking of bread may be done before the worlde because it is the Lord's death and is to be shewed forth I Cor. 11.26, which is a waighty doctrine of the Gospell and if the Lord's death may be shewed forth in preaching and baptising, as is cleare, wee conclude in this ordinance allsoe. 5. Wee judg allsoe the pronouncing of the sentence of excommunication may be done before the worlde that they may see the church doth not bear with sinne and sinners and that it may minde them of the wofull condition of wicked man and that God will denounce that terrible sentence against them, Goe, ye cursed. But, for admonition generally before excommunication in hope the offender may bee recovered, that may not bee done before the worlde because sinnes of offending brethren are not to be tould the church till former admonition be visited. 2. Debating of doubtful [matters] that concernes the church only may not bee before the world, Acts 15 (the

former part of the chapter). 3. Tryall, election and ordination of officers we judg is not to be done before the world because the world is not concerned in such cases, neither are such chosen to officiate to the world as officers but to the church.

Question 8. Whether a competent number of baptised believers in a troop or regiment may there walke as a church.²³

Answer: wee doe not discern that a number of disciples in a troop or regiment canne there walke as and act as a perticular church of Christ as seeing no Scripture to warrant it nor discerning them to be in a capacity to keep close to the rule of the worde in receiving of members, dealing with them in all cases as the matter shall require, and that they are continually liable to be dissolved.

Question 9. What is a true gospell prophesing in the church and who may or ought to appeare in that great duty.

Answer: to the first branch wee answer: wee finde in I Cor. 14.3 concerning gospell prophesing that he that prophesieth speaketh to edification and exhortation and comforte. Hereuppon wee humbly offer it to consideration, whether it may not now be called gospell prophesing when men thus speake. To the 2nd branch wee answer that they and they only may and ought to apeare in the worke whome God hath endued with giftes thus to speake, I Pet. 4.10.

Question 10. How far women may speak in the churche and how fare not.

Answer: wee answere that women in some cases may speake in the churches and in some cases againe may not. That in some cases they may nat speake manifestly apperes in I Cor. 14.34f. and I Tim. 2.11f. They may not soe speake as that their speaking shall not shew a not acknowledging of the inferiourity of their sex and so bee a usurping of authority over the man and more particularly thus:

1. A woman may not publickely teach in the church. This apeares to have beene much in the apostle's eye, I Cor. 14.
2. Shee may not speake in the church by way of passing sentence upon doctrines or cases in the church.
3. Shee may not stand up as a ruler in the church and soe speake upon that accounte.

4. She may not speake in prayer as the mouth of the church, that is very cleare in I Tim. 2; yet, in the cases that follow and, possibly, in some other cases a woman may speake in the church and not be found to offend against the rule of the apostle: if she desire to make a profession of her faith to the church to expresse her desire to baptisme and communion with the church. 2. If shee bee a wisse concerning the church admonition of one that the church is to deal with or must herselfe tell the matter to the church according to the rule in Mt. 18.17. 3. If shee be sente from another church as a messenger she may deliver her message. 4. If shee have need of the church's assistance in any things shee may impart her just desire and lay open her case to them. 5. If a woman have sinned and [been] cast ut of the church and God hath given her repentance, undoubtedly shee may manifest it in the church.

Some queries presented to the several churches.

First, if a gospell minister be mistaken in something he delivereth publicly, or som member of the church conceive so, hee may be questioned before the world or whether that is to be done before the brethren only.

2. Whether it be not the duty of every gospell minister to joyne himself as member to some particular church of Christ who may encourage him in well-doing and deale with him in case he sinne or fall.

3. What are the duties of beleving servants towards their masters and governours?

4. Whether it be regular for a church to call in help of those that are not properly members there, to deale with offenders before the church themselves or [if] herself and her owne members have tryed what they can doe of themselves.

5. Whether persons in case of offence or trespas against brethren may regularly have their matters brought to the church before they have bene twice admonished according to Mt. 18.17.

The next meeting of the messengers is oppoynted at Allcester the 15th day of the 8th moneth 1656 by 10 of the clocke in the morning where those queries before layd down are answered by the messengers.

The sixth General Meeting, 15 October 1656.

Answers to some quires going before:

Question 1. Whether, if a gospell minister be mistaken in som thing he qelivereth publikly or som member of a church conceive so he may be questioned and oposed beefore the world or whether that may be donne only among brethren.

Answers: if a gospell minister be mistaken or conceived by sune member of a chunch to be mistaken in sum thing he delivered publikly yet not houling forth scandallous or dangerous doctrines wee judg hee is to bee dealt with in this case as Aquilla and Priscilla dealt with Apollos in Acts 18.26.

Question 2. What is the duty of beleiving servants towards their master and govenours.

Answer: they must readily endeavor to obay all their lawfull and just comands and this with reverence and singleness of heart and with good will herein acting as the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the harte, Eph. 6.6f; Col. 3.22f; I Pet. 2.18. They must not only avoid all false and unjust dealing with them but allsoe all provoking and unsavory language towards them and so farre as they may, without omitting any duty that the Lord requireth of them, nor use such behaviour and acting as would any way displease them, Titus 3.2, 9f., But, if they comand anything against the Lord they must remember that God is to be obeyed rather than men, Acts 5.29. If master or govenours be believers they are not in that respect to take liberty to themselves to neglect any part of their duty towards them but fully to perform the same with care and reverence and willingly and chearefully, I Tim. 6.2. And, if they be unbelievers, yet they must acknowledg them worthy of all honour that duly belongeth to them as masters and govenours. And must act towards them accordingly that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed, I Tim. 6.1; I Pet. 2.18. They are allsoe to performe towards their believing masters and govenours all the duties which one believer aught to performe towards another but in such a way and maner as is not disagreeable nor unsutable to their relation as servants [which] aught not to make them forgett their relation in Christ [’s] temple. Gal. 3.28; Col. 3.11; I Tim. 6.2.

Questions propounded by the church at Tuexbury.

Question 1. What is the duty of beleivers at this day towards the present powers, whether in civill things to submizt unto them and to live what in them lyeth peacable under them.

Answer: the messengers offer to the searious consideration of the churches

this ensuing answer: as the rule which the church hath received from Christ and his apostles for the baptising of beleivers and for the leading of a sober, righteous and godly life in the world at this day to be obeyed of the same, soe also is the rule which wee have received in the New Testament concerning the obeying of magistrates in civill things, viz. in Ro. 13.1; I Pet. 2.13f; Titus 3.1, to which may be added I Tim. 2.2, which implieth that wee must desire and indeavour to leade a peaceable life under the civill power and these things among others in like maner commanded are still to [be] taught and learned and obeyed as may soundly be inferred from 2 Tim. 2.2. And if the magistrate shall now give forth unto us unlawfull commands wee ought rather to suffer patiently for our just refusing to yeald any active obedience to them then to rise up in rebellion against the magistrate. If, doing well, wee suffer for it and take it patiently this is acceptable with God, I Pet. 2.20.

Even at this day we must take heede that wee doe not suffer as evill doers nor as busibodies in other mens' matters, I Pet. 4.15, and that wee be not founde men taking the worde²⁴ contrary to the minde of our blessed Saviour. If any think otherwise let them shew where the foresaid rule did cease to binde and by what word of God it is abrogated and recalled and what other rule God hath given his people to walke by in these dayes.

When the Lord shall make his people a smiting people will hee not first clearely put a just and lawfull power and authoritie into their hands or cause such in power to be [at] their sides and to commande them as that in the exercise thereof or in yelding obedience thereunto their actions shall be clearely just and goode, not at all crossing his own rule which he hath given unto them to walke by, shall not kings then see and arise and princes worship, Is. 49.7. Shall not kings then be the churches' nursing fathers and their queens their nursing mothers, Is. 49.23? Wee offer it to the searious consideration whether it be not implied in Ro. 11.12, 15 that the Gentile churches shall be in a low condition till the calling of the Jewes and whether it may not be gathered from Mic. 4.8, that the Jewish Church shall have the kingdom and the first dominion, Japhet being to dwell in the tents of Shem, Gen. 9.27. If so, then whether it doth not behove us with patience and quietness to waite for the time.

Question 2.²⁵ What course may bee taken with a sister, who, contrary to those several conclusions made by the churches according to the word and read publickely, and by silence assented to, as touch[ing] the inconveniency, if not utter unlawfulness, for any that are in the fellowship of The Gospell, to joyne themselves in marriage with any that are not in the same fellowship?

Neverthelesse, contrary to this and to all possible meanes used by us to prevent it, hath joyned herselfe to one that is not only out of fellowship, but out of faith: an open and profane person and an enemy to the ways of God.

Answer to the quere: that the sister who hath acted as is there expressed hath, as we judge, greatly sined; the act which she hath done being a sinn which ought earnestly to bee repented of, and her sinn being increased by her not hearaing the church endeavoring to keepe her from it, wee therefore judge that her sinne and the greatest (*sic*) of it being shewed unto her by the church, manifesting the same by the light of the Word, and shee being earnestly admonished to repent unfaignedly of the same, if shee shall continue in the justifying of her evill, or refuse to manifest repentance for the same, shee is then to bee put away as an impenitent person.

Question 3. How wee may walke towards those brethren who contrary to our faith, and the resutt [?resolution] of most of the churches in England that none should take wages and live upon the hire that is commonly given by the State for preaching the Gospell, yet, neverthelesse doe not only soe doe but stand openly to contend for it countenancing others in it and blame[ing] those that speake against it?

Answer: the messengers, to the greatest part of them, doe answer that the brethren which doe acte as in the query signified are to have theyer sinn layd before [them] and to bee admonished to repent of the same and to breake it off. And if, being thus seriously dealt with, and this more then once, they still continue in theyer evill, then they are to bee withdrawn from.

The next meeting is to be at Morton Hinmarsh on the first day of the second moneth being Wensday in Ester weeke and to continue 3 dayes, 1657.

The seventh General Meeting, 2/4 April 1657.

Queries debated and resolved by the messengers of the severall churches at their meeting at Morton Hinmarsh the 2nd and 3rd and 4th dayes of the 2nd moneth 1657.

Question 1. Whether it be lawfull for a Christian to joyne or make a shew of joyning with a visible unbeliever when hee makes a shew of speaking in prayer, either in saying of grace, as they call it, or otherwise.

Answer: wee judg it not lawfull considering that the sacrifices of the wicked are abomination to the Lord, Prov. 15.8, therefore his prayers also, Prov. 28.9. And that wee are not to be unequally yoked with unbeleivers, 2 Cor. 6.14, nor to be partakers of other mens' sinnes, I Tim. 5.22. But wee judg it a Christian's duty in a discreet, sober, way to beare wittness against such a practice.

Question 2. Whether a brother, having no other churchmember nor visible godly person with him, being desired to speake in prayer either as craving a blessing on God's creatures to be received or praying for a sister presence [?present], may lawfully so doe and, if hee may, what rule hee is to observe or must then observe in the action.

Answer: wee offer it to the searious consideration of the churches, a brother may lawfully pray as is in this question mentioned soe taking heede to his maner of expressing himselfe that he doth not make a shew of taking in the unbeliever's company and joyning with him in prayer, Acts 27.35; 28.8.

The next meeting is to be at Alcester the 15th day of the 7th moneth 1657 by two of the clocke afternoon and to continue 3 dayes if neede require.

A letter from Daniel King.²⁶

I doe intreat the churches to hasten the view of theyer copys by this and send it with as much speed as may bee to each other, and that the church at Teuksbury (to whom I suppose it will come last) [is] to hasten the returne of it to Morton hinmarsh to Brother Rowland Freman for mee because I would send it to the church at Lemster who will send messengers to our next meeting, that they may also consider of the particulars, and certify us by theyer messengers how far they are on with us in these things or wherein they differ.

Your poore unprofitable brother in the faith and fellow in the gospell
Daniell King.

The eighth General Meeting, 15/17 September 1657.²⁷

The conclusions of the messengers of the respective associations and churches meeting at Alcestor the 15th, 16th, and 17th dayes of the 7th month 1657.

After theyre soleme seekeing of God by fasting and prayer, these things were taken into consideration:

Question from Warwick: when a member may bee said to be under dealing by a church.

Answer: Wee understand by the word ‘dealing’ to signify rebuke or reproofe; wee conceive a member cannot be said to bee under dealing by a church except it can bee proved by good testimony unto the church that hee hath comitted sinn and so the church by reson of sinn doth rebuke or reprove him, Mt. 18.15f; I Thess. 5.14; I Tim. 5.20; Tit.1.13.

Question 2, from Teuxbury: concerning the sabbath. Whether the last day of the week comonly called Satterday be to bee observed as a sabbath now under the gospell of Christ.

Answer: the messengers answeere in the negative, only one brother declaring himselfe to bee enquiring and not yet fully satisfied.

The grounds for the negative are these among others: ground 1, the sabbath given to the children of Israell was to be a signe betweene the Lord and them in theyre generation. Ex. 31.13; Ezek. 20.12; 40.4. ground 2, from that cleare place, Col. 2.16f., provs that the sabbath[s] that the law had required to be observed to bee shadowes and for the nonobserving when in gospell times the saints are not to regard the censure of any man, the same apeares alsoe in Heb. the 4th, if rightly understood. ground 3, from Gal. 4.10f. The apostle certainly speaks of the observing of dayes that had bene apoynted by Moses’ law: compare it with v. 21 to be weekly or sabbath dayes.

Question 3. Concerning the querys from Lemster: the two first were at present concerning the lawfullnes of being with those wee judg gracious in theyre prayer or in giveing thanks (if providentially or accydently being present) although they are not in order with us.

Answer: it is judged it is better [to] incurrage then discourage gracious soules in a good worke.

Question 4. Whether disciples may sit dawne as a church under the number of 12 or 13.

Answer: it is judged necessary they should amount to the number of 12 or 13.

Question 5. How to answer an opposer demanding assente for the pertakeing of our owne supper after the Lord's Supper was waved till next meeting.

It was debated whether the church at Leominster and Hereford²⁸ that walkes distinct from Mr Tombs²⁹ were rightly constituted. It was proved and judged they were a true constituted church. It was likewise considered whether the sayd church might have assotiation with these respective churches. It was generally judged they might only [they] left the compleating of it till the messengers had acquainted the severall churches.

The people walkeing with Mr Tombs put in a letter to the messengers referring to theyr consideration to consider whether the withdrawing of members were not a great evill. It was found, upon debate, to bee theyr liberty and theyr duty and an answer was sent of the letters to justify and approve of it.

A paper was sent likewise from Brother Harrison³⁰ with 3 Querys. The paper is agreed upon by the messengers to bee answered by Brother Coxe.³¹

The queryes in substance was this:

1. In what cases a member may lawfully depart the church.
2. If lawfull, whether all meanes should not bee used to call in the assistance of other churches.
3. If not lawfull to depart, how to proceed toward those that shall.

Agreed upon by the messengers of 7 congregations and likewise by messengers of 2 associations that next meeting to be at Alchester in Easter weeke, 2nd, 3rd and fourth days if need require.

Daniell King, Richard Creed, John Tomlinson, Benjamin Cox.

The ninth General Meeting, 13/14 October 1657.³²

The substance of the conclusions of the messengers of the churches when met at Gloster the 13th and 14th dayes of the 8th moneth 1657 in answer to some quiries at that time propounded.

Question 1. Whether that those that have received the worke of regeneration may be sayd to be baptised with the spirite baptisme according to the Scriptures.

Answer: the messengers answer in the negative; first, because wee doe not finde that the worke of regeneration is anywhere in Scripture called the baptisme of the Spirit. Secondly, because wheresoever we finde the Scripture speaking of the baptisme of the Spirite, we do understand it to be meant of giftes and miracles and tongs, Acts 2.3f; 19.6. Thirdly, because the disciples had the worke of regeneration wrought within them yet had not the Spirit's baptisme till after Christ[s] Assension, Jn. 7.38f; Acts 1.4f., compared with Acts 2.2ff., 33 yet wee do believe that that worke is wrought by the Spirite.

Question 2. Whether a private brother may open[ly] reprove a member for some evill or disorder before the church when met together at the churchmeeting or whether the elder or elders in the church.

We judg itt the proper worke of the elders, yet wee judg that a ministering brother may speake a word or move to the confermation of what the elder or elders had before spoken provided hee have a speaciale eie to his owne harte that hee doth it not to be seene but to God's glory.

Question 3. Whether a gifted brother soe judged by the church may goe out to preach at his owne will att the time of the churchmeeting or is to be alone at the disposing of the church.

Answer: we answere that such a brother soe adjudged of by the church ought wholly to be at its disposing. First, because that all those gifted are the church's, I Cor. 3.22; 12.28; Eph. 4.11f. Secondly, because if one brother goe forth at his owne will, then another and soe a third, and by that meanes the church may be wholly neglected. Thirdly, because, if such a brother miscarry in his ministerie, it would be charged upon the church, and soe it would prove very dishonourable to the church and truth of Christ. Fourthly, because, in such a disorderly going out, he eannot expect the prayers of the church for the Spirite of God to accompany him, Col. 4.3; Eph. 6.18f. and wee judg if any brother shall persist in such disorderly practice after admonition that it is the church's duty to

deale with him as an offender.

Question 4. Whether it is lawfull for any perticular member to withdraw communion from the church in breaking of bread or any other ordinance for the scandell of one member whome hee judgeth an offender but the church as it [*is* for 'as it'] unsatisfied in the thing.

Answer: wee judge it altogether unlawfull for a brother so to doe. First, because by soe doing he taketh the authority of Christ out of the hands of the church to doe that which is the church's worke. Second, because in such a practice that brother doth not only withdraw from that brother but the church also and, in so doing, disownes the church.

Question 5. Whether a member or members may neglect breaking of bread with the church and goe at the same time to another meeting though in the same faith and order though nearer to their dwellings and they judg that there may be more eminent brethren to minister.

Answer: wee answer they ought not. First, because one greater ende of church felowship is not answered in so doing, Acts 2.42. Second, because the solem engagements of the church as to the performance of their duty is broken. Thirdly, because by such a practice they weaken the handes of the church's ministerey and grive the harts of their brethren, I Thess. 5.12f.

The next meeting is to be at Cirencester or Ciceter uppon that day usually called Whitson Tuesday being the first day of the fourth moneth 1658.

A letter from the messengers of the associated churches.

To the severall churches of Jesus Christ the messengers of the severall congregations met together at Glouceter the 13th day of the 8th moneth 1657 sendeth (*sic*) greeting:

Dearly beloved brethren in our Lord Jesus Christ whome we love in the Lord and unto whome our bowelles yearne in all tendernes of affection: with our hart breathing and sighing with longing desire at the throne of grace: both for you and for all that love our dear Lord Jesus Christ. That you may grow and increase in all the giftes and graces of the Spirite and may be kept stedfast and unmoveable in these stragering [*staggering*] times and that you may shine forth in your conversation as lyghts in the worlde.

That you may adorne the pretious gospell of our Lord Jesus with a holy and humbell conversation and that you may presse forward towards the marke that is sett before you and that you may be kept unblameable

untill the comming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Deare brethren, we have beene by the pretious hande of God our Father brought together from severall partes according to our appoyntment to seeke the face of our God together by fasting and prayers. And wee can say that our Lord hath not altogether beene wanting unto us but hath in sum sweate measure kept us humble before him. And we have, through his grace, beene enabled to poure out our soules before him and for more of that blessed Spirit of Christ to bee poured out upon Zion in generall, and uppon ourselves in perticular that wee might be thereby the more enabled to glorifie him in our generation and performe the duties of our relation each to other as becometh a people redeemed by Christ. And wee humbly and earnestly beg of you that you may be more in consideration of those blessed cautions that our Lord hath left upon record for to warne us that so a slugish and drowsie frame of spirit sease [?seize] not on us which is very apt to doe both on the wise as well as the foolish virgins towards the time of the bridegroomes appearance. Brethren, we have agreed, the Lord assisting [and] willing, to keepe our next generall meeting at Siseter upon the day usually called Whitson Tuesday.

At which time and place wee desire you to sende your messengers with your epistel wherein yuu may let us understande the state and condition of your churches with a resolution to stay with us till our meeting bee ended which will continue two dayes at the least. So, committing you to the Lorde on whome you beleve, and to the word of his grace, wee rest,

Your weake and unworthy brethren in the faith and fellowship of the gospell of our Lord Christ.

Signed by us in the name and by the appoyntment of the whole,
John Nobb, John Michell.

The eleventh General Meeting, 1 June 1658.

This meeting at Cirencester³³ on Whitsun Tuesday being the first day of the fourth moneth 1658 there was but littell done by the messengers. The next meeting of the churches is to be att Alcester the 13th and 14th dayes of the seconde month 1658.³⁴

The tenth General Meeting, 13–14 April 1658.

The substance of the conclusions of the messengers of the churches when mette together at Alcester the 13th and 14th dayes of the seconde moneth 1658.

The first question at this meeting: question 1. In what cases it may be lawfull for a member to departe the church and rented from them.

Answer: wee judg it unlawfull for a churchmember, to wit, a member of a true church, to rent from the church, for there ought to be no scisme in the bodye of Christ, I Cor. 12.25, yet, in some cases, wee judg it is lawfull for a saint to departe the congregation of which he has beene a member. And, first, when the same shall in deede appeare and be found and proved not to be a true church of Christ, 2 Cor. 6.17 compared with Rev. 18.4. Secondly, when the church or congregation shall sinnefully act and cause her members soe to joyne with her in her sinnefull acting as that a sainte cannot hould communion with her without fellowship with sinne, Eph. 5.11; I Tim. 5.22. Thirdly, when the congregatian goes on in a manifest and scandalous sinne or evill and continues in the same with stifenes and frowardnes after her sin hath clearly been held forth to her by the lyght of the worde and all good meane[s] appoynted and afforded of the Lord to be used for her repentance and reformation have beene used according to the will of the Lord with love and patience and meekenes and yet shee continued forward and obstinate in her evill: then, wee judg, that a saint may and ought with mourning to depart from her, Ps. 104.4; 2 Tim. 3.5; I Tim. 6.3ff. For communion with frowardnes and obstinacie in any evill is as well to be shunned in a congregation where it is offensive as in a particular person.

Question 2. Whether, if a member leave the church for sin hee ought not first to use all meanes to bring her to a sight and sence of her sin by calling for the assistance of other churches.

The answeere to this quirie is implied in the answeere to the former. If an offending member may not be cut of nor rejected till hee have beene orderly dealt with all, much less may a church be departed from without an orderly dealing with the same. But, as touching the calling for assistance from other churches, though it bee many times expedient yet wee cannot prove it allwayes necessary.

Question 3. If it be not lawfull soe to departe what is the duty of a church towards such members as shall disorderly leave the church.

Answer: when a true and orderly walking church is disorderly left by any of her members if shee have given occasion thereof by any offensive acting she is first, in the feare of the Lord and in the tenderness of love to remove the occasion. But shee is also bounde to shewe such disorderly acting members the greatness of their sin and so call upon them to amende and, this being done, if yet they will not learne [from] the church she is further, according to rule, to procede against them and at last, they persisting in their evill and there being no other remedy, to reject them, Ro. 16.17.

Question 4. Whether a member solely joynd to a church of Christ may departe from them and joyne himself to another church without the consente of the church of which he was a member.

Answer: for a member solely joynd to a church rightly constituted to departe not declaring unto them grounds why or wherefore, neither desiring their approbation for his soe doing wee judge it contrary to rule, I Cor. 12.25; 14.40.

Question 5. Whether it be warantable for a church of the same faith and order to receive such without a testimony from the aforesaid church.

Answer: we judg it ought to be the care of every church of Christ, walking in gospell order, to looke to the rule for receving of any member of another church which is by testimony from that church of which hee is a member, Ro. 16.1.

The³⁵ church of Christ att Glocester³⁶ propounded for association.

The messengers judged it meete to receive them, only left the compleating of it till next generall meeting.

The church at Bewdley³⁷ likewise propounded for association but it was judged meete that they should consider of and peruse our articles of faith and order with the conclusion of the messengers, and, if they can close with us and wee with them, it is to be concluded the next generall meeting of messengers.

The next meeeting of messengers to bee at the sign of the King's Arms at Morton hinmarsh the 2nd day of the 7th month by 12 of the clock and to continewe till the sixth day at night if need require. And likewise it is desired by the messengers, that the respective churches doe observe the 5th day of the weeke, being comonly called Thursday, to bee kept solemnly by fasting and prayer the weeke before the next

generall meeting of the messengers and, in particular, for the presence of God with them next meeting with any things else God shall lay before them. And that the church doe peruse the conclusions of the messengers and [send to] the next meeting with theyer consent or thire grounds of desent that soe our worke might not be useles.

Benjamin Coxe, John Mayo, Nathaniel Alsop, Matthew Weston, William Bouky.

The twelfth General Meeting, 22 September 1658.³⁸

The substance of the conclusions of the messengers of the churches when mett at Morton hinmarsh the 22 day of the 7th moneth 1658 for the worke of the Lord.

The first question. Whether it be lawfull for a churchmember at any time to heare a person preach which hath bine excommunicated by a true church.

Answer: it is not lawfull at any time to heare an excommunicated person preach unless some necessity shall be found to require some able brethren to heare in order to a present discovery and refutation of his errours, Lev. 19.17. Secondly, wee should by our hearing of him both harden him in his sinne and imboulden others to followv him in it, I Jn. 3.15. Thirdly, such a one must be unto us as a heathen and a publican, Mt. 18.17. Fourthly, in our hearing of him wee shoulde not walke according to the apostle's rule, 2 Thess. 3.14. Fifthly, we should by our hearing and soe owneing of him [do] what in us lyeth to make void the church and null the act of the church by which hee is excommunicated.

The second question. Wheras there are some touching whome wee cannot but hope they are truly conscientious yet neverthesse doe, under pretence of higher [light], doe breake communion with the church unto whom they have stod or bine related, yet acknowledg them to be true in faith and order. What may be done to such persones: whether to have no communion with them yet count them not as enemies or to cast them out to Sathan.

Answer: the church, having orderly admonished them and they neglect- ing the admonition, the church is to avoid them and to have noe more communion with them untill they repent, Ro. 16.17; Mt. 18.17.

The thirteenth General Meeting, 5/6 October 1658.

The conclusions of the messengers of severall churches when met at Gloucester the 5th and 6th days of the eight moneth commonly called October, 1658 in answer to severall things brought before them.

Question. What may be done by the church to such a person who, being for evill under admonition, neglects his duty in seking reconsiliation yet goeth after an excommunicated person to have hands layde uppon him as an ordinance of Christ.

Answer: wee judg it his greater evill under a twofold consideration. First, not seeking reconsiliation to the offended brethren, Mt. 5.23f., and, next, in that hee goeth after an excommunicated person for to have hands layd uppon him who should have bine to him as an heathen or a publican for which evill the church is ta deale with [him] as a great offender.³⁹

Further abbreviations used in the footnotes

1. *B.Q.*, — *Baptist Quarterly* 1922–.
2. *C.R.*, — A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, Oxford 1934
3. *Ivimey*, — J Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists* (4 vols), London 1811–1830.
4. *O.R.*, — G. L. Turner, *Original Records of early Nonconformity under persecution and indulgence* (3 vols), London 1911
5. *T.B.H.S.*, — *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* (7 vols) 1908–21.

Notes

¹All the records printed in this section are transcribed from the Tewkesbury Churchbook unless specifically noted to have been from the Leominster book. The extent of the extracts from the Leominster source is indicated by a line down the left-hand margin of the page.

²This Midland Confession is printed from the Tewkesbury Churchbook. There are numerous unimportant variations from this in the Leominster version but the only significant difference is an addition to be found at the close of the Leominster version of article 15. It is possible that this was added later since Tewkesbury, was an original member of the association and Leominster did not join until later. It reads as follows:

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‘All these Ordinances of Christ are enjoined to his Church beinge to bee observed till his second cominge which wee all ought diligently to waite for.’ The whole Confession was printed by W. L. Lumpkin in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, Chicago 1959, 198–200, as ‘edited in 1905 from the Tewkesbury and Bourton Churchbooks’ (*ibid.*, 198 note 36)

³The Tewkesbury scribe frequently repeated the last word in each line of his MS as the first in the next. These repetitions have been omitted.

⁴This section is taken from the Leominster Churchbook.

⁵The Warwick church was in being by 1652 (see note 6) but has no records from this period. Paul Fruin who, in 1653, was elder at Dymock, Gloucestershire, was pastor at Warwick in 1689 (*B.Q.*, II.364)

⁶Daniel King published *A way to Sion* in 1650 (Thomason: 23 March) describing himself as ‘Preacher of the Word neere Coventry.’ Included was an ‘Epistle Dedicatory’ signed by ‘Thomas Patient, John Spilsbery William Kiffen, John Pearson’ commending the tract and describing King as one ‘whom we judge a faithfull and gainfull Minister of Jesus Christ.’ He later published *A discovery of some troublesome thoughts* dated from ‘the Lime-kiln at Pickle hering in Southwark this 7th of the 11th Moneth’ mentioning that he was ‘neer related’ to the following churches: ‘the Churches of Christ in London meeting usually at the glasse-house in Broad street, the Church in Coventry, the Church in Warwick, the Church at Hook Norton in Oxfordshire and the Church meeting neere Morton-Hinmarsh in Gloucestershire.’ The title page describes the tract as published in 1651 but there is no Thomason copy and therefore no indication as to whether the date given by King relates to February 1650/51 or 1651/2. All that can be safely claimed is that the three member churches of this association which he mentioned were in being by February 1652. In 1658 King was one of the Particular Baptist leaders made trustees of money bequeathed by Robert Bowes (*B.Q.*, VII.217). In 1672 he joined William Kiffin to produce material incorporated in *The life of H.H.*, (Henry Hills) 1688. King’s name does not appear among those attending the 1689 Assembly.

⁷Henry Vencent. Nothing is known about this man: like others mentioned in the association records for whom there will be no note this means that no plausible identification of him seems possible with any bearing a similar name in the works listed above under ‘new abbreviations.’

⁸The Moreton in the Marsh church was in being by February 1652 (see note 6) but no records exist for it from this period. At the 1689 Assembly it was represented by John Goring as pastor and Anthony Freeman. F. E. Blackaby, *Past and Present: History of the Baptist Church, Stow on the Wold*, Stow 1892, 6–13 cited evidence suggesting that the congregation originally meeting ‘near Moreton’ (note 6) had moved four miles south to Stow in the 1690’s when their first meetinghouse was built.

⁹There is no evidence of the existence of the Bourton church before this meeting in 1655 and no records of the church remain for this period. When Anthony Palmer was in Bourton 1646–1660 (*C.R.*, 380) his congregation, if Baptist at all, was of the ‘open membership’ type and so was separate from that linked with the association. Apparently no-one attended the 1689 Assembly from Bourton.

¹⁰This is the first known mention of the church at Alcester and no contemporary records otherwise remain concerning it. It was represented at the 1689 Assembly by John Willis and John Higgins.

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¹¹In 1663 S. Wade, minister at Chard, was in prison. This could have been the man who represented Alcester in 1655 (*B.Q.*, IV.30).

¹²Tewkesbury, in spite of the very detailed association records preserved in its Churchbook, has no other evidence from this period. The church was represented at the 1689 Assembly by Eleazar Herringe as pastor and Edward Canter. Herringe died 27 April 1694 (*Ivimey*, II.168).

¹³Hook Norton possesses a MS copy of its history by Joshua Thomas with a dedication dated 31 March 1786. (Used in *Ivimey*, II.517–21). The church was in being by February 1652 (see note 6). Thomas had used Crosby's *History*, III.124f., other printed materials, oral traditions, and a marble monument which is still to be seen in the present meeting house commemorating William Harwood, a member and benefactor, who had suffered during the Persecution after 1660. According to Crosby, James Willmot, presumably the messenger in 1655 *et seq.*, and Charles Archer, were joint pastors. During the Persecution they were both imprisoned in Oxford and Witney gaols: unfortunately no records of these in the period remain. Charles Archer represented Hook Norton at the 1689 Assembly. Members of the Willmot family remained linked with the church throughout the 18th Century.

¹⁴Matthew Teyton. His surname has been variously transcribed as Taylor, Tyton and Wyton.

¹⁵The church at Derby joined with those at Hexham and 'Wharton near Bradford' on 'the first day of the first month 1654' in a letter of loyalty to Cromwell. The letter was signed on behalf of 'the church of Christ at Derby and Burton upon Trent' by Robert Holpe (Hope?) and William Tomblinson. (E. B. Underhill, *Confessions of Faith*, Hanserd Knollys Society, London 1854, 331–4). Derbyshire was not represented at the 1689 Assembly.

¹⁶William Tomlison's house was licensed for the worship of a Baptist group at Burton on Trent in 1672 (*O.R.*, II.713).

¹⁷This agreement should be compared with the Abingdon or Berkshire Association agreement printed as Appendix I to E. A. Payne's, *The Baptists of Berkshire*, London 1951, 147ff. The share taken by the Berkshire Association and their representatives in the foundation of this association will be seen in the Abingdon MS.

¹⁸This section is taken from the Leominster Churchbook.

¹⁹It is clear from the Tewkesbury Churchbook that their response to the queries about marriage with those not looked upon as 'true' believers about the acceptance of *any* kind of salary from the 'world' and about members preaching publicly without the church's permission, were firmly negative.

²⁰John Fox *may* have been the owner of the barn in Nailsworth, Glos., registered for worship in 1672 (*O.R.*, II.816) but this was some 25 miles from Bourton and was, rightly or wrongly, considered a Presbyterian meeting.

²¹John Archer from Hook Norton may have been related to the better remembered Charles Archer (see note 13).

²²See note 15.

²³Cf. *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), I.51 for the following more widely known example of a similar suggestion: when Cromwell 'lay at Cambridge long before with that famous Troop which he began his Army with, his Officers purposed to make their Troop a gathered Church, and they all subscribed an Invitation to me to be their Pastor, and sent it me to Coventry: I sent them a Denial, reproving their Attempt,

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and told them wherein my Judgment was against the Lawfulness and Convenience of their way, and so I heard no more from them.' It would be interesting to have 'Baxter's reasons but all we know is that he after regretted his refusal — apparently upon the grounds that the men in that 'Troop' included many of those who later exercised wide influence.

²⁴The Leominster Churchbook reads 'sword' for 'worde' here and is probably to be preferred — as the slightly harder reading which also makes good sense.

²⁵This section is taken from the Leominster Churchbook.

²⁶This letter is only to be found in the Leominster Churchbook.

²⁷This section is taken from the Leominster Churchbook.

²⁸The Leominster Churchbook, p. 21, reads: 'The 28th day of the 7th month 1656 was the Church of Christ meeting at brother Joseph Patshall's house in Leominster constituted and the persons undernamed did, 'after a solemn seeking of God, give up themselves to the Lord and to one another to walk together in all the ordinances of Jesus according to his appointments. Which was done in the presence of, and with the assistance of, our brother Daniell King and other brethren.' A long list of names of over 130 men and women followed but most of these presumably joined later. Question 4, raised by the Leominster messengers at the eighth General Meeting, more probably indicates the size of their congregation at this time. Edward Price represented Leominster as pastor at the 1689 Assembly. A man named Patshall left Jessey's congregation for believer's baptism in 1643 (*T.B.H.S.*, I.245) and a Joseph Patshall signed the new revision of the 1644 *Confession* in 1651.

²⁹John Tombes (*C.R.*, 487f.) was probably the most learned defender of the Baptist position during this period when he was active in, among other places, Bewdley, Ledbury and Leominster. He remains peripheral to the story of the Particular Baptist associations of the time because of his open-membership practice. No doubt it was disagreement over these which led to the withdrawal of Patshall and his friends at Leominster in 1656.

³⁰Richard Harrison (*C.R.*, 250, two successive entries) also practised open membership almost certainly.

³¹Benjamin Coxe (*T.B.H.S.*, VI.50–59) acted here as the messenger of the Abingdon Association. His rather lengthy paper against Richard Harrison's willingness to accept state pay has been transcribed from the Leominster Churchbook and is to be found as an Appendix to these records. For further details see White, 'Organisation' 216–20.

³²This meeting at Gloucester only a month after the last one is unexpected in both venue and timing. Perhaps it was summoned because of the foundation of the congregation which applied for membership of the association at the tenth General Meeting in April 1658.

³³According to T. Thache, *The gainsayer convinced*, London 1649, (Thomason date: 6 August), 16 a Londoner called Harrison had drawn together a congregation in Cirencester whom he had not yet fully persuaded of the truth of believer's baptism. Among his disciples were 'M. Rudge' (mentioned in the epistle to the Reader), Thomas Clutterbuck, William Burge, Giles Handcox, Thomas Shephard, Caleb Selfe (p. 29) and others referred to (p. 61) as 'Roger the Shoemaker' and 'Samuel the Boddice-maker'. Of these the Cirencester Churchbook (deposited with the Gloucestershire Record Office) mentions Caleb Selfe only although Richard Burge and James Clutterbuck were members by 1655 — the year in which the first entries are to be found. A

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certain Giles Watkins (who went as minister to the 1689 Assembly) was also a leading member in 1655. On the '9th day of the 7th month 1659' it was agreed that 'our frends in the contry' could 'sitt downe as a church of them selves' probably under the leadership of one William Moulder. It should be noted that the association record does not say that the church at Cirencester became a member of the association at this point.

³⁴The apparent confusion in entering this meeting before the tenth must be due to a scribal mistake: the Cirencester meeting, though ineffectual, was intended whereas the meeting at Alcester which took place before it was not.

³⁵This section is taken from the Leominster Churchbook.

³⁶Nothing else is known of the church at Gloucester at this time. It was not represented at the 1689 Assembly.

³⁷Bewdley appears to date from 1649 (*T.B.H.S.*, VII.12) and the work of John Tombes. In 1653 a letter was sent to Hexham (E. B. Underhill, *Records of the churches of Christ*, Hanserd Knollys Society, London 1854, 344f.) signed by Tho. Bolstonne, Philip Mun and Robert Goodlad. The hesitation over Bewdley's membership of the association is likely to have been due to its open membership practice inherited from Tombes.

³⁸Note the conflict of this date with that said to have been proposed in the last paragraph above.

³⁹The first Churchbook now known at Sansome Walk, Worcester opens in 1796 with an historical survey by the then pastor, William Belsher. He reports, (p. 1) that 'There is before me an old book belonging to the Baptists of Worcester' with an entry by Thomas Fecknam (*O.R.*, II.786, 802, two entries concerning him as active in 1669) of January 1658/9 with the names of 17 men in addition to himself and 21 women in membership. Belsher also noted that the Worcester church had proposed two queries for discussion at the meeting of the association at Alcester 12/13 days of the 2nd month 1659. This reference contains the only information extant about this meeting: unfortunately, Belsher did not trouble to transcribe any details. Cf. W. T. Whitley, 'Prosecutions of Worcestershire Dissenters under the Stuarts,' (*B.Q.*, I.373-83). The church was not represented at the 1689 Assembly.

Appendix from the Leominster Churchbook

Benjamin Cox to Richard Harrison on Ministerial Maintenance,

March 1658.

(See footnotes [30-31](#) above)

An answer to a wrighting of Brother Richard Harrison touching the practise of taking mainetenance for preaching by the state's augmentation out of tyths or other revenews or both sometime belonging to the dean and chappiter of Hereford.

Brother Harrison, for soe I yet call you, because I doe not yet understand you yet to be fully disowned by the churches though, for my parte I doe judg your present practise and your stifnes therein to call for noe lese: your writing sent to the messengers of the churches mett at Alchester in the 7th month 1657 being by the said messengers delivered to me that I might, according as God should be pleased to enable me, give such an answer thereunto as the matter required. To the glory of God in the cleareing up of truth, I doe accordingly now return an answer to the same as followeth.

In the begining of your writing you imply, if I doe not misunderstand you, somewhat of dissatisfaction in regard that your papers formerly sent as you signified to our brother Thomas Arme, were not by mee particularly answered, nor your exceptions to the arguments of our brethren in the West particularly replied unto but only our owne former arguments enlarged *vidz.*, touching which I now minde you, that some of those pages being carried away from that meeting, at the begining whereof you were present, by one of our brethren who departed before the end of the meeting and the other never coming to my hands, by that meanes I could not have thesse soe to answeere unto them. Besides, I judged it most convenient to manifest the firmeness of our owne grounds and arguments and to leave the worke of further managing the grounds and arguments of our brethren in the west unto themselves who, I doubt not, but can through mercy and allsoe when they see it needfull farther manage the said arguments to the honour of God in the asserting of truth and righteousnes.

1. As to our first ground, that your practise is not of good report according to the apostle's warning in Phil. 4.8: you renew your old objection from Darius and Artaxerxes not takeing here any notice of the full and punctuall answeere that hath beene already unto the same. You allsoe intimate your now questioned maintenaunce to be in your apprehension as just, true, honest and of as good report as any maintenance from churches and as free from just scandall and offences. But have you forgotten that some maintenance from churches is expressly justified by the gospell rule, in the New Testament? Mind againe; Gal. 6.6; I Cor. 9.4–11; Phil. 4.10, 14–18; I Tim. 5.17f. Can you produce the like gospell allowance of your mainetenance? And, whereas in substance you deny the world's taking offence at your maintenance, shall not the worlde rise up

against you and condemne this yor denialls. If the world take offence, as you without good proffe afferme it doth, at our takeing maintenance from the churches, if wee neither exact nor exceed due measure, nor preach for maintenance sake, nor otherwise transgresse the gospell rule, it is a takeing offence where none at all is given, no, not soe much as in apearance which you cannot make good touching your maintenance. Whereas you hold forth the world's reproching us of coveteousnes, saying wee will not take of publik maintenance but wee will take of the churches as much or more as yet I know none of the world appearing soe shameles as thus to reproach us soe I question not but that you yourselfe are convinced if any should thus speake, his speech would be found a most manifest lye, not having soe much as any colour of truth. Yea, I speake to your owne contience whether ever you yourselfe would ever have chosen the world's maintenance, rather then the churches,' if you had not discovered the world to give a larger maintenance to its hyrlings than the church doth or as yet can unto her teachers.

2. Our second ground was that this practise of yours makes you guilty of taking an enforced maintenance. That this might more clearly appeare I enquired whether this your now questioned maintenance doe not come from tythes once belonging by man's antichristian laws to the deane and chapter. For, if wee doe, then it is manifestly an enforced maintenance: this antichristian law was somewhat adorned in man's blind eye with a new cloke still compelling men against theyre wills to pay theyr tythes. To this you plead ignorance but a Christian's care to kepe a good contience would have carried you long before this to searching out the truth in this thing. But if it were, say you, is it not lawfull to put it to a good use? But answer punctually before the Lord: is it not a takeing an enforced maintenance? And is not a preacher's takeing an enforced maintenance an unlawfull and shamefull thing? Here the fig leaves will bee too shorte, viz. the magistrate was not enforced to give it [to] you for the tyth payers are enforced to give it and this makes it clearly an enforced maintenance whereas you conceive the maintenance is rather from gifts frely given eyther in money or lands under the notion of charity to the church. First, I discern your owne consid-

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eration touching this is but weak not only because you cannot deny it to be from teythys but also because you doe afterward plead, in effect, soe far as I am able to understand, for teythes even with one of the grossest arguements or rather fallicious sophisms that the worst of the teythmongers now use which shall be further minded in its place.

But now, suppose the best according to your account as the supposed church to which such things were given was antichristian so ordinarily the charity was answerable, men giving to this church for the maintenance of idolatrous and superstitious worship and that by such gifts they might obtaine the pardon of theyer sins and merritt good to theyer soules: would a gospell preacher of Abraham's spirrit willingly bee maintayned as a preacher by verture of such gifts? I next enquired whether you would have preached in a constant way as you have done in those assemblys and in those places, but for this maintenance and, consequently, whether you have not manifestly acted as one preaching for hire. Here you have quite altered the first part of the querye and whether you have done it simply or cunningly I leave it to your own contience and the Lord for to judge, you haveing put this first part of the querye into this new forme, whether you would preach so often? And, whereas you say you are as much, if not more, out of the county then in it this is far from justifying your acting sith the maintenance is appoynted you for the preaching in the county. Yea, this shews you to fall shorte of dealing faithfully with man even as you do of the keeping close to the rule of the Lord.

You have also in like sorte waved the force of the latter part of the query *vizt.*, whethr in some preaching to those assemblys and in those places for this your maintenance, you have not manifestly acted as one preaching for hire. You, quite waving your manifest acting herein as on[e] preaching for hire, yet endeavour to acquite yourselfe as to your pwne intention and end denying that you make hyre the end of your preaching and signifying that you will not preach anything, as I understand, you will preach not heresy nor blasphemy for hire. And will not all the nationall priests and all theyre hired curats say as much? Yea, many of them might say it with as much truth as you can, yet will not all this acquit them from

being manifestly in the way and worke of hyrelings, as your owne contience, if any life and sence remaine in it, cannot but testify? As touching Lk. 10.7, the page not being in my hand to minde mee of the particular end for which you alleaged it I did only minde it as an objection here made that is, in and about this present question. But yet, if you brought it thereby to prove the lawfullnes of your present takeing of your now questioned mayntenance then, in effect, you brought it to justify a covenanted hire and an enforced mayntenance from the world and soe doe manyfestly wrest it. And if you brought it not to prove the lawfullnes of your present takeing of mayntenance, then surely you brought it to litle purpose. You say it was brought to prove it lawfull to receive maintenance of others besides the church and this for preaching, and doth it not indeed prove the same? Were not these disciples sent only to the townes of Israell? See Lk. 10.1 with Mt. 15.29; 10.5f. Were they not in every towne to enquire who is worthy and accordingly to take theyer quarters, see Mt. 10.11. Yea, they were [per-]mitted to receive their food, which was all the maintenance they were at the present to receive of those that received them, Lk. 10.8. And surely the nationall church state of Israell then remaining, which expired not till Christ had suffered, these might not then bee sayd to have noe part in any true church state. Thus your allegation of the scripture hath still in it a lamentable wresting.

3. Our third ground against the practise was thus held forth and strengthened: I desier it might be considered whether a gospell preacher should, as such a one, receive his maintenanee any other wayes then according to a gospell rule. If any will answer, yea, I demand then, where is the faithfullnes of Christ over his house noe whitt inferior to the faithfullnes of Moses? If noe, then where is any gospell rule for, or any gospell approbation of, such maintenance? Against this ground you do first thus object: the gospell doth not set downe how much they should have, therefore shall they have nothing? Answer: though the gospell doth not set downe an exact rule of soe much or soe much to bee paid to each gospell preacher by the yeare or by the month *viz.*, yet it clearely signifys that they who orderly and paynfully labour in the word and doctrine of the gospell may live of the gospell, I Cor. 9.14, that they should have

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maintenance with honour, I Tim. 5.17f., that hee which is instructed in the word should communicate to him that teacheth in all good things, Gal. 6.6, will it now followe, if our ground bee good and firme, that they must have nothing? O that you might now wisely consider what spiritt did lead you thus to speake vanity!

Secondly, as being contious to your selfe that your frivilous objection is too weake to overthrow our ground, you say: the gospell doth allow them to receive of the church or world what's freely given. Let this saying of yours bee distinguished into its two proper branches.

Branch 1. The gospell doth allow them to receive of the church what is freely given. Answer: but not without some lymitting cautions. They must receive only what men may justly give, the Lord loveth judgment and hateth robbery for burnt offerings, Is. 61.8. These may they receive when theyer receiveing will not in respect of circumstances, hinder the advancement of God's glory by giving advantage to false teachers, or by retarding the free passage of the gospell or by some other like fruit, I Cor. 9.15; 2 Cor. 11.9–12; 3 John 7.

Branch 2. The gospell doth allow them to receive of the world what is freely given. Answer: I hope you will acknowledge, that they may not receive of the world without regarding the aforementioned lymitting cautions. I desire a gospell proffe of the lawfullnes of a gospell preacher's receiving a setled maintenance from the world for his preaching the gospell. For, all the seemeing proffe that hath beene allready offered is found to fall shert. Have not gospell preachers at this day much greater cause to refuse a setled mayntenance from the world for preaching then Paul had to refuse all mayntenance from the Corinthians? I desire you will allsoe seriously consider what direct and punctuall answer can now bee given by you to our aforesaid third ground and the confirmation of it. You minding this as an objection, but it must be theyre owne, doe lay downe this by way of answer: what noe man can clayme right to is in the power of the magistrate to dispose of for those ends appoynted.

If, in this, you have any relation to the lands and lay revenues sometimes belong(ing) to the deane and chapter it is to bee minded

1. That the comonwealth layes a just clayme to them all and needeth to enjoye her right to them, even for the just satisfaction of those many purposes that shee remayneth indebted to, besides other great necessities.

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2. That in the first donation or gift of them, they were all appoynted for like ends, and therefore of those ends doe give any right (to bee acknowledged and minded of the magistrate) unto you and soe consequently to the rest of the tribe (as they were wont to call themselves) with which you now publickly acte, in the tearmes on which you preach, to any of the sayd revenews.

Then have you and they the like right to them all, which yet I judge you will not hastily affirme. But, if in this your speech you have a speciall eye, as other passages of yours doe perswade mee that you have, unto the teythes formerly belonging, by man's antichristian law, to the dean and chapter, then I pray you consider:

1. That this saying of yours is as much serviceable unto all the nationall priestes for the clayming of theyre teythes, soe farr as man's decree will allow them, as it is unto you in this case and accordingly it is made use of by them. And have you not then spun a fayer thred, thus espousing such an antichristian claym of such a generation?
2. That the lords of manours and lands formerly giving theyer teythes, for soe many of them did, some to abbeys and other supposed religious houses, and some to other members of the same antichristian body of which deans and chapters were a considerable part as [? that] they gave the same for the support of the false ministry, false church state and false worship in those times, and in a declared hope of benefitt from heven to redound to theyer souls and the soules of theyer children and relations. Soe alsoe they professedly have them upon this account because, as they were made to believe, the teythes were due to the clergy or church, as they called it, by divine right or law.

All which you see abundantly proved by Gilden in his history of teythes specially in chapter the 8th and chapter 15. Yea, what the king in those times did in giving of teythes, hee in like manner declared himselfe to doe it for the redemption of his soule and the soules of his predecessors. As Gilden also shewes (chapter 8 in the same booke aforementioned) it like wise appears that men declared themselves to give their teythes to God and St Mary and all the saints. Alsoe, as touching the pretended right

which such antichristian members as have beene afore mentioned did seeme to have unto the teyths belonging unto appropriated parsonages, this alsoe was manyfestly built on the same quadmire (as the aforementioned historian shewes in the same book in chapter 12 and also in chapter 14) and then what true and just right can any pristes or pretended gospell preachers now have to teyths upon this antichristian and popish grounds? 2. It is alsoe here considerable that as the antient popish lawes requiring the payment of teyths tooke it ffor granted (as appears in the 8th chapter of Gilden's *History*) that the law of God required the payment of them, made this the foundation on which they required the paying of the same, soe that law for teyths, very advantagious to the prists, in 27 Henry VIII and so grounded on the same antient popish lawes there called ecclesiasticall lawes, and onthe popish usages and customs there mis-called laudable usages and customes, and the lawe which hath beene since enacted in Parliament for the paying of teyths is grounded upon that of Henry VIII and soe rest on the same foundations with it.

Now, if wee set before our eyes the nation's just Protestation, first springing, as to man, from the Parliament to make opposition (in a just way) against all popery and popish innovations, and the nation's cleare and just right to bee fully free from all such popish burdens and grievances, wee may easily and soundly inferr from the premises that all those ordinances of men which now require the payment of teythes as things formerly due, rightfully belonging, at lest by man's law, to the ministers, are indeed unjust and ought to bee lookt upon as nul. And yet all the right which eyther possessions of dean and chapter, impropriations, or theyer other teyths or which any impropriatours can now pretend unto teythes, is meerly nothing in true and right justice. The impropriatours haveing noe better right unto the teyths, then the Parliament gave the king, which was only the right of the religious houses or religious persons, soe-called, had unto them which was indeed none, much more as to manyfest evidences, that the pretended right of the prists to theyre teyths is merely nul. Also that the pretended present right of the state to any teyths as teyths is likewise nul, all the aforegoeing gifts, apropriations, antichristian lawes and ordinances of man being not of force to deprive each man or any man in this present generation of the same right to the teyth of his owne land or goods that hee hath to the other nine parts. Specially considering that the paying of teyths as due by a divine right, is such an establishing of the shadowish Levitticall law, as in effect

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over throws the priesthood of Christ, for the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity the change alsoe of the law, [Heb. 7].¹² which is clearly spoken of the lawe of teything, among other parts of the shadowish lawe, v. 5. And considering alsoe that the paying of teyths, even as now they are required doth implicitly contayne in it an owning of the old antichristian law by which they were formerly required, and considering that teyth paying is a maine supporte of the false and antichristian ministry; and teyth paying to any impropiatours doth strengthen the priestes to require theyre teyths. Yea, and all teyth paying now called for is an implicate holding of the pretended church state of the nation.

Thus, I hope I have sufficiently, though not soe methodically as I desired, manifested the unsoundness of your intimation in this your saying, specially if any way ment by you of teyths, viz., what no man can clayme right unto is in the power of the magistrat to dispose of.

In the next place you mind this as an objection, that they ought only to dispose of what is for the civill good of a nation. Indeed, concerning your now questioned maintenance, which you affirme that you have by the free gift of the little Parliament which, you say, had power to give it to whomsoever they pleased, my assertion was that if it had beene a lay and temporall thing then in the stat's hand, the Parliament had power to have disposed of it in a juste way for the civill good of the civill state and noe other wayes. Now, wherein the frameing of the objection you have not somewhat altered my sence as well as my words, I leave you to consider. And I should now minde your answer to it but that I find nothing therein which hath not been in substance already replied unto and that, as I conceive, sufficiently.

You add, our brother calls it unreasonable resoning etc., I speake indeede of unreasonable reasoning and the unreasonable reasoning which I spake of was this *viz.*, when from that which is recorded in Acts 23.¹⁰ any will goe about to justify a man's preaching for an enforced maintenance or a covenanted hire, or seeke hereby to prove it lawfull and agreeable to gospell rule, to take of the world a set sallary by venue of a worldly law, for preaching the gospell to the world. And is not this indeed an unreasonable reasoning? But yet, say you, as unreasonable as it is, our brother grants the thing for which it was brought viz., that it was lawfull for gospell preachers to receive of the world. That it is lawfull for a Christian, and soe for a gospell preacher as well as another Christian, to receive as Paule there did, if the case and tearmes bee alike, was never

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by mee denied. But, where did I ever grant that it was lawfull for a gospell preacher to receive of the world any maintenance for preaching either more or lesse in any such way, or on any such tearmes, as you doe preache and pleade for. I still say it was well done of Joanna and Susanna and others, Luke 8.3, to minister to Christ of theyre substance. But what is this to your practice or how will you prove these to bee then a part of the world [in] the sense in which wee both now minde the word?

To Acts 20.23 you answer that scripture is as much against maintenance from the church as from the world, but to work with theyre hands. To which I reply, if Paul's meaning there, sufficiently appearing by the light of other places bee rightly understood, hee is not against all maintenance from the church. For, from some churches he sometimes tooke maintenance, and hee proved the lawfullnes of the practice of the other apostles, who did take maintenance of the churches. But the practize of Paule there minded, abundantly reproveth all such receiveing of maintenance as shall bee found either irregular or scandalous, or any way obstructive to the gospell or advantagious to the adversaries of truth. And thus this place is of force against the practize though it doe not expressly take notice of the difference twixt receiving from the world and receiveing from the Church and these. Should not men rather weigh this saying of the apostle then use such unreasonable reasoning as had bene before reproveth?

You are pleased to add: all that our brother hath to object is — what is this to prove a sett maintenance from the world, a covenanted hire? Answer — and is this all that I have to object? Read over againe what hath bene written, and consider whether this bee all. You further add: in which I am not concerned, as I know of. Answer — Is it soe? Will you stand to it before the Lord, is not your maintenance for preaching a set maintenance from the world? That it is a set maintenance you cannot deny, and are not the teyth paid by the world? Were not all the deane and chapter's revenues given them by the world? And was not the Parliament that gave you this maintenance, at least as to the nationall, formall, constitution of it, a part of the world, although there might bee, I beleive there were, diverse godly men in it. Doe you not alsoe receive it as a covenanted hire? Is it not your covenant (in effect) for this hire to preach in the parish churches soe-called in Hereffordshire? And was it not alsoe the Parliament's covenant (in effect) and substance, that you soe preaching should have such a maintenance as a recompense for the

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same and can you not heare see a covenant hire? Take heed, God will not be mocked.

You take it for granted it may be lawfull, yea, you say it is granted, they may receive of the world. If you speake of any such receiving as you practize and is now in question betwixt us I desire you to receive [? propose] the supposed grounds of your soe accounting and saying. And as touching the receiving of soe much by the yeare, according as you have minded it, it is objected to you not as the only thing wherein your evill consists, but as a manifest aggravation of the same. As touching a gospell preacher's receiveing of a brother £20 per yeare if hee give to him: if hee receive it as a covenanted hire for preaching soe and soe *viz.*, soe often in such places to such congregations etc., it is not to bee justified. If you doe not meane it of such a receiveing it reacheth not the case. As touching takeing pay as a souldier: if you speake of chaplaynes of regiments takeing pay of the state for theyer officiating, I have nothing to say in this behalfe and what alsoe you can meane that may have any relation to the present questions I know not.

I shall wright noe more at present, though there bee (ffor words and largenes) a considerable part of the writeing not yet replied unto, because, indeed, time will not now permitt me. For though the writing hath bene a good while by me, yet it is but a short time since I either did or well could begine, to write this answer to it: a good part of this answer being written in my journey hitherward. If I shall judge it needfull, or convenient, and the Lord shall enable mee, the whole shall shortly bee replied, although what hath bene already written is (as I judge) abundantly sufficiently to the inexcusablenes. I desire the Lord soe to awaken your conscience and to have [?heal] your backsliding as that I may bee able on good grounds as oportunitie shall serve to subscribe my selfe your affectionate brother in the faith and wayes of the gospell,

Benjamin Cox.

This answer formerly begune, was thus far continued and thus concluded at Morton hinmarsh the 8th day of the 2nd Month 1658.

Part II

Association Records of the Particular Baptists of the West Country to 1659

1 The West Country records

Editorial Note

The major sources for the present section are the two tracts published by Thomas Collier,¹ probably in 1658, and discovered some years ago by Dr G. F. Nuttall.² Since one tract prints the associated messengers' answers to their churches' queries and the other their letters it has been decided to reprint the material in the same way rather than to link each letter immediately with the queries and their answers supplied by the same meeting.

In addition, three manuscripts have been used. First, the well known account, by John Thurloe's agents, of the meeting held at Dorchester in May 1658 of which no Baptist record appears to survive. Then, secondly, the Lyme, Dorset, Churchbook has been used both to supplement Collier's materials in certain particulars and further to supply both a letter dealing with his 'ordination' and an account of the meeting held at Wells in May 1659. Finally, the Witchchurch manuscript copy of the record of an earlier meeting at Wells, in April 1656, has provided a list of the churches whose representatives attended.

This set of records shows churches from Gloucestershire to Cornwall linked together under the general leadership of Thomas Collier. With their answers to the queries presented by the churches the messengers were continuing to provide, as the Midlands records have already indicated, a body of case-law for the guidance of their people. Through the letters to the churches, beneath the bland usages of 'the language of Canaan,' there is a continued emphasis upon the need for holy living, for evangelism, for the member congregations to realise their fellowship in one body and, sounding through them all, an undertone of expectancy, of millenarian excitement, entirely typical of many sectaries in the years from which these records derive.

Several resolutions and answers of queries, sent in from several congregations, at several general meetings of messengers from the said congregations, in the county of Somerset and the counties near adjacent.

The First was at Wels the 8th and 9th daies of the 9th moneth 1653.

Query 1. Whether that imposition of hands on all baptized believers be an ordinance of Christ under the Gospel?

Answer:

1. That there is no precept nor president in the Gospel of Christ for the imposition of hands on all baptized believers, and therefore we cannot judge it to be an ordinance of Christ, it being performed by the Apostles when it was don on believers as believers, rather in a way of present power of faith for the confirmation of the Gospel, by the visible demonstration of the guifts of the Spirit, as other miracles was, then in way of instituted ordinance, as other ordinances was, there being no word left for our practice thereof, Heb. 2.3f, Acts 8.15–18, 19.6.
2. That the practice or not practice thereof is no ground of the breach of communion amongst or in the churches, and we do desire that none may submit unto it upon any such account.
3. It is concluded and desired that the churches that stand in fellowship without it be very carefull how they permit any member from any church that ownes that practice to preach among them that will not hold fellowship with them in all the ordinances of Christ as they practice them.

The second general meeting was at Wells the 26th and 27th daies of the first moneth 1654.

Query 1. Whether the word addition, Acts 2.41, 47, do import any solemn act of the church towards the person baptized before his receiving him to full communion?

1 *The West Country records*

Answer: we judge that the addition spoken of in that and other scriptures imports not any solemn act of the church towards the person baptized but is rather made use of as a word to discover the increase of the visible number added to the Church. Yet, in some case, viz., if persons are baptized at a distance from the church and so commended to the church, then we judge that some solemn act of the church is to be don in receiving of them, Acts 9.26ff.

Query 2. Whether withdrawing be a particular act to be performed by a church of Christ toward a brother offending before admonition?

Answer : it is not the duty of a church of Christ to withdraw from a brother offending before admonition except in the want of opportunity.

Query 3. Whether a gross offender be to be rejected before admonition?

Answer: not before admonition, nor at all, if the evil be repented of, II Cor. 12.20f, Tit. 3.10, repentance being the end of all church dealings and censures. If the end be attained before rejection we know no rule to reject. Yet, in such cases, the church ought to have full satisfaction of the truth of such repentance, by visible fruits, before they admit such a person to full communion. Therefore we judge that he may be set apart in such a case for a time, as in the case of Miriam, Num. 12.14f., and as in the case of the leper, Lev. 14.3, 8.

Query 4. Whether it be lawfull for a believer in the order of the Gospel to marry one that is not in the same order?

Answer: we judge it to be most expedient, and most suitable to the minde of God in scripture, that church members marry with such as are in the same order with them, or at least with such as may be judged godly, Gen. 6.1ff; Deut. 3.7 with I Cor. 7.39, and, in this case, it is desired that the churches should endeavour in the way of love to prevent the contrary.

Query 5. Whether any brother in the church, having a gift, though it be weak, may not in the church meeting have liberty to exercise it, though many of the world be present?

Answer: we judge that any brother that is known to have a gift may exercise it in the church, though some of the world be present : and the church is to judge of her gifts, I Cor. 14.23f, 26,31.

Query 6. Whether laying on of hands be an ordinance of Christ to be practised in his church on persons chosen to office in the church?

Answer: we judge that the ordination of ministers is an ordinance of Christ in his church now in force, Tit. 1.5, Acts 14.23, and ought to be

performed with fasting and prayers and the laying on of hands, Acts 6.6 and 13.3.

Query 7. Whether a woman may speak in the church at all, and if at all, in what cases?

Answer: a woman is not permitted at all to speak in the church, neither by way of praying, prophecy nor enquiring, I Cor. 14.34f, I Tim. 2.11f, but, if any have a gift, we judge they may exercise it in private, observing the rule mentioned, I Cor. 11.5.

Query 8. Whether a member satisfied in all the essentials of worship in the church of Christ may upon any dissatisfaction touching standing or kneeling in prayer, or any such like circumstance, withdraw from that church with which he is a member?

Answer: we judge that no member may, upon any such circumstance in worship, absent himself from that church whereof he is a member, because this were to binde where God hath left free and a transgression of the command of Christ in not assembling with the church, for his own tradition, Heb. 10.25, Mat. 15.3.

The third general meeting was at Taunton the 18th, 19th and 20th dayes of the 7th moneth,1654.

Query 1. Whether the setting apart of any to administer officially in the church of Christ is not to be done by that church of which the person set apart is a member?

Answer: 1. That it is in the power of the church to ordain and send forth a minister to the world, Acts 13.2f. Secondly, that this person sent forth to the world and gathering churches, he ought with them and they with him to ordain fit persons to officiate among them, Acts 14.23, Tit. 1.5.

Query 2. Whether any ought to baptize, and not add the party baptized to that church of which the party baptizing is a member or to commend him by epistle to some other church to walk with?

Answer : whosoever doth baptize any person ought withall to exhort the person baptized by him speedily to joyn himself to that church of which the baptizer is a member or to some other true church of Christ and, in order thereunto, is to give him a letter testimonial of his faith and baptism, Acts 2.41f, and 9.26ff.

Query 3. That inasmuch as the Apostle layeth down coveteousness to be a sin, and a ground of withdrawing from a brother, how such a one may be discovered, convicted and dealt with as a covetous person?

Answer: 1. Either in getting and not by right, [I] Thess. 4.6, Jer. 17.11 or, secondly, in a[n] over eager pursuing after gain though it may be in the way of his lawfull calling, I Tim. 6.9f., Luke 21.34, Prov. 28.20 or, thirdly, in a close keeping what he hath when the Lord calls for it upon any opponunity, Gal. 6.10, Prov. 3.27f., I Jn. 3.17.

Query 4. Whether any are to be received into the church of Christ only upon a bare confession of Christ being come in the flesh and assenting to the doctrine and order laid down by him?

Answer : they may not be admitted on such terms without a declaration of an experimental work of the Spirit upon the heart, through the word of the Gospel and sutable to it, being attended with evident tokens of conversion, to the satisfaction of the administrator and brethren or church concerned in it, Acts 8.37, Rom. 10.9f., Acts 19.18, Luke 6.44f., Mat. 3.7f.

Query 5. Whether the church of Christ is not to consider of some rule for habit and hair, inasmuch as costly habit of women and long hair of men are both forbidden in the scripture?

Answer: we judge that Christians are not to adorn themselves with gold, pearls and costly aray, I Tim. 2.9, I Pet. 3.3, but they are to shew all soberness and modesty in the matter of apparel and in the manner of the putting of it on not fashioning themselves like unto this world, I Pet. 1.14, Zeph. 1.8, and so much the rather because of the expediency of it, I Cor. 10.32, Phil. 4.8f., I Cor. 8.12f., and forasmuch as the word of God forbids the wearing of long hair, I Cor. 11.7, 14, we judge it the duty of saints so to wear it as to give none offence thereby, I Cor. 10.32f.

Query 6. Whether a servant of the Lord may purpose what to speak to the world or to the church beforehand and search the scriptures concerning it?

Answer: we judge that he may lawfully, and it is his duty, to wait on the Lord in the reading and meditating on the scriptures, as opportunity and occasion gives him liberty, and whatsoever the Lord is pleased to give in both for matter and manner, he may communicate to others as the Spirit gives him utterance, II Tim. 2.15, 3.17, Eccles. 12.9f. yet notwithstanding by this we deny not the immediate ministry of the Spirit of Christ in the churches.

Query 7. Whether a church of Christ having a member in debt above what he is worth it be their duty to free him from that debt or only to administer towards his maintenance?

Answer: we judge that it is the duty of the church not only to relieve such a brother in his necessity but likewise according to their abilities to pay his debt, provided it doth not disable them in the performance of more necessary duties, such as respect both family and church, Gal. 6.2, I John 3.16f., I Cor. 12.26, II Cor. 8.13f. Moreover, we advise that when persons are to be admitted into the church, whose estates are suspected, that strait enquiry be made whether they be in debt or no and, if in debt, how far and by what means. And, if evil appear in the party indebted in bringing himself into debt, then care be taken that his repentance be made manifest before his reception into the church. Likewise, we judge that the deacons or other persons intrusted by the church are to make enquiry after the courses and employments, together with the expences of those members that are justly observed to be in a declining condition in the world, and if they refuse to give an account herein, then to be dealt with as froward persons, Psalm 101.4. And it's likewise desired that tender respects be had to the reputation of such persons.

Query 8. Whether a member of a church having a family and the whole family be in want, it be the duty of the church to provide for the whole family or for the member alone?

Answer : it is the churches duty to provide for their member according to his necessity, Gal. 6.10, and it is the member's duty to provide for his family.

Query 9. Whether a member varying from the faith which at his admission he profest, as in respect of free will, general redemption, and falling from grace, the church may proceed to reject him without some other occasion?

Answer: a person holding general redemption, free will, and falling from grace, stiffly persisting therein, with an unquiet and disturbing spirit, notwithstanding the clear light of the scripture brought against his error to convince him, after due admonition, is to be rejected, I Tim. 6.3, 5, Tit. 3.10, Ro. 16.17. And our advice is, that ministering brethren be much in holding forth such truths as may strike against such errors. Also that, in case of need, help be called for from other churches to deal with such persons, Acts 15.2, 25f.

Query 10. Whether distinct parts of one and the same church meeting

in several assemblies, by reason of the distance of their habitation, having ministring brethren among them, may warrantably break bread together?

Answer: we can see no rule transgressed by such a practice; onely we desire to wait on the Lord for further light for the full clearing of it.

The fourth general meeting was as at Bridgwater the 17th, 18th, and 19th dayes of the second moneth, 1655.

Query 1. Whether a church of Christ, having no officers elected among them, may, notwithstanding, appoint members for the administration of any or all of the ordinances of Christ? And, if so, what qualifications are required for such a member so appointed?

Answer: a church of Christ having no officers settled among them may, with the assistance of those that have been instrumental in the hand of God in their gathering, set apart such brethren to the work of the ministry as are in some good measure, qualified and gifted according to the scripture upon trial in order to further establishment, I Tim. 3.10, 5.22. The qualifications we judge to be according to Acts 6.3, I Tim. 3, Tit. 1.6f. But, to appoint a person for the administration of ordinances in the church, not being in order to office, we finde not clear in scripture, yet we conclude it not unlawfull in all cases.

Query 2. Whether singing of psalms be an ordinance of Christ. If so, then what it is, and in what manner it is to be performed, and what is meant by the words exprest, Col. 3.16, psalms, hymns and spiritual songs?

Answer: first, that singing of psalms is an ordinance of Christ, to be performed in the church of Christ by the saints, Ps. 65.1, 149.1, Eph. 3.21, I Cor. 14.15, James 5.13, Heb. 2.12.

Secondly, singing is, when the soul being possest with the apprehension of the goodness and mercy of God, doth make a joyfull noise to his praise, Ps. 42.4, 95.1f.

Thirdly, this is performed in the church, first, in speaking to the Lord to his praise, and in this for one to speak and that so as that the rest may say, Amen. I Cor. 14.15f. Secondly, in speaking of the greatness and goodness of God one to another to his praise, Col. 3.16, Eph. 5.19. Thirdly, we understand, that by psalms, hymns and spiritual songs is intended the whole matter of praise as for outward mercies, so for Christ

and all spiritual good. This is that which at present we see and further we cannot speak but wait on the Lord for further light when he shall pour forth more of his Spirit.

Query 3. Whether it be the duty of a church member to joyn in prayer with his family if there be no believer in the family or present?

Answer: it is neither the duty nor liberty of a believer to joyn in prayer with his family if there be no believer in the family but himself because, as the worship of the Lord is spiritual so are his worshippers, Jn. 4.23f. Yet we judge that a master of a family, when he doth instruct and teach his family, may pray for them before them, Gen. 17.18 with John 11.41f., Acts 7.59f.

Query 4. How far we may receive the testimony of the world against a brother offending?

Answer: the testimony of such as are without may be received so far as in the wisdom of the church it appeareth to be a satisfactory testimony, I John 5.9.

Query 5: Whether church-membership in the wife and faithfull children be qualifications absolutely necessary to such brethren as are appointed to officiate in the church?

Answer: it is required of the Lord that the wife of the elder be in subjection, I Tim. 3.4, that the wife of the deacon be grave, sober, no slanderer, faithfull in all things, I Tim. 3.11, which faithfulness, for ought we yet see, may be meant of faithfulness upon a civil account. And that the children be faithfull, that is, faithfully subjecting themselves to their parents, not charged with riot or unruly. For, were they not so, it might give just ground of dissatisfaction concerning his fitness to take care of the church of Christ. These things we judge the Lord hath required. But, if the wife or children of the elder be unruly and it appears that the fault is not in him, that he should therefore be judged unfit, we do not at present determine because of the word, I Tim. 3.5.

Query 6. Whether a baptized person, walking in fellowship with unbaptized persons, may administer any ordinance in the church of Christ and, if one, why not all?

Answer: we know no rule in scripture for such a practice. And, farther, we judge the ministring brethren should walk most exactly to the rule, that they might be exemplary to others in drawing them to, and keeping them in, the truth. II Cor. 6.3, I Tim. 4.12, Phil 3.17.

Query 7. Saints being assembled together to observe a day of thanksgiving to the Lord, in what manner they are to observe it?

Answer : they are to observe it in a way of praising the Lord by speaking to him and of him, I Chron. 16.4, 7–10, Ps. 35.18, Heb. 13.15. As also in a moderate refreshing of their bodies with the creatures if they are free to it, wherein they are especially to remember the poor and needy saints, Neh. 8.12, Esther 9.22.

Query 8. Whether it be a duty required of an elder in the church to anoint the sick with oyle according to James 5.14?

Answer : we being not fully satisfied of the minde of the Lord in this scripture desire to be silent in it untill we have received further light from the Lord. And, in relation to this and other things in which we want light from the Lord, we desire the churches to be earnest with the Lord for the powrings forth of his Spirit more abundantly, Luke 11.13.

Query 9. Whether it be an ordinance of Christ for disciples to wash one another's feet, according to John 13.14?

Answer : we understand that Christ in that scripture teacheth disciples humility and to serve each other in love and, if need call for it, to wash each other s feet, Heb. 13.1, I Pet. 5.5.

Query 10. Whether it be according to the minde of the Lord for the church to send forth an elder to preach the Gospel to the world or to assist the churches?

Answer: we judge that they may so do provided that the church be so provided for in the mean time that neither God be dishonoured nor the church wronged. That they may do it our grounds are: first, from the common membership that is in all the churches all make up but one body though many, therefore, as members of that body they should assist each other, Acts 8.14, 11.22, 15.22 with I Cor. 12.25f. Secondly, from that common interest that all the churches have in the gifts of God given forth in the church it being but one in the Head. If God give plentifully in one, and but sparingly in others it may be for the tryal of the liberality of the one in the right use of it, and for the trial of the patience of the other, Eph. 4.11f., Gal. 6.10. Thirdly, we judge that if it be the duty of the churches to assist each other in temporal things, that it is their duty likewise in spiritual things. The first is clear, II Cor. 8.1-4, 14. Fourthly, if the most usefull brethren may be sent with the outward gift, Acts 11.29f., much more with the spiritual gift if the case be as is exprest before, Acts 15.22. Fifthly, it being the duty both of church and elders to improve

their talents that way in which they may most glorify God, if the church at such a time can part with such an elder, then he may most honour God where there is most need. And this answers that clause of sending to the world, if God may be most honoured there, and the church not wronged, so he take care to return again to take care of the church, Gal. 6.10.

The fifth general meeting was at Chard the 24th, 25th, 26th and 27th daies of the 8th moneth, 1655.

Two daies was spent in fasting and prayer for a greater measure of gifts of the Spirit.

Query 1. Whether the power of the keys spoken of in Mat. 6.19, John 20.23, Mat. 18.18, be given to the church or to the eldership in the church?

Answer: the exercise of the power of Christ in a church having officers, in opening and shutting, in receiving in and casting out, belongs to the church with its eldership, Mat. 18.17f., I Cor. 5.4f., III John 9f., Acts 15.4, 22.

Query 2. Whether a church of Christ in her election of elders are to invest the power of teaching and ruling in them all alike or to appoint some for teaching and some for ruling suitable to their gift?

Answer: it is the office of an elder both to teach and rule. The church, therefore, ordaining a person to that office do thereby invest him with a power both to teach and rule. Tit. 1.9f., I Tim. 3.2, Acts 20.17, 28, Heb. 13.7, 17, I Peter 5.1f. Yet suitable to the gift are they to be most exercised, I Tim. 5.17.

Query 3. A member having sinned greatly and the church sending to admonish him, whether they may appoint him a day when to tender his repentance to the church, he having not spoken anything thereof to them? Or whether the church is to leave him in respect of time to his own liberty and to God's work upon his heart?

Answer: a person having so sinned and being openly reprov'd and admonish'd in the church and if the church cannot presently determine whether he repent or not, they may appoint him a day wherein to come before them in order to their satisfaction, either to acquit him of his fault on satisfactory repentance or else to reject him, Mat. 18.13, 17, Lev. 5.10, I Cor. 5.5, 7.

Query 4. Whether Christ Jesus our Lord dyed for all and every man or for the elect only, and if for all, then how far?

Answer: our Lord Christ dyed for all and every man, Heb. 2.9, first, to reconcile all to God so as to have their being continued by him, Col. 1.20. Secondly, and that repentance and remission of sins might be preacht in his name to all men, Luke 24.47, Mark 16.15f. Thirdly, that so he might be Lord of all, Rom. 14.9, Phil. 2.8f. Fourthly, that he might raise all from the dead in the order and times appointed by the Father, I Cor. 15.21ff. Yet he died not intentionally alike for all, Jn. 17.12, I Tim. 4.10, Heb. 2.10, Is. 53.11.

Query 5. Whether the creature may be used at any time for pleasure and delight or only for necessity?

Answer: believers are not limited by the Lord in the use of the creature to use them only for necessity nor may they use them only for sensual pleasure and delight, but God hath given to his people a necessary, moderate and sober use of the creatures, to receive and use them to his praise with thanksgiving, Gen. 9.3, Neh. 8.10, Zech. 7.6, Prov. 25.16, I Tim. 4.3f., I Cor. 10.31.

Query 6. Whether it be lawfull for baptized believers to hear a person in the exercise of his gift preaching as a parochial or national minister ?

Answer: it is unlawfull, upon these grounds following: first, because there is an appearance of evil in it, in conforming to the worship of those men which we are commanded to separate from, II Cor. 6.17, II Tim. 3.5, Rev. 18.4, Prov. 19.27. Secondly, in so doing weak members are emboldened to sit down under that false ministry and thereby are in a ready way to be seduced, I Cor. 8.9f. Thirdly, because they walk according to their own professed principles, they walk disorderly in justifying the wicked for believers and persons in covenant, by declaring it to be the priviledge of believers to have their children baptized; and then apply it to the children of such who have no mark of faith upon them and therefore are to be witnessed against as persons walking disorderly and by their practice condemn their own principles, Rom. 14.22, 16.17f. Fourthly, by such a practice they strengthen their hands in their present standing and acting in a national way wherein they are found contrary unto and warring against the true ministry and churches of Christ, against which such ministers do bitterly inveigh and often raile. Fifthly, because that by such a practice they give a just occasion of offence to the rest of their brethren who in judgement and conscience cannot own such a practice

which is contrary to I Cor. 10.32. Sixthly, it is a consenting to the evil doings of such as take the word of God into their mouthes and hate to be reformed, approving them in that which God reproveth them for, Psalm 50.16f., Jn. 10.1–15.

Query 7. Whether a member of a church may make or sell unnecessary things such as only tend to pride and vanity?

Answer : this question was not resolved, but [I] Peter 3.14 commended to the consideration of the churches.

The sixth general meeting was at Wels the 8th, 9th and 10th daies of the second moneth, 1656.

Query 1. Whether it be lawfull for a minister of the Gospel to take a set maintenance for preaching of those that are without, whether it be for preaching to the world or to the church?

Answer: we judge that a preacher of the Gospel ought not to accept of the place of a minister to a parish, or lecturer, or chaplin, or to take a set maintenance from those that are without for preaching, and that for these reasons:

First, because God hath provided another way for the maintenance of the ministers of the Gospel, viz., by the church or churches of Christ, III Jn. 7f., I Cor. 4.7–18, Phil. 4.15. And the taking of maintenance from others would be a transgression of that ordinance; and if the case be such that the church which sends them forth be not of sufficient ability, we judge that it's the duty of other churches to be assistant in such a case, that the ministers of the Gospel may not be exposed to temptation in this thing. And of this we are perswaded that, such is the ability of the churches that, if they be faithfull and forward in the work and seek not great things for themselves, they may be thus provided for without taking a set reward from the world which would be honourable to the Gospel, III Jn. 7f., and whereby they might condemn the practice of the false church and their mercenary ministry.

Secondly, because the taking of such a stipend would put a tye and fetter upon the feet of the ministers of the Gospel to preach at certain times and places according to the will of men, whereby they are made the servants of men, I Cor. 7.23, and so will be deprived of their liberty to follow the Lord freely and fully in his work. And that liberty of ministers

we judge ought to be dearer unto them than any outward enjoyment whatsoever, yea, though [*sic*] life itself, Acts 20.24. And seeing that all saints and ministers especially are to pray that the word of God may run and have free course, II Thess. 3.1, then they that are sent to preach ought not to enter into such bonds which by sad experience proves a snare unto them and it is to be noted also that wisdom's messengers are said to be maidens or virgins, Prov. 9.3, which sheweth their freedom in the work of the Gospel.

Thirdly, it stops the mouth of a minister from bearing an open and full testimony against the practice of the parish ministers who, Balaam like, run after the reward and, seeing this is the way of the ministry of the whore of Babylon, it becometh not Christ's ministers to follow the reward whither that goeth thither to go.

Fourthly, it hath the appearance of that horrible sin of covetousness and preaching for hire and selling of the gift of God for money, which is contrary to these scriptures, I Thess. 5.22, Mic. 3.11, Acts 8.20.

Fifthly, to these considerations we add the command of our Saviour to his disciples whom he sent forth to preach the Gospel to the world, Freely ye have received freely give, Mat. 10.7f. These things considered we judge that it is the duty of a church whose ministers take such set rewards of the world for preaching to endeavour to convince them of the said evil and, if they continue and go on in this practice, the Church ought to deal with such for the same, as that which gives occasion to the enemies of the truth to reproach and just ground of offence to the church of Christ, contrary to I Cor. 10.32f. We conclude our answer with the proposal of these three things to the consideration of the churches and ministers concerned in this matter:

1. Whether some brethren have not, without any clear call from God, taken up a trade of preaching to get into a trade of maintenance?
2. Whether the large rewards allotted by the world for preaching the word be not a means to draw off divers ministering brethren from the service of the Lord in the churches whereby many offences come?
3. Whether a man may justly be judged, by himself or others, to be called of God to go about to preach the word as a Gospel minister that hath not faith to believe that God will be with him and provide that nothing shall be lacking to him in the work?

Query 2. Whether it be lawfull to take money upon usury in case of necessity, and, if so, how far the necessity must extend?

Answer: it seems to us unexpedient for a church-member to take money upon usury, except a clear necessity compel him thereunto.

1. Because it is of evil report.
2. Because it is an offence to brethren.
3. Because it strengthens the hands of usurers. Wherefore we judge also that the churches of Christ should dissuade their members from it and to take care to prevent them what in them lieth from coming into such wants and straits as may put them upon such a practice.

Query 3. Whether baptism be absolutely necessary to an orderly church communion?

Answer: we judge it so to be, because it's sutable to the declared will and ordinance of Jesus Christ, Mat. 28.19f., Acts 2.38, 41, 10.48.

Secondly, it's the clear and trodden paths of saints that have gon before us whose steps we judge it our duty to follow, Acts 2.41, I Cor. 11.1, Cant. 1.8.

Thirdly, it's the duty of those that believe in Christ to put on Christ in a visible way of profession by which they are distinguished from the world which profession or putting on is entred into by one baptism and is presented by the apostle as an argument to unite in the church of Christ, Eph. 4.5, Gal. 3.27.

Fourthly, it much concerns those who profess Christ to walk according to the rule of God in scriptures in faithfulness to the Lord, Acts 3.22, II Thess. 2.15 without which they cannot with clearness and comfort approve themselves either to God or men, Ps. 119.6, Jn. 15.10, or expect the blessing and promise of God to his people that do faithfully follow him in this his will, Acts 2.38, 5.32.

The 7th meeting at Bridgewater the 5th and 6th daies of the 9th moneth, 1656.

Query 1. Whether it be an absolute duty now lying on several churches speedily to send forth persons fitted for the great and good work of

preaching the Gospel to the world?

Answer: we judge it to be a duty and at this time much to be laid to heart and performed to send forth such brethren as are fitted to the work of preaching the Gospel to poor sinners that they might be saved.

1. That it's a duty appears by the commission of Christ, Mat. 28.18f., and by the churches that first trusted in Christ according thereunto, Acts 11.22, 13.1 ff., 1.15-23.
2. That it's now to be performed appears by the open door that God hath set before us, Acts 16.9f., the fields being white to harvest, Jn. 4.35, Mat. 9.37f. and the abounding also of the mystery of iniquity.³

Query 2. Whereas it hath been judged by the churches that the wearing of gold, pearls and costly array is contrary to the rule of the Gospel and a sin, if brethren and sisters will not reform in this matter, what course may a church take in this thing?

Answer: we judge that those who wilfully refuse to reform are to be dealt withal as transgressors of the law of Christ, I Tim. 2.9, I Pet. 3.3f. Yet we desire that persons in this case may be proceeded with in all sweetness, tenderness and longsuffering it being not so clearly and generally understood among saints to be a sin as other sins that are more contrary to the light of nature.

Query 3. That seeing there are several churches that do still own the taking of a set maintenance from the magistrate for preaching and will not reform what may be don further in this matter?

Answer: we judge that it's the duty of the churches that are clear in this case to continue their bearing testimony against their practice as there is opportunity yet to wait with patience till we see the Lord accomplishing our desires herein. We do not yet see it our duty to proceed any further.

Query 4. Whether astrology in matters of physick be lawfull?

Answer: we cannot at present determine this question but desire to waite on the Lord for further light in it. Nevertheless we desire the brethren may be very cautious how they meddle with the practice of it and that:

1. Because if it be prosecuted to the utmost it leads unto and ends in that which is evil and that such evil which (as it is judged) the scriptures condemn.

Secondly, because that several brethren which have known and practiced the same formerly have left the practice of it upon the accounting the evil which they saw in the same.

Thirdly, because it's very hard to practice any part thereof without bringing damage to the profession of the Gospel by an evil report.

Query 5. What is the saints' most proper and special work at this day?

Answer: besides the acknowledged works of faith and holiness that becomes the house of God in all generations so much more to be heeded in these latter daies as the departure from the faith and great iniquity aboundeth and the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, we judge it doth much concern the saints:

First, to cry mightily unto the Lord and wait upon him for the Spirit to be powred forth: for the bringing down of Babylon and the building of Zion in all the truths and appointments of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly, to be found in the Lord's way, not only by prayer and by self-denying endeavours to the utmost, that the everlasting Gospel may be preached to poor sinners that they may be saved, especially to the anciently beloved people of God the seed of Abraham according to the flesh.

Thirdly, being grounded and rooted in the faith and love of the Gospel, a diligent search be made in the fear of the Lord into the propheties that open unto us the work of the Lord and duty of his people in the latter daies wherein we desire these cautions may be observed:

First, that saints be very wary and weighty in their spirits how they receive any apprehensions that seem to lead us besides plain and positive scripture grounds of practice.

Secondly, to be very humble and self judging in all such inquiries, taking heed how they censure and despise one another in their differing apprehensions least they be wise in their own conceits and least they decline from the power of godliness through intruding into things that are not seen as yet and not keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Thirdly, we desire that when any distinct apprehensions are attained there may appear in such brethren a willingness to propose them for examination as there is opportunity to the more strong and searching brethren, who attend on the word and prayer, ere they engage their weak brethren in such questions that are not able to judge as yet in such cases.

Query 6. What is the saints' duty towards the magistrate at this day in this nation?

Answer: we refer those concerned herein for answer to the fourty fourth article of the confession of faith of the churches in these parts.⁴

Query 7. Whether a church of Christ, being in a strait for a place to meet in, may address themselves to a magistrate for such a place and, obtaining it, may return the thanks of the church to him?

Answer: the messengers of the churches in these parts, having weighed this question, cannot at present judge but that a church may send to a magistrate in the case mentioned and having obtained it may give thanks for it. This is our present light.

The 8th meeting was at Chard, the 16th, 17th and 18th daies of the second moneth,1657.

Query 1. Whether or not that a company of people converted to the faith and baptized and living at such a distance from the church of Christ as that they cannot assemble conveniently with them, ought not to be established a church of Christ by themselves though they have no ministerial gifts among them. And, if so, then whether or no that that ministry which was by the Lord made usefull or instrumental in that work ought not to take care of them till the Lord hath raised up gifts among them and not to forbear their settlement as a church or congregation of Christ untill they be furnished with gifts among themselves, for the carying on of all the administrations of God's house?

Answer: we do judge that they being a competent number though they have not gifts at present among themselves for the carrying on the work of God in all the administrations of his house, yet they may be established a church of Christ having the assistance of others whom God hath inabled to carry on the work of God among them and to take such care for them as their necessity shall require; and that it is the duty of that church and ministry to take care that they be so provided for that was instrumental in their gathering, Acts 14.21ff., Tit. 1.5, II Tim. 2.2, Acts 11.21ff.

Query 2. Whether a believer's abstaining from the company of and eating with an impenitent person be before, or after, rejection or both?

Answer: our judgement is that religious fellowship is especially intended in that scripture, I Cor. 5.11, and also that the saints should, as much

as they may, so far as may tend to work shame and repentance, abstain from civil society with them during the time of withdrawing and after rejection too, Eph. 5.11, II Thess. 3.14, Mat. 18.17.

Query 3. That though a church of Christ is bound to relieve all her members yet whether they are bound to relieve all their families or rather to assist them to look to the Magistrate for a supply for them according to the law of the nation and whether the profession of the Gospel will be any waies dishonoured by such a practice?

Answer: we judge that a church of Christ may address themselves to the magistrate without any just occasion of offence or reproach to the Gospel or name of Christ.

Query 4. How far it may be lawfull for a sister having a husband not in order to dispose of outward substance for the church of Christ without his knowledge or consent therein?

Answer: we judge that a sister may lawfully and that it is her duty to dispose of outward substance and that for these reasons:

first, because the law of God hath given the wife an interest in her husband s estate, being made one flesh with him, Gen 1.17, 28f., 5.2, Acts 5.8f.

Secondly, this appears by the practice of holy women recorded in the scriptures, I Sam. 25.18, II Kings 4.8, Luke 8.2ff.

Thirdly, believing women as well as men are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, Eph. 2.10, and it's held as a property of a good woman to be stretching forth her hand to the poor and needy, Prov. 31.11, 20, I Tim. 2.10.

Fourthly, God hath promised a blessing in the faithfull performance of this duty, which he hath nowhere excluded the women in this case from Mat. 21.34 to the end, Eccl. 11.1ff, Mat. 10.42, II Kings 4.13-6. Yet in this matter we desire that wisdom may be exercised that so the name of the Lord, the honour of truth and her own peace as much as in her lieth may be preserved, Col. 4.5, Prov. 31.11f.

Query 5. Whether a man dissatisfied with an act in the church may leave his place in the church during the time of the churches proceedings in that business?

Answer: if a member do so in heat and passion we judge it his sin of which he ought to repent. But, if in tenderness of conscience in peace, we judge it weakness and to have the appearance of evil in it and therefore should by the church be tenderly dehorted from such a practice, Col. 3.8,

Phil. 2.2ff.

Query 6. Whether it be unlawfull or contrary to any rule in the New Testament for baptized believers to hear a person that hath received a gift from the Lord, which gift hath been blest by the Lord to the conversion of sinners and to the confirming of saints in the faith of Christ, being of a holy. and grave eonversation, and denying wholly the world's waies and which, though not yet baptized, yet so far from opposing that ordinance that he is earnestly longing and diligently waiting for further information therein to the end he may not practice the same formally but in the power of him into whose name believers ought to be baptized?

Answer: for the hearing of such a person when the church is not assembled, as we desire to be very tender and cautious in our conclusions in such a case, so we do earnestly desire the brethren concerned in this matter to look to their rule for such a practice.

Secondly, but for such a person to be permitted to preach in the church assembled, we judge it altogether without rule, and of dangerous concernment and that for these grounds:

first, because we are to keep close to the commands of Christ and not to do everything that is not expressly forbidden, Mat. 28.19f., Acts 3.23, Col. 2.18 to the end.

Secondly, because it is a disorderly practice, being contrary to the rule of the Gospel, II Thess. 3.6, compared with 2.15, I Cor. 14.40. For, if disorder in a person duly received into communion may hinder him from administring in the church, much more will it him that was never orderly received.

Thirdly, because that such a practice, being contrary to the rule, becomes justly offensive to the churches and saints and so is contrary to that, I Cor. 10.31, Ro. 14.14, II Cor. 8.12, Ro. 16.17.

Fourthly, because it will prove the ready way to disorder and confusion in the churches of Christ and therefore not of God, I Cor. 14.33: for God is not the author of confusion but of peace as in all the churches of the saints.

Fifthly, it may prove a means to hinder the person himself and likewise others that are waiting at Zion's gates from their obedience to the truth and also beget a low esteem thereof in the hearts of those that are already in the truth, Mat. 2.8.

Sixthly, it laieth the church who ownes such a practice liable to the unsoundness and errours of disorderly persons standing out of the truth,

who ordinarily are more subject to receive principles contrary to Christ then persons standing in the truth. And this seems to us to be in part already both in the person presented and in the persons presenting this query who, as it seems to us, owns it to be a formal thing to obey the Lord in his ordinances upon the account of faith in Christ and love to him but look for a greater power, which principle we desire the Lord to deliver his people from. Wherefore, as our judgement is, that such a practice is disorderly and so contrary to the rule of Christ and dangerous to persons both within and without the church and likewise will prove dishonourable to the Lord, so it is our advice and counsel to such brethren and churches that are or may be concerned in this matter in the fear of the Lord to weigh and soberly to consider the grounds by us presented in this answer.

Query 7. Whether baptized believers in a church state may not have communion in prayer and prophesie with unbaptized?

Answer : for answer to this we refer you to some of those things said in answer to the last query.

Query 8. What forbearance a church of Christ should exercise towards an offending member after their due dealing with him he still professing conscience in the matter they differ about and still desireth to stand a member in the body?

Answer : that some forbearance towards such a person there ought to be we grant but for the time we conceive that the church with whom he walks is in best capacity to judge, they knowing the cause and likewise his temper of spirit and behaviour in such a condition.

The 9th general meeting was at Tiverton in Devon the 15th and 16th daies of the 7th month 1657.

Query 1:⁵ Whether a man in any case in ruling over his wife may lawfully strike her?

Answer: he ought so to rule over his wife in wisdom as that the ordinance of God in point of ruling may be preserved and if it may be by any means without striking of her such a proceeding being without any pretext or example that we read of in the holy scripture.

Query 2. Whether a believer being head of a family now in these daies of the Gospel may keep in his or her house any instrument or instruments of musick playing on them or admitting others to play on them?

Answer : it is the duty of the saints to abstain from all appearance of evil and not make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof, Rom. 13.14, to redeem the time, Eph. 5.15f., and to do all things to the glory of God, I Cor. 10.31, and, although we cannot conclude the use of such instruments of musick to be in all cases unlawfull, yet we desire that saints would be very cautious lest they transgress the aforesaid rules in the use thereof and do that which may not be of good report and so give offence to their tender brethren.

Query 3. There being a power given to the magistrates in some cities and towns to tax the people for the maintenance of their ministers and to distrain in case of non-payment, we desire your advice what we ought to do in this matter?

Answer: that at least they ought to bear a publick testimony against it as a soule offending and oppressing yoke and, if any have faith to expose themselves to sufferings, by refusing utterly to pay through a real scruple in tenderness of conscience only towards God, we desire them to walk according to their faith and understanding uprightly whatever they may suffer from men, with meekness committing themselves to God, as into the hands of a faithfull Creator.

Postscript.

My precious brethren in the Lord, I have occasioned some few of these to be printed only for the churches' benefit of our meeting, being likewise desired by some brethren so to do. I have, though not without some pains and care, given a true and faithfull account in this matter of all the meetings. But I trust I can say in truth it's my soul's desire to serve the Lord and his people, so it be usefull to you I have my end and remain, your poor brother uncessantly at the throne of grace for Sion's welfare.

Thomas Collier.

The Preface

My dearly beloved in the Lord, at the desire and appointment of the brethren at the general meeting at Tiverton I have, with some time and labour, endeavoured the compiling and publishing of the epistles from the messengers to the churches at the several general meetings (all except two⁶ which I could not attain unto). And as I trust, I may say, that the end of the brethren in their desire, so I can say it's mine in the performance thereof, viz., the spiritual advantage of the churches for

whose sake it is done, and to them it is presented. My earnest desire is, that you may receive it in love and improve it to the end for which it is intended that advantage may come to your souls the more abundantly by the often meetings of your brethren, especially in these evil and backsliding times wherein it concerns us so much the more abundantly in faithfulness to God and to your souls to cry aloud unto and to warn you of the abominations and evils of the times which we cannot but with sadness see and say that professors are by nature too much inclined to. Oh my brethren, it's better to be as a beacon on the top of a hill in a faithfull following of the Lamb then to follow a multitude that think gain and the honours and pleasures of this world to be godliness. My earnest desire to you and to God for you is that you may keep yourselves unspotted of the world hating the garment that is spotted with the flesh. And if these endeavours of your brethren contribute anything to so good a work, I trust we have our end. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Thomas Collier.

The 7th day of the 9th Moneth, 1653.

From the messengers of the churches assembled at Wells to the churches of Christ etc. Grace and peace be multiplied.

Beloved brethren in the Lord, we being by common consent assembled together to wait on the Lord at Wells for satisfaction concerning the practice of laying on of hands. And being accordingly assembled on the 6th and 7th dayes of this moneth, spending part of our time in a serious, and, we trust, sincere waiting in seeking the Lord and the residue in conference to see what particular satisfaction the Lord had or would give in this matter and in conclusion we came to this result.

First, that several of the brethren are something of the minde that laying on of hands on all baptized believers is an ordinance of Christ. But yet they are not satisfied but desire to wait on the Lord for further light in this matter.

Secondly, the most part of the brethren assembled are altogether dissatisfied in the imposition of hands on all baptized believers seeing no precept nor president to warrant it but joyntly conclude that the imposition of hands with fasting and prayer (on such as are called to office in the

church or sent forth to preach the Gospel to the world) is an ordinance of Christ.

Thirdly, it's likewise joyntly concluded that the practice or not practice of it upon all baptized believers is no ground to make a breach in communion, nor will any own it nor submit unto it upon any such account.

Fourthly, it is concluded not to permit any member of any church to preach in any of our congregations, that owes that practice of laying on of hands on all etc., except he be free to have communion with that church in all the ordinances as they practice them.

Fifthly, it is concluded as a means to prevent divisions and increase communion, as also to be instrumentally helpfull each to other, that some of each church do meet again at Wells on the day commonly called Easter-Monday and the day following. And we humbly desire the churches to further it without fail, that we may wait further on the Lord and seek his mind in relation to any particular occasion that may concern any of the particular churches. Thus, our dearly beloved brethren, have we in all faithfulness, as is our duty, given you a brief account of this our present assembling together, desiring the God of grace and peace to establish you in the truth, as it is in Jesus. And that the Spirit of humility, love and peace may rest upon you and be in you and establish you in every good word and work to the praise and glory of God. That as everyone hath received so let him walk by the same rule. But if any be contentious we have no such rule and therefore we desire there may be no such practice in the churches of Christ. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen.

Subscribed by us the members of the several congregations assembled at Wells aforesaid; and by us appointed to be published by our beloved brother,

Thomas Collier.

The messengers of several churches in the county of Somerset and of other adjacent counties assembled at Wells the 26 and 27 daies of the first moneth, 1654 to the churches of Christ, etc., wish increase of grace and peace.

Holy and beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is our joy to consider the grounds we have to believe that the Lord hath bestowed grace upon you and that not in vain. Your willingness in sending your messengers to the general meeting to be enquiring of God concerning his will about the great affairs of his house and kingdome give us grounds so to judge. And truly brethren we can say through grace that we have obtained mercy from the Lord in this our assembling and do believe that it will be a means by which much honour will come to the name of our dear Father and much good and peace to the churches of Christ. We being at this time according to appointment assembled together spent some time in a serious waiting upon the Lord in prayer for his presence and blessing both upon us and upon you, the fruit whereof we trust we may truly say we found and have faith to believe that you shall finde it likewise. Afterward the rest of our time by providence allotted us, we spent in debate with much tenderness, unity and love. And, we trust, we may say likewise with some clearness from scripture grounds concluded our answers to the queries sent into us from the several churches which we commend unto your serious consideration desiring that it may be usefull unto you for the well ordering of the Lord's house, whose house are ye, if ye hold fast and continue faithfull to the end. Our dear brethren, we trust we can say that your stability and growth up in the knowledge of God our Father, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the true desire and longing of our souls. And that for us to be faithfull in serving the Lord and you his people and to be poor instruments in furthering your joy will be our delight now and our joy in the day of Christ.

The earnest desire of our souls for you is that our God who hath counted you worthy of his calling and kingdome will be pleased to make you a willing people in every good word and work to the praise and glory of his own grace. And that love and duty may engage your hearts to a holy, humble and obedient walking with God all your daies and that you may be made willing to continue this our assembling together at such

times and places as shall be appointed. And that our souls with you may be constantly waiting on the Lord in his appointments for his presence and blessing — which is the desires and prayers of your poor brethren and servants in and to the Lord for you. To whom we commend you and rest. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen.

Signed in the name, and by the appointment of the whole.

Thomas Collier.

The 18 day of the second moneth 1655.

The messengers of several churches in the county of Somerset and other adjacent counties assembled at Bridgewater, to the churches of Christ assembling in Dublin, Waxford [sic], Waterford or elsewhere in Ireland desireth increase of grace and peace through the knowledge of God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dearly beloved brethren, though you are set at a distance from us in respect of habitation and place of residence for the present time, yet standing with us to our Father in the same relation, by the same faith and in the same visible profession and worship, being baptized into one body by one and the same Spirit, and are waiting together for the grace that shall be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, when we shall be no more at a distance, but shall ever be together with all the saints and with the Lord. Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, we judge it not onely our duty to remember you but we can say, through the grace of Christ, that you are upon our hearts with much tenderness and the glory of God intrusted in your hands likewise, being very sensible by our own experiments of that weakness and aptness that is in the saints to miscarry by reason of their own corruptions and the temptations of Satan. So that we finde that it's not onely necessary a duty and our priviledge to remember each other at the throne of grace but likewise to be remembrancers of each other to stir up and provoke each other to love and to good works. That, as God hath honoured both himself and us in shewing mercy, so we may honour him in an holy and inoffensive walking shewing forth the fruits of faith to his praise.

Now, our beloved brethren, as we have heard of the stedfastness of your faith and order, and your persevering in the way and work of the Lord to our joy so likewise we cannot but in much tenderness and faithfulness

let you know that we have heard there are some things amiss among you and we partly believe it, it being so often confirmed unto us by several brethren and others that have come from thence.

The first is pride in apparel, in needless superfluities and deckings of the flesh, that which is by the Spirit of the Lord condemned and that which we cannot but judge to be a visible demonstration of the vanity of the minde. For, if we may read the abundance of the heart in the words that are spoken, Mat. 12.34, so likewise doth the same appear in our fashioning ourselves after the manner of the world. Hence it is that saints are exhorted, I Pet. 1.14, as obedient children not to fashion themselves according to their former lusts in their ignorance (which we cannot but understand that it relates to the fashions in apparel as well as in other things) that so they may be holy in all manner of conversation.

If it should be objected that we finde in the Old Testament, that the saints did wear gold and pearls and costly array, therefore it's lawfull for saints now, as in the case of Rebekah, Gen. 24.53, and of Mordecai, Est. 7.2 [Chapter 6?], we answer, if we finde it forbidden under the Gospel, it is our duty to submit. To have more wives then one was tolerated and practised under the law yet forbidden under the Gospel.

Now, in the Gospel we finde that both gold and pearles and costly array, and the manner of putting it on, that is to say, in a gaudy and vain fashion, is plainly forbidden, 1 Tim. 2.9f., I Peter 3.3. But sobriety and modesty, as becometh men and women professing the Gospel is commanded. And, indeed, we cannot but judge it exceeding necessary for saints to deny the flesh in such cases knowing that the grace of God doth not teach the saints such things. But it's rather a sad symptome of a vain minde and it's that which hath been a stumbling-block before our eyes. But God in his mercy hath begun to take away the vail and to let us see the iniquity of it, that it is indeed a sin and that which we desire to take notice of and testifie against in ourselves and others and amongst ourselves to deal with persons that do clearly offend in this matter refusing to reform. Though by sad experience we often finde that persons in profession of the truth are very ready (though very carnally) to endeavour to excuse the matter with this poor excuse, that pride doth not consist in apparel, but that a man or woman may be as proud in mean apparel as others in the most gay and that pride is in the heart and not in apparel. This is that we often meet withall which is but a device of the devil to carry on his design in ruining souls upon this rock

of fleshly deckings and gay attirings. For although it's true one may be proud in mean apparel that's no ground why others should transgress the rule in wearing of gay apparel. And such persons become judges of their brethren's hearts who keep to the rule and so transgressing the law of love towards their brethren, which is to hope all things etc., and the law of moderation in themselves giving just occasion of offence to their brethren and of reproach to the world. It's true that pride is in the heart and it usually manifesteth itself by those vanities in the outward man. And truly we cannot but judge that vanity in apparel doth minister occasion to a vain minde to be puffed up. And we are very ready from our own experience to conclude that whoso cannot witness to this doth not know their own hearts nor are they acquainted with the depths of Satan and the corruption of their own natures. Oh therefore, dearly beloved brethren and longed for in the Lord, we, in the tenderness of our Lord, beseech you to think of these things and to abstain from all appearance of evil. Let your moderation be known to all men, the Lord is at hand. Oh, then what will pride profit or the vanity of riches do for us? If it be queried what rule we ought to walk by in our reformation in this matter, we answer, if ye are not convinced of an absolute evil in this thing, then go to that rule which enjoyeth to avoid offending our brethren. If it be further questioned, what particulars of apparel are they offended at besides the things before named, we say, we with many more are offended in a very great measure with the wearing of those things which have no colour or shew of use, as points and ribands at knees, and more laces then are needfull on garments. When we have reformed in these things which we may easily do then may we expect a further light for a thorow reformation in this matter.

The second particular we have to minde you of is your dependency of the ministry on the maintenance of the magistrate which we do not see to be according to the Gospel constitution, especially when churches are of sufficient ability to maintain their ministry if they improve their outward substance faithfully and not in superfluities. It's true that it is an ordinance of the Lord that they that preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel, I Cor. 9.14, that is, of the fruit of the vineyard planted or nourished by them, of the milk of the flock, watched, kept and fed by them, being freely brought forth to them, v. 7, and it's their duty who reap spiritual things to communicate of their carnal things, v. 11. And it's the duty of those who are taught in the word to communicate to him

that teacheth, Gal. 6.6, but we no where finde it in the Gospel, that the ministers of Christ should make use of the magistrate's power for to get a coercive maintenance for them.

Dear brethren, we desire the Lord to teach you to deny yourselves in this case. And truly we have heard likewise of the great vanity and pride in apparel of some brethren in the ministry with you. That whereas they should be patterns of humility, meekness and good conversation they are too much patterns of the contrary.

These things, dear brethren, having so often sounded in our ears (and indeed hath pierced our hearts) not onely from enemies but from friends⁷ and, indeed, we cannot but doubt that the large allowance by the state in Ireland hath drawn over many brethren to be preachers there. Not but that we rejoyce in the flourishing of the Gospel in that nation and could desire that there were more publishers of it, but it would have added to our joy, if they had come there on better principles. We desire not to mention particulars in this case but that we hope for its reformation which will be our joy in the Lord.⁸ It being that which indeed hath administred matter of grief and sorrow to our souls, both brethren and others, having often declared these things unto us and, indeed, it's that for which the truth doth suffer and the way of truth is reproached and your brethren grieved. Oh, make our hearts glad by taking away the occasion of such offence! Oh, constrain not any tender hearts to separate from you for such causes as these are. Oh, grieve not tender hearts among you who sit sighing in the beholding of these things! Let, we beseech you, the tender endeavours of your poor brethren in England be accepted with you, and do you not resolve to grieve our hearts and cause us to hang down our heads for sorrow, but rather cause us to remember you at the throne of grace with joy. This we say the more by reason of an epistle written from the church at Bridgewater which was not well resented nor took but little effect as we hear. But, dear brethren, we have not written these things to shame you, but to warn you not as having dominion over your faith but as helpers of your joy knowing that we ourselves are men of like infirmities and subject to the like (if not worse) temptations. And we have dealt with you no otherwise but as we earnestly desire you in the tenderness of the Lord to deal with us. Let the righteous smite us and we trust it shall not break our heads but be a precious balm unto us because faithfull are the wounds of a friend but the kisses of an enemy are deceitfull. Thus having though in much weakness yet, we trust, in much

tenderness and faithfulness written unto you, desiring and not doubting but that the Lord will give both the truth and us a being in your hearts of which we shall rejoyce to hear. So remaining yours incessantly at the throne of grace, we rest. Grace, mercy and peace be with you all. Amen.

This epistle was signed by the messengers of the churches following:

Bridgewater ⁹ }		{Riden ¹⁰	Abington in Bark. ¹¹	
Stoke ¹² }		{Charde ¹³	Sydbury in Gloucester ¹⁴	
Taunton ¹⁵ }		{Dalwood ¹⁶	Lime in Dorset ¹⁷	
Wells ¹⁸ }	Somerset	{Bristol ¹⁹	Dartmouth ²⁰ }	
Wedmore ²¹ }		{Somerton ²²	Totnes ²³ }	Devon
Hatch ²⁴ }			Lupit ²⁵ }	
			Bradley in Wilts. ²⁶	

It is also desired that in the relieving of your poor, you will be careful to lend them sufficient for their need according to the scriptures, Deut. 15.17ff., Prov. 3.27f., Mat. 5.42. Our brethren in Ireland did never to this epistle return us any answer which was our trouble.

The Spirit from on high be powred forth upon you and all the Israel of God.

Dear brethren and fellow citizens

The God of glory having wrought in the hearts of this poor people in several congregations far remote, a sweet willingness to send their messengers to meet together to enquire of the Lord and one another concerning the lawes of his house. After much experience of our own insufficiency for things of so great importance we have found it in our hearts to pray with fasting before the Lord for the powring forth of his Spirit which he hath promised in the last dayes and is now the one thing needfull to the carrying on of Sion's buildings and the pulling down of Babylon's walls. The glorious things brought to the birth cannot be brought forth without it. Having spent two whole dayes together in this work we have had such evident testimonies of the Lord's gracious presence with us, that should we be silent we might be rebuked within ourselves with the words of the lepers who said one to another, We do not well, this day is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace. We have been admitted through grace as spies into the good land, that glorious rest, which flowes with milk and honey. Oh, brethren, the land is an

exceeding good land, let us go up into it by faith and prayer, let not the highest walls of difficulty within or without discourage us. Is it not a promised land to Israel? You who are precious heirs of the promise of the Spirit, own your right by faith and sue it out by prayer in the name of Christ whilst the fleshly seed are glorying in their humane wisdom and parts. Let the right seed rejoyce in the stable covenant meade with them and which was made and performed to Christ for them, that his Spirit and his word which was upon Christ should remain upon his people from generation to generation. Is. 59.21, Acts 2.23 [33?]. This Spirit of Christ hath remained with his during the time of the churches being in the wilderness but in a low measure sutable to the suffering state of the church. Now is not the set time for the building of Sion's wastes, raising up the foundations of many generation, opening breaches and restoring paths to dwell in? All which works of wonder, with many more speedily to be effected, may serve to assure us that God will not leave us destitute without a portion of his Spirit sutable to the work of the day. Oh, how much is it needed at this day to the holding forth of the glorious Gospel, the convincing gain-sayers and carryyng on the administrations of God's house, so that the glory, power and beauty which spiritual souls look after, might be seen upon them.

How heavily do men drive without it in their prayings and prophesyings. Now, inasmuch as the Lord will maek a short work in the earth, he will speedily give forth his quick Spirit for the effecting of it. Is it not yet a very little while? See Is. 29 from the 9th to the 18th verse. We are not without hopes to see it so with us that we shall discenr as clearly a power within us in all our worship as a word of truth without us to warrant it This promise of the Spirit is the promise of the Father as Christ call it, Acts 1.4, and it's honoured above many other promises. The great thing Christ so much commended to his disciples before his departure, is it not the Spirit, read John 14 and 16, the waiting for it must be grievous to us. If we see no sign of rain after the sound of rain, let us send forth our prayers, as Elijah did his servant seven times and then, if thre cloud be like a man's hand, let us not dep[s]ise the day of small things, yea, let us diligently improve our present mewasure prizing the gift of God in any degree upon this account. Though we have just cause to be humbled for our unworthy frames in this work yet we are will;ing to improve our small measure, that we might provoke you to lft up holy hands to God in the heavens uncessantly untill the Spirit

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be poured out from on high and the wilderness become a fuitfull field, Is. 32.15f. Give us leave to cry unto you, Oh, awake, awake, it is high time to seek the Lord who is ready to rain down upon you with his holy, sweet and blessed Spirit. Having tasted a little of this honey we have been made to say, Oh, how are our eyes enlightened, our hearyts united, enlarged, quickened and greatly comforted. Inthis work we have purposed (if God prevent not) at our meeting which is to be at Wells next spring, to spend four dayes, two of them seeking the Lord for the pouring out of the Spirit and those gifts which the work of God calls for. And that we may the better know the work of the saints att this day, we humbly pray you, beloved brethren, to wait on God as Daniel did concerning his people and the holy city, Dan. 9. Go, by fasting and prayer, enquiring diligently what special word of prophesie is now fulfilling upon the saints in this present condition, looking at the welfare of God's people in general, a worke gloriously rewarded, as appeareth Dan. 9. From the 20 to the 23 verse and other eminent servants of the Lord, as Ps. 122.6, David, [I] Samuel 17.46, Hezekiah, Is. 37.20. If God raise up your spirits to send some help to the wolrk of the Lorfd amongst us at our next meeting we shall gladly embrace it ads an answer of prayers. Let us remember our relation as fellow members of one body though in distinctr congregations. It would be our grief, dear brethren, for any of you to slight these things and to fall short of the gloy we pursue. Now, that neither you nor we may miscarry in travelling for this glorious birth of the Spirit, we are perswaded it concerns all vigorously and with all our might to strive to purge ourselves and the Lord's house from the abominable pollutions of pride, formality, covetousness, vain-speaking, lightness of behaviour with other evils. Having God's promise that he will purely purge away the dross of Zion and take away all her tyn, Is. 1.25 Thus with our eye to the Almighty to set it upon your spirits as in the sight of God and in his fear to consider the things here humbly presented to your view, we say no more but with our hearts and hands subscribe ourselves.

Subscribed by us in the name and by the appointment of the rest of the messengers met at Charde, 7 moneth, 28 day, 1655. The meeting to begin the eighth day in the morning, second moneth 1656.

Your affectionate brethren

and servants in the Lord,

THOMAS COLLIER,
JOHN PENDARVES.²⁷

[From Wells, April 1656]

The very God of peace be with you filling your souls with joy and peace in believing

Precious and dearly beloved in the Lord,

Our heart's desire and prayers to God for you is that you may grow in grace, and that you may flourish in the Lord's house as plants of his own right hand's planting and that you may bring forth much fruit, and that your fruit may remain. That you may be known by your glorious garments to be the followers of precious Jesus, holiness to the Lord being written on all your conversations, that gain-sayers may be ashamed and be made to confess that God is in you of a truth and to cry out with those that followed Baal that, the Lord he is God, I Kings 18.39. Dear brethren, the Lord by a good hand of his providence to the great refreshing of our souls, hath brought us together from far, and counted us worthy (who are most unworthy of ourselves) to be employed in the great affairs of Christ to be waiting for the promise of the Father, the powrings forth of the Spirit, to fit us for the world of our day and lead us on to the building of Zion and the great things that are to be done in these latter dayes. In this our seeking to him our God hath graciously owned us by his presence in the midst of us, carrying us up to the mount, giving us some precious views of glorious Canaan, raising our faith. Oh, we are even astonished to think what God is about to do: our joy and wondering doth scarce leave room for faith to describe what we expect. We have seen the Lord exalted and his train filling the temple. We have in some measure been embracing our dear Jesus who hath even made us sick with love and overcome with longings for that day of glory when we shall appear with him and be made like him and shall for ever be with him, not onely beholding but enjoying glory, Oh, if the crumbs be so sweet as to make us rejoyce with joy unspeakable and full of glory what will it be when faith and hope shall stand aside and we sit down at table to enjoy the fulness of glory?

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Dearly beloved, lift up your hearts for the day of glory is at hand, be patient and hope to the end. Let worldlings take the world but let us be with Christ our lord and king. We can say that a day in his courts is more precious then the whole world. He is the chiefest among ten thousand and he is altogether lovely. His waies are waies of pleasantness and all his paths are peace. We may say the half was not told us, his glory exceeds the fame that we heard of him, II Chron. 9.6. Oh, happy are those that are but permitted to wait at his gates, Cant. 7.13, Ps. 84.10. But oh, we are yet too low to set forth his glory. Let us rather believe and wonder and so sit silent, then speak to darken the glory of our beloved.

We have not time to tell you of the many precious tokens we have received of the Lord's owning us in this work.

After two dayes spent in fasting and prayer, we came to consider what promises we might be under at this day and by a precious hand of the Lord we came to consider that word, in Ps. 102 from verse 13 to 22 and some hours was spent in considering of it. The Lord made it of much use to us for raising and strengthening our faith about Zion's building. We desire you may consider if this be not the set time and, if it be, it much concerns us all to be up and be doing, to put our hands to the work, not onely in this nation, but also to pray that it may be carried on in other parts of the world as the Lord may open a way.

It is in our hearts to wait for the call of poor dispersed Israel after the flesh which is of great concernment in this building and to pray for the fall of Babylon which things also have been with some power set upon our hearts. And we do earnestly entreat you, both in congregations, families and closets, to make it your business to cry mightily to the Lord, even night and day, to give the Lord no rest, unless he makes Jerusalem a praise in the whole earth, Is. 62.7. Oh, we would beseech you to consider it perfectly, that word of the Lord hath been of good use to us in this work. In the latter daies ye shall consider it perfectly, Jer. 23.20. Be not discouraged if you meet with great oppositions from within and without, but know the work is the Lord's and our strength is in him, Ex. 15.13. Let us go up as David against Goliath in the name of the Lord, I Sam. 17.45. Be of good courage and the Lord shall strengthen your hearts, Ps. 27.14. Time prevents our enlarging. We hope that the relation you will receive from your messengers, together with this report of the good hand of the Lord with us, will encourage you to send your messengers to the next meeting to wait upon the Lord in the further prosecution of this great

business. Doth not the Lord say to Sion, in this day fear not, let not thine hands be slack, Zeph. 3.16.

We have appointed the next meeting to be at Exon, the 6th day of the 8th moneth, being the second day of the week, where we have appointed to spend four dayes, two of them in waiting on the Lord in fasting and prayer for the Spirit. We shall adde onely the tenderness of our dear love to you in the bowels of our Saviour. We commit you to the Lord to direct and guide you to his glory and remain your endeared brethren and fellow-servants in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, waiting and longing for his appearing.

Subscribed in the name and by the appointment of the messengers of the severall churches.

From our general meeting the 11th day of the 2nd moneth, 1656.²⁸

THOMAS COLLIER.

JOHN PENDARVIS.

NATHANIEL STRANGE.²⁹

The messengers of the severall churches met at Exon the 6th day of the 8th moneth, 1656, unto the churches of Christ, etc. Mercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied.

Dearly beloved,

The sence of that duty that we owe to you in the Lord, together with the constraints of love and endearment on us to our God for his appearances among us since we came together, hath lead us forth chearfully unto this present undertaking to you-ward, knowing that you have an unquestionable interest in these our affairs and trusting that you will (through the assistance of the same Spirit) have and maintain a sympathie with us as being in the body and members in particular, and therefore have thought it necessary to let you understand that, however, our gathering together unto the feet of Christ hath not been without some small disappointment and straits. Yet, according to the inner man and upon a substantial ground of experience, we can comfortably and unanimously say, it was good for us and an unspeakable mercy to us that we have been here. And we could wish you all had been and may be as we are

except these obstructions. Nay, touching them we have found, that out of the eater came meat to us and out of the strong sweetness. Of which honey in our hands we present you a little that you may also taste and see that the Lord is good.

May you therefore know that in order to the time to be spent in fasting and prayer, we found our spirits mutually and much affected with the sence of the ensuing particulars to be spread before the Lord.

First, that through the good hand of the Lord upon us our hearts might be deeply sensible of the non-improvement of that liberty and those large appearances of God with us in the like assemblings heretofore and of our not following on in the spirit and strength of such mercies in the waies of the Lord our God.

Secondly, that the Lord would keep up the faith of all his people in a constant expectation of the blessed Spirit of promise to be powred forth abundantly upon his children and that in the participation of its anointing we may be more enlightned in and enabled unto the works he hath for us to do in the earth.

Thirdly, that through it he would cause all his people more naturally and sensibly to lay to heart and sympathize with the state and condition of the whole Zion of God by being delivered from the spirit of this world and those carnal interests of earth and men whence so many minde their own things in the neglect of Christ's and one another's.

Fourthly, that if it be his pleasure he would appear amongst his saints guiding them in the light and power of truth into that union and sameness of minde and heart as may heal those sad breaches and divisions among them especially in their apprehensions about the works and duties of their generation.

Fifthly, that the Gospel may have a free course and be glorified everywhere unto the gathering in all the elect to the faith and obedience of Christ and to that end that much of the Spirit may be given to the churches to the preparing and thrusting forth labourers into his great harvest not onely among us gentiles but also if it be his pleasure to use us among that ancient people, the house of Abraham his friend.

Sixthly, that he would strengthen, guide and comfort the hearts of all his mourners in and for Zion that are in a right spirit waiting for its redemption and searching after and hastning unto the fulfilling of all the glorious promises and prophecies that relate to the downfall of all that riseth up against the work of Christ both in themselves and in the earth.

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In the prosecution of which desires although in both daies we found not (and therefore have not to glory in) those constant heightnings of enlargement and rejoycings, as sometimes we have met withall in such dayes. Yet hath there been evidently seen and owned a sweet hand and presence of the Lord more and more humbling us and laying us law in the sence and cause of whole Zion as it now lyeth over the face of the earth. Touching which as the Lord hath in some sweet measure begotten in us a little fellowship with and travel about her estate so cannot we but reach forth this exhortation to you that you also lay her interest to heart in order whereunto we referre you to the enclosed, which we desire may be read and weighed together with this among you.

And for a further encouragement we are informed that the report of the life and union and the appearances of the Lord that have been found among you in this work hath provoked very many both churches and saints in the south and north parts of this nation, to assemble together and have fellowship with you in this cry the which may turn to you for a testimony and a strengthening to your hands hanging down and the feeble knees that notwithstanding any present deaths and disappointments we seem to see on the Lord's work yet he that shall come will come and will not tarry, nay, the Lord will hasten it in his time. This further the Lord hath been learning us while we have been at his feet, that the slow proceeds to our apprehension of this great work so evident in promise and so much in expectation both among ourselves and in the earth is not for that the Lord is slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness but is patient to us-ward. He findeth that we are not yet so delivered from our earthly mindedness, coveteousness, pride, formality, coldness to the things of Christ etc., as doth become a people that look for those things and as would render us in a fit capacity to receive such glorious things as we have begged which therefore calls aloud upon us to search, reach and press after a thorow reformation, shaking ourselves and delivering ourselves from the yokes of bondage and Babylon that have been on our neck not onely in worship but also in all manner of conversation. Whereunto we desire that you would give all diligence and in order to it, among other things, that you would not slight or neglect the several messages of this nature that have been formerly sent unto you as the warm fruit and return of the many prayers powred out to the Lord not thinking that once reading them will answer the ends for which they have been sent unto you but that you may have due regard unto

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those things as far as you finde them agreeable with the minde of Christ, as being some special speakings of the Lord to the churches that are to be diligently attended unto by them that would be acquainted with the voice of the Lord in his temple.

And to the end that our communion in this and all the works of Christ that concern us in common may be held up and prosecuted we do agree by the will of God to meet together at Chard the thirteenth day of the second moneth following at evening to spend the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth daies as formerly we have done in prayer and conference, at which time and place we trust you will be forward to send your messengers that we may together be refreshed by the mutual faith both of them and us.

Onely³⁰ whereas at this time we have found that some of you have omitted the sending messengers to us, which we are far from interpreting to arise either from any disrelishing of the work or disrespect to us in it, we have thought good to assure you of our love and longings to you-ward in the Lord. And least, peradventure, any temptation may possibly seize upon you through which you may be discouraged or faint in your mindes we are bold with you to stir up your pure mindes by way of remembrance entreating you for the Lord's sake, that you give not way unto any sinkings in such a day as this least Satan get some advantage on us, for we are not ignorant of his enterprizes.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen.

Written by the appointment of the messengers as above and signed by us,

ALEXANDER ATKINS³¹

WILLIAM FACY³²

NATHANIEL STRANGE

JOHN OWEN³³

The brethren, messengers of the churches assembled at Bridgewater, to the churches of Christ, sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be saints. Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Holy and beloved brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling and waiters with us for the hope of the resurrection and of the glory that shall be revealed at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the blessed hope of saints. Which glorious day the saints of old were earnestly looking for and hastning to. Oh, our precious and beloved brethren, that this glorious and blessed expectation might be much upon our hearts and yours, we your poor brethren, one with you in the faith of Jesus, and the spiritual war of saints, having experience in our own souls of the manifold temptations the Lord's people are exercised withall in this our day of the spiritual warfare and therefore, dear brethren, give us leave to be your remembrancers and to stir up your pure mindes in some few things that rest with weight upon our hearts. The first is that yet it is a day of temptation and rebuke, wherein Satan, that great enemy of souls, as not onely seeking to devour particular persons but churches. Nay, the whole truth of God he turneth into a lie and so many persons are deceived with it who received not the truth in the love of it. Wherefore we earnestly desire that that word, Jude 3, may be much upon the hearts of the Lord's people at this day, that is, earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints as also by faith and prayer to set a stop to Satan's devices. For some of us have some confidence that this devil that is now so much in deceiving souls in an angel-like appearance may be cast out by faith and prayer and that the time is very near at hand. Oh, therefore, stand fast in the faith, quit yourselves like men, and be strong in the Lord.

2. Our earnest desire for ourselves and you our brethren is that a deep sence of that sluggishness and luke-warmness of spirit that is so much seizing on the churches of Christ at this day may be much on our and your hearts and on the hearts of all the saints. Oh, that the God of grace would help all the churches of Christ to see from whom they are fallen that they may be zealous to repent and do their first works. Oh, brethren, how much doth that worldly spirit seize on saints and

on professing people at this day, pride, passion, covetousness and luke warmness. Oh, how much death hath seized upon the profession of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in the day when they have been professing to be in the high expectation of the pourings forth of the gifts of the Spirit. And is it not high time for us to remember and to consider with each other where we are and whither we are travelling and to stir up and provoke one another to love and to good works. And oh, that the power and the life of godliness, even the precious life of faith in the blood of the everlasting covenant might be more pressed after and lived in by all the saints.

Thirdly, our earnest desire is, that it may be much upon our hearts to seek peace and unity one with another and to prefer the prosperity and peace of Zion above our chief joy, praying for her and doing whatever the Lord calls for at your hands. Oh, when will the time come that the zeal of the Lord's house shall even eat up the saints? When they will not forget Zion nor hold their peace for Zion's sake but be earnestly waiting for her perfection rejoycing when the daies of assemblings are and not forsaking the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some is, but willing to do for Zion's welfare, both for building up and for gathering in her stones that yet lieth abroad in the rubbish undiscovered. Remember that it is the property of the servants of the Lord to take pleasure in Zion's dust and it is that which hath (we trust we may say through the grace of our Lord) rested with some weight upon our hearts in this our meeting. And we are confident that the Lord hath led us in a way which may (through his blessing) be to the glory of his name and the furtherance of this so good a work and that is, that the churches of Christ would be free to part with some of their ablest brethren and to send them forth into the Lord's work in the world. Oh, our dear brethren, let it not seem strange that your poor brethren in such a day as this should be remembrancers to you and provokers of you to so good a work as this is to shew your compassion to the sad estate of souls that lieth in darkness and in the shadow of death. God hath given the Gospel ministration as a means to guide their feet into the waies of peace and blessed shall those souls be whose hearts are enlarged to so good a work. Oh, do you not say within yourselves that ye cannot part with your gifted brethren. We know the weakness of the churches, and the great need of more gifts in Zion's building, yet why should not the churches deny themselves and spare a little of that which they have a clear interest in to the poor blinde

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world? And to encourage you in this work know,

First, that it is the churches' duty and it lieth upon them as their work in which they ought to be faithfull and of which they must give an account.

Secondly, the fields are white to harvest and the Lord calls for workmen in this our day to gather in the fruits into his garner.

Thirdly, be ye assured that if your hearts be enlarged in faithfulness to the Lord in the performance of this work you shall not suffer loss: the Lord will both preserve you and give forth encrease of gifts among you. Yea, doubtless, you may expect that the Lord will double his Spirit upon you. Your improvement of what God has given you will be the true way for the attaining of more and for the obtaining of that which the lord hath set your hearts so much waiting for, even the powrings forth of the blessed Spirit of promise.³⁴ Oh, that the Lord would enlarge the hearts of the churches to exercise faith and so set their hearts and hands to it willingly and see if the Lord powre not down a blessing from heaven upon them a double portion of his Spirite. Dear brethren, we have waited together on the Lord in this our meeting the secnd, third and fourth daies of this week and we can say through grace that the Lord hath not left us without a witness of his presence in carrying us through in peace in the debating such things as we presented before us — an account whereof you have with this epistle. Our desire is that the Lord may make it usefull to you and that both your and our hearts may be much with the Lord in the exaltation of his great and good name. Who hath been pleased to account such poor, weak, foolish and nothing creatures worthy (in his dear Son and our dear Lord in whom he hath made us accepted) to bear up his name in the world and to be exercised in his work. Let us be faithfull to him, therefore, and zelous for him that we may finish our course with joy and at the end of the race obtain that prize.

Thus we your poor brethren and your remembrancers do commend you to the Lord and to the word of his grace which is able to make you wise to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Desiring that you may finish your course with joy and obtain the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls, which that you may so run and so obtain the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.³⁵

Written from Bridgewater the 6th day of the 9th moneth 1656 and signed by the appointment of the brethren there assembled by us.

THOMAS COLLIER.
NATHANIEL STRANGE.

**The messengers from the assembly at Chard the 18th day
of the second moneth 1657 to the several churches
sendeth greeting.**

Precious brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, the earnest breathing of our souls are for your growth in grace and establishment in the truth as it is in Jesus in these shaking daies. Oh, this is the time of Jacob's trouble, Satan rageth, the world rejoyceth, and poor Zion's children, some are weeping and making bitter lamentation, others turning aside from the faith which was once delivered unto them, giving heed unto seducing spirits and doctrine of divels; others almost asleep in a worldly spirit, contenting themselves in the form without the power, professing they know God but in works deny him, zeal for God and love to him, his waies and people waxing cold, gray hairs are upon us here and there and, alas, few consider it. The Lord calls to weeping and mourning but, behold, signs of joy and triumph. For these and such like things the Lord hath laid us much in the dust before him in this our meeting. Some of us, if not all, can cry with the prophet, Oh, that our heads were water and our eies a fountain of tears that we might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of our people. Oh, that we had in the wilderness a lodgingplace of wayfaringmen, that we may go and weep our fills for all the abominations we have found in Zion. And, oh, that we had not cause to put ourselves in the first rank in these things. Oh, the joy of our hearts is much ceased, the crown is fallen from our heads and woe unto us that we have sinned. And that which doth much aggravate the sin is the many favours and mercies the Lord hath bestowed upon his people, and we as foolish and unwise people, have thus requited the Lord for his goodness; and, as we have been crying before the Lord, we are engaged to cry upon you to joyn with us in our lamentation of weeping and fasting and oh, let everyone lay it to heart, and begin at home, washing, making clean and putting away our abominations and cast out the stains. Let us cast off our pride and coveteousness and formality and that self-seeking and that lukewarm spirit and hypocrisy, yea, all our darling lusts, envy, strife and vanity of words, foolish jesting, backbitings, whispering and

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wasting of our precious time in vain about other men's matters, lightness of gesture and the like. Oh, let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ, walking humbly, righteously and godly in this present world with our conversation in heaven, let us return to our first love and do our first work.

As we desire in these things to begin at home that we may be good examples unto you so we beg your constant and faithfull prayers to the Lord that he would help us herein, and we shall pray and beseech you as you tender the honour of God, the peace and welfare of Zion and the good of your own souls, that you would lay these things to heart and reform. And also to make it your business to walk with God in your retired work between the Lord and your own souls. Be dayly in self-examination, heartsearching, heavenly meditation, reading of the scripture, studying much the principles of godliness, of the being of God and his attributes, and of Christ the Son of God, of his divinity and humanity, of the worth and efficacie of his blood and of the Spirit, and the authority of the scripture, the grounds of our separation from the world, the resurrection of the body and the last judgement. Oh, look to yourselves, for many shall come in sheep's cloathing which shal privily bring in damnable heresies denying the Lord that bought them. Give yourselves much to prayer: in everything let your requests be made known to God. Remember that Isaac went out into the field to pray, Daniel upon his knees three times a day, our Lord went out into a mountain apart to pray and continued all night in prayer, Peter went up upon the house to pray with other the like instances. Take heed, let not worldly business thrust out heavenly duties but perform them in the first place. Be faithfull and diligent in your families towards children and servants and others committed to your charge as those that must give an account at the day of Christ. Teach and instruct them in the fear and admonition of the Lord with prayer and supplication for them and be you as good examples to them. Be diligent in your church relations and see that you love one another with a pure heart unfeignedly and let all things be done in love watching one over another, bearing one another's burthens. Let there be an esteeming of one another better than ourselves, keep to your assemblies and be punctual to your appointed hour, lest you rob God of what you vow unto him. And in your speakings, either in prayer or prophecy, take heed of vain repetition but study brevity and to compose your matter in few words and be forward as God doth bless you to communicate to the poor saints. Press much after spirituality and faith in the worship of God.

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Take heed of entertaining hard thoughts upon reports of each other or of telling the faults of each other behind their backs but keep close to that rule, Mat. 18.15f. Walk uprightly towards them that are without lest you lay a stumbling-block before them and so bring dishonour to the profession of the Gospel. Do good to all, and as you would that men should do to you so do to them. Let your lights so shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorifie God your Father. And now, let us not be weary of well-doing, for in due time we shall reap if we faint not, for it is your Father's good will to give you the kingdom. Oh, let the love of Christ constrain you and the riches of glory engage you in the following of these instructions. Look much unto the Lord for strength to perform them. Take heed you do not onely give us the bare reading and hearing of these things but so minde them as those that must give an account to the Lord at his appearing and, if you know these things, happy are ye if you do them. And bear with our plainness herein for we must be faithfull unto the Lord and to you lest we become guilty of the blood of your souls, and if you will not hear, our souls shall weep in secret for you where we shall go and power forth our complaints to the Father. The Lord set these things with power upon your hearts. Now, as to our present meeting, we have much to tell you of the Lord's following of us with many revivings in this time of sorrow. We did agree to spend the first two daies in waiting upon the Lord in prayer with fasting and did farther agree upon these following particulars which we beg may be of weight and power upon your hearts and that you may be often waiting on the Lord in solemn assemblies for the performance of them.

1. That the Lord would put his fear in our hearts and bless this our present meeting, raising our faith and keeping us spiritual in the work.
2. That he would perform his great promise in the pourcing forth of his Spirit upon his people to enlighten them in and fit them for his work in this our day, uniting and carrying them on with comfort and courage in his work.
3. To be made deeply sensible of the state of all the churches of that worldly spirit and of those divisions that are amongst them and of their proneness to turn aside from the truth as it is in Jesus Christ and to pray that the Lord would purge and build whole Zion.

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4. That the Lord would call in his ancient people the seed of Abraham his friend.
5. That the Lord would thrust forth more labourers into his harvest and stand by those that are already engaged in the work, that they may be in power what they appear to be in word.
6. That the Lord would call and pluck forth his people out of Babylon and that he would raise Babylon according to his word and that he would maintain the liberty of his people and bring to nought the plots and devices of the enemies that are against it.
7. That the Lord would be pleased to help us rightly to improve these mercies we have already received.

The Lord hath given unto many of us faith in these things and we desire that you and we may be looking up and daily waiting in a constant expectation of the returns of those many petitions which are before the Lord in the hands of Christ. And surely, whilst we have been praying, the Lord hath been answering of us. And we hope you will receive a more full and particular account of your respective messengers of the precious hand of the Lord with us. We have been encouraged by the forwardness of the churches in sending their messengers and we hope you will be encouraged to continue your forwardness herein. We have appointed our next general meeting to be at Tiverton in Devonshire upon the fourteenth day of the moneth to which place and at which time we do earnestly intreat our sending messengers. We intend to stay the 15,16, 17, and 18 daies and desire your cries at the Throne of Grace for us that the Lord would be pleased to be with us and bless our meeting. We shall leave these things to your serious consideration and commit you all to the Lord and the word of his grace desiring that you may be filled with the Spirit to the glory of God. We remain your brethren and servants in the kingdome and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ, waiting for his coming from heaven. Farewell.

Signed in the name and by the appointment of the messengers assembled, by us,

THOMAS COLLIER.
NATHANIEL STRANGE.

Thomas Collier to the churches of Christ in the county of Somerset and the counties near adjacent, Grace and peace be multiplied.

Holy brethren partakers of the heavenly calling, your poor brother and unworthy servant and labourer in the Lord's vineyard, sendeth greeting. This being a day of temptation and of reproach and trouble, the enemy of saints and Zion's peace being more then ordinarily working to undermine the name, truth and people of God from the face of the earth were it possible. In the sight and sence of which I have found my heart somewhat enlarged in that care God and his people have laid upon me and reposed in me, though unfit for such a work as this is. Oh, who is sufficient for these things, none but the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Yet, in the sight and sence of Zion's sadness and that on many accounts as one whom the Lord hath intrusted in his great work I cannot, I dare not, be silent. And that little sight that God hath given me in the behalf of Zion something the more enlarges my heart towards you, in which I shall endeavour to spread before you (as the Lord shall enable me) some few heart considerations very necessary for the Zion of God (by Zion I mean the Church).

First, what hath been the churches' mercies in this our day and truly it hath been very great. Oh, the manifold mercies of God to his people, heart-affecting and heart-engaging mercies, such as the saints before us in many generations have not known. The breaking forth of the glorious light of the Gospel in opening the fountain of free grace and justification through faith in the blood of Jesus, a mystery in great measure hid from many generations past, but God hath now revealed it by his Spirit through the scriptures to the glory of his own name and joy of saints. Oh, prize this precious grace. Here is the way, the door of entring into the enjoyment of justification, peace and reconciliation with God by which souls may have free access to God as their Father. Oh, what manner of love is th^{is}Isaiah!

Secondly, this is not all, likewise our Prophet hath taken away the vail from off his people's faces in giving the knowledge of his will in the practical part of the Gospel, in his ordinances and matters of worship. By venue of which, through the working of his holy Spirit he hath called very many precious souls out of Babylon's wayes and worships and hath

placed them together in families like a flock. Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderfull works to the sons of men.

Thirdly, he hath added unto this a time of peace and liberty for the tryal of his people's love how they will improve all to his praise. For, indeed, to whomsoever much is given much will be required and that upon the account of duty as well as priviledge. But, oh, how hath the Lord's people requited God for his kindness? Hath he not cause to say, as sometimes he did to Israel, Is. 5.4, what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done? And hath he not cause to complain likewise of us as sometime he did of them: do you thus requite the Lord? O, foolish people and unwise, Deut. 32.6, else what means the general coldness and lukewarmness of spirit that seems to come in like an armed man upon the poor churches of Christ, sinking down under a worldly spirit and even dying away from the life and power of godliness. Else what means the little delight in and meditating and speaking of the precious things of Jesus Christ. The little profiting by the ministry and means God hath set in his churches for their building and increasing. The coldness in coming unto the assemblies of the saints and little respect to the retaining and improving the word of life. The many divisions and contentions about small things which argueth that we are carnal and walk as men, yea, as worldly, as carnal men. That liberty that is given unto the lusts of the flesh, pride, passion, earthlymindedness and the like. Oh, the little witnessing to that truth, Gal. 5.24, they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof, reckoning themselves indeed to be dead unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And withall what cause have you to be sensible of the manifold wiles of the great enemy, the prince of darkness who is so much transforming himself into an angel of light. Oh, the many ways that he is at work to bring about his design to overturn the poor churches of Jesus Christ not onely in working in these forementioned evils amongst them but also to bring in damnable heresies even denying the onely Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. And, under pretence of holiness and light within, to undermining the whole truth of the Gospel, many following their pernicious waies in stirring up to despise dominion and to speak evil of dignities and government. Whereas Michael the archangel durst not bring a railing accusation against the worst government in the world but said, The Lord rebuke thee, Jude 8.9. Oh, how easily doth the enemy of saints prevail to turn them aside from the plain rules of the Gospel.

Oh, what cause have we to take up a lamentation for these things and say, how doth the city sit solitary that was full of people? How is shee become a widow? The waies of Zion do mourn: all her beauty is departed. What cause have we to fear that the Lord is departing from Israel? For the joy of our heart is ceased and our song is turned in mourning and the glory of our head is fallen! Woe to us that we have sinned, how have we given occasion to the enemy to blaspheme and justly to take occasion to hate us? How justly have we provoked God to give us into the enemies' hands and wills, that the haters of God should rule over us and none layeth these things to heart. Oh, that Zion could weep sore for these things and because her friends have dealt treacherously with her and are become her enemies. But is the case desperate? Is there no hope in Israel? Yea, there is yet hope in Israel, there may be yet a remedy, if the decree be not gone forth. Oh, that the saints, that Zion would set about the work in good earnest. Who can tell but that the Lord may yet be gracious and he may yet have a blessing in store to poor down upon his poor Israel? Oh, then let this be your work, mourn, oh mourn, for Zion's abominations. Oh, proclaim a fast and weep, yea weep bitterly, and say, Lord, spare thy people, the remnant of thy heritage. And that you may do so, endeavour to get your hearts deeply affected with Zion's condition and everyone with his own sins. Who can say, I am clean? Give over looking after others and quarrelling with and speaking against those that are without. Will not God judge them? Have we not been looking so much after the miscarriages of others till the enemy is come up among us as a flood? Oh, that we could yet prevail with the Lord that his Spirit might lift up his standard against him.

Secondly, let it be everyone's care in this matter, not onely to make diligent search after his own iniquity, that everyone may lie low in a true sight and sence of his own sin but also to turn from all iniquity and to turn to the Lord our God. Oh, Israel, turn to the Lord thy God for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity, take with thee words and turn to the Lord your God, and say unto him, Take away all our iniquity and receive us graciously. Oh, put away your iniquity from between your breasts. Say unto them, get you hence. Say to your pride and vanity, to your passion and peevishness of spirit, say to your worldyness and covetousness, say to your lukewarmness and want of love to God and zeal for him, and say to your love to this world, envy, malice and evill speaking, get you hence, what have we to do any more with these idols? Acknowledge

your iniquities and put away your abominations and turn, O backsliding children, and the Lord will be gracious. For who is a God like unto our God that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his people? He retaineth not his anger for ever because he delighteth in mercy.

Thirdly, be much in the exercise of faith, in the improvement of former and present mercies. And that it may be so, call to remembrance former lovingkindness, remembering the lovingkindness of the Lord, the right hand mercies of the most high, so that you may get your hearts much affected with love to God, one towards another and towards all men. That so, your hearts being seasoned with grace, you may appear for God and his cause in an evil time. Oh, remember that it is usual for the Lord's people to be bettered by evil times. Daies of apostacy and turning from the faith have proved advantages to the truly faithfull, Ps. 119.126ff. When others made void the law, David loved it so much the more and hated every false way. Mal. 3.16, when others thought and said it is in vain to serve the Lord, then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another and the Lord hearkened and heard. Oh, my dear and precious ones, my joy, my crown of rejoycing, if you stand fast, let it be your special care with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord and not unto the world. Contend earnestly, in the meek spirit of Jesus, for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. Building up yourselves and one another in the most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Let it be your care, yea, great care, to endeavour to get your hearts affected with these things and seasoned with grace from on high, living by faith in the unchangeable covenant of grace, seasoned with the fear of the Lord and the dread of his glorious name with love to him above all and zeal for him. Oh, it is good alwaies to be zealously affected in a good thing ! If these things be in you and abound, they make you that you should not be barren or unfruitfull in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I trust that I may say truly that God did set some of these things with weight upon the hearts of the brethren at Chard, of which I have some faith to believe, that the churches of Christ shall reap some advantage and that not onely of the many requests put up to God on their behalf but I hope that the same fire of love to God and zeal for him, the same sence of the present state of the churches doth abide upon the hearts of the brethren, and will be as a fire within them, breaking forth

to the begetting and enlarging light and life in your souls to the Lord. My expectation of this so desirable a mercy hath drawn from me these lines at present being willing to help forward so good a work for God in your souls. Oh, take it in good part as a might [mite] flowing from a heart in love towards you and bleeding in the sence of Zion's sorrowes. Or, at least, that which might cause her to mourn and an arm stretched out after and willing to recover her out of her sinking and dying estate. Oh, that the Lord would sanctifie these lines to you and sweeten your souls to himself by it, that the end for which they were written to you may powerfully be acomplished in you which shall be the prayers of your poor brother who is waiting for the consolation of Israel and much needs and begs your daily prayers for him at the throne of grace. Amongst the rest of Zion's sons, I can say, I trust through grace that you are in my heart to live and die with you and, if you stand fast, I live. I have written these things unto you, not as one that hath dominion over your faith but as a poor helper of your joy, that if by any means I might fulfil my ministry and give account with joy in faithfulness to the Lord and your sauls have I written this. Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father through our Lord Jesus Christ be with yau all. Amen.

Written from the general assembly at Charde the 18th day of the 2nd moneth 1657.

To all the churches of Jesus Christ, called to be saints through the immortal seed which dwelleth in you and shall be with you for ever.

Grace be with you, and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dearly beloved brethren,

We hope it is on our hearts to live and die with you as those that are joynd to the Lard and each to other by the will of God, members of that one body, built up through that one everlasting Spirit, a hoIy tabernacle for the living God. Neither is it the least part of our joy to be serviceable unto you who are our joy and the delight of our dear Jesus. Surely we have been made in much sense to say to the Lord, our goodness extends not unto thee, but if as a few poor worms we may be usefull to thy excellent ones to help them on to the end of their faith,

the salvation of their souls, it shall be enough unto us. And for this we would labour night and day, warning everyone of you, striving with you and together with you with God for you, that every one of you may be presented perfect in Christ Jesus. This design and honest desire of our souls hath brought us together from far to sit before the Lord in this place where we have been taking upon us to speak to God though dust and ashes. Yea, we have been encouraged to spread before your Father and our Father the several weights that lie upon you and us. Wherein we have not been without hope the Father hath not taken advantage through our confessions to condemn us in his presence, or to upbraid us but hath smiled upon us notwithstanding. And though we have been ready to cry out, we are cut off from before thine eyes, yet hath he heard the voice of our supplication. And it is no small addition to our comfort, while we think of it, that while we carried the yokes and burdens of whole Sion, and have been as the souls under the altar, crying, How long Lord, holy and true, why doth this chariot wheel make so long tarrying? The Lord hath lightned us while we have thus looked unto him. Neither shall we be ashamed to say to you, Rejoyce, oh daughter of Sion, behold your king, he cometh in righteousness and in peace, to give an expected end. We have told our Father and your Father that we could not be satisfied with life for ourselves, peace for ourselves, white robes for ourselves, unless Sion also might be made partaker of the salvation of God. And in this we have had some faith and some revivings have attended our souls in the hope of his mercy. And now, as we have been faithfull for you to God, so we would be faithfull for God to you. We have been arrainging the abominations of Sion before the bar of the Most High. We have been crying for justice from the throne upon every sin, for strength and light to purge out every persisting impenitent sinner, as enemies and traytors to the crown and dignity of our Lord Jesus. More particularly, we have been spreading out our hands before the Most High and have made confession of those reigning abominations in our own souls and in the churches, that light spirit, living short of the true sight and sence of God's majesty in his churches and among his saints from whence proceeds that vanity and carelessness which doth so much attend them. We have bewailed that wretched worldly spirit that plucks down the saints from their excellency and leaves such blackness upon them which renders them so uncomely in the eyes of men. We have bewailed that coldness and deadness that is upon ourselves and upon the churches. That formality in holy duties,

that indifferency, that Laodicean spirit that is fallen upon us, while we have been crying, Let him make speed and hasten his work that we may see it, let the counsel of the Lord come, that we may know it. And all this while [we] have been drawing iniquity with the cords of vanity, having been in a great measure as without the sence of the work, so without the true travail of soul which this work should put us into. For these things our souls have been bowed down. And some have been made to cry out, Oh, that our heads were a fountain and our eyes were as rivers of tears that we might weep for the iniquity of the daughters of Sion. Behold, for this our souls have been in distress, our bowels have been troubled, our hearts have been turned within us. We have taken off our ornaments, we have been breaking and bleeding and have been crying out for more sighs, because the crown is fallen from Sion's head by reason of her iniquity. We have been bewailing personal iniquity, congregational iniquity, national iniquity, family iniquity, closet iniquity. We have by search found poor Sion as it were without soundness from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot full of bruises and putrified sores. And now we call upon you that tremble at the word of God to come unto us. Take heed, oh take heed, of being unsensible of poor Jacob's trouble. Take heed of stretching yourselves on your beds of ivory, of drinking your wine in bowls, in chanting at the sound of the viol, anointing yourselves with the chief spices and forget that Joseph is in affliction; your poor nation, your poor families, your poor churches, your own poor souls are in distress. Heaven and earth seems to frown, trouble within and terrour without. These things are come upon thee and who shall comfort thee? Oh come down, sit in the dust, call your solemn assemblies, proclaim fasts, and weep bitterly before the Lord for all your abominations. You have but, as it were, played with God. You have not trembled in his presence. You have been wanton before him, having been without the terrour of his majesty, therefore you have confessed and have delighted to word it out with the Lord. But, alas, you have no sooner gone away but you have forgot what manner of men and women you were and thought no more on your prayers. Oh, how often have you mocked God but, oh, be not deceived, God will not be mocked. It appears already how God takes it at your hands, and now once more you have sent us hither and once more our Father hath smiled upon us for we have begged him to save us yet this once more and truly we tremble. If it should be as at other times what will the Lord do in the end thereof?

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The hope that is in Israel concerning this thing lies in your putting from you that accursed thing. Oh now, if you would pursue this pride, this worldliness, this coldness and slothfulness, your personal neglects, your family neglects, the Lord might yet be intreated to return and have mercy upon us that we might be healed. Oh, that now these things might be laid to heart! How doth the world as a canker eat out your affections to the Lord Jesus, eat out your time, your strength, your zeal. While you have been asleep in the lap of this Dalilah, your locks have been cut off and you are but as other men that whoever beholds you may say, what singular thing do ye? Now, then, lay to heart these crying abominations of Sion: the general complaint in almost all the epistles, the world is too beautifull. Satan hath shewed them the kingdomes of the earth and this hath bewitched them and their mindes are much, oh too much, alienated from the Lord. Oh, brethren, the lot is fallen upon this as a troubler of Israel. And that for which you have fallen before your enemies, bring it out now, and stone it before the Lord. Yea, raise up such a heap upon it as it may never appear more, that God may make this valley of Achor a door of hope. This iniquity hath been apparently written upon your foreheads, witness your remissness in meetings, your neglect of the poor saints and of the ministers of Christ whose daily complaints and addresses are living monuments of this reigning abomination; your cruelty to servants, children, exacting all their labours but take no time to counsel them, instruct them, to shew them that are without Christ that miserable estate wherein they are, that their souls may be the better for you and they bound to bless God on your behalf. And to commune in the Lord with them that are in Christ, that their souls might be comforted, edified, and encouraged to walk with God in their places.

This hath made professors' families so dry, useless, and unprofitable, saints' communion so little tending to edification. This sin eats out all that divine sweetness of regenerating and sanctifying grace. We have mourned in that we have had so great a hand in this trespass in not bearing so faithfull a testimony against it in our ministry. But slavish fear of being accounted selfish or the like hath stopt our mouth untill the mouth of this iniquity hath almost devoured the poor churches of Christ. Oh, we would not consult with this flesh any longer but in our places and desire by these to provoke all the ministring brethren everywhere also to be faithfull to the Lord and their poor churches, to bear a faithfull testimony against every evil way that is hated and abhorred of God, what

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censure soever they may meet withall from men. That of slothfulness, carelessness, another reigning evil, from these two as the root, springs many other dangerous hurtfull practices, the great hindrances of our work in our families, the churches and our own souls. And because they are evils rooted deeply in the heart it is hard to get them out. And we have by experience found how well they are able to bear with testimony against them, with reproofs and counsels and yet lie close. They are sermon-proof and epistle-proof. So strong that they have wrested all weapons out of the hands of saints and ministers that have been formed against them. Now we desire we may no longer rest in a testimony of words but proceed to take some effectual course that sin or sinners may be purged out of the house of God. In order to this we desire the churches that they would set some day or dayes apart wherein they may bewail these iniquities and pollutions of Sion before the Lord and to bring their souls into a through [*sic*] sence of them also. That the ministring brethren would, without respect of persons, bear their constant testimony in their ministry and from house to house night and day, warning everyone to flee from those abominations. That at least they may deliver themselves from the blood of souls having declared to them the whole counsel of God. And if still it be persisted in and plain proofs of it in the waies and works of the professors of Christ, we leave it as the churches' special duty to pursue it by dealing with it untill sin or sinner be purged away. We shall leave it to the Lord and those whom the Lord hath intrusted with his oracles to be further opening and alledging those things whose words we desire may be heeded.

Another evil we had thought to have spread before you for want of opportunity we shall now omit yet desire you may lay it to heart. Look over again our former epistles and that from Chard. We have laboured in vain : that which hath been brought forth hath been to so little purpose. And now, brethren, our hope is in your obedience in those things and we hope we shall rejoyce in you. Nay, we do rejoyce in our hope of you. In this hope we commit you to the Lord and to the word of his grace who is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance amongst them that are sanctified. We remain.

We have appointed our next meeting at Dorchester and desire the churches to send their messengers to be there the 2d day (at night) of the 2d week of the 3d month (vul.) May 1658.

From the meeting of the messengers of the churches in Tiverton, this

18th day of the 7th moneth 1657. Signed by us, in their names, and by their appointment,

Yours dearly to love in and ready to serve you for Christ Jesus,
THOMAS COLLIER,³⁶ NATHANIEL STRANGE, THOMAS GLASSE.³⁷

An account of the meeting at Dorchester, May 1658³⁸

John Coake etc., to Sir John Copleston.

Honorable,

In pursuance of your instructions we speeded to Dorchester where wee cam on monday night aboute eight att night delaying the time untill then, because wee would avoid observation in our cominge and in order to the concealement of ourselves left our swords at Barport. Suddenly after our cominge to Dorchester wee delivered your honour's letter to Mr Bushrode, who thereupon readily engaged his best assistance then acquaintinge us that some of the Annabaptists had beene with the mayor, himselfe and major Strange³⁹ being present and desired to have one of the churches to meete in which, after some consideration and debate, hee refused to grante them. One tuesday morninge the Annabaptists mett in a place of there owne where wee had a trusty and fitt agent attendinge them, thereby to gett knowledge of the number and quality of the persons assembled, as also what they did, who acquainted us that the wholl forenoone was spent in receivinge and readinge certaine letters, (by them styled epistles) which were sent by the respective churches whose messengers there mett. Whereof there were many. The inscription of all which epistles was this, viz. An epistle from the church of Christ in . . . to the messengers of the severall churches of Christ who are now assembled att a generall meetinge in Dorchester. The subject matter of most of them (besides salutations) was to inquire the estate of the other churches and to give an accounte of their owne, the motive to both beinge the consideration of the season, which they assert to be a time of apostasy and persecution, wherein the sufferings of Syon were. There subscription was under such terms: subscribed by your fellow-members and sufferers in the body of Christ. The regilater of this affair was one Collier a clarke, all the while attendinge and recordinge the said epistles. The afternoon was spent in prayer and such kinde of preachinge as they customarily use wherein there were eight employed that little time. In

there prayer all of them much complained of the bonds and sufferings of the saints some callinge it the time of Syon's affliction wherein those that have been glorious lights on the right hand and left hand are shutt up in bonds, vehemently praying that, in order to their deliverance, God would put a hooke into the nostrills of and destroy him who is enemy of God and his people. In both these meetings there were about three hundred persons. The same afternoone came captain Kiffin,⁴⁰ captaine Deane,⁴¹ one of the treasurers at warr, Mr Warren,⁴² Mr Harrison⁴³ and six more from London to attend this meetinge.

Wensday in the forenoone the like or a greater number mett in the same place again and after prayer, performed by captaine Kiffin, many epistles (so called) were presented and read under the same inscription and of like substance with those of the day before. The remainder of the time then as also the afternoone, was spent in answering certain questions, viz,

1. Whither one of there church-members, beinge poore, might lawfully seeke after and receive reliefe from the world?
2. Whither a church-member might lawfully marry with an unbeleever?
3. Whither a teacher might preache and presse such truthes (not being fundamental) on his hearers as appearinge soe to him are yet not generally received for such by the churches in generall?
4. What is to be understood by anointinge with oyle, mentioned in the epistle of James etc., whither it were materiall oyle they anointed with and whither such unction be now in use?
5. Whither layinge on of hands bee now requissitt to be used?

The debate about these questions was very greate and the answers at last resolved soe empty as not worth recitinge. All that was donn besides was the perusall of a little manuscript they had got printed, intituled Sertaine queries and answers proposed and answered att fower generall meetings, two whereof were to bee sent to each church who sent there messengers thither, the contents whereof I could not understand. That afternoone one John Cary,⁴⁴ captaine Vernon and adjutant Allen, William⁴⁵ came to towne. Att night there was a private meetinge in the George, where many of the principple ones were and amongst other things there debated, a great contest arise aboute there joyninge with the fifth monarchy men,

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but for that time not concluded by reason of captaine Kiffin's opposing itt.

Thursday morneinge a little after eight of the clocke, there mett att the George Inn all the grandees with the pastors and teachers only where (the doore beinge close shutt and all resort of others denied) untill two in the afternoone, they sate close in debate but whither about the fifth monarchy business, (broke off the night before) or what else, could not learne. All the day their publike meetinge in the accustomed place was carried on and managed in prayinge and speakinge as before, butt att eveninge another close meetinge was held; to what purpose also unknowne.

Friday morninge they mett againe in the accustomed place, the forenoone in prayer. In the close of there meeting it was published that the messengers of the churches were desired to meete att the same chamber they mett in the night before, to receive an accounte of the result of the generall meetinge to communicate to the severall churches from whome they came and to receive information of the day and place appointed for the next generall meetinge but what their conclusions were on the day and place assigned for the next meetinge wee could not learne.

This donne the company dispersed to there respective homes.

We are your Honour's and the commonwealth's faithfull and most
humble servants,

JOHN COOKE
DANIEL CARY
GEORGE FORDE.

15 May 1658.

The principall persons at this meetinge were these under:

Mr John Cary

Adjutant Allen

Captaine Vernon

Captaine Deane, one of the treasurers at warr. London

Captaine Kiffin

Mr Warren

Mr Harrison

Mr Collier of Wells

Mr Strange of Barnestaple

Mr Sheires of Plymouth⁴⁶

Mr Mercer of Bridgewater⁴⁷
Mr Glasse of Bovey Tracy
Mr Hitch of Lime.⁴⁸

The names of any other we could not get.

The General Meeting at Wells, May 1659.⁴⁹

The messengers to the severall churches to whome they belong sendeth greeting in the Lord, let us not be wary of well doing for in due season wee shall reape if wee fainte not.

Precious and deerly beloved in the Lord,

Our heart's desire and prayer to God is that both you, your churches and wee your messengers may bee awakened, strengthened, established, enlightened and preserved faythfull to the death and then wee shall receive the crowne of life. Notwithstanding the many epistles you have received from former meetings and the little successe they have been attended with which, to our grieffe, wee have cause to mention. Yet wee judge ourselves bound in duty both toward the name of the Lord and your poore soules to adde this one epistle more — and the Lord grant that it may not only bee acceptable to you but also successfull among you. Though wee finde much cause of filling our luynes with complaints yet wee would not forget the kindnesse of the Lord both to you and us. And, first, that hee should make choyce of such unworthy ones and give his Sonne to dye for us and send forth his Spirrite in the Gospell of peace to call us from darknesse. Yea, when wee were running to the pit of misery to bring us backe and put us among his children, setting us together in the hevenly places in Christ Jesus, giving us the everlasting hope of everlasting glory. Yea, such things that eye hath not seene nor eare heard nor entered into the heart of man so wee may cry out with David, Oh, how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that feare thee. May not our hearts leape for joye in the thoughts of this glory and bee much to the admiring the distinguishing grace of God that wee shaould be chosen, others left. We have also cause to take notice of the love of God and his power in keeping us to beare his name and owne his trueth where so many are lost in the dark above and many turned from the precious wayes of God.

And yet, notwithstanding the enemyies endeavours to cast fire in the sanctuary, yet the Lord hath preserved the churches in a good measure in peace and unity and, though our gifts are few and weake, our opposers many and strong who, with all their skill, might have endeavoured to blocke up our way, casting aspersions upon it, and also very much rages opposing, yet the Lord hath given us and doth continue to us many open doers in severall parts for the teacheing of the Gospell to the world which hath been attended, through the blessing of the Lord, with good suckcesses in that great worke of conversion and, further, in taking notice of our mercys wee should not forget this, that, although by meanes of darknesse there is found much difference amongst us in our apprehensions about those things which relate to the worke and those of the lat[t]er day the knowledge of which causing [*sic*] our adversaryes to watch for our ruine, yet the Lord's pleasure in such mercy [is] to performe love and tendernesse amongst us so that wee are still engaged judging it our duty [to keep] our communion together in the church where the Lord hath set us. Only some few members of one church (which to our grieffe wee heare) have separated upon that account. These things are matters of joye and prayse unto the Lord in the churches which wee desire may bee accomplished. And nowe wee would acquaint you with our matters of complaint. And, first, the little returnes that are made to the Lord under all these favours that wee are made partakers of but which [by] Hessekiah wee may bee reproved. Wee meane, both messengers and churches, that wee have not rendered againe according to the benefits done unto us, living too little under the sense of those great favours that wee have beene and still are made partakers of.

(2) Wee have cause moreover [to lament] the little suckcesse that all our endeavours have had, both prayers, epistles and other meanes. But still the opening of the state of the churches presents us with most or all the same things that wee have endeavoured reformation of: that worldly spirite of deadnesse and coldnesse, those church and family neglects are still found amongst us so that we have grounds to feare that there is to[o] much a seting downe in beare complainings, a confessing without forsakeing and what to say further then what hath beene said in our former epistles wee knowe not. Only with the prophit Jeremiah, if you will not heare our soules shall weepe in secret for you. Wee entreat you, take a view of the epistle from Tiverton and, if you expect mercy by the Lord's returning, up and bee doing in the worke of reformation, both in

your own soules and in the churches and in your families, not only a casting away but, with Ephraim, to say, What have I to do any more with idols? And this wee say and with the apostles testify in the Lord that henceforth yee walke not as the gentiles walked in the vanity of their wishes but that wee put off the old man which is corrupt and that wee put on the new man which after God is created in righteousnesse and true holinesse.

(3) Wee have cause to complaine of those neglects that wee found in many churches about the setting of officers according to the primitive paterne though now, it appeares not to bee for want of gifts amongst several of them. Through this neglect the affaires of the house of God are much neglected and doores opened for the enemy to scofe at us and make breaches upon us and the hands of our gifted brethren much weakned in the Lord's worke: severall of them being laid open to an indifferent and careles frame of spirite. The last thing we shall present as mater of complaints is the great neglect that is found in many of such a searching into and pressing after the knowledge of the minde of the Lord in the scriptures about the concernment of the church in the later dayes, by reason of which neglect darknes is much upon us. These matters of complaint wee desire may bee fervently weighed and laid to heart amongst the churches and oh that they may not only bee complained of but utterly forsaken by those that are guilty of them. And, further, wee desire in love and tendernes to advise and exhort that ye may bee much found waiting upon God in faith for his Spirite to bee powred downe upon yourselves see [*sic*] upon whole Syon and that you presse after love and unity among yourselves. Oh, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently striveinge much to bee peacemakers for they are blessed, remembering that the wisdome that is from above is not only pure but peaceable, take heed of pressing rash judgment one upon another because you have not all the same measure of light.

Consider that wee all know but in parte and if that parte bee more to one in some trueths it may bee more to another in other trueths. Therefore as everyone hath received so let him walke as a faythfull steward of that grace. Let us not fall out by the way because wee are brethren but let all our things bee done with, and all our differences bee managed in, a spirit of love simply enquireing of the glory of God and the good of each other's soules. And let us take heed least in oposing the things wee knowe not wee are found noe lesse then fighters against God. Let

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us also take heed that wee do not abuse any light that God hath given us indeavouring to unchurch, if not unsaint, those that have not received the same measure of light which is by our separation from them. As also that wee do not take up nor impose darknes instead of light to the dishonour of God and the breach of the churches. Also wee desire that you as churches may as much as in you lyeth, presse after and walke up to the primative patterne not only in matter but also in manner of government and discipline with respect to the settlement of elders and deacons which, through the blessing of the Lord may bee much to his glory and the churches' good. Wee further desire that the concernment of poore friendes lying in their blood (among whome you were in tymes past) may bee much upon your hearts before the Lord and that, both at home and abroad, you may much endeavour their conversion. And it may bee a very acceptable service to the Lord if you may bee sendinge forth the joyfull sound into darke partes remote from you. Wee also desire that both in your families and abroad in the world you may walke soberly, faythfully, dealing justly to the prayse of him who hath called you to his kingdome and glory. Though wee might present much more unto you wee shall desire to present it to the Lord for you, praying that our labours may not only bee accepted by you but also may bee very usefull amongst you to the Lord's glory and your good. Wee commit you to the Lord and the word of his grace and remaine,

Signed in the name and by the your brethren and servants in appoyntment of the messengers the Lord that truly desire both assembled at Wells, the 13th your present and eternall day of the 3rd month 1659.

welfare.

THOMAS COLLIER.
NATHANIEL STRANGE.

The next meeting is appoynted to bee at Bridgwater the 11th of the 8th month 1659.

Severall queryes and answers at the generall meeting at Wells, 13th day of the 3rd month 1659.

Query 1. Whether it bee lawfull for any member or members to forbare the practice of any ordinance of Christ when the church is waiting upon

the Lord therein if they bee in a capacity for the practisinge thereof.

Answer: the word, capacity, in the question being understood of ability of body or not being lawfully called from home or not under dealing by the church, wee answer that it is the duty of every member to keepe his place in the church in the performance of all the ordinances of Christ. Heb. 10.25, Acts 2.42, Mat. 26.27, 28.20, I Cor. 11.2, 14.37. If so then —

Query 2. Whether there bee any further duty lying upon the church toward such a member then to admonish them to their duty.

Answer: the question depending upon the former and being understood as explained in the answer. Wee judge the church ought to deal with such a person according to the rules of Christ, as the nature of the sinne shall bee found, in all faythfulnesse and tendernesse.

Query 3. Whether or noe it bee a duty at all tymes to seeke the face of God by prayer in the church before the word preached?

Answer: wee judge that prayer is a duty to bee performed in the church in the caring on of the ordinance of Christ, Eph. 6.18, Prov. 3.6, Acts 2.47. Wee also judge it necessary at all tymes to bee sollemly performed before entering upon either preaching or prophesying in the church, Acts 6.4, Phil. 4.6, I Tim. 2.1. Wee would not be understoode by this to obstruct a word of preparation.

Query 4. Whether a member leaving his place in the church in the ordinance of breaking bread upon the account of his not seing of interest in Christ and, after a 12 month waiting, being then withdrawne from by the church for that neglect the church may receive him againe without repentance?

Answer: Wee judge that though a member were under the want of sight of interest in Christ yet it was sin in that member to omit the ordinance which Christ hath appoynted in his church and wee judge hee ought to be sensible of his neglect of duty yet wee desire the church may use much tendernesse toward such a member in his reception. Heb. 10.23, Is. 50.10, Gal. 6.12.

Query 5. What is the power that a church doth invest him with whom they call to the office of an elder?

Answer: the resolution of this question is refened to a former answerd given to a question much of like nature proposed at the fifth generall meeting at Charde.

Query 6. Whether the answerd of the brethren at the fift generall meeting concerning the sending forth of the Gospell ministry to the world

were a hasty conclusion or whether it bee the churches' neglect in not sending?

Answer : it was then the sense of the assembly and still is that according to the capacity that the churches are in they ought to send there ministers to preach the Gospell to the world.

Question 7. Whether that life of which the saints have in them by faith is God's nature in respect of offence of whether it bee [the] dwelling of his influence that by fayth is seene to bee in them.

Answer: that the Spirite of Christ is in his people is without doubt according to the scriptures. But, to bee curious inquiring after the manner how it is, wee judge it not to bee the worke of Christians, it being a height and depth (as wee apprehend) unsearchably. What it's in parte we apprehend to bee in the gifts, operation and fruits of the Spirite, Ps. 68.18, Gal. 5.22. But what further wee must leave, therefore wee desire the brethren concerned in this query to bee moderate and not overwise in their owne understandings to impose their apprehensions upon each other but to keepe to the scriptures' language even the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Question 8. Whether it bee lawfull for a church of Christ to hold communion with soldiers as they stand servants to the present power of this nation?

Answer: if they be only soldiers under the power in being and the protector and the church having nothing more to charge them with then meerly standing in the army wee judge it not lawfull for the church to deny them communion. Luke 3.14, Acts 10.12, 33 with the whole chapter. This was assented unto by all except one who was contrary minded and 7 or 8 that doubted. If so then —

Question 9. Whether it bee sinfull for members to separate from churches that have bene or at present are in such a practice?

Answer: wee answer that it is sinfull for members to separate from churches that have been, or at present are, in such a practice.

5 brethren doubted as to this answer.

Question 10. How farre it's warrantable for ministring brethren or other members to have fellowship guilty of such separation and under the admonition of the church.

Answer: in noe other way but in admonishing them or some other lawfull meanes tending to the reclayming of them.

From the messengers of the severall churches assembled at Bridgwater on the 16, 17 dayes of the 3rd month to the church of Christ assembled in Lyme.⁵⁰

Deerly beloved in our king, priest and prophitt Jesus Christ, grace, mercy and peace bee multiplied unto you in his name through his eternall Spirit from the invissible God the Father of the faythfull.

Deere brethren, wee fulfil a parte of our duty to you-wards to give you a breefe account of the effect of our meeting: which is, being all assembled, there did appeare a great measure of the Spirit of supplication presented to the throne of grace with much fayth and fervency in the expectation of the gracious presence of the Lord to bee made manifest amongst us to guide us in respect of what did or might lye before us. And, after some tyme had been spent in way of wayting on the Lord, wee were then exercised in a way of debate consarning the cheife end of our meeting, namely, the more orderly ordaining⁵¹ of brother Thomas Collyer for the performance of that worke that hee hath beene a long tyme exercised in, namely, in gathering and confirming the church. And, first, in our debate there was a generall conclusion that an orderly ordination of ministry in the Church of Christ is an ordinance of Christ now in force. But, in the manner of ordination by the laying on of hands, much debate was spent in differences; and herein there was not a full consent. These messengers differed: from Abington, brother Pendarvis with another brother from that church; from Lyme, brother Goodman; from Killminton, brother Hitt and brother Parsons; from Broote,⁵² brother Crabbe and brother Elliot; from Hach, brother Parsons; in Bridgwater, brother Wells.; from Bristol, brother Heynam. These, though scrupling, yet not opposed the rest of the brethren. They having fayth to act in it who were unanimously caried on this enquireing not only how their judgments but affectlons also were drawne forth to the thing. They breifly and fully, one by one, with much fayth concluded it there duty to procede in a further and more orderly ordaining and appoyntinge our deerly beloved brother Thomas Collier in the name of our Lord Jesus and of his churches who were one in it, to the worke of the ministrey to the worlde and in the churches which was performed by two brethren of Luppitt who were formerly ordained and now called thereunto as their duty being desiered by the rest of their brethren which caused joye on [to?] us at present who are confident that

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particular churches will reape the frute thereof in due tyme to the prayse of God.

Wherefore, deere brethren, wee desire that our service may bee accepted of you his saints for whose sake wee have devoted ourselves hereunto, wee desiring your growth in the grace of and eonformity to the Lord Jesus, wee rest subscribing ourselves your servants in the Lord and in the wayes of his holinesse.

It is desired by this assembly:

1. That brethren be sent from the respective churches to Taunton the 18, 19, 20 dayes of the 7th month next.
2. To bring with them a breefe narrative of the fayth and order of every church to whome they belong.
3. Such questions as are of weight.
4. Their bounty to a poore brother of Bridgwater whose great necessity was layd open before us.
5. That the brethren to order their occasions beforehand as not to bee straytned in tyme when meete.
6. 2 things were presented by brother Collier to be remembered:
 1. By way of request that wee remember him to the Lord in the churches. Eph. 6.18f., Ro. 15.30f.
 2. By way of exhortation: that wee walke worthy of our high calling. Eph. 4.1ff.

Signed with the consent of the assembly,

By ROBERT ADDRIDGE,⁵³ TOBY WELLS.⁵⁴

Notes

¹For Collier see 'Thomas Collier and *Gangraena* Edwards,' *B.Q.*, XXIV, 107 n.l.

²G. F. Nuttall, 'The Baptist Western Association 1653-1658,' *J.E.H.*, XI, 1960.

³At this point the Lyme Churchbook, 26, adds: 'in order to the practice of which duty, upon enquiry what churches have brethren fitted to be parted withall for this worke, wee offer our understanding that these may bee this supply: from the church of Bradley 1; from Bridgwater and Taunton 1; Riden and Parret 1; Luppit 1; Tiverton 1;

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Plymouth 1. And the course most conveniently to be taken for the accomplishment of this worke in the churches is by an epistle now to be sent to the respective churches to informe them and encourage them herein. And that our brother Collyer and brother Strange bee desired to visite the churches for the accomlishment of this worke.'

⁴E. B. Underhill. *Confessions of faith*, London 1854, 104f., gives the 44th article of the 1656 *Confession*: 'That the ministry of civil justice (being for the praise of them, that do well and punishment of evildoers) is an ordinance of God, and that it is the duty of the saints to be subject thereunto, not only for fear but for conscience sake ... And that for such, prayers and supplications are to be made by the saints.' The texts cited were Ro. 13.1-5, I Pet. 2.13f., and I Tim. 2.1f.

The signatories were (*ibid.*, 73):

Of the church of Christ meeting at Bridgwater, Alexander Atkins and Tobias Wells.

Of the church meeting at Taunton, Thomas Mercer.

Of the church meeting at Ryden, Robert Adridge.

Of the church meeting at Hatch, George Parsons.

Of the church meeting at Chard, Roben Channon and John Sprake.

Of the church meeting at Somerton, William Scriven and William Anger.

Of the church meeting at Wells, David Barret and Thomas Savery.

Of the church meeting at Wedmore, Thomas Urch and Richard Coals.

Of the church meeting at Stoak, William Hare.

Of the church meeting at Wincanton, Blaze Allen and Ambrose Brook.

Of the church meeting at Munticue, Thomas Bud.

Of the church meeting at North Bradley, William Crab and Nicholas Elliot.

Of the church meeting at Luppit, Edmund Burford and Samuel Ham.

Of the church meeting at Sedbury, James Nobs. Of the church meeting at Bristol, Henry Hineham.

Of the church meeting in and near Lime, Abraham Podger.

⁵Lyme Churchbook, 28f. notes that the first query came from the church at Stoke, the second from Luppit and the third from Exeter.

⁶These were, presumably, the letters from the meetings at Taunton in September 1654 and at Bridgwater in April 1655.

⁷Lyme Churchbook, 28f., inserts: 'as one brother Ames in Waterford who, with others, is separated from the church there, did leave it with our beloved Collier under his hand in writing that the reason of their separating from the church in Waterford was their pride and covetousnes and that in the particullers before mentioned.' See W. C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (Ed. 1955), 218.

⁸*ibid.*, 23, inserts: 'One Captaine Grime baptized (as hee said) in Scotland, our brother Collier reproving him for his pride in apparell in the presence of some brethren said, Do you finde fault with me? You would say something if you were in Ireland. Oh, the most abominable pride that ever was amongst professing people! — mentioning particular persons which at present are forborne.'

⁹Bridgwater was represented at the meeting which ordained Collier in May 1654 by Tobias Wells; it was represented at the April 1655 meeting, at Wells in April 1656 and Alexander Atkins and Tobias Wells signed the 1656 *Confession*. It was also represented at Exeter in October 1656 and at the meeting at Bridgwater in November that year. At this meeting Bridgwater, linked with Taunton, was asked

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to surrender one member for evangelism. 'Mr Mercer' (Thomas Mercer who signed the 1656 *Confession* as representative of Taunton?) was described as 'of Bridgewater' by the government agents in Dorchester in 1658. Tobias Wells and William Coleman represented Bridgewater at the 1689 Assembly in London.

¹⁰Riden is Ryden in the parish of Williton (G. F. Nuttall, *op. cit.*). The church was represented at Bridgewater in April 1655, at Wells in April 1656 and Robert Addridge signed the *Confession* of 1656. At the Bridgewater meeting held in November 1656, 'Riden' with 'Parrot' was asked to send out a single evangelist.

¹¹Abingdon church was formed c. 1650. John Pendarves was its minister until his death in September 1656. It was a founder member of what has become known as the Berkshire Association. For further details see E. A. Payne, *The Baptists of Berkshire*, 1951. Pendarves, with another, unnamed, was present for the ordination of Collier in May 1654 at Bridgewater. The church was represented at Bridgewater in April 1655. Pendarves was at Chard in September 1655 and at Wells in April 1656.

¹²Stoke was probably Stoke St Mary (Nuttall, *op. cit.*, 216, note 5). The church was represented at Bridgewater in April 1655, at Wells in April 1656 and William Hare signed the *Confession* of 1656. The church was also represented at Exeter in October 1656 and put up a query at Tiverton in September 1657.

¹³The church at Chard is supposed to have been founded before 1653 by 'Captain Wallington' (*B.Q.*, IV 30). The church was represented at Bridgewater in April 1655, presumably at the two meetings held at Chard, in October 1655 and April 1657, at Wells in April 1656 and at Exeter in October 1656. The *Confession* of 1656 was signed by Robert Channon and John Sprake. The church was represented at the 1689 London Assembly by William Wilkins.

¹⁴Sydbury, Gloucestershire, is listed as Sudbury in 16R9 but without the name of its representative at the London Assembly. G. F. Nuttall (*op. cit.*) identified it as Chipping Sodbury. The church was represented at the meeting at Bridgewater in April 1655 and at Wells in April 1656, James Nobs signed the *Confession* of 1689.

¹⁵Thomas Collier wrote to a church at Taunton as early as 1646. (See 'Thomas Collier and Gangraena Edwards,' *op. cit.*, 108). The church was represented at Bridgewater in April 1655, at Wells in April 1656 and Thomas Mercer signed the 1656 *Confession*. At the November 1656 meeting at Bridgewater the church was asked, with Bridgewater church, to send out an evangelist. Thomas Winnell represented Taunton at the 1689 Assembly in London.

¹⁶Dalwood was represented at Bridgewater in May 1654 for the ordination of Thomas Collier by brothers Hitt and Parsons; on this occasion the church was listed as 'Killmenton.' Dalwood was represented at Bridgewater in April 1655 and at Exeter in October 1656. It sent James Hitt and Thomas Payne to the London Assembly in 1689. Cf. W. T. Whitley, 'Loughwood and Honiton, 1650-1800,' *T.B.H.S.*, IV, 129-144.

¹⁷Lyme was represented at Collier's ordination at Bridgewater in May 1654 by one 'brother Goodman.' The church was represented at Bridgewater in April 1655, at Wells in April 1656, at Exeter in October 1656 and, possibly, by 'Mr Hitch' at Dorchester in 1658 — though, if this were James Hitt he may have been representing Dalwood. Abraham Podger signed the 1656 *Confession*. The church sent Simon Orchard in 1689 to the London Assembly. See W. T. Whitley, 'The Baptist Church at Lyme Regis,' *B.Q.*, VIII, 1936-7, 44-8.

¹⁸Wells was represented at the Bridgewater meeting in April 1655, at Wells in April

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1656 and the 1656 *Confession* was signed by David Barret and Thomas Savery. See D. P. Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, Oxford 1971, 37, 322 for references to Barret and the suggestion that the congregation had been formed by the spring of 1653 In the report by Cromwell's agents on the Dorchester meeting in May 1658 Thomas Collier is mentioned as 'of Wells.' The church sent Timothy Brooke to London to the Assembly of 1689. Presumably, also, it was represented at the two meetings held in the town in 1653, 1654.

¹⁹Pithay Baptist Church, Bristol had received Thomas Munday and James Teague into membership in 16S3 (*T.B.H.S.*, II.240). According to *Ivimey* (II.541) Henry Hynam, d. 1679, was believed to be their first pastor. 'Heynam' was at Bridgewater in May 1654 for Collier's ordination. He also signed the *Confession* of 1656. The church was represented at Wells in April 1656 and at Exeter in October 1656. It sent Andrew Gifford to the London Assembly in 1689.

²⁰Dartmouth may have been founded by the close of 1646 with links with Paul Hobson, *Ivimey* II.133f. At this period the church was led by Robert Steed. It was represented at Bridgewater in April 1655 and at Exeter in October 1656.

²¹Wedmore was represented at Bridgewater in April 1655 and at Wells in 1656. The 1656 *Confession* was signed by Thomas Urch and Richard Coals. The church sent George Stant to the 1689 Assembly in London.

²²Somerton was represented at Bridgewater in April 1655 and at Wells in April 1656. William Scriven and William Anger signed the 1656 *Confession*.

²³Totnes had Henry Forty as its pastor in 1656. He was imprisoned in Exeter gaol in 1660. The church was represented at Bridgewater in April 1655, at Wells in April 1656 and at Exeter in October 1656.

²⁴Hatch Beauchamp is the next village to Stoke q.v, The church was represented by George Parsons at Bridgewater in May 1654 when Collier was ordained. It was also represented at Bridgewater in April 1655 and at Wells in April 1656, also signed the 1656 *Confession*. The church sent Jeremiah Day to the London Assembly of 1689.

²⁵Luppitt was founded in 1652 and later met at Upottery (*Ivimey*, II 139ff.). The church was represented at Bridgewater in April 1655 and at Wells in April 1656 Edmund Burford and Samuel Ham signed the 1656 *Confession*. The church put forward a query at Tiverton in September 1657. Thomas Halwell was sent to the 1689 London Assembly.

²⁶North Bradley sent William Crabbe and Nicholas Elliot to the ordination of Thomas Collier at Bridgewater in May 1654. The church was represented again at Bridgewater in April 1655 and at Wells in April 1656. Crabbe and Elliot signed the *Confession* of 1656. In June 1655 the Ponon congregation organised itself as an independent group although before it had stood related to North Bradley, W. Doel, *Twenty golden candlesticks*, London 1890, 8. 11. In 1672 Thomas Collier was licensed to preach at North Bradley, *T.B.H.S.*, I.122. 'Southweek' sent Joseph Halton and John Layes to the 1689 London Assembly.

²⁷For John Pendarves see *D.N.B.* and E. A. Payne, *The Baptists of Berkshire*, 1651. Also note 11 above and my forthcoming article on his life and work in the *B.Q.*

²⁸Among the Whitchurch MSS preserved in the Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford, there is a copy of this letter which includes a list of the churches whose messengers attended the meeting. The Devon churches listed were: Exeter, Totnes, Plymouth, Tiverton, Luppitt, Barnstaple and Bovey Tracey. The Wiltshire churches

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were: Bradley, Amesbury, 'Cleppen Netten' and Andover. 'Amesbury' is likely to have been the church now known as Porton, since Amesbury was one of the villages from which it drew members. 'Cleppen Netten' is still unidentified. Andover (Hants) is an unexpected inclusion — but that town was the original centre for the church now known as Whitchurch. The Somerset churches were: Bristol, Ryden, Wells, Somerton, Bridgwater, Chard, 'Euell,' Stoke, Wedmore, Taunton, Wincanton, Minehead, Hatch and 'South Pearot,' 'Euell' was Yeovil; but Ryden 'with Parret' was asked to send out an evangelist in November 1656 — see both the letter and the queries from this meeting. 'Yeovel and Perriot' sent Thomas Miller to London in 1689. The Dorset churches were Lyme and Osmington — the latter is also mentioned in the Kilmington Church book in August 1656. The remainder were Abingdon, 'Sidbury' (Chipping Sodbury?) in Gloucestershire and Looe in Cornwall. Looe, which was also represented at Exeter in October 1656, was linked with the Cornish Baptist leader Robert Bennet for whom see Mary Coate, *Cornwall in the Great Civil War*, 1933 and D. P. Underdown, *op. cit.* Dr Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *op. cit.*, 216, suggests that the 1656 *Confession* was issued from this meeting but, as a comparison of the two sets of churches represented indicates (see note 4 above), it is clear that the *Confession* was issued by another, later, meeting.

²⁹Nathaniel Strange appears, as a signatory of the letter from Wells, for the first time and, it should be noted, Barnstaple is represented for the first time while Cromwell's agents at Dorchester in 1658 reported that Strange was from there. He signed all the remaining letters, from Exeter in October 1656, from Bridgwater in November, from Chard in April 1657, from Tiverton in September, and from Wells in May 1659. Some of his career can be traced from Whitley's bibliography after 1660. He had been an officer in Robert Lilburn's regiment in 1647. (See Whitley, 56–647).

³⁰Instead of the final paragraph, 'Onely whereas . . . enterprizes,' the Lyme Churchbook, 39, has: 'And as for the queries you have sent unto us, although some straights of time and other wayes have disabled us at the present from answering your expectations, yet the sense of our duty is strong upon us and we have referred it to another time and oppertunity wherein the advantage of the light of some other honoured brethren that are not now with us wilbe obtained, wee trust, to your more ample satisfaction which wee hope shortly to give you an account of. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.'

Since the transcript in the Lyme Churchbook also lists the churches who had sent messengers, among them Lyme itself, the paragraph of rebuke printed by Collier was not in order and hence, in all probability, the alternative ending.

The churches which sent messengers were: Bristol, Dalwood, Looe, Stoke, Lyme, Dartmouth, Tiverton, Bridgwater, Exeter, Plymouth, 'Bouhey,' Totnes and Chard. 'Bouhey' may be a mis-transcribing of Bovey Tracey.

³¹Alexander Atkins had also signed the 1656 *Confession* as one of the two representatives of the Bridgwater church.

³²William Facy, in spite of *Ivimey*, II.68, was imprisoned at *Exeter* after the restoration. A manuscript version of his shorthand survives in the Exeter Record Office and he represented the Reading church at the 1689 Assembly. Facy was pastor at Tiverton and got into trouble there: see Whitley 25–657 and 39–658.

³³This John Owen, who was a member at Dalwood-Kilmington, does not appear elsewhere in these records but may be the author of Whitley, 4–682.

³⁴Lyme Churchbook, 25, inserts: 'the churches wee judge that may be actually exercised in this worke are Bradly one, Bridgwater and Taunton one, Rydon and Parret one, Luppitt one, Tiverton one, Plymouth one.'

³⁵*ibid.*, 26, inserts: 'It is, moreover, desired in the feare of the Lord, that the other churches that are not particularly named in this epistell may reckon themselves on these considerations so farre concerned in this blessed worke as to endeavour to the utmost as to enlarge their borders by sending their ministering brethren as much as may bee into the countryes neere about them and withall to assist in the other more publicke ministration by a mutuall helpe not only in prayer and fayth for them but, as there shall bee any other occasion of helping them onward in their way after a godly sort wherein you will do well. Farewell.'

³⁶This association letter from Tiverton involved Collier in a pamphlet dispute with the Quakers. See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *op. cit.*, 217.

³⁷Thomas Glasse of Bovey Tracy was also at the Dorchester meeting in May 1658. He shared in the production of *Whitley* 36–656, had a warrant issued for his arrest in 1664 (Whitley, 4–664) and died in 1666 (Whitley, 8–666)

³⁸This heading is provided by the editor. The account is taken from John Thurloe, *State Papers (1742)*, ed. T. Birch, vii. 138ff., collated with the original manuscript in Bodley's Library, Rawlinson MS A lxix.75. Birch's version has only been altered when words have been either misread or omitted.

³⁹Major Strange was, presumably, Nathaniel Strange.

⁴⁰For William Kiffin see *D.N.B.* and my 'William Kiffin — Baptist Pioneer and Citizen of London,' *Baptist History and Heritage*, II.2. July 1967. Nashville. Tenn.

⁴¹Captain Richard Deane's early career can be traced in the Clarke Papers. He became a not inconsiderable member of the Cromwellian establishment and, in consequence, found himself in trouble after the Restoration. For his career see the entries under his name in Whitley's Bibliography.

⁴²'Mr Warren' has not been identified.

⁴³'Mr Harrison' was probably Edward Harrison, one of the London leaders of the Particular Baptists. See W. T. Whitley, 'Edward Harrison of Petty France,' *B.Q.*, VII, 214–20.

⁴⁴It is possible that 'John Cary' was the regicide John Carew (*Ivimey*, II.123–7) who provided the Exeter Baptists with a meeting place and whose opposition to Cromwell was similar to that of Vernon and Allen.

⁴⁵For John Vernon and William Allen see P. N. Hardacre, 'William Allen, Cromwellian Agitator and "Fanatic",' *B.Q.* XIX, 1961–62.

⁴⁶'Mr Sheires' of Plymouth was, probably, Abraham Cheare. For whom see *T.B.H.S.* III.95 He shared in the production of *Whitley* 36–656, 39–658 (in defence of William Facy) and, posthumously, to 24–668 and 6–673.

⁴⁷If this were Thomas Mercer he had signed the 1656 *Confession* as the representative of Taunton.

⁴⁸Similarly, if 'Mr Hitch of Lime' were James Hitt he was a member of Kilmington (or Dalwood). See the letter from Bridgwater in 1654.

⁴⁹Both the letter and the queries concerned with this General Meeting are taken from the unnumbered pages which follow page 39 in the Lyme Churchbook.

⁵⁰Lyme Churchbook, 18f, collated with *Ivimey*, IV, 292f. *Ivimey* omitted the six items introduced by 'It is desired by this assembly . . .' and, hence, the reference to

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the next meeting at Taunton in September 1654 which indicates that this letter, whose heading dated it ‘the 16, 17 dayes of the 3rd month,’ was written in May 1654.

⁵¹*Ivimey, ibid.*, 292, interpreted this passage as follows: The office to which Mr Thomas Collier . . . had been ordained, was that of a messenger of the churches, exercising a kind of general superintendency over all the associated churches.’ In 1843, J. G. Fuller, in *A brief history of the Western Association*, 9, described the event of the ordination of Collier to the office of “General Superindent and Messenger to all the Associated Churches”. The implication that this was a quotation from some earlier document rather than Fuller’s own improvement of Ivimey’s account of the event led W. T. Whitley, *A history of British Baptists*, (1932 Edition), 72, and even Dr E. A. Payne in *The Baptist Union, a short history* (1959), 33, to quote him *verbatim*. Such has been the power of a set of inverted commas!

Once the Ivimey-Fuller interpretation has been set aside it is possible to see the ‘further and more orderly ordaining and appoyntinge our deerey beloved brother Thomas Collier, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and of his churches who were one in it, to the worke of the ministrey to the worlde and in the churches’ in a Seventeenth century light. It seems that, though Collier may have been engaged in his missionary work for a decade, he had never been formally set apart for the work and it was this omission that the meeting at Bridgwater set out to repair. On the other hand, the work he had been, and still was, engaged upon had been described by Benjamin Cox in 1646 (E. B. Underhill, *op. cit.*, 58f.) and no new element was apparently added to his responsibility or his functions. The new element was the concern for order manifested by the churches for whose planting, in many cases, he had been responsible. If the letter be read to imply that Collier had been formally ordained among the Baptists, and this is a plausible interpretation, he could have been ordained a pastor earlier.

⁵²‘Broote’ here evidently indicates North Bradley for these two men signed the 1656 *Confession* from there. See note 4.

⁵³Robert Addridge was also to sign the *Confession* of 1656 on behalf of Ryden.

⁵⁴Tobias Wells was to sign the *Confession* of 1656 on behalf of Bridgwater.

2 The Irish Correspondence of 1653

Editorial Note

The 'received text' of the documents printed below and dated from June and July 1653, was published by Joseph Ivimey in 1811¹ and was, apparently, derived from the work of John Rippon.² The present text, however, is the result of the collation of a transcript made from the Ilston Churchbook³ with the version preserved in the Llanwenarth Churchbook.⁴ This is substantially different from Ivimey's. First, in the actual letter from Dublin as given here a longer text is preserved than that known to Ivimey and Rippon which reflects in rather more detail the political attitudes of the writers in the early summer of 1653. Secondly, some of the names of the Particular Baptists in Ireland are given more accurately and, thirdly, some additional fragments of information help to clarify a little further what was happening among them at the time.

The history in detail of the manuscript tradition of these documents can only be guessed but certain aspects of it seem quite clear. It seems probable, for example, that, when the London Baptists had read the letter and supporting documents which John Vernon⁵ had brought them, they had a large number of copies made which they had sent out, with their own covering letter, to a number of churches in England, Scotland and Wales. They, in their turn, it was evidently hoped, would make and pass on further copies to nearby congregations. This correspondence has had its significance somewhat misunderstood by at least two students of the history of Baptist association life⁶ in the present century and may finally prove to be of greater importance as reflecting political attitudes and eschatological hopes among, the Calvinistic Baptists in Ireland in the months before the failure of the Barebones Parliament and the inauguration of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector.

The Irish Correspondence

1. The covering letter from London.

From the Church of Christ at Glasshouse, London.

Dearly beloved brethren,

Whilst wee were slumbering and sleeping with those wise virgins mentioned by our Saviour, Mat. 25, regardlesse of the obligations and ingagements to the Lord which, by soe eminent and signall discoveries of love and works of wonder wrought for us in these last dayes, he hath layd upon us it hath pleased the Watchman of Israell, who neyther slumbers nor sleepes, to rayse up a quickning spirit in the hearts of our brethren of Ireland, provoking them to call upon us to awake to righteousness, to remember our first love, to rend our hearts and not our garments and to turne to the Lord with our whole hearts that, doing our first woorks, wee might receive answers of peace from the God of peace and healings of all our woundes from him, whose propertie is to heale backslidings and to love freely and that the weak amongst us might bee as David and David as an angel of God.

Wee have sent you inclosed a coppie of what wee received from them, which wee pray the Lord to sanctifie to you as in some measure he hath done to us, that it may serve, through the co-operation of the Spirit, as Nathan's parable to David and as the cock-crowing to Peter, to bring to our remembrance all the deadnes, wantonness, unfruitfullnes, want of love and unsuitableness of spirit which have to[o] much prevailed in you and upon you, to the grieving of the Spirit of God, the provoking of the eyes of his jelouzie, the hardening of such as know not the Lord and the wounding of each other's hearts in these times of Gospell peace and libertie. Wee desire you to communicate the same to all our beloved brethren neere you and, with all convenient speed, to certifie us not only what effect the subject therein contayned hath wrought upon your hearts but alsoe a particular accompt of theirs and your estates and conditions with relation to your communion each with other, as grounded upon your fellowship with the Father and the Sonne, in the faith and obedience of the Gospell of Christ. In order wherunto wee intreat your care and paines in visiting the severall weake and scattered brethren in your parts, that from a thorough knowledg of, and acquaintance with, their present standing, wee may receive information from you and our

brethren in Ireland, according to their desires, from us: what churches and societies wee may groundedly communicate with, according to a rule of Christ and what not. Wee shall not offer arguments to perswade you to compliance with our brethren's desires and ours, they carrying soe much evidence and demonstration of truth, necessity and suitablenesse to the Gospell rule, in the very first view of them. Wee have alredey kept a day of holy fasting and prayer, upon the grounds therein expressed and, wee trust, shall never lay downe those spirituall weapons till Satan, the world, and the lusts of our flesh, bee made our footstool. Which the Lord hasten, fox his Christ's sake. To whose fatherly care and tuition we commend you and subscribe ourselves,

Your affectionate brethren in the faith and fellowshipp of the Gospell,

William Kiffin⁷
Edward Harrison⁸
Thomas White⁹
Joseph Sansom¹⁰
Thomas Cowper¹¹
Henry Hills¹²
John Perry¹³
Richard Tredwell¹⁴
Robert Bowes¹⁵
Peter Scutt¹⁶

Our great designe in this letter is to obtaine a full knowledg of all the churches in England, Scotland and Wales and, therefore, wee desire you not to forgett to informe us not only concerning the estates of any churches that are in your country or neere adjacent that soe, if it may be possible, wee might have the full knowledg of all the churches or saints that are one with us in the sound principles of truth. And [to] yourselves, or any other church of Christ, we shall be ready to give the like accompt, if desired therunto, of ourselves or the churches neere us. From the severall echurches of Christ in London, the 24th day of the 5th month 1653.

2. **The letter of exhortation from Ireland.**¹⁷

For the Churches of Christ in London when assembled.

Dear frindes,

Wee cannot without much sense and shame speake of our long silence to you nor, without much greif of heart, think of yours to us, which wee earnestly desire may bee mutually laid to heart by us all for to prevent the like occasion of complaining for the future. Surely it is a needfull, wholesome word of exhortatian, Heb. 3. [13], to exhort one another dayly. Had it byn more in our hearts it would have byn more in our mouthees in those severall oportunityes wee have had of conversing together by our private pennings uppon more common and less profitable affaires. Oh, how many packetts have passed filled with worldly martters since wee have heard one word from you, or you from us, of the condition, increase, growth and decrease of the commonwealth of Israel for whose sakes wee have heard with our eares and seene with our eyes that our God hath greatly reproved kings and mighty men. What hath the Lord byn doing these many yeeres but casting contempt uppon princes and taking away the reproach of his people who were some yeeres since brought low through oppressions, afflictions and sorrow. His hand hath byn still stretched forth to sett his poore despised ones on high from the kings of the earth, even therby increasing the family of those that feare his name like a flock. Yea, God hath done great things for us, wherof wee have made mention, for which wee ought greatly to rejoyce; but, how litle have wee wisely considered of his doings for us. For which wee have meete cause to mourne or, having seene great things of our God for our good, but not observed, neyther feelingly layd them to heart, how many have byn broken that have byn gathered together against Syon and fallen for their sakes. And, surely, were wee not heardened through the deceitfullnes of sinn, our hearts would be more awakened, and all that is within us, to bless his holy name, who hath so blasted the wisdom and power of men when it hath byn opposite to the worke which our God is carrying onn in the earth, which, as wee have cleerly seene, wee have soone forgott through our carnallityes which have suffered too much to reigne in our mortall bodies.

Preciouse frinds, let us in this our day search and examine our hearts by the light of the Woord and Spirit of our God, and, surely, wee shall find that the posture of those poore virgins, Mat. 25, hath byn too much ours. For, whilst our Bridgroom tarrieth, doe wee not all slumber and sleepe soe that little difference is discerned betweene the foolish and the wise? Alas, alas, what meanes the dull, cold, estranged frame of heart wee beare each to other as is before mentioned? And, is it not the like to

our God? Doth it not appeare by our litle zeale for him and lesse delight in his wayes, with constant complaynings, with litle sense of our victory over our leanese, our drynese and barrenese. Are not these instead of the songs of Syon** and [that] in the houre of temptation wherin the Lord, as a man of warr ridinge on victoriously, conquering, yea, and to conquer and subdue all those that will not that Chnst shall reigne over them.** And doth not his voyse cry loud to every subject in Syon, Prepare yee, awake to meete thy God, oh Israell. Yea, doth he not pronounce woes to them that are at ease in Syon? Doubtles expecting, whilst these turnings, overturnings and changes are working in the earth, wee should stand upon our watch, enter into our chamber, be a holy, praying, yea with all supplications in the Spirit, humble, praysing people. For, doubtless now, if ever, wee are especially called upon to put on the whole armour of God that wee may be able to stand in this day, and, having done all, to stand.

Wee therefore desire to revive your memory and our owne, with these knowne and approved exhortations, Eph. 6.10–17. Beloved brethren and sisters, wee, even with teares, beg for you and our selves, that all and each of us may in truth of heart bee retiredly exercised in recounting and calling to mind what the Lord hath done for our soules and for our bodies, for his people in generall, and what he is doinge and with what great and precieuse promises he tells us are in his heart, as his resolved intendments, speedily to accomplish.

Wherin and in expectation wherof he calls upon us, Is. 65.18, but bee yee glad, rejoyce for ever, in that which I create. For, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoycing place and her people a joy. Wee recommend unto you the foregoing and following verses,** earnestly begging that every one of us may give all diligence to keepe alive, yea rather to begett oyle in our lampes least they goe out and wee sit downe in silence, yea, even departe in sorrow. Wee, therefore, [are] to recount the speciall and signall wayes the Lord tooke with our forefathers, Israel ofould, with the returnes they made and the frames of their hearts and therefore in very faithfullness [what] the Lord gave them; all which are left upon record for our instruction.**

Deerly beloved brethren, the Lord engaged our hearts with the rest of the churches of Christ in the faith and order of the Gospel in this nation joyntly as one person to waite upon him by fasting and humiliation and cry to him by prayer and supplications in the sence of our great shortnes

of and unsutableness unto what is in the within — closed particulars expressed; the which wee alsoe tenderly offer and, as our resolutions direct, recommend unto you, our fellow members, followers of the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ, being hopefully assured this will be our recovery from a slippery and slothfull condition, the which hath made in us all too much the seat of Satan, the sadd fruits of which temper are manifest, Prov. 24, latter end. Yea, precious frinds, the Lord hath given us comfortable hopes that, in the prosecution heerof,** the Lord will roare out of Syon to the consumption and utter destruction of Antichrist, the man of sin**, and will, through his mighty working of his blessed Spirit, fitt and prepare us for every condition. Yea, if he shall bring uppon us such a tryall as hath not yet beene seene in our dayes or this the dawneing of his blessed day, soe much promised yet too litle hoped for! However, he will hasten it in his time, Is. 60.22.

Wee, for our conveniency, have agreed to keepe the first Wensday¹⁸ in every month, from 6 to 6, the which, with others the breathing of our hearts, wee have committed to the care and trust of our beloved and faithfull brother, John Vernon, the bearer heerof who, through the blessing of the Lord, will suddenly be with you and will alsoe acquainte you with our state and condition. He is in full communion with us, his conversation hath beene in zeale and faithfullnes. The Lord haveing put it into the hearts of all his congregations in this Iland to keepe a more revived correspondency with each other by letters and loveing epistles.** The which wee acquainte you with haveing** in the practise heerof found great advantage not only weakning Satan's suggestions and jealousyes but it hath begott a closer union and knitting upp of heart and, which is not inferior to the rest, wee are enabled therby feelingly and knowingly to present each other's wants and conditions before our God in the sence therof And that wee might bee therby the better enabled to answere our dutv towards you and you towards us and beare each other's burdens and soe fullfilling the righteous law of Christ in our great and neere relation, wee heerby earnestly request and begg the same brotherly correspondence with you and from you desireing the same things by your meanes with all the rest of the churches of Christ in England, Scotland and Wales whom we trust you will provoke to the same feelings and which wee hope, once in 3 months, may be mutually obtained. You may remember, sometimes since, our earnest request, which request was to you once and againe, to have a perfect account from you of all the churches of Christ owned

in comunion with you in the places before mentioned, which desire, had it beene answered, might have prevented our long sad sylence and the dangers of receavings or refusings such as ought, or ought not, to be communicated with. And with this wee offer one request more unto you, if it hath not byn lately practised: which is that you would send two or more faithfull brethren, well acquainted with the discipline and order of the Lord's house and that may bee able to speake seasonable woords suiting with the needes of his people, to visit, comfort and confirme all the flock of our Lord Jesus that are, or have given upp their names to bee, under his rule and government in England, Scotland and Wales. And for the smale handfull owned by the Lord in this nation, wee trust it shalbe our care more naturally to looke after and watch over then heertofore the rather because wee have observed Satan, our substill enemie, by his depthes and wiles, whose time wee belive is short, takeing the opportunity of the peace and rest lent to us by our God, ready to slay us by casting us into carnall security even lulling our hearts asleepe and that in this houre wherin as before exprest wee are especially called upp on to be a praying, watchfull people. For surely the Lord is now at hand! Therefore, let us leave off the beggerly pursute of the things of this world and let our moderation be knowne unto all men, being carefull for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication and thanksgiveing makeing knowne our request unto God for Syon, for each soule therin, for all the particulars heerin mentioned, for the peace and tranquility of the nation wherin wee live, Jer. 29.7, and for the rulers and magistrates the Lord hath sett over us and particularly for those with you,** in whose prosperity the honoure of God, the quiet and rest of his people and the cause of the poore and needy, the wydows and the fatherlesse are soe much concerned and whose miscariage (if the Lord shall suffer) wee may expect will bring in as floudes sorrowes and miseryes, yea, what not!

Deere frinds, ought not wee to bee earnest with the Lord to know our woorke and dutyes in these latter dayes wherin our God is working terrible things in righteousnes and makeing his owne pleasure to prosper, in putting downe the proud and mighty from their seates and exalting the base and meane things of this world. Yet such as he hath put his Spirit in and name upp on, even such as he hath made a refuge from the stormes of the violent, even hiding places and nursing fathers to his people. And now, frinds, wee are called upp on to laboure with them and for them in our prayers. Yea, how are wee called upp on to walke

by faith and not by sense, is it not our strength to sitt still and see the salvation of the Lord who worketh all things according to the counsell of his owne good will and who will certainly bring his great promises and determinations to pass. Only belive, be strong in the power of his might, beleve in the Lord your God, soe shall you bee established. Beleeve his prophetts, soe shall you prosper: not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hoostes shall these things be brought to pass. And, though the enemyes come in like a floud and all tounge rage, yet that good Spirit shall lift upp a standard against them and every rounge he will condemne, yea, the rage of man shall prayse the Lord and the remainder he will restraine. Let our eyes and hearts be fixed upon that God who changeth not, whose gloriouse name is our strong tower. In him though the earth be removed and the inhabitants be dissolved have wee ground to rejoyce for evermore and humbly to bless all the day long. Yea, though in ourselves and in the sence of the very vilenes of our natures which lusteth to envie and is treacherously bent hellwards, there is contynued occasions of the great woork now desired and endeavoured after even soul abaseing and low prostrating ourselves at the footstoole of his Majesty with a deepe fasting, with a pressing the Lord by all manner of prayer and supplication to be gratiouse to us in not bringing upon us the fruits of our doeings even which is recorded in Deut. 28.47f. Alsoe that he would be gratiouse to us in knowing the sad condition of hearts searchings, the heart breakings because of the sore and uncomfortable divisions amongst the redeemed ones which have their lamentable effects to the joy and puffing up of the uncircumcised which cry, 'Ha, ha, soe would wee have it, did wee not say this it would come to?' And, 'Tarry a little, you shall see these divisions come amongst them all.' Alsoe that the Lord would be gratiouse to us in acquainting us with what he speakes to us** in his sore snatching and removeing from us not only usefull members in Syon but even our eyes, our hands and our hearts, never to be forgotten young Drapes,¹⁹ deare Consett,²⁰ pretious Peck,²¹ usefull Saffry²² and that in the midst of their dayes and beginning of wonderous woorks. Ah, deere frinds, were they to[o] holy, to[o] heavenly for our society? Or did wee abuse the mercy, some doteing upon them whilst others sleighted them, yea, hardly tooke notice there was prophetts amongst them. Or may wee not all conclude that the indifferency and worldlymindednes and hippocrisie of hearts are soe great and have soe highly provoked** the jelousie of** our God** who hath left noe meanes unattempted that wee

might have been a people of and to his prayse** that he is cominge forth against us in his indignation and displeasure with some visitation and scourges and therefore hath called home his choyce ones that they might not see the evill that is coming upon us neyther stand in the gapp** to appease his fury and turne away his wrath from us. And, lastly, frinds, mightily cry unto our God, even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, give him noe rest untill he be entreated by us in the things within mentioned and particularly for those poore insufficient instruments whom he hath signally signified out and whose standings are soe slipery, whose temptations are soe many and whose woorke is soe great and mighty, on whom our eyes are fixed and from whom these three nations expect soe great things as returnes and fruits of all the abundance of blood, of travells, of hazards, of long wayting, large promises and vast expenses. Precious frinds, though wee are called to looke higher then instruments, yea, the blessed Spirit directs us to looke to our God through Jesus Christ who is the author and from whom all our mercyes flow by whom what we expect must be brought about, to him they belong, being for his honour and praise intended. Yet, seeing hee conveys and woorkes by and through instruments and they are such with whom he hath much appeared and in whome wee have cause to belive he hath placed his feare and who have by testimony of his good Spirit obtayned like pretiouse faith with us and by whom his name is called upon and through whose sutable or unsuteable walking and actings eyther much glory and honour or shame and reproach will accrue to his great name, to our joy and consolation or to our sorrow and reproach, wee therefore once more beseech you earnestly to beg of the Lord that he would not leave them to their owne wisdom nor to bee discouraged under their many streights but that he would be wisdom and strength to them and keepe their hearts in a holy depending upon him voyd of pride and ostentation; that they may be the repayrers of our many breaches and restorers of pathes to dwell in; that they may bee nurseing fathers, the officers under them peace and exactors [of] righteousness; that they may be a terrour to evildoers and for prayse to them that doe well; that under them wee may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlines and honesty.**

And now, deere brethren, beloved of the Lord, let not this sad subject of long sylence be any more amongst us but rather let us bee constant provokers of each other to every good word and worke by our epistles, by our holy, humble, persevering Christian conversation, suiting ourselves to

that pretiouse and ever to be remembred example, our Lord Jesus Christ. And seing that nothing can seperate, neyther height, nor depth, betweene us and that everlasting love of our heavenly Father in his deere Sonn, and those inestimable mansions of love, prepared for us by him where wee, even wee, shall behould the gloriouse face of our God, and joyntly sing the everlasting song of Moses and the Lambe! Oh, then, let neyther sea nor land, things present nor things to come, seperate us from a Christian correspondency each with other, wherby wee may be enabled knowingly to mourne with those that mourne and to rejoyce with those that rejoyce, that wee may sympathizingly in faith, offer supplications and prayes answerable to the dealing of our God to any of his members.** And now the very God of peace helpe you and us to beare one another's burdens and soe fulfill the law of Christ and, in truth of heart, soe to pray for each other, that wee keepe the comfortable fruits of neere relations.** Finally, brethren, farewell, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one minde,** live in peace: Let us follow the things which make for peace and things wherwith one may edifie another** and the God of peace shall be with you and us.

Your poore weake brethren yet fellow heires, expertors of the consolation ready to be revealed at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ who will now come, without sin, to our salvation.

From the Church of Christ in Waterford, being now assembled upon the ground within mentioned 1 day 4 Month 1653.

The names of the brethren that subscribed this be viz.,

Att Waterford

Robert Kingdon²³
 Thomas Skelson²⁶
 Edward Marshall²⁹
 Peter Rowe³²
 Thomas Boulton³⁵
 Thomas Sparking³⁸
 George Cawdron, George⁴¹
 John Rowe,⁴⁴
 William Leigh⁴⁷
 Richard Sutton⁴⁹
 Robert Murry⁵¹
 Thomas — ⁵²

Att Killkeny

Anthony Harrison²⁴
 John Pratte²⁷
 Humphrey Prichard³⁰
 Thomas Willsoppe³³
 John Courte³⁶
 Arnold Thomas³⁹
 Christopher Blackwood⁴²
 Richard Wood⁴⁵

Att Dublin

James Hardish²⁵
 Henry Jones²⁸
 James Montely³¹
 William Sands³⁴
 William Salt³⁷
 Edward Roberts⁴⁰
 Philip Carteret⁴³
 Thomas Patience⁴⁶
 Nicholas Scots⁴⁸
 Adrian Strong⁵⁰

3. Two documents accompanying the letter of exhortation from Ireland.

i The agreement concerning matters requiring prayer by the churches.

The churches of Christ in Ireland, walking in the faith and order of the Gospell, doe agree together, through the Lord's assistance, to sett apart one day in every month, solemnly to seeke the face of our God and, by fasting and praying, humbly to mourne before him for the things following which is alsoe recomended to our deere frinds the churches of Christ in England and scattered brethren in severall places, who have obtayned like pretious faith with us.

First. Our litle knowledge of and less trusting in the name of our God in Christ so as to sett him for ever before our eyes, that wee may glorifie him both in our bodies and soules, which are his, I Cor. 6.20; Heb. 5.12.

2. Our litle sincere love to the Lord and his people and our litle knowledge of the office and proper place of each member as God hath sett him in the body of Christ, to the end that every particular member might be now effectually improved for the mutuall edification of the whole, I Cor. 12.21, Eph. 4.16.

3. Our litle serious searching into the word of God and not substantially acquainting ourselves with the foundation truthes revealed therein, 2 Tim. 3.15; 2 Pet. 2.2; Rom. 1.16f.

4. Our litle faith in the great and pretious promises of the Lord, which are to be fullfilled in the latter days, Lk. 18.8; 2 Pet. 1.4.

5. Our litle pressing after the mark of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ and our inordinate affections after earthly things, Luke 10.40f; Phil. 3.9 [?14]; Col. 3.2.

6. Our litle praying and prayseing frames of hearts in particular for faithfull labourers in the Lord's vyneyeard and for all whom he hath sett in authority over us, under whom wee have much oppertunity to practise the truth wee profess. Mat. 9.37f; I Cor. 2.4; Is. 9.7; I Tim. 2.2; I Pet. 2.14; Jn. 15.4; Ps. 22.4.

7. Our litle sence of saintts' sufferings, Lk. 18.7; Rev. 17.6.

8. Our great aptnes to forgett the great things God hath done for us. And the abuse of the many pretious mercyes he hath multiplied upon us, Ps. 7.8; 10.6, 13.

9. Our want of spirituall wisdome to reprove sin plainly in all without respect of persons and to exhort faithfully soe as to stop the mouthes of

gainesaiers and to give no just offence to any, Prov. 19.15; 9.8f; 2 Tim. 4.4; I Cor. 10.28.

10. Our litle laying to heart the great breaches the Lord hath made amongst us by removing many righteouse ones from us and from the evill to come, Is. 57.1f; 2.22.

11. Our litle mourning for sin both in ourselves and others, Ezek. 9.4; Hos. 4.1f.

12. Our great ignorance of the deceitfullnes of our owne hearts, Jer. 17.9.

These things amongst others ought to be sufficient grounds of our being low before the Lord that his voyce [may] lift us up in due time, James 4.9f, and supply all our wants according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus, Phil. 4.19.

ii. Details of the Particular Baptist churches in Ireland.

The churches of Christ in Ireland walking together in the faith and order of the Gospell and [*sic*] are resident in severall places as followeth, viz.,

In Dublin. With whom are brother Patience, brother Lamb,⁵³ brother Vernon, brother Robens, brother Smyth⁵⁴ with severall others through grace who walk comfortably together but most of the brethren besides brother Patient have relation to the army and therefore are subject to be called away, as occasion requires, to performe their duty in their places.

In Waterford. With whom are brother Wade,⁵⁵ brother Row, brother Boulton, brother Caudron,⁵⁶ brother Kingdon with severall others walking together comfortably, most of them being resident; there who, wee trust, are in a thriveing condition in ther spirituall state.

In Clommell⁵⁷ with whom are brother Charles,⁵⁸ brother Drapes⁵⁹ and sometimes brother Hutchinson⁶⁰ and Bullock⁶¹ to assist them, who are commonly abroad improving their guifts in severall garrisons. Some other brethren, scattered, are in severall places in those parts who are recomended to the care of our frinds at Clommell who are neerest unto them.

In Killkenny. With whom are brother Blackwood, brother Card,⁶² brother Axtell,⁶³ brother Gough⁶⁴ with severall others whom we hope alsoe are in a growing condition and doe walk orderly. Wee know not any particular frinds scattered abroad in the country but [if there be any they] are comitted to the care of some frinds neere them who, we hope, as they are able will discharge their duty towards them.

In Corke. With whom are brother Lamb,⁶⁵ brother Coleman⁶⁶ with

severall others who walk orderly together though in a place of much opposition to them by such as slight the way of the Lord, with whom alsoe are in comunion some frinds at Brand Kingsaile⁶⁷ and other parts of the country.

In Lymrick . With whom are brother Knight,⁶⁸ brother Uzell⁶⁹ brother Skinner⁷⁰ with some others whom, wee feare, may bee in a decaying condition for want of able brethren to strengthen them. Brother Knight haveing byn weake and not able to be with them.

In Galloway. With whom are brother Clark,⁷¹ brother Davies⁷² with severall others who, wee understand, doe walk orderly but have few able amongst them to edifie the body.

In Wexford. Are a people lately gathered by brother Blackwood with whom are brother Tomlins,⁷³ brother Hussy,⁷⁴ brother Neale,⁷⁵ brother Biggs, ⁷⁶ with severall others who have not much helpe amongst themselves but are sometimes visited by our frinds at Waterford.

In Kerry, Alsoe are some frinds received lately by brother Dix⁷⁷ and brother Nelson,⁷⁸ brother Browne⁷⁹ and his wife: with whom is brother Chambers⁸⁰ that doe speak to them. Of these wee have not much experience but have lately heard from brother Chambers that they walke orderly.

In the north neere Carrick Fergus are severall lately received by brother Reade⁸¹ who were baptized heere by brother Patient whom wee understand are pretiouse but want some able brethren to establish them.

Frinds deceased of the severall places and churches before mentioned as followeth:

Sister Watson, sister Mary Rowe att Waterford.

Sister Deane att Killkeny.

Brother Brookes att Clommell.

Brother Brookes,⁸² brother Cooper, brother Rush, att or neere Lymrick

Severall cast out for sin, viz.,

Brother Dixon, brother Clayton, brother Price, brother Thornhill, brother Francis at Clommell.

Brother Fogg at Killkeny.

One at Galloway and some at Lymrick a particular account of whom wee have not at present.

Sister Sarah Barret at Dublin, somezime servant to brother Patient, who is now coming for England. Brother Vernon can more particularly

informe you of her.⁸³

Notes

¹Ivimey I 240–252. On 252 at the close of his transcription, Ivimey appears to credit Joshua Thompson's 'Hist. of Welch Association' as his source. Yet his material appears to be taken directly from Rippon.

²Rippon, J. *The Baptist annual register, 1790–93*, 13–20. A footnote to 18 by Rippon as editor says, 'Some of these names are not very plain in the written copy from which this correspondence is taken' and may indicate that he had seen and prepared the transcript of this material from a 17th century MS. Cf. W. T. Whitley in *B.Q.*, I, 279, 'Allen and Vernon took to Loughwood many papers a few of which were seen and printed by John Rippon of Tiverton, then reprinted by Ivimey.'

³The Ilston Churchbook MS, National Library of Wales MSS 9108/9 is a facsimile of the original possessed by Brown University, Rhode Island, U.S.A.

⁴The Llanwenarth Churchbook MS, is National Library of Wales deposit MS, 409.

⁵See footnote 45 to the Western Association Records.

⁶See W. T. Whitley, *A history of British Baptists*, 2 edn. 1932, 90f, followed by R. G. Torbet, *A history of the Baptists* 2 edn. 1963 44. And, in criticism of their views, B. R. White, 'The doctrine of the church in the Particular Baptist Confession of 1644,' *J.T.S.* (N.S.) XIX, 1968, especially 584–90.

⁷Kiffin, William. See *D.N.B.* and B. R. White, 'William Kiffin, Baptist pioneer and citizen of London,' *Baptist History and Heritage*, July 1967.

⁸Harrison, Edward. See W. T. Whitley, 'Edward Harrison of Petty France,' *B.Q.*, VII.214–220.

⁹White, Thomas, is only known at present from this correspondence.

¹⁰Sansom, Joseph. He signed *Heartbleedings* (1650), the 1651 edition of the 1644 *Confession*, the letter of 1654 with Kiffin and Spilsbury to Ireland urging acceptance of the Protectorate and the letter of April 1657, urging Cromwell against acceptance of the English throne.

¹¹Cowper (or Cooper), Thomas. Apparently a member with Kiffin, one who worked to calm Irish Baptist feelings towards the Cromwellian establishment (Thurloe, IV, 243, 408, 422, 433, 451), with Jerome Sankey and who signed *The humble apology*, 1660.

¹²Hills, Henry. See W. T. Whitley, 'Henry Hills, official printer,' *B.Q.*, VI.215–7.

¹³Perry, John. A leader, with Hanserd Knollys, of the church in Swan Alley, Coleman Street, London. (*Hexham records* 310, 313, 321, 340.)

¹⁴Tredwell, Richard. This may have been the same man who, with his wife Katherine, joined the Separatist group from Jacob-Lathrop church sometime after 12.9.1633 with Samuel Eaton and others.

¹⁵Bowes, Robert. A member at the Glaziers' Hall who signed several letters from there to the churches founded by John Miles in 1650/51.

¹⁶Scutt, Peter. According to *T.B.H.S.*, V.74, a draper. He also was a member at Glaziers' Hall and signed several of the letters to Wales mentioned in Note 15.

¹⁷The material not available in the Ivimey/Rippon version of this letter is marked by two stars at the beginning and at the end of each 'new' section.

NOTES

¹⁸See p. 20 of these records, Note 48 [of Part 1], for an indication that this suggestion was widely adopted.

¹⁹Drapes, Edward. Wrongly as 'Draper' in the Ivimey/Rippon version. He had signed *Heartbleedings* (1650) and written pamphlets himself before his death in 1653.

²⁰Consett, William. He had been a member of the Glaziers' Hall congregation, had signed *Heartbleedings*, also letters to Wales 1650/51, *A declaration of congregational societies* (1651 edn.) and the 1651 edn. of the 1644 *Confession*.

²¹Peck. Pocke in Ivimey/Rippon version. Links with Abingdon family (*B.Q.*, III, 44) thus early are unlikely. So are they with the G. B. Robert Peck (*T.B.H.S.*, II.244).

²²Saffery, Solomon. Signed *Heartbleedings* in 1650.

²³Kingdom, Robert. Robert Ringston in Ivimey/Rippon

²⁴Harrison, Anthony. He seems not to appear in other documents of the period from London and Ireland.

²⁵Hardish, James. His name appears thus in both Ivimey/Rippon and Ilston/Llanwenarth. Nevertheless it is almost certainly James Standish — the Receiver General in Ireland (*Seymour*, 32) Presumably the error in transcription was made in London. James Standish signed the Waterford to Dublin letter opposing open communion in January 1652 and also signed the Dublin address to the Protector in 1657.

²⁶Skelson, Thomas. Thomas Shelson in Ivimey/Rippon. Paid from the civil list at Belfast 1654 and at Newry in 1656 (*Seymour*, 221). See note 32 below.

²⁷Pratte, John. Perhaps he was in London in 1689 (*B.Q.*, I.114). A. T. Pratt signed the Dublin address to the Protector in 1657.

²⁸Jones, Henry. He was the Cromwellian Scoutmaster General in Ireland (*B.Q.*, I.276), and may earlier have been involved in the debates about Baptism in Jessey's church in 1643 and after (*T.B.H.S.*, I.244f). He signed the letter to Wales from Dublin in 1656 (*Ivimey*, I.253ff).

²⁹Marshall, Edward. Signed the letter from Waterford to Dublin against open communion, 14 Jan., 1652.

³⁰Prichard, Humphrey. He only appears here.

³¹Montely, James. Ivimey/Rippon gives James Marely, Llanwenarth gives James Mottley.

³²Row, Peter. A member, in 1648, of the Hubbard-How-More church (B. Stinton, 'A repository . . . ' 111). *B.Q.*, I.223, suggests he may have been the Row who served as an emissary of Thomas Collier according to Gangraena Edwards in 1646. See B. R. White, 'Thomas Collier and Gangraena Edwards,' *B.Q.*, XXIV.3. Row was paid on the civil list in Ireland from, apparently, 1654–1657. (St. John D. Seymour, *The Puritans in Ireland 1647–1661* Oxford 1912 and 1969, 219 — referred to hereinafter as *Seymour*.) Row seems to have been active and known to the authorities for a time after the Restoration.

³³Willspe Thomas. Ivimey/Rippon give his surname as 'Alsop.' But both Ilston and Llanwenarth appear to have read their original as Willspe or Willsop.

³⁴Sands, William. Signed the Dublin address to the Protector in 1657.

³⁵Boulton, Thomas. In 1645 Thomas Boulton was a major at Newport Pagnell (*B.Q.*, III.367).

³⁶Courte, John. Only known here: unlikely to be the G.B. of the 1690's (*B.Q.*, VII.174).

³⁷Salt, William. Sault according to Ivimey/Rippon. Llanwenarth: Saull.

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³⁸Sparkling, Thomas. Thomas Sparkling according to Ivimey/Rippon. Sparling in the Llanwenarth Churchbook.

³⁹Thomas, Arnold. Signed letter to Wales from Dublin, 12 June, 1656 (*Ivimey*, I.253ff).

⁴⁰Roberts, Edward Signed letters from Glaziers' Hall to South Wales 1650/51, the 1651 edition of the 1644 Confession, the letter from Waterford to Dublin opposing open communion in January 1652, the Dublin address to the Protector in 1657. He was auditor general in Ireland (*B.Q.*, I.276) and was listed as a dangerous person recently returned from Ireland in 1660 (*T.B.H.S.*, III.251, 254). He also signed the *Humble Apology* of 1660 and is said to have signed the Declaration of 1659 (*Whitley*: 64–659). He may have been the man listed as Edmund Roberts who signed the letter to Wales from Dublin in 1656 (*Ivimey*, I.253ff). He may have returned to preach in Ireland in 1676 (*B.Q.*, I.287f).

⁴¹Cawdron, George. Ivimey gives his Christian name as Thomas, Rippon does not give him one at all. Llanwenarth omits him completely. He signed the Waterford letter, 14 Jan., 1652 to Dublin opposing open membership.

⁴²Blackwood, Christopher. Known to Thomas Edwards (*Gangraena*, III.9B). He was stationed at Kilkenny in Jan. 1653 and paid £150 per annum from the civil list (*Seymour*, 60). He signed the letter from Dublin to Wales in 1656 (*Ivimey* I.253ff), the Dublin address to the Protector in 1657 and the *Humble Apology* of 1660 (*Confessions of Faith*, 343–52) in London.

⁴³Carteret, Philip. His surname was given by Ivimey/Rippon as Carcherol. He was advocate-general in Ireland (*B.Q.*, I.276).

⁴⁴Rowe, John. A John Row signed, with John Tomlinson, a letter to Cromwell from Derby (*T.B.H.S.*, II.238).

⁴⁵Wood, Richard. Only known here.

⁴⁶Patience (or Patient), Thomas. See B. R. White, 'Thomas Patient in England and Ireland,' *Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal*, II.1969/70.

⁴⁷Leigh, William. A colonel in Ireland (*B.Q.*, I.276). He signed the Waterford letter to Dublin against open communion, 14 Jan., 1652.

⁴⁸Scots, Nicholas. Ivimey/Rippon give surname as 'Scott.' A Richard Scott signed the Dublin address to the Protector in 1657.

⁴⁹Sutton, Richard. Appears as Richard — in Rippon, as Richard Leigh in Ivimey. Ilston/Llanwenarth agree on Richard Sutton. He signed the Waterford letter to Dublin opposing open communion, 14 Jan., 1652.

⁵⁰Strong, Adrian. Signed the Dublin address to the Protector in 1657.

⁵¹Murry, Robert. Robert Merry according to Ivimey/Rippon. Llanwenarth gives Murrey. A Robert Marrey signed the Dublin address to the Protector in 1657 (*Confessions of Faith*, 1854, 339–42).

⁵²No surname appears here in any version of the letter.

⁵³Lamb, Richard (?), Ivimey/Rippon give surname as 'Law' and Llanwenarth as 'Loe.' A Richard Lawem signed the letter from Dublin to Wales in 1656. (*Ivimey*, I.253ff).

⁵⁴Smyth, Brother. Only known here.

⁵⁵Wade, Brother. According to Whitley (*B.Q.*, I.276) a captain in Ireland. Brother and sister Wade had shared in the debates about baptism which led to their baptism with Hanserd Knollys in 1645. Later, after Jessey's baptism, they rejoined his

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church (*T.B.H.S.*, I.244f), S. Wade signed as minister at the founding of the Midland Association from Alcester in 1655 (see these records 20, 40, note 11.) John Wade was keeping a conventicle at Stafford in 1669 (*B.Q.*, III.192).

⁵⁶Caudron, Brother. Presumably George Cawdron — see Note 41 above.

⁵⁷This is, of course, Clonmell.

⁵⁸Charles, Brother. Only known here.

⁵⁹Drapes, Brother. See Note 19. John Draper signed the letter to the Protector from Dublin in 1657. According to *Seymour*, 211, John Draper was based at Clonmell in 1655 and paid from the civil list. He was later appointed preacher to the garrison in Tipperary, 1656, and was suspended later. It seems as if the Ilston/Llanwenarth scribes (or the copy/ies from which they worked) made the reverse mistake to that made over Edward Drapes by Ivimey/Rippon later.

⁶⁰Hutchinson, Edward. He signed the letter from Waterford opposing open communion at Dublin in January 1652. According to *Seymour*, 215, he was chaplain to Colonel Abbott's regiment in 1653. An Edward Hutchinson was in controversy with Richard Baxter in 1676/77.

⁶¹Bullock, Brother. Only known here.

⁶²Card, Edward. Ivimey/Rippon gave his surname as Caxe and led Whitley to speculate on the possible presence of Benjamin Coxie in Ireland. Edward Card signed the Dublin address to the Protector in 1657.

⁶³Axtell, Daniel. See *D.N.B.*, article 'Axtel, Daniel.' He was governor of Kilkenny but resigned his commission under Henry Cromwell. Executed in 1660 as regicide.

⁶⁴Gough, Christopher. Signed the Dublin address to the Protector in 1657.

⁶⁵Lamb, Brother. Only known here and not, presumably, to be confused with Richard Lamb at Dublin — see Note 53.

⁶⁶Coleman, John. *Seymour*, 209 (and elsewhere) suggests he was paid from 1654–58 as a minister in Cork. Could he be identified with John Coleman of Barnstaple? Cf. B. R. White, 'Baptists in Barnstaple, Devon, 1650–1652,' *B.Q.*, XXIV, 385–88.

⁶⁷Or, better, Bandon and Kinsale.

⁶⁸Knight, James. Signed the Dublin address to the Protector in 1657. He was paid from the civil list at Limerick in 1654 (*Seymour*, 215). Joined Harrison, Tull, Cox and Blackwood in London, 1661, in repudiating Venner. (*T.B.H.S.*, V.110).

⁶⁹Uzell, Brother. Only known here unless identified with John Uzall who obtained a license in 1672 (*T.B.H.S.*, I.169).

⁷⁰Skinner, ? William. Will. Skinner signed the Glaziers' Hall letter to Carmarthen in the Ilston Churchbook, 2 March, 1650. W. Skinner signed the Dublin address to the Protector in 1657.

⁷¹Clark, Robert. Signed the Dublin address to the Protector 1657. May have been in Burton on Trent in 1652 (*T.B.H.S.*, II.252). A Baptist commissioner for revenue in Ireland, paid for preaching in Connaught 1652, in Galway until end of 1657. Offerlane, Queen's County, 1658. (*Seymour*, 56, 209, etc.).

⁷²Davies, Thomas. Major in Ireland (*B.Q.*, I.276). Signed Dublin address to Protector 1657.

⁷³Tomlins, Edward. Signed Dublin address to the Protector 1657.

⁷⁴Hussy, Bartholomew. Signed Dublin address to the Protector 1657.

⁷⁵Neale, Richard. Signed the Dublin address to the Protector 1657.

⁷⁶Biggs, Brother. Only known here.

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⁷⁷Dix, William. Carlow, 1653. Belfast c.1655. Derryaghy, on civil list, 1656, (*Seymour*, 210.)

⁷⁸Nelson, Brother. Ivimey/Rippon, Velson. Llanwenarth, Welson. A man named Nelson was doing some itinerant preaching in the Dublin neighbourhood in 1654. (*Seymour*, 217.)

⁷⁹Browne, ? James. James Browne signed the Dublin address to the Protector in 1657.

⁸⁰Chambers, John, Ivimey/Rippon, Chawbers. He was considered inadequate for the ministry by presbyterians in Ireland in 1658 and had been paid from the civil list in Co. Kerry, 1654. (*Seymour*, 155, 209.)

⁸¹Reade, John. He seems to have been at Belturbet in 1654 but his appointment and, presumably, his salary, were suspended the following year.

⁸²Another brother Brookes had also died at Clonmell by June 1653. Both Ivimey/Rippon and Ilston/Llanwenarth list two Brookes, one below the other. This may be a coincidence or it may be a slip by an early scribe.

⁸³The position of this note in the Ilston MS suggests that Sarah Barret was among those 'cast out for sin.'

Part III

Association records of the Abingdon Association to 1660

1 The Abingdon Association records

Editorial Note

There are only two sources for the Abingdon Association¹ prior to 1660: the Longworth Churchbook² and the quite separate and far more complete Abingdon Association manuscript³ itself. The Longworth Churchbook alone records the two preliminary meetings at Wormsley,⁴ but, thereafter, the records here transcribed are taken from the Abingdon manuscript. The further fragmentary evidence in the Longworth Churchbook merely corroborates that in the Abingdon records. Unfortunately the Abingdon manuscript has suffered a certain amount of damage over the years and more words have had to be supplied in square brackets in this transcript than in any of the former sources used. So, in these records, when words appear in square brackets, they almost invariably indicate a damaged manuscript rather than the carelessness of the original scribe. It may be noted that the whole manuscript appears to be the production of one hand and that the index which the writer provided (now too badly damaged to be reproduced) indicates that this whole record was produced for reference as a guide to church policy and polity.

It should be noticed that the early meetings show a considerable concern for the theological basis of association between churches and that emphasis is laid less upon agreement over a wide spectrum of doctrine than upon agreement over the nature and extent of the cooperation that there ought to be between independent churches. This does not, of course, indicate a lack of concern for doctrinal matters rather, in all probability, does it mean that the Confession of 1644⁵ was generally accepted as providing a common doctrinal basis. After all, Benjamin Cox⁶ himself, the leader of the Abingdon Association's eastern wing, had earlier produced a theological Appendix⁷ to the 1646 edition of the 1644 Confession. It ought also, at the same time, to be recognised that this association as a whole, in spite of the part played in it by the Fifth Monarchist John Pendarves, shows little sign of millenarian excitement though some churches seem to have favoured radical political reforms.⁸

The first General Meeting

Wormsley, 8th day, 8th month (vulgarly, October) 1652.

At a meeteing of chosen members of the churches, viz., of Henly,⁹ Reading¹⁰ and Abingdon,¹¹ it was concluded as followeth:

1st. That perticular churches of Christ ought to hold a firme communion each with other in point of advice in doubtfull matters and controversies, Acts 15.1f., 6,24, 28; 16.4f. Which scriptures, compared together, shew that the church at Jerusalem held communion with the church of Antioch affording help to them as they could.

2ly. In giving and receiveing in case of want and poverty, 1 Cor. 16.3.

3ly. In consulting and consenting to the carrying on of the worke of God as choosing messengers, etc., 2 Cor. 8.19. And, in all things else, wherein perticular members of one and the same perticular church stand bound to hold communion each with other for which conclusion we render these scripture reasons:

1st. Because there is the same relation betwixt the perticular churches each towards other as there is betwixt perticular members of one church. For the churches of Christ doe all make up one body or church in generall under Christ their head as Eph. 1.22f.; Col. 1.24; Eph. 5.23ff.; 2 Cor. 12.13f. As perticular members make up one perticular church under the same head, Christ, and all the perticular assemblys are but one Mount Syon, Is. 4.5; Song 6.9. Christ his undefiled is but one and in his body ther is to be no schisme which is then found in the body when all the members have not the same care one over another. Wherefore we conclude that every church ought to manifest its care over other churches as fellow members of the same body of Christ in generall do rejoyce and mourne with them, according to the law of there nere relation in Christ.

2ly. From that which is a maine ground for perticular church communion, viz., to keepe each other pure and to cleare the profession of the Gospell from scandale which cannot be done (I Cor. 5.5) unless orderly walking churches be owned orderly and disorderly churches be orderly disowned, even as disorderly walking members of a perticular church, yea, the

1 *The Abingdon Association records*

reason is more full in respect of the greater scandale by not witnessing against the defection (2 Cor. 7.11) of a church or churches.

3ly. For the prooffe of their love to all saints, perticular church communion being never appointed as a restraint of our love which should be manifest its selfe to all the churches.

4ly. The worke of God, wherein all the churches are concerned together, may be the more easily and prosperously carried on by a combination of prayers and endeavors.

5ly. From need they have or may have one of another to quicken them when lukewarme, to helpe when in want, assist in counsell in doubtfull matters and prevent prejudices in each against other.

6ly. To convince the world, for by this shall men know by one marke that we are the true churches of Christ. In order thereunto we unanimously agreed at our next meeting to declaire the principles and constitutions of the respective churches to which wee belong.

These things to be offred to the churches to be approved.

It was alsoe agreed to give notice to other neighbouring churches of our next meeting which is appointed to be at Wormsley one the 3rd day of the 9th month and that a coppie hereof should be transmitted to them with our desire for their concurrence in order to that communion before specified.

The second General Meeting

At a meeting of chosen messengers of the churches at Wormsley, the 3rd day of the 9th month 1652, viz., of Abingdon, Reading, Henly, Kensworth, ¹² Eversholt¹³ etc.

There was a declaration by the saide messengers of the respective principles and constitutions of the churches wherein appeared much of the Spirit of the Lord in the unity, both in faith and order. Upon the understanding of which the messengers then present resolved to complete the agreement they formerly minded if the churches respectively to which they belong should agree thereunto.¹⁴

The principall and [most ma]teriall results of severall meetings of [the messe]ngers of severall churches, viz., of the churches of [Abing]ton, Reading, Henlie etc., keeping appointed meet[ings of] their messengers at Tetsworth¹⁵ from the yea[r 165]2 to this present yeare 1658.

The third General Meeting

At the meeting of messengers at Tetsworth, December 27th 1652, this conclusion formerly agreed upon at Wormesly, being revised and in some few passages explained, was fully consented unto by the messengers of the churches of Abington, Reading, Henley, Kensworth and Eversholt, as here followeth, viz.,

That particular churches of Christ ought to hold a firme communion each with other:

1. In point of advice in matters and controversies remaining doubtfull to any particular church, Acts 15.1f., 24-28, 16.1f. Which scriptures, compared together, shew that the church at Jerusalem held communion with the church at Antioch, affording help to them as they could.
2. In giving and receiving, in the case of the want and povertie of any particular church, 1 Cor. 16.3.
3. In consulting and consenting (as need shall require and as shall be most for the glorie of God) to the joynt carying on of the worke of the Lord that is common to the churches, as choosing such messengers as we find in 2 Cor. 8.19. And in all other things wherein particular churches ought to be serviceable and to manifest their love each to other.

For this conclusion these scripture reasons are rendred:

1. Because in respect of union in Christ there is a like relation betwixt the particular churches each toward other, as there is betwixt particular members of one church. For the churches of Christ doe all make up one bodye of church in generall under Christ their head, as Eph. 1.22f., Col. 1.24, Eph. 5.23ff., I Cor. 12.13ff., as particular members make up one particular church under the same head, Christ

and all the particular assemblyes are but one Mount Syon, Is. 4.5, Christ's undefiled is but one, Song 6.9. And in his bodie there is to be no schisme which is then found in the bodye when all the members have not the same care one over another. Wherefore we conclude that everie church ought to manifest its care over other churches as fellow members of the same body of Christ in generall to rejoyce and mourne with then according to the law of their relation in Christ.

2. From that which is a maine gound of pareticular church communion, viz., to keepe each other putre and to cleare the profession of the Gospell from scandall, which cannot be done unles order[ly] walking churches be owned orderly, and disorderly churches [be] orderly disowned, even as disorderly walking members of [a] particular church. Yea, the reason is more full in res[pect of] the great scandall by not witnessing against the [disorders of] a church or churches.
3. For the prooffe [of their] love to all saints: particular church cmmunion being [never appo]inted as a restraint of our love which sho[uld man]ifest itselife to all the churches.
4. That the worke of [God,] wherein all the churches are concerned together, may [be] the more easily and prosperously caryed on by a combination of prayers and endeavours.
5. From the need they have, or may have, for each other to quicken them when lukewarme, to helpe when in want, assist in counsaile in doubtfull matters and to prevent prejudice in each against other.
6. To convince the world, for by this shall all men know, as by one marke, that we are the true churches of Christ.

The fourth General Meeting

At the meeting of messengers at Tetsworth the 16th and 17th dayes of the first moneth 1653 this ensuing Agreement was confirmed and subscribed as followeth:

The Agreement of certaine churches, viz., of Abington, Reading, Henley, Kensworth and Eversholt.

Whereas the Lord hath made it appeare unto us by the holy Scriptures that true churches of Christ ought to acknowledge one another to be such and to hold a firme communion each with other in point of advice in things remaining doubtfull to any particular church or churches as also in giving and receiving in case of the want and povertie of any particular church or churches and in consulting and consenting (as need shall require and as shall be most for the glorie of God) to the joynt carying on of the worke of the Lord that is common to the churches. And the same Lord hath made us to discern and minde our agreement in our principles and constitutions and to be perswaded (as we hope upon good grounds) of each other's endeavouring to walke accordingly. We doe therefore hereby declare that we doe mutually acknowledge each other to be true churches of Christ and doe agree (according to our dutye) to maintaine a strict communion each with other in the particulars aforementioned and, whatsoever else we shall discern the word of God to require true churches to hold communion in; and, accordingly, doe engage ourselves in the strength of Christ and through his grace, faithfully to performe each towards other such dutyes of churches so joyning together to the glorie of God.

Subscribed in the name of the churches abovementioned, by us the messengers of the said churches respectively by them thereunto authorised and ap[pointe]d: at our meeting at Tetsworth this 17th day of the first moneth 1652/3.

Of Abingdon: John Pendarves, John Tomkins,¹⁶ Edward Penner¹⁷

Of Reading: William Millward,¹⁸ John Deane¹⁹

Of Henley: John Tyler,²⁰ John Ewin.²¹

Of Kensworth : Benjamin Coxe, Robert Knight.²²

Of Eversholt: Edmund White,²³ Thomas Vause.²⁴

At this meeting also these [three] proposalls following which had bene sent to the chu[rches fro]m the last meeting were confirmed and so made conclusions subscribed by the aforesaid messengers in the name and by the appointment of the churches in forme and manner following. The churches of Abington, Reading, Henlie, Kensworth and Eversholt have agreed as follows, viz.,

1. That the respective churches will continue the meeting of their mes-

sengers and that it be referred to the said messengers when mett together, to appoint both time and place for their next meeting. And that, in the intervalls betweene the meetings, the churches may hold correspondencie by letters (as need shall require) by meanes of some friend in London to be named by each church.

2. That what proposalls shall at any time be sent to the severall meetings of the churches' respective messengers the said messengers shall, when mett together, examine and consider which are most usefull and necessarie and shall cause the same to be presented to each of the respective churches for their approbation therein which, if approved of, shall then be sent by the churches' messengers to another generall meeting, there to receive their confirmation.
3. That whereas some notorious cheaters and seducers are gone abroad, by whom some of our friendes, by meanes of their faire pretences, have bene much abused, if any such be by any one of the said churches discovered, the said church shall give notice of them to the other churches, describing their persons and qualities, that so they may the better be knowne and avoyded.

John Pendarves, John Tomkins, Edward Penner etc.

The fifth General Meeting

At a meeting of messengers at Tetsworth the 10th day of the 4th moneth 1653 these foure ensuing proposalls (which had bene sent to the churches from the last meeting) were confirmed after this manner:

At a meeting at Tetsworth the 10th day of the 4th moneth 1653 by the messengers of the churches of Abington, Reading, Henlie, Kensworth and Eversholt, they agreed as followes:

First, that such churches as want gifted brethren to hold forth the word among them should make the same knowne to the rest of the churches or, at the least, to [such] church or churches as in probabilitie may be most [able] to helpe them, that helpe may be afforded them accordingly.

Secondly, that if any person be excommunicated by [a church] the said church shall give notice of his excommunica[tion and] the cause thereof [to the] church or churches neere adjacent or to which he is [likely] to repaire.

Thirdly, that in case [the] excommunication of any person be so certified, and he be afterward received againe upon repentance, then his repentance and receiving againe shall be as farre certified as his excommunication was.

Fourthly, that none of the churches shall receive into communion any person that pretends to be in communion with any other church of Christ, except the said person have a letter of recommendation from the said church or that they have some other satisfactorie testimonie of his being in full communion with the same. And when any church hath so received any person and he hath continued some time with them he shall at his returne, upon his just desire, have a testimoniall from them of his walking with them. But, if he be under dealing or have deserved to be dealt with for any disorderly walking, they shall signify the same to the church to which he formerly appertained or to which they shall understand him to be gone.

Subscribed in the name of the churches abovementioned by us the messengers of the said churches respectively by them thereunto appointed.

Thomas Tisdale,²⁵ John Comes.²⁶

William Millward, James Cowdery.²⁷

Robert Knight, Benjamin Coxe.

John Tyler, Edward Tub.²⁸

Edmund White.

At this meeting also this ensuing epistle was subscribed by the messengers of the churches of Henly, Kenseworth and Eversholt and afterwards by the churches of Abington and Reading:

To the church of Christ of which our brethren John Spilsberie²⁹ and William Kiffin³⁰ are members and to the rest of the churches in and neere London, agreeing with the said church in principles and constitutions and accordingly holding communion with the same, the churches of Abington, Reading, Henlie, Kensworth and Eversholt send greeting:

Faithfull and beloved brethren,

The Lord our God having made us to lay to heart how the churches of Christ in the apostles' dayes held a firme communion each with other and how necessarie it was for us to endeavour to doe the same, as it becometh particular assemblies which make up but one Mount Syon, Is. 4.5, that we might endeavour to keep each other pure and to cleare the profession of the Gospell from scandall and to manifest our love to all the saints, and thereby [to mani-] fest ourselves to be true churches of Christ and

that we [may] shew ourselves sensible of the need that we have, or may have, one of another and that the worke of God, wherein all the churches are concerned, might be the better caried on by a combination of counsells, prayers and endeavours. Through the assistance of the same God (after many conferences and seeking to the Lord) we solemnly entered into such an association each with other as this enclosed copie of our Agreement doth manifest. And have agreed to the confirmation of some conclusions of which we also send you an enclosed copie. These things we thus represent unto you, not onely because we desire to conceale nothing of this nature from you, but also that we may manifest both our due esteeme of you and also our desire to partake of the benefit of the gifts which God hath given you for counsaile and advice and brotherly assistance; and for the increase and furtherance of love and amitie and good correspondence between us, not doubting but that you will receive this our declaration with the right hand and so construe the same as the Spirit of love shall direct you.

Subscribed in the name and by the appointment of the churches last abovementioned, by us etc.

Postscript. It is our earnest request to the church above named, that this our declaration and the enclosed papers may be communicated to the rest of the churches above signified.

Those enclosed papers were: the copie of our Agreement and of the conclusions confirmed at this meeting and the last.

The sixth General Meeting

At a meeting of messengers at Tetsworth, October 4 1653, it was agreed that the messengers of the churches should desire the respective churches to keepe a record of their proceedings both of receiving in and rejecting persons and of all other remarkable transactions as need shall require.

The seventh General Meeting

At a meeting of messengers at Tetsworth beginning December 27 1653 these foure proposalls ensuing, which had bene sent to the churches from the last meeting were confirmed in maner following:

Proposalls agreed unto by the churches of Reading, Henlie, Abington, Kensworth and Eversholt, to be confirmed by their messengers at their meeting at Tetsworth the 27th day of the 10th month 1653.

1. That such baptized persons as hold the truth in the maine and have the power of godlynes appearing in them, who stand not related to any church of Christ, are to be instructed and encouraged to joyne themselves to some true church of Christ. And that [this] duty be performed by the church next adjacent to the said [persons] as also by the church [whose] members baptized them and by other churches as they [shall see] need and opportunitie upon knowledge of their condition to [be as] aforesaid.³¹ And also, to prevent such neglect for the future, that when an administratour is sent forth by any church to preach and baptize the said church doe take care that he be minded to exhort all such persons as he shall baptize to joyne themselves without delay to some true church of Christ and that everie such administratour be in like manner exhorted, that soone after he shall baptize any person, he give notice thereof to some adjacent church.
2. That such baptized persons as stand not related to any church of Christ, who have fallen from part of the truth or are somewhat scandalous in their lives, or both, of whose recoverie there is ground of hope, be looked after and diligent endeavour used (according to the Scriptures) for their restoring. And this to be done by the church whose members baptized them if with conveniencie it may be or by the church next adjacent.
3. That such baptized persons whose totall apostasie and manifest impenitencie doth shew them to be unfit for communion are, by the church next adjacent, having sufficient knowledge of the manifestnes of the said impenitencie and apostasie, to be declared against accordingly for prevention of scandall and that the members of the churches are to be admonished to take heed of them. And the like duty to be done by the church whose members baptized them, if need require, and it may stand with their conveniencie.
4. That if any person having propounded himselfe to be received into communion with any of the churches, be judged unworthie by reason

of some notorious sin known to the said church and the same person to their knowledge be likelie to offer himselfe, or to make his complaint to any other church or churches, the church that so judged him shall endeavour to signifye the same and the cause thereof to the said church or churches.

Subscribed by the said messengers:

John Combes, John Tomkins of Abington.

John Tyler, Thomas Wooddeson³² of Henlie.

William. Millward, John Deane of Reading.

Edmund White, Thomas Vause of Eversholt.

Thomas Hayward,³³ Richard Woodhouse³⁴ of Kensworth .

The eighth General Meeting

At a meeting of messengers at Tetsworth the 29th of the first moneth 1654 the messengers agreed that the ensuing proposition should be communicated to the churches that, if approved by them, it might be subscribed at the next meeting etc.

A proposition touching heresie:

When a church member doth against his first profession of faith, professedly hold an error directly contrarie to any fundamentall doctrine of the Gospell and stiffely continues therein notwithstanding the cleare and full light of [the Scrip]ture brought against his error, this is heresie and [such an) one is an heretike who, remaining impenitent, after [the fir]st and second admonition is to be rejected.

This appeares to be confirmed by these scriptures: 1 Tim. 1.19f., Titus 3.10f. Hereto may be added these scripture reasons:

1. Such a one, if not rejected, would corrupt many with his leaven of damnable heresie, 2 Tim. 2.18, 2 Pet. 2.1ff., I Cor. 5.6.
2. He now cannot be looked upon as one appearing to have actual communion with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ, I Jn. 1.3, 6.
3. This is the last meane and now the onely meane that remaineth to be used to bring him to repentance, if God have an intention to shew mercy to him, I Tim. 1.20.

The ninth General Meeting

At a meeting of messengers at Tetsworth beginning September 6 1654 the church at Eversholt not consenting to the subscribing of the proposition touching heresie as not judging it to be full and large enough, the ensuing proposall, with the explanation thereof in the margin, was sent back unto the churches in this manner:

A proposall agreed upon at Tetsworth, September 6th 1654, to be sent to the respective churches etc.

When a member of a church of Christ doth hold out an error directly contrarie to any fundamentall doctrine of the Gospell, the church ought orderly to deale with him for the same. And if, notwithstanding their bringing the cleare light of the Scripture against his error, he stiffely continues therein, they then, as the Scripture directs, ought to reject him.

(Margin: This proposall is not intended exclusively to prevent the churches' orderly dealing with their members for diverse other errors though of a lower nature).

At this meeting (viz., at Tetsworth, September 5th and 6th 1654) it was also agreed unto by the messengers that the churches should be desired to set apart a day for seeking the Lord.

1. That God should purge his churches from whatsoever is not right in them. That he would set in order and supply what is wanting and furnish his churches with all needfull gifts and abilities and cause all his gifts to be made use of and improved to his glorie: and that he would helpe his people against all the assaults and wiles of Satan and all the temptations that they lye under and all the dangers that they are subject unto.
2. That God would manifest his owne designe and worke that he hath to doe in our time and shew us what is our duty in that respect and helpe us to performe it.

The tenth General Meeting

At a meeting of messengers at Tetsworth beginning December 26 1654 the proposall above written was subscribed by all the messengers of the associated churches, in the name of the churches etc. The messengers

of the church of Abington thus declaring that churches understanding of the terme ‘fundamentall’ in the said proposall, viz., that by fundamentall doctrine of the Gospell, they understand that doctrine, the belief: whereof is necessarie unto salvation; which sense was also approved by the messengers of the other churches.

At this meeting also these two ensuing proposalls were [by] the messengers agreed on as follows: Proposals to be confirmed at the next meeting (of the) messengers, if consented unto by the churches:

1. That the offi[ces of E]lders and deacons are ordained of the Lord for the [good] of his church and, therefore, it is the duty of everie church verie diligently to endeavour, and very earnestly to seeke unto the Lord, that they may enjoy the benefit of these his gracious appointments, remembering God’s promise to give his people pastors according to his owne heart, Jer. 3.15.
2. That the office of pastors, elders and overseers or bishops is but one and the same and that it is the duty of everie elder as well to teach as to rule in the church whereof he is an elder.

At this meeting also the messengers did subscribe the ensuing epistle to the church at Warwick.³⁵

To the church of Christ at Warwick the messengers of certaine associated churches now assembled at Tetsworth, send greeting:

Deare and faithfull brethren,

We, having received your epistle by the hands of your and our beloved brethren, Captaine John Turner³⁶ and John Sackwell,³⁷ and being informed by them not onely concerning the state of the churches about you but also concerning your laying the same to heart as becometh brethren tender of the state of their fellow members and regarding the glorie of their God, we cannot but blesse our God and stirre you up to praise him also for his grace herein appearing in you. And, although it becometh us rather to be ready humbly and thankfully to receive advice of our brethren, then to be forward to give advice to brethren so furnished with wisdom and understanding as you appeare to be. Yet, considering your brotherly request and that it is the duty of everie Christian to be ready to communicate whatsoever he bath received, we have resolved not to be silent, though we can say but little. We are bold, in the first place, to intimate unto you on what grounds and after what manner we ourselves

did enter into our association, both which you shall easily gather from the enclosed papers. We also signify unto you our rejoycing that such readinesse appears in you to so good a worke, so manifestly tending to the advancement of God's glorie and his churches' good as that we need not stirre you up who are forward allready. Yet we desire that the Lord in this and in everie other thing wherein he hath bene gracious unto you, will confirme and stablish what he himselfe bath wrought. We also desire and are perswaded that our gracious God will so helpe and guide you in entring into a solemne association with other churches that are rightly constituted and principled, that your association may be everie way to the advantage of truth and godlynes and to the strengthening of the hands of those whom God ma[kes instr]umentall in the building of the walls of his Jerusalem [just] as those noble builders in Nehemiah's time were encouraged and strengthened, Neh. 4.19f. It is our resolution to commend it to the respective churches to which we belong that some messengers may be sent to your meeting from some of the said churches or from all of them joyntly, that they may both partake of the benefit of the light which shall appear in you and may also impart what God gives in unto them and be ready to declare the sense and method of the churches that send them concerning such things as shall then lye before you to be considered of.

And, although we cannot in this engage, yet we are confident that it will be readily assented unto. What progresse: we have made in the businesse and what is expected from you in this respect, your messengers will enforme you and in this respect we shall now be the briefer.

As touching the result of this present meeting (for we suppose you are already acquainted with the results of former meetings) you shall also find it among the enclosed papers. And, although we doe not take upon us to prescribe times unto you, yet we are bold to signifye unto you that if the time of your meeting should be at or very neare the times called Easter or Whitsuntide it would be very inconvenient for our messengers but if it be as it were in the midst betwixt those two times it would be most convenient for them. But it is earnestly desired that you would by severall letters give timely notice aforehand of the time and place of your meeting to our brethren John Pendarves of Abington and Benjamin Coxe of Dunstable, sending your said letters to our brother Samuell Tull³⁸ of London by him to be carefully sent to the said brethren.

Thus desiring the Allmighty God more and more to quicken and strengthen

both you and us to his owne worke and to carie it on by his owne good hand we committ both you and ourselves and all our businesses to the same gracious God and sincerely subscribe ourselves,

Your affectionate brethren in the faith and order of the Gospell etc.
Given at Tetsworth the 27th day of the 10th moneth 1654.

In this epistle subscribed as abovesaid, by the messengers were enclosed a copie of the Agreement of the churches and of the grounds of the said Agreement and the result of this present meeting. Also for the furthering of this worke, the messengers now assembled did write to the severall associated churches after this manner:

To the church of Christ at Abington the messengers of the other associated churches send greeting.

Although we have experimentall knowledge of the ability [and] faithfullnes of your owne messengers, whose proper wor[k is] to give you an acco[un]t of a]ll our actings here as messengers of the churches to whic[h we be]long Yet we judge it expedient (as the case at present stands with us) to signifye unto you as followes: we are fully certified by an epistle from the church at Warwick and by the information of those faithfull and approved brethren which brought the said epistle, that the said church at Warwick hath a sweet inclination and a very good desire to enter into such an association with other churches neere unto them as we are entred into. And that such of those churches as know their mind herein, doe appeare very willing and glad to embrace it. And they are perswaded that the like mind will be found in the rest also. It likewise clearly appeares unto us, that the said church of Warwick is herein led with a Christian desire not of their owne good onely but also and in a speciall manner of the good of the rest of the churches who, at present, have great need of their helpe. They also earnestly desire of us in their epistle, that we would give them our brotherly advice in order to the putting of themselves in a way of association with those churches and their messengers doe earnestly presse us to afford them and to endeavour to procure for them the best assistance that we can. Hereupon we considering how much the honour of the name of our God and the good of his churches is concerned in this thing and consequently how it behooveth us to be readie, what in us lyeth, to answer this their desire, did unanimously agree that all the associated churches should be mooved joyntly to agree to send unto them two messengers to a meeting that shall be appointed by them for this worke, that they might not onely partake of the benefit

of such light as shall then appeare in them but also be assistant unto them in the best measure that they may and we have written unto them accordingly as your owne messengers also will enforme you.

And, although we could not engage in this businesse, as we have also written to them, yet, out of our confidence of your love both to God and to all his churches we were perswaded (and have signified our perswasion) that you would embrace the motion. And that this good worke might not be retarded we judged it meet to pitch upon our much respected faithfull brethren Benjamin Cox and John Pendarves to commend them unto you (as we also doe to all the rest of the associated churches) with our earnest desire that you would for your parts appoint and authorise them by your letter, as we question not but the rest of the churches will also doe, to goe and act as aforesaid as messengers sent by you together with the rest of the churches. We humbly pray you to consider how important the worke is and how it requires not to be delayed and, accordingly, to act with convenient speed.

Thus, leaving the relating of other things concerning this businesse and other affairs to your owne messengers and intreating the exercise of your brotherly love in the interpreting of our actions; we commend you in this, and in everie worke of yours, to the gracious direction and disposall of our good God.

In whom we are your loving brethren etc.

[Tetswo]rth, December 27 1654.

The like epistle was sent [to each] of the other associated churches. The brethren [asked] to be messengers did not subscribe. Also the epistle to e[ach] church was not subscribed by the messengers of that particular church. All the rest of the messengers did subscribe their names to each epistle.

At this meeting it was also earnestly desired by all the messengers that all the churches should be humbly mooved and called upon by their respective messengers to consider their wayes before the Lord and to examine them diligently by the rule of his word and to intreate the Lord to shew them all their failings and wants that they may give glorie to God in the humble acknowledgement of them seeking to the Lord for his grace and helpe and in his strength reforming whatsoever is amisse.

The eleventh General Meeting

At the meeting of messengers at Tetsworth, the 19th and 20th dayes of the 4th moneth 1655.

The first of the two proposalls appointed now to be confirmed if consented unto by the churches was accordingly confirmed and subscribed by the messengers of the churches of Abington, Reading, Henlie, Kensworth and Eversholt.

The confirmation of the second was respited by consent and the writing here ensuing was approoved of by the messengers who agreed that a copie thereof should be taken and shewed to the brother whose scruple (in this writing mentioned) did, for the present, cause the confirmation of the proposall to be respited.

Proposall: the office of pastours, elders and overseers or bishops, is but one and the same and it is the duty o[f eve]rie elder as well to teach as to rule in the church [where-) of he is an elder.

Whereas there is [some scru]ple in one of our brethren which makes him not fully free as y[et to c]onsent to this proposal whereupon not onely the particular chu[rch] of which the said brother is a member but also the messengers of the other associated churches doe respite the subscribing of the said proposal. For the remooving of the said scruple, we offer unto his serious consideration:

1. That the elders, overseers and pastors of the church of Ephesus were all one, as appeares in Acts 20.17 with v. 28. That it is the duty of the elders to feed the flock of God and take the oversight thereof, 1 Peter 5.1f. And that it appeares also in Titus 1.5ff. that elders and bishops are but severall names of the same officers.
2. That it is expressly required of a bishop or elder that he must be apt to teach, 1 Tim. 3.2. That he hold fast the faithfull word that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainesayers, Titus 1.9.
3. That therefore the saying of the apostle in 1 Tim. 5.17 must not be conceived to imply that there were elders ruling well who yet were not at all exercised in the word and doctrine, but rather to signifye that the elder's paines in the word and doctrine was a speciall thing for which he was to be honoured; and that as any did abound in

his paines this way, so he should have the more abundant honour: for the word here rendred, 'They which labour' doth most properly signifye, 'They which labour verie painefully.'

4. So also that in Ro. 12.7f., (which is to be compared with the verse aforegoing) though it may imply that some had the gifts of teaching and exhorting (who are also stirred up to diligence in the use of their gifts) who yet were not in the office of pastors or rulers, yet it doth not imply that persons might be fit to be pastors or rulers with one such a gift. Or that pastors or rulers doe not need to make use of such a gift.
5. As touching Heb. 13.7, 17. As the rulers or guides spoken of in both those verses were the pastours of the church so herein lyes the different scope of those two verses. In v. 7 the saints are stirred up to a profitable remembrance of the labours and life and blessed end of their godly pastors that were deceased. In v. 17 they are called upon to yield due submission to their pastours who then lived and watched for their soules who, feeding them with knowledge and understanding, were undoubtedly carefull to speake unto them the Word of God. Though the phrase of the translators in the translation doth render this distinct scope of those two verses somewhat obscure yet is it not so dark in the Greeke text but that it may well be there discerned by an understanding eye.

At this meeting the churches of Wantage,³⁹ Watlington,⁴⁰ Kingston⁴¹ and Hadnam⁴² were received into association by the expresse consent of the churches before associated and did by their messengers subscribe the agreement of the associated churches. It was also agreed at this meeting that the messengers of the churches should carie backe to the severall churches. these ensuing desiers:

1. It is desired that the severa[l churc]hes would seriously consider and examine by the scripture [the p]ractise of church members marrying with unbelievers and such as are in Babilon. And that in this examination they would seriously mind these scriptures, 1 Cor. 7.39, 9.5 and 1 Peter 3.7 and not forgett how great a snare such mariages have proved. And that they would signifye their judgement touching this matter by their messengers at the next meeting. And, in

the meanwhile, admonish their members to take heed and beware of that which is so unsafe, uncomfortable and very sadly complained of among the churches.

2. The severall churches are also desired that as they have manifested the right information of their judgement concerning the Lord's appointing of the offices of elders and deacons for the good of his church and their duty to endeavour diligently, and to seeke the Lord earnestly that they may enjoy the benefit of these his gracious appointments, so they would now shew themselves to endeavour and to seeke the Lord accordingly with all earnestness in prayer with fasting. And that their messengers may signify at the next meeting what they have done herein and with what successe.
3. Moreover, whereas at the last meeting the churches were humbly mooved to consider their wayes before the Lord and to examine them diligently by the rule of his word. And to intreat the Lord to shew them all their failings and wants that they might give glorie to God in the humble acknowledgement of them, seeking to the Lord for his grace and helpe and in his strength reforming whatsoever is amisse. They are now humbly intreated that, so far as they shall see meete, they would by their messengers informe at the next meeting what they have herein also done and what answers they have received from the Lord, specially in such things as are in some measure common to all the churches. That so all may receive benefit and rejoyce or mourne together as there shall be cause.

It is also desired that each church would authorise their messengers to subscribe at the next meeting the proposal whose subscription was now respited in case the rest of the churches be readie to joyne therein.

The twelfth General Meeting

At a meeting of messengers at Tetsworth beginning the 17th day of October 1655.

At this meeting the church at Pirton⁴³ was received into association with the rest of the churches and by their messengers subscribed the Agreement of the churches.

At this meeting also the messengers agreed the several papers whose contents here follows should be sent unto the ch[urch]es which were sent accordingly. At a meeting at Tetsworth the 18th day of the 8th month 1655 the judgement of the messengers of the churches of Abingdon, Reading, Henlye, Kensworth, Eversholt, Wantage, Watlington, Kingston, Hadnam and Pirton concerning beleivers marrying with unbeleivers was declared as followes and is by them tendred to the serious consideration of the respective churches:

Although we doe not affirme that if a beleever have married a visible unbeliever this mariage is null, considering that the contract of mariage is a civill contract and considering what the Apostle expressly affirms concerning married persons in I Cor. 7.12ff. And consequently we dare not affirme that a promise of mariage made by a beleever to an unbeliever may lawfully be broken by the beleever because it was made to such a one in case the unbelieving partie constantly require the performance of the same lest so the name of God should be blasphemed and his people accused as covenant breakers. Neither doe we assert a beleever's marrying any visible unbeevever to be so absolutely and perpetually unlawfull as that no necessitie whatsoever may make it to be dispensed with in any case. Yet we discern and judge that it is the duty of everie dis-ingaged beleever that intendeth mariage to be very carefull and to use his best and earnest endeavour to have such a yokefellow as may upon good grounds be looked upon as a reall beleever.

1. Considering the manifest and great evils and evill consequences of the acting of those sons of God who, seeing the daughters of men that they were faire, tooke them wives of all which they chose, Gen. 6.2–5. And that they are led by no better motive who are not carefull to choose a godly yokefellow considering also the noted evill fruit of wise Solomon's transgressing in this kind in Neh. 13.26.
2. Considering how a vile person and consequentlie everie visible unbeliever, as he is such a one, is contemned in the eyes of a saint, acting and judging as a saint; and how a saint honoureth them that feare the Lord, Ps. 15.4. And surely a saint falls very short of so acting and judging when he chooseth a vile person to be one flesh with hirnselfe and seekes not carefully one that feareth the Lord to be his yokefellow. Where is now his speciall honouring a saint as a saint?

3. Considering that by such mariages the godly friends and relations of the believing partic are not onely exposed to grieffe and sadnes but also greatly deprived of their spirituall freedome of communion with them. Such inconveniences as those, with many others, we suppose were well foreseen by Abraham when he so straitly charged his servant about the mariage of his son, Gen. 24.3. And by Rebecca when she so earnestly intreated Isaak that Jacob might not take a wife of the daughters of Heth, Gen. 27.46. And by Isaak when he accordingly charged Jacob, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan, Gen. 28.1.
4. Considering how much it concerns the spirituall good and comfort of married saints to care to looks upon their yokefellowes as beings together with them of the grace of life, I Pet. 3.7. And consequently how this is in due time to be provided for.
5. Considering how the good example and pious instructions of both the parents are appointed meanes in God's hand of the good of the children, Prov. 6.20. And the contrarie is a means of their mine 2 Chron. 22.3, therefore a godly person intending manage with an eye to the procreation of children, whould for their good make a good choise of his yokefellow.
6. Considering how in all things we ought to doe that which is most for the setting forth of God's glorie, I Cor. 10.31. And how Christians that marrie ought to marrie in the Lord, I Cor. 7.39.
7. Considering how we are to pray not to be led into temptation and therefore should be carefull not to expose ourselves to a continuall and dangerous temptation from an unbelieving yokefellow.
8. Considering the perpetuall enmitie betweene the two seeds, Gen. 3.15, and also what Solomon saith in Prov. 29.27, An unjust man is abomination to the just, and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked. What holy or settled peace then can the godlie partie expect from his yokefellow if he regard not to make a good choise? It being the unquestionable dutie of a saint to provide for peace what in him lyes.

9. Considering how farre a saint shall come short of David's saintlike mind expressed in Ps. 101, I will not know a wicked person etc., if in mariage he seeke not a faithfull yokefellow. And how little wisdome he will shew in this case in joyning a dead sinner to himselfe a living saint, as a companion made one flesh with him. And how farre he will be from doing a saint's dutie in laying aside everie weight. Also how great difficultie there must needes be found in ruling or being ruled by a yokefellow in whom Satan rules.

All these things considered it is desired that not onely church members likelie to be married but also such parents (being likewise church members) as have such children to be disposed of in mariage may be seasonably and earnestly admonished to endeavour that the mind of the Lord may herein be observed. And if any have done otherwise, they ought earnestly to repent of the same.

The humble motion of the messengers mett at Tetsworth October 18 1655 unto the associated churches concerning seriousnes and gravitie and concerning faithfull dealing in brotherly admonition and seasonable reprehension.

Whereas it pleased the Lord to suffer a brother that was a messenger of one of the churches somewhat to faile in a speech that fell from him in the agitation of the things of God which savoured of some lightnes and occasioned some smiling (not to be commended) in some other of the messengers. And through the goodnes of God one [of] the messengers did not let the same passe without a gentle explicite reproofe and (through mercie) the same reproofe [took] so good effect as that the said brother did not onely priv[ately] acknowledge his failin[g to t]he brother that had so reprooved him but did also confesse the [sa]me before all the messengers with much opennes of heart and abundant manifestation of the grace of God clearely shining in him. Which good example drew from all the rest of the messengers such heart opening and soule melting confessions as made them to admire the goodnes of God unto them. And filled their hearts with much comfort and encrease of love and stirred them up to seeke the Lord not onely for the encrease of grace in their owne hearts, but also that this dealing of the Lord might not slip away without some speciall advantage and benefit to all the churches to which they did belong.

It is therefore the humble desire of all the messengers:

1. That all the churches should much lay to heart how much it concerns all the saints to be farre from all lightnes and vanitie and to manifest sobernesse, seriousnes and gravitye both in their countenances and speeches and manner of behaviour as at all times and in all the parts of their conversation, so especially when they are employed in any of the affaires of God's house. As it is one spot of wicked men, that the shew of their countenance doth testify against them, Is. 3.9, so it should be the commendation of the saints that the shew of their countenance doth testify for them. Their speech should be allway with grace, seasoned with salt, Col. 4.6. Their speech should be pure, not onely from filthynesse and foolish talking but also from jesting; which things are not convenient and should not be named among saints, Eph. 5.3f., and the grace of God teacheth them as to live righteously and godly, so also to live soberly in this present world, Titus 2.12. And the righteous man doth guide his affaires with judgement, Ps. 112.5. And it is with special care to be minded, that God will be sanctified in those that draw neere to him, Lev. 10.3. And that in doctrine he will have his servants to shew not onely uncorruptnes and sinceritie but also gravitye, Titus 2.7.
2. That they would in like manner consider the dutie of an saints to deale lovingly and faithfully one with another not onely instructing and exhorting but also, as need shall require, admonishing and re-prooving, considering the word of the Lord in Lev. 19.17, Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour and not suffer sin upon him. Also in Prov. 28.23, He that rebuketh a man shall find more favour afterwards than he that flattereth with the tongue. And againe, Prov. 27.5, Open rebuke is better than secret love. Also in Mat. 18.15, If thy brother tres-passe against thee, goe and tell him his fault betweene thee and him alone. In Col. 3.16, 24, The word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another. In 1 Thess. 5.14, Warne them that are unruly, or, disorderly. In Gal. 6.1, If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spirituall, restore such a one in the spirit of meekenesse and in Heb. 3.13, Exhort one another daily while it is called today lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfullnes of sin. And in Heb. 10.24, Let us consider one another

to provoke unto love and good workes. And that saints may not be unwilling to receive both wholesome admonition and also seasonable and necessarie reproofe, it is desired that the saying of David may be well minded, Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness, and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oyle which shall not breake mine head, Ps. 141.5.

Moreover the messengers doe rejoyce for that diverse of the churches, as appears by the answere of their respective messengers, have shewed themselves very earnest in seeking the Lord that he would performe to them his promise of giving his people pastours after his owne heart. And they desire them to continue herein untill they have prevailed with the Lord. And whereas some churches have come short of shewing such earnestnesse and diligence, they are now humbly desired more seriously to mind the seeking of the Lord in this behalfe, that he may set forth his glorie in dealing graciously with them in giving this blessing which the churches so much need and for want of which some churches have sadly miscaried. And they are in like manner once againe mooved to search and try their wayes and to follow the Lord with incessant prayer for the healing of all their diseases, not giving over till they have obtained health and cure. And that their messengers may certify at the next meeting what strength they have gained that we may rejoyce or mourne together.

It is also agreed to be represented to the churches as the earnest desire of the messengers, that they would be very carefull to recommend unto God in their earnest and faithfull prayers, their poore and weake brethren whom they employ, whether at home or abroad in this day of small things, to declare the truths of Christ, that so they may be more strengthened in the worke and being enlarged, they that have so prayed for them and received an answere to their prayers may breake forth into the praises of God in this respect.

The churches are also exhorted that whatsoever they shall discern to be their duty touching all or any of the aforesaid matters, they would doe the same speedily and with all their might, as to the Lord.

The churches are also earnestly desired to take out fit men among them such as are in some measure fitted and qualified according to the Apostle's rules for the offices of el[ders] and deacons and, as they shall have opportunitie, and [need] require, to employ such persons respectively in the [practice] of such parts of the [offices] of elders and deacons as may

be performed by such gif [ted] brethren not yet in office. That so they may have tryall and experience of their abilitie and fitnes. That upon such tryall and prooffe, if they find them fit, they may orderly and cheerefully proceed to the settling of them in those offices.

It is also desired that the churches would review before the next meeting, the conclusions that have bene allready agreed to and consider how they have bene observed. And that the churches lately received into association would authorise their messengers then also to subscribe the said conclusions. Also that at the next meeting the messengers may be readie to subscribe the respited proposall, which is now againe respited because the churches of Watlington. Hadnam and Kingston had not till now a copie thereof.

At this meeting there was also presented to the messengers a copie of an epistle written by the messengers of diverse churches mett at Chard in the 7th moneth now immediately past to all the churches to which they were related. And the messengers now mett at Tetsworth having heard the copie of this epistle did not onely desire that the same might be read to all the churches of this association also but did also desire that upon such reading thereof these churches might be mooved touching the authorising of their messengers at the next meeting to write to the messengers of those churches for a mutuall correspondence. The copie of the said epistle here followeth . . . ⁴⁴

At the aforesaid meeting at Tetsworth in the 8th month 1655, the writing, the copie whereof here followes was also agreed unto by the messengers.

The copie of a writing agr[eed unto] by the messengers to be sent to a brother not fully satisfyed touching one expression in the Agreement of the churches.

Whereas the messengers of the associated churches are informed that one of their brethren is somewhat unsatisfyed as touching that expression in the Agreement of the churches in which they doe engage themselves (in the strength of Christ and through his grace) faithfully to performe each towards other such dutyes etc., doubting lest they have here offended in promising and vowing more then they are able to performe.

They now intreate the said brother to consider:

1. That they have expressed themselves herein to rely on the grace and strength of Christ and not at all on their owne abilitye.

2. That they have expressly confined their engagement to such duties as they doe and shall discern the word of God to require of them.
3. They desire this their engagement to be conferred with David's in Ps. 23.6, 101.2, 119.15f. and also in v. 106 hoping that so it may be the better understood that they have bound themselves by their promise to performe the duties by them signified as the Lord shall give them both light and opportunitie and strength to performe them. Though they have not used, as they judge that they needed not to use, those particular expressions no more than David did in the places aforementioned
4. They desire it may be considered that all the church members have, according to the will of God, even in their closing with Christ, and receiving of baptisme, engaged themselves in the strength of Christ, whom they have put on, being baptized into his name, to walke through his grace according to the rule of his Gospell in true obedience to his will, Gal. 3.26f., Ro. 6.3f.

The next meeting of the messengers of these associated churches was appointed to begin the eleventh day of the first moneth then next coming and to continue full three dayes. The first of those three dayes to be spent in receiving the answers from the churches and in such other things as might (be) fit for the seeking of the Lord. The second, in seeking the Lord by prayer with fasting for the powring forth of his spirit. The last day to be spent in the remaining worke.

The thirteenth General Meeting

At the meeting of [mess]engers at Tetsworth in the first moneth 1656 which began the 11th day of the moneth.

At this meeting the churches of Oxford⁴⁵ and Hempstead⁴⁶ were received into association.

At this meeting also all the messengers did subscribe certaine copies of the Agreement of the churches and of the conclusions formerly subscribed for the more full and cleare satisfaction of the churches lately received into association.

At this meeting likewise the respited proposall was confirmed as follows:
Concluded at this meeting at Tetsworth:

1 *The Abingdon Association records*

That the office of pastors, elders and overseers or bishops is but one and the same and that it is the duty of everie elder as well to teach as to rule in the church whereof he is an elder.

Subscribed by us the messengers of the churches respectively, viz.,
of

Abington, John Pendarves, John Jones⁴⁷
Reading, William Millward, John Man.⁴⁸
Henlie, Richard Boulton,⁴⁹ Thomas Smith.⁵⁰
Kensworth, Benjamin Coxe, John Mettmoth.⁵¹
Eversholt, Thomas Cooke,⁵² Clement Berridge.⁵³
Wantage, Robert Keate,⁵⁴ John Beale.⁵⁵
Kingston, John Belcher,⁵⁶ Isaak Chowne.⁵⁷
Watlington, James Harrison,⁵⁸ Richard Harris.⁵⁹
Hadnam, Robert Coxe,⁶⁰ William Cowlie.⁶¹
Oxford, Thomas Tisdale, Richard Tidmarsh.⁶²
Hempstead, John Baker.⁶³
Pirton, William Bradles,⁶⁴ William Hare.⁶⁵

At this meeting the messengers also answered two questions proposed by the church of Reading as follows:

The judgement of the messengers of the churches mett at Tetsworth concerning these two questions proposed to us by the church at Reading, viz.,

1. How, and by what meanes and rules of Scripture, may any person be justly judged a visible believer.
2. If a member of a church contrarie to advice and counsaile take an unbeliever for a yokefellow whether such a one deserves to be dealt with for the same.

Having heretofore given our understanding touching the duty of believers who are about to joyn[e in] mariage that they ought earnestly to endeavour for the [obtain] ing of such yokefellowes as are partakers of the same faith with them. Upon the questions proposed to us we have thus concluded.

First, as to the first:

1. That a visible believer may be manifestly discerned and known by these two things: his profession or confession of Christ and his practise or conversation; and the agreement betweene both these and

their sutablenes to the rules of Scripture in these things following chiefly:

His love to all saints, I Jn. 3.14, Jn. 13.35, Heb. 6.9ff.

His universall obedience to God's commands according to the measure of light received, Ps. 119.6, Jn. 15.14.

His readinesse to lay downe all that he hath for Jesus Christ rather then to sin against him, Rev. 12.11, Acts 15.26, Mat. 10.38f., compared with Lk. 14.26 and 33.

His experimentall declaration of the worke of regeneration and of the worke of faith with power, Jer. 51.10, Ro. 10.9f., Ps. 145.6f., 10f., 66.16.

By these distinguishing characters appearing in visible effects as occasion and opportunitie is offered the children of God may be and are visibly manifested and differenced from others.

Secondly, as to the second:

2. Whereas it is the duty of believers about to marie earnestly to endeavour to get godly yokefellowes; if such who are church members be found despising, slighting or rejecting wholesome counsaile herein, they then are reproveable according to the rule of the word, Lev. 19.17, Ps. 50.16f. And if after due and orderly dealing with them, they continue froward they are to be put from among the saints, Prov. 15.31f., Ps. 101.4, 8.

At this meeting the messengers of the church at Kensworth did by the appointment of that church desire the advice of the rest of the messengers touching their standing still as one church or dividing by consent etc., and to that end gave them information of the state of that church so far as concerned that matter. Hereunto the messengers answered as follows:

The answeere of the messengers at Tetsworth to their brethren at Kensworth :

Deare brethren,

Whereas God hath set the bounds of your habitation at such a distance that your members are in no capacitie to assemble together with conveniencie and comfort to the joynt car[rying] on of the worke of the Lord amongst you and there [being] a considerable [number] of your members some of them endued with competent [gifts] for the worke of a church

living together in and neare Lughton⁶⁶ which is sixe or seven miles from you. We being made acquainted herewith by your messengers and being mooved to seeke the Lord in your behalfe and to give advice in this case whether it be not most expedient and tending to the glorie of God for you to part by consent and to stand as two distinct churches, doe in humilitie and the feare of the Lord present you with our judgement, and the grounds thereof, as followeth:

We judge it most expedient and tending to the glorie of God that the members who mett at Lughton, stand distinct from you as a church of themselves:

1. Because as now they stand they are deprived in a great measure of solemne church meetings wherein above all other meetings we have ground to expect a speciall presence of Christ who walkes amidst the golden candlesticks etc., Rev. 2.1.
2. Because your church businesse. or rather the worke of the Lord in the church, must (as now you stand) either be caried on by a part and it may be the lesser part of the church without the presence of the rest, yea without their knowledge and consent, or otherwise be greatly neglected and deferred from time to time to the great dishonoure of God and disadvantage of truth and great dissatisfaction of diverse members of the church as hath bene sadly experienced in the like case in other churches.
3. Because as now you stand your members in the one part or the other are deprived in a great measure of the benefit that might groundedly be expected in hearing publike reproofe and admonition given to church members under dealing.
4. Because your present posture and standing is apt to expose and (as we heare) doth expose diverse members amongst you to much trouble and scruple of conscience, partly from their not knowing their fellowmembers (it may be not one halfe of them by face) much lesse their conditions not hearing their declarations nor conversing with them; being strangers also in a great measure to what is done in the name of the church. And the breaking of bread, no win one place and then in another, where the greater number of your members cannot probably be expected to come together into one

place is a practise not so clearely warranted by the word of God, but it hath bene found lyable to diverse doubts and questions not easily resolved as experience bath shewed in other churches.

These things considered, as also that God hath appointed that his people for convenience sake and for their better edification and benefit in the enjoyment of the ordinances of Christ in the church should associate together in distinct churches where the members generally might be in a capacitie to meet together in one place as occasion should be offered, we have therefore thus judged.

As for the helpe you have at present either from other in severall parts, the same may and, we are perswaded, will be constantly continued, as need shall be, and as it shall be desired, seeing such a distinction into two church bodyes cannot make voyde the law of your relation as fellow members of Christ.

Brethren, if we have presumed herein, beare with us, seeing we have bene provoked to signifye our sense in this matter. We commend you to the Lord, who is able to supply you with all wisdome out of his rich treasures, so we rest,

Your loving and faithfull brethren through rich grace.

The second day of this meeting, being the 12th day of the moneth, was spent in prayer to God, with fasting, for the powring forth of his Spirit. God's gracious presence with his servants in the same is declared in the ensuing epistle which was thus directed:

To the severall churches whose messengers mett at Tetsworth the 11th day of the first moneth 1656.

Deare and precious brethren,

The Spirit of grace and of supplications promised to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem be abundantly powred upon you. Whereas the copie of an epistle sent to severall churches by the messengers that mett at Chard, wherein they signified to the churches how and with what good successe they had sought the Lord in prayer with fasting for the powring forth of his Spirit, became through the good hand of our God a meane whereby we were stirred up to seeke to the Lord in some like manner for the same mercy, we have therefore judged it to be our dutie not to conceale from you the swete experience which we also,

notwithstanding our weaknes and unworthynes, have now had of God's great goodnes and loving kindnesse.

When the Lord shall build up Syon he shall appeare in his glorie: he will regard the prayer of the destitute, he will not despise their prayer. And this, saith the Psalmist, shall be written for the generation to come etc., Ps. 102.16ff. The Lord therefore having begun to appeare unto us in his mercie and shewing himselfe not to despise our prayers we are pressed in our spirits to write of the same. We have found the Lord gracious and full of compassion. Therefore we desire to speake of the glorious honour of his m[a]jesty and to utter the memorie of his great goodnesse, Ps. 145.5, 7f.

The Lord made [us] sensible of our unpreparednes to seeke him and suffered us to have much experience of the malice and subtilty of Satan endeavouring to hinder us. Yet, in the strength of Jesus Christ our deare Saviour, we obtained a joyfull victorie over our subtile and potent enemy. It was God's promise to Israell that they should come with weeping and with supplications he would lead them. He would cause them to walke by rivers of water in a streight way wherein they should not stumble, Jer. 31.9. And this goodnes we have found in our God. His poore servants who were drawne forth to speak in prayer found a gracious assistance and his servants that joyned in petition were also strengthened and quickened to put up their requests with earnestnes and confidence and with one accord to their God and Father.

After that some five or sixe brethren had spoken in prayer, both the messengers of the churches and also some other brethren who joyned with us in the worke, being mooved to declare their present experience of God's dealing with them, did give such a concurrent testimonie of God's great goodnes and love which they had found, as made all our soules to rejoyce, specially considering how this testimony was joyned with an humble acknowledgement of their owne frailtie and verie evidently appeared to proceed from the Spirit of truth and meeknes. Diverse brethren had such sweet and lively and soule-ravishing manifestations of God's gracious presence, as they could not sufficiently expresse and such as some of them had not enjoyed in all their lives, till this day. And the hand of the Lord was thankfully acknowledged in quickning some hearts which had bene lukewarme and softening some which had bene in a great measure hardened. Thus the Spirit of our God hath wrought in his poore servants as the Spirit of grace. And hath much increased their love and

confirmed their faith, perswading our hearts that we shall in due time receive a plentifull answeere to our requests and confirming our resolution to continue our petitions till we have received the same.

Being taught by this experience how good a thing it is thus to waite upon the Lord and incessantly to crave at his hands his promised Spirit, as we did conclude this daye's worke with renewed petitions and joyfull thanksgivings to the Lord, who had made this day of fasting such a day of feasting to our soules, so we have also resolved (the Lord enabling us) to spend the second day of our next meeting here, in the like earnest seeking to our bountifull Father for the full performance of the promise of his Spirit, that his mercie and his truth may be magnified and the righteousness of Jerusalem may goe forth as brightnes and the salvation thereof as a lampe that burneth, Is. 62.1.

We cannot but take notice with thankfullnes to God, of heavenly grace appearing in some of the churches in their earnest seeking of the Lord for us that his gracious presence might be with us in this our meeting; and we are perswaded that we have received some fruit of their prayers. [So] we represent this now unto you, that it may not onely encourage those who have bene already thus exercised, still to continue and proceed in so good a worke but also that this their good example may excite and encourage other churches who shall hereafter send hither their messengers to doe the like.

Most deare brethren, we humbly desire you to lay to heart how much it concerns you all to be earnest with the Lord in this thing. Consider what is written in Is. 62.6f., Ye that make mention of the Lord, keepe not silence and give him no rest, till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. And shall God thus make Jerusalem a praise in the earth without his Spirit powred forth upon the same? But we need not herein largely presse you, considering that you have heard or shal heare that quickning letter from the West which is very full to this point. The Lord in mercy helpe us all most earnestly to begge this promised grace, that our God may be more glorified in us, in our exercise of spirituall wisdom, love, meekenesse, courage and all puritie and holynesse.

Oh, deare brethren, we desire to leave upon your hearts the consideration of these things:

1. The manifest and great need that we and all God's people have of the powring forth of his Spirit.

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2. The cleare promises that God hath made of this inestimable blessing to his people.
3. That our Head and Saviour is at the right hand of his Father, having fully received this promise for us.
4. That it is now a speciall time and season for the Lord's people to sue unto him for this mercye.
5. That the Lord hath set it with power on the hearts of many of his people now to strive together in earnest prayer for the same.
6. How much it behooveth us to shew our seriousnes herein by manifesting a holy care not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God by doing any of the workes of the flesh, but endeavouring to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.

We shall conclude with the words of the Apostle, 2 Thess. 2.16f., Now our Lord Jesus Christ himselfe and God, even our Father, which hath loved us and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and stablish you in everie good word and worke. This is the hearty prayer of your unworthy and yet, through mercy, your loving and faithfull brethren and servants in Christ Jesus,

John Jones, William Millward, Benjamin Coxe, Thomas Cooke.

Subscribed in the name and by the appointment of all the messengers now mett at Tetsworth this 13th day of the first moneth 1656.

Postscript. Whereas diverse of the churches declaring by their messengers their wants and the great difficultyes that they are exercised with, have by the same messengers entreated [the] earnest prayers of the rest of the churches in their behalfe and it manifestly appears that all the churches stand in great need of the helpe of the prayers of all their brethren and, as we have ground to be perswaded, doe desire the same, we therefore renew our humble desires unto you, that you would be mindfull, according to the will of your heavenly Father and as your brotherly relation each to other doth require, of the performance of your duty in this respect, praying earnestly for all the churches, that God would heale all their diseases, supply all their wants, strengthen them against all their weaknesses and make them to overcome all difficulties. And that he would in a speciall manner helpe those his servants that lye most open to the sorest temptations and strengthen those whom he calleth forth to

his most weightie and speciall service. We againe end with the Apostle's owne words, Eph. 6.17f., Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, praying allwayes with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, etc.

The messengers of the churches continuing their meeting at Tetsworth the 14th day of the first moneth 1656 did agree to present to the severall churches these their humble desires:

1. That they would seriously consider, and try as before the Lord by the rules of his word, beseeching the Lord to give them a right understanding, whether the paying of tithes to the nationall ministers be not an evill from which all the people of God ought to purge themselves. With reference hereunto we present these following arguments being offered to us by some of the messengers to be weighed in the ballance of the sanctuarie.
 - i That such paying of tithes is an upholding (at least implicetely and by unavoydable consequence) of that shadowish law of Moses which the saints are not now under. Neither may it now be looked upon as remaining in force, unles we will deny that Christ is come. The priesthood being changed there is made of necessitie a change also of the law, Heb. 7.12. And that this hath relation to the law of tithing plainly appears in v. 5.
 - ii That, as the paying of tithes to the Leviticall priesthood was an owning and upholding of the same and of the worship that was caried on thereby: so the paying of tithes to the nationall ministrie is likewise an owning and supporting of it and of their national! service and worship which yet we know to be Babilonish and antichristian. In Israeli after the flesh they which did eate of the sacrifices were partakers of the altar, I Cor. 10.18. Is not then this feeding of the altar a partaking of the same?
 - iii The true ministers of Jesus Christ are to be supported, as touching their outward subsistence, not by tithes, nor by any inforced maintenance but, as they shall be found worthy and as it shall be found [nee]dfull and convenient and the saints

shall be enabled thereunto, [by] the voluntarie contribution of those that are instructed by them Gal. 6.6.

2. That they would in like manner consider and try whether the paying of church rates (as they are called) be not likewise unlawfull. Considering that the payment of these doth maintaine, yea and implicitly owne, those pretended holy and consecrated places which the world calls their churches which are set apart for their anti-christian worship. Which also takes in an owning and upholding in some measure, of the worship itselfe considering also that hereby the charge is borne of the bread and wine that is spent in the antichristian nationall communion.

If we must flee out of the midst of Babilon and deliver everie man his soule, that we be not cutt off in her iniquitie, Jer. 51.6, and Babilon must be destroyed utterly, nothing of her must be left, Jer. 50.26. Which is no lesse true of the mysticall then it was of the literall Babilon. With what safetie then may we act as communicating with Babilon and supporting the same?

3. That they would likewise weigh and trye whether it be not a dutie lying upon them to endeavour seriously and effectually to have convenient burying places and to walke no longer after the custome of the people in Babilon in burying their dead in the places appointed for Christian buriall as they call it, viz., their churches or churchyards.

- i Sith God hath commanded his people to be separate and not to touch the uncleane thing, 2 Cor. 6.17, and their churches and churchyards, as they call them, being consecrated by their bishops as holy turfe for their pretended Christian buriall and so accounted by the people as holier then other places for that use and service they esteeming it a Christian priviledge to be buried there, are even hereby made an uncleane thing, I Thess. 5.22. Doe we now abstaine from all appearance of evill when we conforme to the custome of the world in burying our dead there?

- ii Sith it hath bene and is the customarie, superstitious, practise of the world to burie their dead there and nowhere else though other convenient places may be had unles any have

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dyled excommunicate or bene murderers of themselves. This their so doing on such an account is no better then an unfruitfull worke of darknesse and with such workers of darknesse we are to have no fellowship, but rather reprove thern, Eph. 5.11, and so shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, Phil. 2.15.

- iii Sith by our contrarie practise herein we may not onely witnesse against the superstitious and idolatrous esteeme that the ignorant, deluded people have of this their consecrated and supposed holy ground and their priviledge of being buried there with that which they call Christian but may rather be called antichristian buriall but also, by our withdrawing from [thern] there is ground to [hope] that some among them may be provoked to search and so come to see how they have bene deluded in this matter.
 - iv Sith by burying our dead in those places we strengthen the hands of the parish church officers, as their ministers and clarkes who, upon severall accounts, get considerable gaine by the saints' conformitie to their customes in this thing. Yea, thus we are found contributing to the upholding of Babilon and thereby provoking the Lord to jealousye. We ought not thus to lend our helping hand to maintaine their pretended church offices in that antichristian way which we have separated from which stands in opposition to the pure way and worship of God, I Cor. 10.22.
 - v Sith we ought not unnecessarily to mingle ourselves with false-worshippers, in any practise wherein we are in danger of learning their manners and defiling ourselves with their corrupt customes which, as by Israell's experience of old, so by our owne of late, hath proved a snare to God's people. Therefore we should rather with Abraham buy a burying place for our dead then frequent their posts and places with them. Yea, consider what instruction we may herein learne from Jacob's practise who buried Rachell in the way etc., Gen. 35.19.
4. That they would seriously consider what is their duty touching the admonishing their members not to be present at nor partakers of

those christning feasts (as the world calles them) which are held in honour of the mock-baptisme of infants or for the countenancing of the same. And, touching dealing with those members which this way offend. And that they would endeavour to search out how many wayes men may, ere they be aware, make themselves guiltie of worshipping the beast or his image or receiving his marke upon their foreheads or, at least, in their hands, Rev. 20.4.

The fourteenth General Meeting

At a meeting of messengers at Tetsworth which begun the 27th day of the 3rd moneth 1656.

A writing sent by some brethren of Wantage to this meeting was seriously considered by the messengers in order to the answering thereof. In the writing there was an endeavour to proove the lawfullnes of paying tithes as the same is now required by the magistrate etc. The writing was as follows:

Deare brethren,

Forasmuch as it is desired of you that those brethren which dissent from you in their judgement concerning the payment of those payments called tithes that they should declare it, we, judging it our duty to endeavour after peace and love in the Spirit, shall endeavour to answeere your desire. And first we shall declare wherein we doe agree with you in this matter.

The proposall is whether it be an evill to pay tithes. Our judgement is that to pay tithes under the Gospell as a divine right is an evill, Christ having abolished the law so that there is verilie a disannulling of the commandment going before, Heb. 7.18. The priesthood being changed there is made of necessitie a change also of the law, Heb. 7.12. So that Christians, willingly acting in payment of it as it was instituted in the law, is an evill. In this we agree: so those arguments brought by you are herein consented to.

But herein we differ: we doe not judge it an evill to pay it as it is now commanded by the magistrate. First, because it is not demanded as a divine right and so, being a civill thing, we have our liberty to pay it according to that scripture, Mat. 17.25ff. Secondly, because of the constraint the magistrate useth to the payment of it: considering that those things which of itselفة is unlawfull, in case of necessitie, may be

lawfull as it appears in Mat.12.3ff. Thirdly, because of the dutie of endeavouring to avoyd offences after the example of Paul, Acts 24.16, as also the forementioned in Mat. 17, wherein we are not onely to avoyd offences towards God but also towards man. And, fourthly, because the scripture shewes us that we should use our libertie for peace between man and man as it appeareth in I Pet. 2.16 as also in Heb. 12.14 with many other scriptures.

Thus, desiring you to consider whether the scriptures here made mention of, with others, may not by the enemie be made use of to scandall the truth and the people of God; and, secondly, whether you have the knowledge of any other scripture that doth warrant you in that which you practise.

Thus, deare brethren, we have endeavoured, according to that small light we have, to answer your desire, beseeching you, in the Spirit of love and tendernes, to accept of it, and receive it. Thus we rest,

Your fellow members in our Lord Jesus Christ.

To the objections thus made and some others added by two of the messengers, the rest of the messengers approved and subscribed this ensuing answer:

Tetsworth, the 29th of the 3rd moneth 1656.

Whereas the messengers mett here in Tetsworth in the first moneth last past did present to the severall churches whose messengers they then were, this humble desire: that they would seriously consider and try as before the Lord by the rules of his word, beseeching the Lord to give them a right understanding, whether the payment of tithes to the nationall ministers be not an evill from which all the people of God ought to purge themselves. And with reference hereunto they did present unto them certain arguments from Scripture, and scripture grounds, which were offered unto them by some of the messengers, to be weighed in the ballance of the sanctuarie. And now :it appeares that some brethren doe yet remaine so far unsatisfyed, as that they judge [that the] paying of tithes to the nationall ministers or preachers in this land, as now the same are payd unto them according to the law of man now held to be in force in this nation, is not utterly unlawfull, considering the law and command of man in that respect. The messengers now met at Tetsworth aforesaid, who doe subscribe this present paper, doe earnestly intreate the said unsatisfyed brethren very seriously to consider.

1. Whether the whole nationall ministrie of this land (however some part of the same hath now put on a new sute being put into their nationall places by nationall Tryers never appointed by the Lord Jesus to such a worke) be not a manifest part of the whore of Babilon, or, at least one of her daughters, Rev. 17.5.
2. Whether the paying of tithes to this ministrie doth not differ as much from the saints paying of toll, tribute and custome to the kings of the earth as the worshipping the beast doth differ from the yeelding of civill honour to a civill magistrate. If Nebuchadnezzar (as some object) made his image of some of the gold that was payd to him for tribute, or was thereby the more enabled to make the same, yet he did not professedly require the Jewes to pay it to that end (for then it would have bene unlawfull for them to have payd it upon that account as it was an unlawfull act of the Israelites to give their earerings to Aaron that of them he might make the molten calfe). But now they that are in power require professedly the payment of tithes for the maintenance of a ministrie which we know to be antichristian and Babilonish.
3. Whether such paying of tithes can stand and agree with that coming out of Babilon which is required in Rev. 18.4 and with that rewarding of her which is called for in v.6 of that chapter.
4. Whereas the command of the Lord Jesus to peace in Mat. 17.27 is by some here objected, they are desired here to consider:
 - i That the occasion thereof was Peter's granting that the Lord Jesus payd the tribute money spoken of in v. 24, touching which the Lord proves not that his disciples but onely that he himselfe was not bound to pay it because he was the son of the Great King to whom it was to be payd, concerning whom see Neh. 10.32.
 - ii That his yeelding, this notwithstanding, at the present to pay it that he might not offend those that required and received it, doth differ as much from the paying of tithes to this Babilonish ministrie as the temple-worship then appointed of God to be performed at Jerusalem, did differ from the false worship which the world now performes in Babilon.

If any understand it (as many have done) of civill tribute then payd to the Romane emperour, yet even so it will nothing justifie the present paying of tithes to the antichristian ministrie.

5. Whereas some object that the magistrates constraining men to the paying of tithes makes it now a matter of necessitie and therefore they may doe it: as in case of necessitie David did eate the shew-bread which otherwayes he might not have done, Mat.12. This objection tends to signifye that we may now doe unlawfull acts if the magistrate's command shall enforce us either to doe them or to suffer for our refusall. Then a penall law strictly executed may make it necessarie and so lawfull for us to sprinkle our infants, to worship with the priestes in their nationall ways, and what not? Bring this objection to the light that shines in Acts 4.19 and 5.29 and it will need no further answeere. If Hananiah, Mishaell and Azariah had learned such a doctrine they had never bene throwne into the fierie furnace.
6. Whereas the same brethren doe also object, Acts 24.16, we intreat them to review the place as before the Lord that they may see what cause they have of reprooving themselves for their misunderstanding and misapplying of the same. The like we may say concerning I Pet. 2.16 sith the freedome there spoken of cannot be meant of a libertie to maintaine the whore of Babilon or to worship the beast or to receive his marke. And that in Heb. 12.14. makes not against us in the least, Follow peace with all men and holynesse etc., mind well the last words!
7. We intreat them well to ponder I Jn. 5.21, Little children, keepe yourselves from idolls, Amen. Doth the apostle here speake onely of the grosse idolatrie of the heathens then and not also of the close idolatrie which the whore of Babilon should afterwards bring in in a mysterie? And doth he not here forbid whatsoever upholds this idolatrie?
8. Whereas it is objected by some, that the civill magistrate hath a power to command the tithes because men bought them not etc., we answeere:

i Where were the tithes excepted in any purchase?

- ii If men bought their land the cheaper because the whore, whose arme was long and strong, did challenge a right to the tenth part, doth this deprive the owner of the land of his right when he shall see and can proove the whore's claime to be unjust?
 - iii If the magistrate might command it to himselfe, will it therefore follow that we at his command must give it or pay it to the whore, whom both he and we ought to hate and to make her desolate and naked?
9. Whereas it is farther objected, that a man set upon by a thiefe which is too strong for him may lawfully give him some part of his money, if by so doing he have ground to be perswaded that he shall save the rest and that by refusing so to doe he shall endanger the losse of all, and, therefore, a man may also pay 'his tithes to the nationall ministerie because by so doing he shall prevent a greater losse and by his refusing so to doe the nationall minister will come off with the greater gaine, we answeare:
- i Let him that thus giveth to the thiefe consider well whether he have not herein fellowship with a work of darknesse and whether he doe not shew a distrust in God, who is able to preserve him without his so complying, if he see it to be good.
 - ii The case is herein different in that the thiefe in this case doth not challenge a right to what he demands nor doth require the acknowledging (either expresse or implicate) of a right by him pretended to the same; nor doth require it as a stipend allowed to him as his just wages for his paines in thieving as the priest requires his tithes as his wages of right belonging to him for his paines in his pretended ministrie. Also he that so gives his money to the thiefe, gives but his owne and so wrongs himselfe, but he that gives his tithes to the priest robs Christ of his honour and the saints of their libertie.
 - iii If by refusing to pay tithes a man doe suffer in his estate, what is this losse (being for the keeping of a good conscience) to the gaine which shall be unto him and to all the saints, see Heb. 10.34.
 - iv In this case a man's brethren ought to be sharers with him in this suffering and losse. And if a saint in this case be neglected

of men, yet he shall not be forgotten of the Lord. And as to the priest's gaine, it shall be as great to him at the last as Ahab's was when he had gott possession of Naboth's vineyard.

10. We desire the saints in this case farther to consider:

- i That by this their yeelding to the priestes they embolden them in their ungodly way and confirme them (though they may intend it not) in their antichristian standing.
- ii That by this meanes also they encourage those that are in power to continue their unjust compelling of the saints to this evill.
- iii That thus also they discourage the hearts of their brethren and occasion their sinfull complying in like manner. Thus Syon's brightnes is kept downe and her libertie betrayed and the whore kept up and exalted and made to say, I sit a queene etc.
- iv That thus it is discovered (to God's dishonour and the saints' grieffe) what a small measure of faith and courage and zeale for God's glorie is yet in the hearts of those that professe themselves citizens of Syon and how far they are from not loving their lives unto the death.
- v That by this meanes also, what in man lyes, they are greatly discouraged, if not deserted, who are yet God's faithfull witnesses suffering for the truth and for righteousnes sake in this particular.

Whereas some doe yet call for a more expresse command against this paying of tithes we aske: what more expresse command had Mordecai for not bowing the knee to Haman and Naboth for not selling his vineyard to Ahab? Or what more speciall command have we now for the not sprinkling of infants, the not hearing of the nationall priestes, the not wing of the surplice, crosse, kneeling at communion and other Babilonish wares? Is it not enough that all these thinges are forbidden by generall prohibitions?

We therefore humbly desire our aforesaid brethren, if not yet satisfied, to have recourse to our God and Father, to whom we likewise shall make our addresses in their behalfe and our owne also that God may give us

understanding in all things. And we desire them againe to lay to heart what both formerly and now hath bene represented unto them, both concerning this, and also concerning parish church rates which are much of the same nature, if any of them do therein also dissent from us, who through mercie remaine,

Their affectionate brethren etc.

To this answered all the messengers, except those two formerly signified, did subscribe their names.

At this meeting of messengers continued on the 30th day of the said 3rd moneth the messengers did answer the ensuing queries as here followeth:

Query 1. Whether it be lawfull for a saint to marie her that had bene his brother's wife.

Answer. We find no warrant for such a practise in the Gospell and we judge such a practise is not expedient nor of good report seeing the saints are to abstaine from the very appearance of evill.

Query 2. Whether, if any distresses be made either for tithes or church rates the saints may use meanes to prevent their taking of more then they make distresses for.

Answer. We judge they ought not neither by paying downe the money to prevent the distresse nor by buying the goods distrained either by themselves or by any employed by them from the person or persons distraining. But that they should be passive under it, taking joyfully the distraining of their goods.

Query 3. Whether a church of Christ may call forth a brother to administer the ordinance of baptisme that is not in some measure gifted to preach the Gospell, they having a brother or brethren gifted to preach but unfree or by reason of some distemper of body disabled to baptize.

Answer. We judge that it is not warrantable. But in case of necessitie either by the absence of the gifted brother or brethren or such weaknesse of body as doth disable [him to] performe that service the church may call for helpe from the next adjacent church that may be furnished to supply them. Also we judge it the duty of that gifted brother or brethren to performe the part of the ministrie as in Mat. 28.19. And that their gifts being not for themselves but for Christ in his church, Eph. 4.11f., their owne unfreenesse may not obstruct their performance of this duty but the church may and ought to put them upon it.

Query 4. Whether it be lawfull for the saints to burie their dead in the churchyards so-called.

Answer. We judge it is not lawfull except it may be without any engagement either by license procured from the priest of the parish or any officer pertaining to the Babilonish worship or making use of anything which is either part of or depending upon the same but that they may doe it there as in any other place convenient.

It was also at this time agreed to by the messengers:

1. That this motion (first mooved by the messengers of the church at Oxford) should be presented to all the churches, viz., that they would lay it seriously to heart in the feare of the Lord and seeke unto him for the knowledge of his mind and will, what the beast is which is spoken of in the Revelation of John, what is his image, and what it is to worship him and to receive his marke upon their forehead or in their right hand.
2. That these ensuing queres should in like manner be offered to the churches, viz.,
 - i Whether the seventh-day sabbath, as it was given in Ex. 20.10, be in force to be observed by the saints under the Gospell.
 - ii Whether, if the churches shall be satisfied of the unlawfullnes of paying tithes to the maintenance of the nationall mimisterie and the payment of church rates they are free joyntly to publish their apprehensions in print.
 - iii Whether, if any member suffer for non-payment of tithes or church rates it be not the duty of the respective churches concerned in this testimonie against the Antichrist to bear a proportionable share with the member or members so suffering making it as a publike charge.
3. That it be proposed to the severall churches that (if they shall judge it meet) they may impower their respective messengers at each meeting to appoint two able brethren to visit the severall churches within the Association betweene each meeting of their messengers.
4. That the proposall from the church of Reading about the unlawfullness of the saints going to joyne with or to heare the nationall

ministrie etc., be presented as a proposall to the severall churches. The proposall was to this effect:

That it is not lawfull for the saints to goe to joyne with the nationall ministrie in their worship or to goe purposely to heare their preaching as seeking edification thereby etc. The grounds of the same then offered to consideration were, in effect, as followeth:

In a voluntarie coming into the nationall church assemblies or into any assemblye of false worshippers on purpose to heare their minister preach or speake at burials, mariages. or in any other like way, there appeareth to be such a touching of the uncleane thing as is in order to taste or handle the same, from these reasons:

- i Forasmuch as all false worship is idolatrie and the bodies of the saints being temples of the Holy Ghost, I Cor. 6.19 and 2 Cor. 6.16, there is no agreement betweene the temple of God and idols. Therefore the Lord calls upon his people to come out from among them etc., 2 Cor. 6.17. It is clearly implied that being personally among false worshippers in the exercise of their worship is a partaking with them at least in hearing and so far is a touching of the uncleane thing which saints are forbidden.
- ii God hath not promised to be present with an assembly of false worshippers. Therefore a saint not being called to goe purposely among them to oppose their false worship but going voluntarily to heare their worship he cannot expect God's presence with him but lyeth lyable to the tempter's assaults and buffetings.
- iii It doth in appearance countenance the worship and worshippers and embolden the weake to attempt the going who through weaknesse may have their conscience defiled. And it openeth the mouth of those who most watch for saints haltings to say they are unstedfast in their profession and conclude that the rest will followe.

We have had experience of these things.⁶⁷

The second day of this meeting which was the 28th day of the moneth being spent according to appointment and promise in an earnest seeking

to the Lord. The dealing of the Lord with his servants that day was the occasion and ground of this ensuing epistle.

The messengers of the associated churches of Abingdon, Reading, Henlie, Kensworth, Eversholt, Wantage, Kingston, Watlington, Hadnam, Pirton, Oxford and Hempstead met at Tetsworth the 30th day of the third moneth 1656 to the respective churches to which they doe belong, send greeting in our deare Lord and sweet Redeemer Jesus Christ.

Deare and precious brethren and sisters,

Our hearts are endeared to you, our soules long to behold you in the beautie of holynes. Yea, the Lord hath abundantly enlarged our hearts on your behalfe and therefore we cannot hold our peace, but must needs give you a taste, if the Lord shall be pleased to open the mouth of your precious soules to receive lit, of those precious dainties wherewith he hath graciously feasted our soules since we have bene together. Oh, dearely beloved, the Lord hath opened the treasures of heaven to us and hath made us a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. Oh, that you did but heare what the Lord hath done for us! But we cannot tell you for we are not able, either by inke and paper, or by our words, to declare it. We are truly like bottles that want vent. Our deare Lord helpe us that we may sing his praises and not forgett his mercyes. Now that we may sing his praises together, we shall give you an account in briefe. of the Lord's gracious dealings with us both before and at our meeting.

Sometime before our meeting our deare Lord put it into the hearts of verie many of his poore churches to appoint to meet at one and the same time upon one and the same account, viz., for the powring out of his Spirit as one speciall end. And though they appointed to meet at severall places, as at Poole,⁶⁸ Ciceter⁶⁹ and we at Tetsworth, one meeting not at all knowing of the other at the time of the appointing of the meetings. Yet our precious Master so ordered our work or rather his owne worke to be put into our hands that at all the meetings their solemne day to seeke his face for the forementioned mercie, was at one and the same time. Now, dearely beloved, behold his blessed providence. He having a purpose to take us all into his armes together and to perswade us of his mind therein, he sent three of his choise servants to London who acquainted each other with what was intended, each of them having knowledge of one of these meetings, whose hearts were mooved to be at the three meetings, one with us, and one at Ciceter and one at Poole that so we might carie each

other in faith and prayer before the Lord. And, blessed be his holy name, he heard them for us and us for them we doubt not, we felt the benefit of their prayers, as we hope they did of ours. Oh, that with holy hearts we might stand and admire at the gracious dealings of the Lord with us.

At our meeting, towards the evening of the first day thereof, being mooved to seeke the Lord for some particulars which the Lord made us agree together to seeke his face for, we had the first fruits of the blessed harvest of our meeting which since in a full crop our poore soules have reaped for we enjoyed a blessed presence of the Lord at the time of our evening oblation, though in the former part of the day we saw but little appearance thereof.

When the second day of the meeting was come and we mett together there did appeare, specially to some of us, a sad death upon our worke so that we were even ready to give it up for a lost day. Our deare brethren, you cannot thinke with what sad hearts we were before the Lord. Satan's worke prevailed in our poore unbeleeving hearts. The Lord was pleased to let us see our nothingnesse by suffering us to be cast downe. And he was pleased to raise us up. For, after two or three of the brethren had prayed before the Lord, some began to be revived and soone after some more who were made to declare the same, that so we might clearly see the goings of the Lord among us and how he lifted us up one by one untill he had set us all upon our feet. And many answeres he gave us in while we were yet praying before him that the scriptures might be made good unto us such as Is. 40.11, 31 and 65.24. He was pleased to goe one pace with us and made our sense to serve our faith. We having a little prayed for raine, the clouds did grow thicke and a little raine fell there being so signe thereof before we prayed that we saw. And towards the offering of our evening oblation even this day also we did enjoy a most blessed presence of the Lord with us. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongues with singing and a great number of the Lord's servants then present had their soules filled with joy. O, our soules, praise the Lord and all that is within us praise his holy name.

On the 3rd day of our meeting we seemed to be as if that we had lost what we had enjoyed the night before and our worke went on somewhat heavily in the forepart thereof. But the Lord did not leave his poore weak instruments, but caused a brother to behold the raine to begin to fall who said, Here is an answer of prayer, and mooved that we might praise the Lord, saying, The raine hangs in the clouds and wants a shout

of praise to fetch it downe. And whilest one brother who was first made our mouth to the Lord was in his worke, the raine came a great pace upon the earth and the Spirit of the Lord which we had sought for by fasting and prayer the day before was in a blessed maner powred into our soules. And, O what blessed worke it made in us! Then were we as in the mount with God. Then were our hearts broken and our soules melted, our faith strengthened, our love encreased! O, what shall we render to the Lord for his goodnesse? O, that you and we may blesse his holy .name [for ever] and be encouraged to waite upon him, for he [touched] and made it good; they shall not be ashamed that waite upon him.

Oh, most deare and well-beloved brethren, let not this seeme a light thing unto you but be encouraged to follow the Lord fully that so you may not onely have a sight of that good land but may enter into it and have your lots divided to you.

And now we are neare the conclusion of our sweet meeting, we direct these lines unto you, desiring the Lord to set them upon your hearts and ours and that it may be as a motive to us all to walke thankfully and faithfully before him. To whom we committ you, to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance amongst all them that are sanctified.

Your affectionate brethren in our Lord Jesus,

William Millward, Thomas Hayward, John Combes, James Pope.⁷⁰

Subscribed in the name and by the appointment of all the messengers.

The fifteenth General Meeting

At a meeting of messengers at Tetsworth beginning the 16th day of the 7th moneth 1656.

At this meeting the messengers received and considered a letter directed to them from the church at North Warmborow,⁷¹ the copie whereof here followeth:

To our loving brethren, the messengers of the severall churches meeting at Tetsworth the 16th of this instant September 1656. We, the church of Christ who meet at North Warmborow in Hamshire, send greeting.

Beloved brethren, our brethren which we sent to the last meeting to behold your order gave us an account of your proceedings and of your

love and tendernes towards us and your readinesse to receive us into communion and association with you and so under your care, which some of us could much have rejoyced to have obtained such a favour from the Lord. But there were some things held forth by some among you the day of humiliation you kept to the Lord, the which some doe so scruple that they have not freedome to associate with you for the present and those of which are free, were willing also to forbear and to endeavour after the clearing up of the things scrupled by some of us, if the Lord be pleased to helpe us herein that we might be of one mind and of one judgement. Wherefore we intreat you to receive with the spirit of love and meeknesse these our scruples and give us an answer in much love and tendernes

1. The first was, that some of you did hold forth that they did expect and so did seeke unto the Lord for the powring forth of the Spirit in the same measure upon them as it was powred forth upon the apostles. The which we cannot see any promise and so no ground to expect.
2. Secondly, in the carying on the duty of the day it was held forth [that] none should speake or pray but such as were immediately mooved thereunto by the impulses of the Spirit.

These two things are scrupled by us and some of us are perswaded that these two things are not held forth by the severall churches of whom you are messengers and [are] but the private judgement of some persons or else the mistake of our messengers for the cleareing of which we have sent our beloved brethren Edward Dinnett⁷² and Richard Greene⁷³ as messengers from us, further to behold your order. Whom we beseech you to receive in the Lord and to communicate unto them your answeres to these things aforesaid who, we believe, will faithfully impart the same to us. And if these things, which some of us judge are not your judgements, be cleared, we hope we shall joyne with you. So brethren, desiring your Christian patience may not be tired in waiting upon us and that you would with a spirit of love and meeknesse cover those infirmities you doe see in us. So brethren, we commend you to the Lord and to the word of his grace which is able to carie on his worke among you and to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all those that are sanctified. Farewell.

Your loving brethren who desire to waite with you for the appearance of our Lord Jesus,

Robert Nash,⁷⁴ John Trimear,⁷⁵ George Warner⁷⁶ Benjamin Barnham.⁷⁷

The 7th moneth and the 14th day. Subscribed by us in the name of the whole church.

The answeere of the messengers was as followeth:

September 18, 1656.

To the church of Christ using to meet at North Warmborow in Hampshire, the messengers of the churches now mett at Tetsworth send greeting in the Lord Jesus our precious Redeemer. Holy and faithfull brethren,

Your epistle dated the 14th of this moneth we have received from the hand of your faithfull messengers. And, according to your Christian desire, we have through mercie received the same with the spirit of love and desire to answer it with the same spirit. We rejoyce to observe that prudent warinesse and tendernes of conscience which the same doth manifest. And, as touching the scruples therein mentioned, those of us that were present at the last meeting cannot call to mind, neither did then observe, any holding forth an expectation of, and seeking to the Lord for, a powring forth of the Spirit upon us in these dayes in the same measure that it was powred forth upon the apostles. Neither any holding forth that none should speake or pray but such as were immediately mooved thereunto by the impulses of the Spirit.

But, touching these things, our judgement is as followeth:

1. We doe not now expect, nor sue for, the gifts of tongues and of working miracles which were given in the apostles' dayes for the publishing and confirmation of the [truth] and conviction of unbelievers or the leaving of them the more inexcusable, Mark 16.20, Heb. 2.4, I Cor. 14.22.

But we expect and beg of God a greater measure then we have yet received of those gifts of the Spirit which are in some measure given to all believers: as the gift of wisdom, faith, hope, love, etc., and a more cleare and full understanding of the scripture by the effectuall teaching of the Spirit. And so a more full and cleare knowledge of the Lord's revealed will and counsaile. And we expect and crave that God will endue us and all his people, with all such gifts of his Spirit as are needfull for the carying on of his great and gracious

worke which he hath to doe by his faithfull servants in these latter dayes.

2. As touching the second thing scrupled. We doe not judge that the saints whom God enables to speake either in holding forth sound doctrine or in exhortation or in prayer, ought to stay till they can feele themselves put on, so to speake, by a violent motion. But it is the duty of everie saint thus to make use of the abilitie that God gives him, as the Lord shall put fit opportunities into his hand. But we judge that when God doth both give his servants such abilitie and opportunitie to make use thereof and also inclines their hearts to an holy willingnes and freenes to doe his will herein, it is then most fit for them to put forth themselves to this worke and that they ought to observe the dealing of the Lord with them in this respect and to act accordingly and that they are to be incited hereunto.

And, as we now signify this our judgement unto you so, as your messengers can fully informe you, the same hath bene openly declared at this our meeting.

Thus, hoping that God will hereby give you satisfaction touching us in these things and being taken up with other weighty affairs of the Lord's house we shall not at present enlarge any further but, committing you into the armes of our gracious Father, we remaine,

Your affectionate brethren etc.

This epistle was by appointment subscribed by foure of the messengers in the name of all.

The messengers from North Warmborowe brought from that church two queres to which the messengers at Tetsworth answered as followeth:

Query 1. Whether if the major part of any church agree in any proposall agreed unto by the severall churches, they have not power to subscribe it in the name of the church.

Answer. We doe not discern that a proposall can rightly be subscribed in the name of any church unlesse the whole church may duly be judged to agree thereunto. We question not but the epistle sent to Antioch in the name of the church at Jerusalem was agreed unto by the whole church, Acts 15.22f.

Query 2. Whether those that doe not agree to assent nor subject [them to] the major part of the church are not for the same to be [looked] upon as disorderly persons.

Answer. If the things whereto they doe not agree be doubtfull or questionable 'and, if it may rightly be judged that they doe not dissent out of frowardnes but conscientiously, they ought not then to be looked upon as disorderly.

From this meeting also the ensuing letter was sent to the churches of Newcastle etc.

To the churches of Newcastle, Eedes-bridge and Dotland-parke,⁷⁸ the messengers of the churches of Abingdon, Reading, Henlye, Kensworth, Eversholt, Pirton, Hempsteed, Oxford, Wantage, Watlington, Kingston and Hadnam, now mett at Tetsworth, send greeting in our precious Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Deare brethren,

Though as to acquaintance in the flesh we be strangers unto you not having scene your faces nor you ours so far as we know yet, considering our relation each to other in and under Christ our Head, we judged it convenient, having opportunitie and a very good occasion so to doe, to write and send this epistle unto you.

Our spirits have bene much refreshed and cheared by the relation of our faithfull brother Nathanaell Strange⁷⁹ concerning the dealing of the Lord with you, and the sweete and effectuall appearance of his gracious presence and power amongst you and in you. Blessed be the God of truth and peace who hath so mercifully wrought in the composing of your differences and the repairing of your breaches. And the same God set it upon your hearts with power as to give unto his name all the praise and glorie so also to be now, through his grace, exceeding carefull to keepe the unitie of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We poore unworthy creatures have also had very sweet experience of the goodnes and faithfullnes of our God and doe now judge it our dutie as the shortnes of our time and the pressing weight of our businesses (or rather of the Lord's worke in our hands) will permitt us to acquaint you with the same.

As sometimes formerly we have done so on the 17th of this moneth we gave ourselves to a solemne seeking of the face of our Father. The speciall things which lay upon our hearts and which accordingly we agreed to be earnest with the Lord for, were these:

1 *The Abingdon Association records*

1. That we might not be rash with our mouthes to utter anything before the Lord nor use any vaine repetitions and that the feare of the Lord might be and abide upon our hearts.
2. That we might confesse before the Lord both our owne sins and the sins of Zyon and that, in the sense of them, we might be humbled before our God.
3. That the Lord would poure forth upon us and upon all the Israell of God his holy Spirit according to his owne promises and our great need.
4. That he would heale all our backslidings and remooove our deadnesse and bring us into a lively frame and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth and that he would graciously keepe the [feet] of his saints from sliding in these dangerous times.
5. That he would in much mercy send forth more labourers into his harvest and better furnish them that are sent forth allready and effectually blesse all their good endeavoures.
6. That he would acquaint us with his mind and end in his late dispensation in taking from us our deare brother Pendarves, while he was yet young in yeares and a constant instrument in his hand of much good unto his people, that we and others concerned herein may make a right use of this stroke of the Lord.
7. That we might according to our dutye, remember God [’s]l ancient people, the people of the Jewes, Rom. 11.28, beloved for their fathers’ sakes and that God would shew mercy unto them according to his promise.
8. That the condition of such as lye under the sense of sin and the want of the light of God’s countenance, might be remembred before the Lord.
9. That the Lord would be graciously pleased to guide the messengers now mett in the great things they are employed in by the churches in which the glorie of God is much concerned.

10. That we might humbly acknowledge the goodnes of the Lord in answering prayers put up at the last meeting and that among many signall returns from the Lord, we might in a speciall measure mind his mercy in the reconciling of the churches of the north, even you to whom we now write.

As the Lord put it in our hearts to agree together to petition him earnestly for these things, so, through his grace, we were enabled in some good measure to doe accordingly. And, as formerly, so now, we found the Lord graciously present with us. And he hath perswaded our hearts that we have not sought him in vaine. Yea, we have great cause to speake much to the praise of our God who hath bene and is, good and mercifull to us.

Now, although we know nothing to the contrarie but that you may be much before us in things of this nature, having heard with much comfort and joy that you are allready engaged in many of these things, yet we hope this relation may be some encouragement unto you, as the grace of God appearing in those brethren, Acts 28.15, was an encouragement unto Paul and stirred him up to give thanks unto God. We hope also that this will be a motive unto you to let us heare from you and receive incitements and encouragements from you unto and in the things that are good. We could willingly enlarge ourselves but our time and worke will not suffer us. As you have not bene forgotten by us so we hope and desire to be remembred by you at the throne of grace.

We remaine your brethren in the faith and fellowship of the Gospell.

Tetsworth, the 18th of the 7th moneth 1656.

This epistle also was by appointment subscribed by foure of the messengers in the name of all.

Postscript. We hope a faithfull brother who is one of us will in convenient time send you a more larger relation of God's dealings with us and our proceedings through his grace both former and latter.

[There fo]llowes an epistle sent from this meeting to the messengers of the churches of Warwick, Tewkesburie, Darbie etc.

To the messengers of the churches of Warwick, Tewkesburie, Darbie, Morton-hinmarsh, Allcester, Borton-on-the-water and Hooke Norton, appointed to meete at Allcester the 15th of the 8th moneth 1656.⁸⁰ The messengers of the churches at Abingdon, Reading, Henlie etc., now mett at Tetsworth, send greeting in the Lord Jesus, our Priest, Prophet and King.

1 *The Abingdon Association records*

Deare and precious brethren,

It much rejoiced our hearts to heare that both you and the churches of which you are members stand fast in the faith in these shaking times and that you continue in joyning your counsailes and endeavoures for the carying on of the worke of the Lord to his glorie in the edification of his people.

As we have had experience time after time of the goodnes and mercy of our God so we desire that you may be fully acquainted therewith. And because the straitnes of time and the weight of our present worke will not permitt us now to write at large, therefore we have desired our beloved brother Benjamin Coxe, who is one of us, to give you an account of the gracious dealings of the Lord with us, and what he hath bene pleased, in much mercy, to doe for us notwithstanding all our unworthynes. If the Lord give him opportunitie and abilitie and the church of which he is a member can so long spare him he will come unto you and informe you of our sweete experiences of God's faithfullnes and his loving kindnes to his poore servants. And then, we doubt not but you win receive him in the Lord. We desire the Lord to raise up your hearts to an earnest seeking of his face for the pouring forth of his Spirit and for all the promised mercyes which we are now most earnestly to sue unto him for, both for ourselves and for the whole Israell of God. And that both we and the churches to which we appertaine may be much minded of you in your suites to the Lord.

We remaine your affectionate brethren in the faith and fellowship of the Gospell. of Jesus Christ,

Edmund White, Thomas Tesdale, William Millward.

Subscribed in the name and by the appointment of all the messengers this 18th day of the 7th moneth 1656.

The next generall meeting of these associated churches by their messengers was appointed to be at Tetsworth the 30th day of December next. And the 2nd day of the meeting to be spent in a speciall and solemne waiting upon God etc.

Whereas at the meeting at Tetsworth which began the 27th day of the 3rd moneth 1656 it was agreed unto by the messengers that it should be proposed to the severall churches that, if they shall judge it meet, they may empower their respective messengers at each meeting to appoint two able brethren to visit the severall churches within the Association

betweene each meeting of their messengers. And at this meeting at Tetsworth beginning the 16th day of the 7th moneth the churches of Kensworth, Eversholt, Pirton and Hempsteed did by their messengers signify their judgement and desire as followeth, viz., that the proposall concerning the impowering of the messengers at each meeting to appoint two able brethren to visit the severall churches of the association betweene each meeting of the messengers should not be confirmed at the present. But, instead thereof, that it should be desired:

1. That such churches as can spare able brethren for such worke would freely shew their care of and love unto the rest of the churches, by sending such brethren to visit as many of them as conveniently they may and specially to visit such of the churches as appeare to stand in most need of helpe by such a brotherly visitation. And that the church or churches whose members shall so visit would, at the next generall meeting after such visiting, declare by their messengers, so far as they shall discern it to be expedient, the fruit and consequent that they have found of the same.
2. That the messengers of all the churches that come to the generall meetings would so far signifye at those meetings the state of the churches of which they are messengers as that it may be discerned what need the severall churches have to be so visited.

These desires were approved of by all the messengers of the associated churches at this meeting last mentioned.

The sixteenth General Meeting

At the meeting beginning at Tetsworth the 30th day of the tenth moneth 1656.

From this meeting the ensuing epistle was sent to the church using to meete in Pettie France.⁸¹

To the church of Christ using to meet in Pettie France in London, the messengers of the churches of Abington, Reading, Henlie etc., now mett at Tetsworth send greeting.

Precious brethren,

Our most glorious God, the Father of lights, endue you abundantly with the Spirit of wisdom and counsaile and make your light to shine forth more and more to the praise of his glorious grace.

Whereas we understand, to our great comfort and joycing, that you have long had upon your hearts the will and counsaile of the Lord touching church officers, viz., touching elders and deacons and have proceeded (as we hope upon good and cleere grounds to the glorie of God and your owne great benefit) to an answerable practise. We having seriously considered and in the presence of our God much inquired, through mercie, after his mind herein, that we might be helpfull to the churches of which we are members, that they also might attaine to a sutable acting and being very sensible of our weaknesse and darknesse and of our great need of a more cleere light and better understanding in this weighty matter, doe therefore humbly and earnestly intreat you to communicate unto the said churches your light in this thing and the good way in which you have so walked and the scripture grounds by which you have bene satisfied. We humbly desire you thus to communicate your light in a letter to the church at Abington and another (if it shall not seeme too burdensome unto you) to the church of Kensworth who will communicate the same to the rest of the churches and in the same to hold forth fully the scripture directions and grounds which the Lord hath given you to see touching the election and tryall and ordination of these officers, in what manner and by whom they ought to be chosen, tried and ordained. Herein we doubt not you shall doe an acceptable service to our Head and Lord, Christ Jesus and a very seasonable and beneficiall kindnes both unto us and to the churches whose messengers we now are. And shall much engage both us and them unto you in the Lord.

Thus, not doubting of your readinesse in much brotherly love to grant this our request, we remaine,

Your affectionate brethren in the faith and fellowship of the Gospell.

This letter was subscribed by the messengers on the first day of the eleventh moneth, 1656. As touching this matter it was at this meeting also agreed as followeth:

It is agreed unto by all the messengers that the messengers at their returne to the respective churches to which they doe belong should signifie unto them as plainly as they can what scruples did arise amongst them about these two particulars, viz., i. Who have authoritie to ordaine elders and deacons? ii. How they are to be ordained?

1 *The Abingdon Association records*

And that the messengers have, by joynt consent, written a letter to the church using to meet in Pettie France in London desiring them thereby to afford them in writing, in the olearest and most ample manner that they can, their utmost light and understanding touching the said two particulars.

From this meeting the ensuing proposall was sent by the messengers to the respective churches etc.

Proposal: It is not lawfull for saints to joyne with the national church assembles or the nationall church ministers (viz., those that preach and pray as men authorised to act as ministers of the nationall church commonly called the Church of England, as namely, parsons, vicars, curates and parish lecturers) in any part of their nationall worship, or so to heare the said national church ministers in their preachings or ministeriall exhortations whether in their churches so-called, or at burialls or in any other like way, as in any appearance to countenance the same or to seeke edification thereby, the nationall church worship and the nationall church ministrie being antichristian and Babilonish. Consider 2 Cor. 6.17 with Rev. 18.4.

If any doe not fully consent to the confirmation of this proposall they are humbly intreated to declare what scripture grounds [in] their understanding doe hold them off from such consent.

At this meeting it was also agreed unto by the messengers that this ensuing query, among others, which came from the church at Abington should be sent to the severall churches that they might by their messengers send an answere thereunto, to the next meeting etc.

Query. Whether it be not most convenient and agreeable to the Scripture that those things which the churches give their light in, or consent to, be declared onely as their judgement and not as a thing concluded or proposall signed.

Betwixt this meeting and the next the church assembling in Pettie France returned the answere here following to the aforesaid letter of the messengers.

To the messengers of the churches of Abingdon, Reading, Henlie, Kensworth , Eversholt etc., the church of Christ assembling in Pettie France sendeth greeting.

Dearely beloved brethren,

The Father of spirits fill you with the anointing of the holy One and lead you in all truth in these dayes of apostasie wherein so many (once

seeming pillars in the house of God) are turned aside to fables that you may hold fast your holy profession unto the end in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Your epistle dated the first day of the eleventh moneth 1656 at Tetsworth, we have received, wherein you desire our judgements from scripture touching the tryall, election and ordination of elders and deacons, viz., in what manner and by whom they ought to be tryed, chosen and ordained. In answeere whereunto we shall briefly present you with the rules and grounds of our owne proceedings some time since in those things, which are as followeth:

The first thing we had in consideration was, unto whom Christ Jesus had given such gifts as the fruit of his ascension for the gathering and edifying of his church, a satisfactorie resolution of which we found in Eph. 4 from the 8th to the 14th verse, viz., that it was unto the church. Which, though applicable to the universall Church, yet is it by Paul applied to the church at Ephesus, verses 14–16. And, moreover, some of the gifts here, viz., pastours and teachers, which we conceive to be one office variously named, as elders, bishops, overseers and pastours, and with respect to the severall parts of the worke assigned to the office are such whose ministration is appropriated to the body of Christ considered in particular congregations.

The second thing was, by whose authoritie these gifts are orderly to be called forth unto their actual services and administration. For our direction herein we had recourse to apostolicall precept and practise in Acts 1 from verse 13 to the end, Acts 6.2–5, Acts 14.23. In the first of these places we note that there being a vacancie in the apostleship by the fall and death of Judas, Peter in the name of the eleven, advised with the body of disciples about the tryall, election and ordination of a meet person to succeed. Whence we inferre, that if the Spirit of God judged it necessarie to employ the churches' authoritie, notwithstanding the presence of the eleven, in the trying, electing and ordaining an apostle then much more is that authoritie needfull in calling and approving an inferiour officer.

From the second text, Acts 6, the deduction is plaine that the tryall and election of deacons was by the Twelve expressly committed to the multitude of the disciples, v. 3 and 5, which we conceive positive in the point of deaconship and also !it was of some weight with us in the case of eldership, forasmuch as we found so little difference in the qualifications

of both exprest in Timothie and Titus according unto which both were to be tryed and chosen.

In the 3rd place, Acts 14, Luke informes us that elders were ordained in everie church by lifting up of the hand, so, in the originall, by election, so it is in the old translation which must imply the action of the church. Wherein we doe agree with the *Paraphrase* of Beza, and others, upon the place, which is in these words: The apostles did not thrust the elders upon the churches through briberie or lordly superioritie, but chose and placed them by the voice of the congregation. Thus you may find in the notes upon Beza's translation of the New Testament.

By all which it appeares where Christ hath placed the authoritie of tryall and electing, viz., in his church. From whence also the manner is obvious how the church is to proceed in that tryall and election, viz., that upon the tryall and examination of the person's giftes and graces and endowments by scripture qualifications (after solemne seeking God for direction and assistance therein) she doe solemnely signify by distinct acts upon each qualification, her approbation of the person or persons as being in some good measure fitted by the Lord and the most fit amongst them to serve the Lord and his people in the respective offices to which they are to be appointed. And then that she doe by one single act of lifting up the hand, choose or elect the person or persons to the offices accordingly.

Having given you the grounds of lour owne proceedings in tryall and election we shall briefly lay downe the rules by which we were guided in the matter of ordination. By ordination first, we meane, a separation or setting apart publicly and solemnly of the person (chosen as afore-said by the power and authoritie of Christ in his church) by fasting and prayers, together with the laying on of hands by an orderly evangelist or eldership, where such as to be had or, in case of that defect, by such gifted brethren of the same congregation as may be called prophets and teachers, as those were, Acts 13.1. By all which you may perceive our judgement is, and accordingly was our practise, that the sole authoritie, as in trying, electing and ordering, so in ordaining, resides in the church (specially since the apostolicall power is ceased) the reason being the same. Or, if any difference be, we judge election to require the greater authoritie because it 'is a matter of the greatest difficultie.

That it is to be done by fasting and prayer not onely the weightienesse of the worke but, likewise, the rule doth [shew], Acts 13.3 and 14.23. That

the laying on of hands is to be added appeares, not onely because some publike ceremonie 'is needfull to signifye a person set apart but mostly because the Lord hath of old made choise and made use of this rather then any other, as in the instances before recounted.

That evangelists are fit to be instruments to administer in the name of Christ and his church in this work, we ground on the example of Timothie and Titus, who were in speciall appointed by Paul to this office amongst others. That it is a sutable service also for the eldership, Paul doth advertise Timothie, I Tim. 4.14, which cannot be understood of any other laying on of hands then in point of offices. Besides which rules, the reason of the thing seemes to evince it, not onely to maintaine an orderly succession, if it may be (as in the case of the baptizednes of a minister where it may in an ordinarie: way be obtained) but chiefly because, in a solemne ordination unto offices it is necessarie that the persons laying on their hands, be persons of approved wisdom, experience, gravitie and fidelitie to spread before the church and her officers their utmost dutie and authoritie severally and publikely.

Upon which grounds and considerations we did thinke it most meet to call to our assistance (as instruments) orderly elders from other congregations and others besides us have since done the like. Notwithstanding which the rule and reason of the thing is to be your guide herein which, having presented before you according to our apprehensions, we commend it and you to the blessing and guidance of the Lord, greatly rejoycing that this matter is upon your hearts and hoping it ever shall, desiring that it may not dye but dwell upon your considerations till you arrive at a judgement and practise of it not onely for order sake, but chiefly because of the great advantage to the churches to which an ordained and obliged ministerie naturally tends. We shall say no more to this or to anything else relating to the ministerie at this time but what hath bene briefly in answer to your desires. We commit you to the grace of God and are your affectionate brethren in Gospell faith and order,

Samuell Tull, Edward Harrison,⁸² etc.

Signed in the name and by the appointment of the church assembling in Pettie France, London the 18th of the eleventh moneth 1656.

The seventeenth General Meeting

At the meeting at Tetsworth the 20th, 21st and 22nd of the 3rd moneth 1657.

The churches did at this meeting of their respective messengers send [back] their judgement touching the proposall concerning hearing of [and j]oyning with the, nationall ministers etc. [It was in] effect, that it is not lawfull so to heare and joyne with them as in the proposall is minded. Onely the church of Henlie did not declare an agreement with the rest of the churches herein.

From this meeting also the messengers did send to the severall churches this ensuing desire sending the epistle from the church assembling in Pettie France.

Whereas at the last meeting at Tetsworth the messengers did send an epistle to the church using to meet in Pettie France in London desiring their judgement and the scripture grounds of the same concerning the try-all, election and ordination of elders and deacons. And the said church hath lovingly given a direct and full answeere to the said epistle with a pithy exhortation to a serious endeavouring after a regular practise in this matter. Which answeere being seriously considered, the Lord following it with his effectuall. blessing, we judge will proove very profitable. Therefore the messengers now mett doe humbly intreat the respective churches seriously to consider the said answeere and to weigh and trye as before the Lord the severall parts thereof and the scripture proofes and grounds in the same contained and shewed, with an earnest desire to be conformed to the will and appointment of the Lord therein discovered that God may be glorilyed in their obedience and edification.

At this meeting also the brethren did receive from the brethren and messengers of the churches in and about London this ensuing epistle:

The brethren and messengers of the respective churches walking in the faith and order of the Gospell in and about London to our beloved brethren and messengers of severall churches at their generall meeting at Tetsworth send greeting in our Lord Jesus.

Dearely beloved brethren,

Our heart's desire and prayer for you is that you may enjoy our Father's presence and in your solemne meeting together may meet with God and be under the conduct of the eternall Spirit as a pillar of cloud and fire going before you, enlightening your understandings, conforming your

wills and regulating your affections, that you may be led into and caried through those great and weightie undertakings that concerne the peace and establishment of the churches, the propagation of the Gospell and the advancement of the kingdome of our Lord Jesus, which we desire to be co-workers with you in and your fellow-helpers unto the kingdome of God. And, therefore, having a worke and dutie of great importance grounded upon the word and set upon our hearts by the Spirit, we thought it our duty to commend it unto you and acquaint you with it as followeth:

It hath bene for some time sadly observed by us that there hath appeared a great neglect in the churches in taking care to provide a maintenance for the comfortable supply of a [spiritual] ministerie, according to what the rule doth require, which hath brought some to pinching povertie, run others upon desperate temptations and occasioned some to fall into sinfull disorders to the dishonour of their high and holy calling. And, we feare, made the work of the ministrie not onely uncomfortable to the teachers but unprofitable to the hearers. We shall not name particular persons nor instance particular cases, supposing they cannot be unknowne unto you. Onely in generall we have this account to give you, that as the conditions of severall nearer to us which we have had :some knowledge of, doth call for reliefe and assistance, so also we have lately received an account from our brother Abraham Chayer⁸³ of the poore and low condition of severall brethren employed in the worke of the ministrie in the westerne churches which, although modestly and sparingly expressed by our brother yet, from what was said, we could not but gather that their want is very great. And the want of a comfortable supply for themselves and their families is a great discouragement to them in the work of the Lord and an obstruction to the propagation of the Gospell among the churches and to the world.

The consideration of all which hath put us upon some desires and endeavours to remedie this for the present and prevent it for the future. And, in order to the effectuall prosecution of this good worke, it hath bin mooved in the severall churches (which give the right hand of fellowship to each other) in and about London and we hope is in some measure warme upon their spirits and well resented by them and some subscriptions have bin allready made of a yearely allowance towards the maintenance of a Gospell ministrie abroad in the countreys and for the reliefe of those which the churches to whom they doe especially belong are not able to maintaine.

And because we find in the apostolike times the churches did hold an association together in their contributions that so it might be done by an equalitie and not some eased whiles others are burdened we thought it our dutie to commend it unto you and desire you to commend it to the severall churches to which you belong that they would consider:

1. Whether they take care for the maintaining of those which are their pastours or elders whose setled abode is with them and which are taken off from their civill employments to serve the Lord and the church in the worke of the ministrie.
2. What they can spare (their owne ministrie and poore being provided for) towards the maintenance of a publike ministrie to preach the Gospell to the world and for the reliefe of those where the churches to whom they doe belong are not able to maintaine them. And to put it into a joynt stock to be issued forth according as the conditions of persons employed in the work of the ministrie shall require.

We shall not use many arguments to excite you to a worke. [of this nature. Onely we desire you would consider two things (i) your duty (ii) the necessitie of the case.

If you consult your dutie, it is cleare:

- i From scripture precept, I Cor. 9.14 and Gal. 6.6.
- ii From the equitie of the case, which Paul argues at large, I Cor. 9.1–14, which we referre to your examination.
- iii And adde in the 3rd place, that this dutie is plaine from scripture president, and the practise of the churches in the first times: taking care for the maintenance of the ministrie, not onely at home but abroad, see 2 Cor. 11.8f., compared with 12.13 and compare both these with Phil. 4.10, 14–18 which is beyond exception. And therefore we hope your dutie will be of such weight upon your spirits as to make you willing to lay up something in store according as God hath blessed you for the carying on of this good worke.

We might also moove you from the necessitie of the cases as also from the benefit and advantage of the worke, as thereby the bowells of the

saints will be refreshed and many thanksgivings redound to God. The ministers will be encouraged to goe on in their ministrie with cheerefullnes to bring in soules to Christ and build up those that are allready brought in whereby Christ will be honoured and his kingdome advanced in the world.

But these things we hope are knowne to you as well as ourselves and therefore we shall not enlarge but commend both you and this worke to the blessing of the Lord, leaving ourselves as your patterne and example, hoping that the Lord will enlarge your bowells and the churches' in generall towards the maintenance of his poore ministers, knowing that he that giveth to a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward and your charitie in this respect will be not onely acceptable to the saints but an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God who, we desire, may supply all your need out of his riches in glorie by Christ Jesus and remaine,

Your affectionate brethren in Gospell faith and order,

Richard Deane,⁸⁴ John Cox,⁸⁵ Thomas Paul,⁸⁶ Edward Grainge,⁸⁷
Richard Merriment,⁸⁸ Henrie Jackson,⁸⁹ George Gosfright,⁹⁰ John
Sowdin⁹¹ etc.

As touching this epistle and the contents thereof the messengers now men at Tetsworth agreed as followeth:

Agreed that the letter from the messengers of the churches in London which hath bene read and upon debate of the whole accepted by the messengers, should be presented to the respective churches with some addition of the necessitie layd before the messengers by a brother that came from the messengers at London. And that the respective churches should be desired to present the matter to the adjacent churches who are not in association with them. It is also agreed that the particular churches be desired to returne their answeres res[pectively] to the messengers at London meeting weekly at brother Spilsberie's house in Cole-Harbour in Thames Street upon the 3rd day of the weeke at two of the clocke; and that it be done with as much speed as may be.

At this meeting also messengers gave their judgement in answer to two queries sent from the church at Andover⁹² as followeth:

The first query was concerning laying on of hands on everie baptized disciple.

Answer. Upon serious debate and examination of the Scriptures we doe judge that laying on of hands on everie baptized disciple was never an ordinance of the Lord. Our grounds from the word are as followeth:

1. We doe not find that ever it was instituted or appointed by Christ or his apostles.
2. We doe not find that everie baptized disciple mentioned in the scripture had hands layd on him but severall instances give us ground to judge the contrarie: as in Acts 10.44 etc., 8.13, 18, 19, 23, Acts 8.35 etc., with diverse others.
3. We never find hands layd on any but it was either in order to the receiving of extraordinarie gifts of the Spirit as Acts 8.17f., 19.6 or for healing, as Acts 9.12, 28.8, or else in ordaining to office as Acts 6.6, 13.3, 1 Tim. 4.14.
4. We find that the apostles onely were exercised in that work of laying on of hands upon baptized disciples for receiving the gifts of the Spirit, Acts 8.12, 15ff., 19.6.
5. Upon debate of the scripture, Heb. 6.2, so often urged in this case, we doe not find any ground from thence to proove the laying on of hands on everie baptized disciple.

The second query was whether the first day of the weeke be to be observed as more holy than another day.

Answer. We judge that in this Gospell time the Lord hath not put holynes in dayes (no more then in places) as he did under the Law and, consequently, not in the first day of the weeke. Yet, as we discern that the Lord's people in the apostles' times assembled together on the first day of the weeke for the worship and service of God, so we judge that they had grounds so to doe and that it is safe and convenient for the saints now to follow their example. And that where they give themselves to the worship and service of God and to a speciall waiting upon him they ought to doe it with all their might and to endeavour what they may to avoyd whatsoever would be a hindrance to them therein.

Likewise at this meeting answer was returned to the messenger of the church at Eversholt and by him to that church by the rest of the messengers, unto the ensuing query, as followeth:

Query. Whether beleivers who upon profession of faith in Christ have bene baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus by a baptized Gospell preacher practising and pleading for mixt communion of beleivers baptized and unbaptized in church fellowship and the use of the Supper may, upon the manifestation of a hearty returne from this error, be received into full communion with a true church of Christ without renewing their baptisme; or whether they ought to be baptized againe before they be so received.

Answer. They ought, as we judge, to be received as in the query is expressed and not to be baptized again inasmuch as there was nothing essentiall to the baptisme of Christ found wanting in this baptisrne. The subject of baptisme was right, the same being a beleiver professing and manifesting faith in Christ, Acts 8.36f. The action of baptizing was right, the same being the dipping of the beleiver in water, into the name of the Lord Jesus and so into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Acts 2.38, Mat. 28.19, The end of this baptisme was right, viz., that Christ's command might be obeyed in their being baptized into his death, Ro. 6.3. They were not baptized into the name of him that baptized them, nor into the profession of his faith considered as his, nor into a profession of walking in his way; but into the name of Christ and into the profession of the beliefe of his Gospell and of walking according to the rule thereof. That error in judgement and practise about mixt communion did not make the baptizer no minister of true baptisme, being such an error as may be found continuing in a true beleiver and such as doth in no wise utterly disable him to preach the Gospell. Consequently, he being a baptized disciple and Gospell preacher professedly continuing in the faith, remains a true administratour of baptisme.

The next meeting was appointed to begin on the 13th of October next and that on the 14th of that moneth there should be a special wating upon God etc.

The eighteenth General Meeting.

At the meeting of the messengers of the associated churches at Tetsworth which began the 13th day and continued till the 16th day of the 8th moneth 1657 this ensuing epistle was written to the said churches.

The messengers of the churches mett at Tetsworth to the churches to

which they belong send greeting.

Deare and precious brethren,

The Lord our God enrich you more and more with all things that pertaine to life and godlynes through the knowledge of himselfe in Jesus Christ. We, having through mercie spent some considerable time in making supplications to our God and Father putting up our petitions unto him not onely for ourselves but for you also and for the whole Israel of God, it came into our hearts to declare each to other the estate of the respective churches that sent us hither so far as we knew and judged it regular and convenient for us to declare. And, having all of us taken notice of the declaration so made by each of us respectively and comparing the same with the experience of our owne hearts, and being sensible of the need that everie one of us bath of the use of all good meanes appointed by the Lord for our edification and quickning and of his effectuall blessing upon the same, we judged it expedient and a part of our dutie to write unto you these ensuing lines, desiring and hoping that our heavenly Father will blesse the same both unto you and to our owne soules also.

And here in the first place we judge it meet to signifye unto you our earnest desire and our dutie to desire it and endeavour it also with all earnestnes that we may be and truly appeare before the Lord, spirituall and livelie and so neither formall nor slothfull in all our actings towards our God and in all holy and righteous conversation before him, that there may appeare in us the work of faith, and labour of love and patience of hope, I Thess. 1.3. That we may shew much diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, Heb. 6.11. That we be not slothfull, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises (v. 12). That we may be assured that God will not forgett our worke and labour of love unfainedly shewed toward his name, v. 10.

We pray you also to consider how much it concernes everie one of us to be frequent and serious in self-examination: Commune with your owne heart upon your bed, saith David, Ps. 4.4. See how he thought on his wayes, Ps. 119.59. And how Jeremie exhorteth us to search and trye our wayes, Lam. 3.40. Let a man examine himselfe, saith Paul, 1 Cor. 11.28. And againe, Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith, prove your owne selves, 2 Cor. 13.5.

And in the examining of yourselves we humbly intreat you very seriously to consider whether you doe diligently enquire and seeke for the good knowledge and understanding of the whole mind and counsaile of

God revealed in his Word. As the apostle did not shun to declare all the counsaile of God, Acts 20.27, so Cornelius and those that were with him were readie to heare all things that were commanded of God, Acts 10.33. We shall not be able to say, We trust we have a good conscience in all things willing to live honestly, Heb. 13.18, unles we endeavour in all things to know the will of the Lord.

And let this Scripture also moove you to consider whether you be carefull in all things to walke up to the light that God hath given you, remembring how sore an evill. it must needes be for a man to give leave unto himselfe in anything to doe contrarie to the known will of the Lord.

Moreover that you may increase in knowledge and order your wayes to the glorie of God, we humbly pray you not onely to be frequent and serious in the reading and hearing of the holy Scriptures but also to be much in holy meditation upon the Lord and his will and counsaile which he hath graciously revealed. As touching this we offer to your consideration these Scriptures: Gen. 24.63, Josh. 1.9 with Pss. 1.2, 63.5f., 77.12, 104.34, 119.15, 97.

We also much desire that none of you be found negligent in prayer, either not regarding to make the best use of precious opportunities of joyning in prayer, touching which joyning in prayer see Mt. 18.19f., Acts 2.42, 4.24, 12.5, 12, or neglecting prayer in secret, touching which consider not onely the example of Daniel in Dan. 6.10 and of Peter in Acts 10.9 and the rule which Christ gives and the promise which he annexeth in Mat. 6.6. But also the example of Christ himselfe which we desire you to mind in Mt. 14.23, Mk. 1.35, Lk. 6.12, Mt. 26.36, 39, 42, 44.

And we doe also in like manner desire that you may not be found failing as touching the performance of the duties of your relations: that you who are parents may not forgett to bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Eph. 6.9, but may follow the approved and blessed example of Abraham in Gen. 18.19, that if those of your familie be yet unbeleeving you would wisely and earnestly endeavour to make them sensible of their sinfull and wretched condition and to make them to know the fullnes that is in Christ Jesus for the salvation of all poore sinners that shall beleve on him. And, if they be faithfull, that you would encourage them and shew yourselves ready to have communion with them in an orderly way in the things of God and earnestly seeke their edification.

It is likewise our earnest request unto the Lord that you may rightly

understand not only the propheticall and priestly office of Christ but his kingly office also: that he is over all and Lord of all, Ro. 9.5, Acts 10.36. That the Father hath put all things under his feet and given him to be the head over all things to the church, and hath committed all judgement unto him having given him all power both in heaven and in earth, Eph. 1.22, Jn. 5.22, Mt. 28.18. And that you, knowing this, may be allwayes carefull to obey all the commands of this your Lord and King Christ Jesus, not forgetting his saying in Jn. 14.15, If ye love me, keep my commandments. And upon this account we desire you to take heed that you doe not sin against Christ and to remember that they doe sin against Christ 'Which sin against the brethren and wound their weak conscience, 1 Cor. 8. 12, which put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in their brother's way, Ro. 14.13.

We intreat you to lay to heart that it is the will of the Lord Christ that you should not onely stand stedfast in the faith but that you should also abound in the worke of the Lord. We cannot but remind you of Paul's request to the Thessalonians, I Thess. 4.1, We beseech you brethren and exhort you by the Lord Jesus [that as] ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. We pray you, therefore, to take heed of all things that tend to the hinderance of a Christian's growth and the abatement of zeale and that you would labour to know them that you may avoyd them.

It behooveth us also here to mind you of your duty to shew your respect to the Lord Jesus by a serious endeavouring in a right way to attaine to the enjoyment of whatsoever he hath appointed for the edification of his church and his owne glorie therein.

We are not willing that this our epistle should grow too large, yet we are pressed in our spirits to present afresh this desire unto you, viz., that you would never forgett the Lord's all-seeing eye nor the puritie thereof. And that, whatsoever good thing you shall endeavour to doe, you would doe it heartily and with all your might, even as unto the Lord. And that you would not be unmindfull of this saying of our deare Saviour: the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him, Jn. 4.23.

We beseech you, deare brethren, to accept of these words of request and exhortation for we write no other things unto you then what we shall be willing ourselves to receive from you or from any of the saints. We are jot ignorant of the temptations and wiles of Satan but doe know by our

owne experience that Christians doe need to have such things as these layd before them. We desire the Lord to set them with weight upon your hearts and ours also. Thus we remaine,

Your affectionate brethren ready to serve you in the Lord.

Subscribed in the name and by the appointment of all the messengers mett at Tetsworth the 16th of the 8th moneth 1657.

At this meeting the messengers of the churches of Kensworth , Eversholt, Pirron and Hempsteed, did send this ensuing writing to the rest of the associated churches.

To the churches of Abington, Reading etc., we the messengers of the churches at Kensworth , Eversholt etc., send greeting.

Precious and beloved friends,

We, considering the distance of the churches to which we doe belong from the usuall place of the meeting of the messengers of the whole association and hoping that the said churches are through mercie in some measure in a capacitie to [meet] as a distinct association by themselves. And also knowing that there are severall churches neare them which, if they were a distinct association, would gladly joyne with them but are not willing, for severall considerable reasons, to joyne in the present association. Minding likewise that as it may well be hoped that by gaining the afore-mentioned churches into association by becoming an association by themselves some blessed advantage will attend them, provoking them to praise the Lord so it is to be feared that from the contrarie such ill effects will follow as may occasion sadnesse to all the churches wee, therefore, in behalfe of the churches to which we belong, earnestly intreate and desire you that, considering the premises, you will now at the last (after so many requests as have beene formerly made to the same purpose) condescend to the following motion and desire, namely, that the said churches, of Kensworth , Eversholt, Pirton and Hempsteed, may be in a loving and solemne manner set apart to act as a distinct association, they still holding correspondencie with the association keeping up meeting at Tetsworth, by two messengers from the whole association. And that ye will empower whom ye shall send to the next meeting at Tetsworth to proceed in such a manner as to all the messengers (after their seeking the Lord by prayer) shall seeme most meet to the present full accomplishment thereof. Beloved, we shall adde no more hereto, not doubting of

your Christian condescension to fulfill these our humble desires but wishing from our hearts your prosperitie here and eternall felicitie hereafter, we subscribe ourselves,

Your affectionate brethren etc.

Also the messengers of the other churches, viz., of Abington, Reading etc., did by the writing here following thus second the said motion and desire:

We, the messengers of the respective churches, upon a serious consideration of the desires of our friends before-mentioned, have unanimously approved of and consented to the same and doe earnestly desire the churches that they would condescend likewise and give unto their messengers at their next meeting at Tetsworth full power and authoritie to conclude and confirme the same in the best way and manner that God shall perswade their hearts may conduce to his glorie in the mutuall good of the churches.

Signed in the name and by the appointment of the messengers etc.

The next meeting was appointed to begin the 30th day of the first moneth 1658.

The nineteenth General Meeting

At the meeting at Tetsworth beginning the 30th day of the first moneth 1658 the messengers of the churches of Abington, Reading, Henlie, Wantage etc., did signify the full condescending of the respective churches to the motion and desire of the churches of Kensworth, Eversholt, Pirton and Hempsteed signified by their messengers in their behalfe at the last meeting and that they had now empowered their respective messengers as was then desired. And hereupon the said messengers of the churches of Abington, Reading etc., did solemnly commit and commend the said churches of Kensworth, Eversholt etc., to be henceforth a distinct association. And this they did both by a writing by them subscribed and sent to the said churches and also by solemne prayer unto the Lord in their behalfe.

The copie of the said writing here followeth:

1 *The Abingdon Association records*

To the churches of Kensworth , Eversholt, Pirton and Hempsteed, the messengers of the churches of Abington, Reading, Henley, Wantage, Hadnam, Watlington, Kingston, Oxford, Longworth, Andover and North-Warmburrow now assembled at Tetsworth, send greeting in the Lord Jesus.

Precious and dearely beloved brethren,

Our gracious Father in much mercy enrich you with liveliennesse of spirit and heavenly mindednesse in this day of sad complaint, affording and blessing unto you more and more the meanes of quickning and edification. Whereas at the last meeting of messengers here at Tetsworth your respective messengers did send unto the churches whose messengers we are an earnest intreatie and desire in your behalfe that for diverse weightie reasons (which your said messengers did then also represent) you might in a solemne and loving manner be set apart to be a distinct association, you still holding correspondencie with the association now keeping their meeting at Tetsworth, by two messengers at the least to be sent to their meeting at Tetsworth or elsewhere, we doe now hereby certify you that the said churches whose respective messengers we are, having weighed your reasons, and the manifest tendencie of your desire, doe fully consent thereunto. And have authorised us in their name and behalfe to conclude and confirme the same. And therefore we, as the messengers of the said respective churches, and by their appointment, doe lovingly and solemnly, as in our Father's presence, committ and commend you upon the termes afore expressed, to be henceforth a distinct association and to receive into association with you in an orderly way any such churches of Christ, true and right in constitution and principles and sutable walking, as shall be readie so to joyne with you.

And we humbly intreat you that you would not be ummind[ful] still to owne and observe the true and just conclusions which your messengers in your name have formerly here confirmed and that you would, in the feare of the Lord and through his grace, be verie watchfull in these dangerous times both over your owne hearts and wayes and also over each other mutually and over all such churches as shall associate with you.

We also signifye unto you that it is earnestly desired that you would in no wise limitt yourselves to the sending of two messengers onely to our solemne meetings of messengers, but that you would enlarge that number especially when and as there shall appeare to, be any speciall need of the same.

Thus commending this matter and you therein into the hand of our most loving Lord and desiring not onely that you may be mindfull of us and we of you before the throne of grace, but also that we all may be more mindfull of the whole Israell of God, we through mercie rest,

Your verie affectionate brethren in the faith and fellowship of the Gospell etc.,

Tetsworth: the first day of the second moneth 1658.

At this meeting the messengers received a letter from our brother Nathanaell Strange, written at Barnstable in Devonshire the 19th day of the first month 1658 the copie whereof here follows:

To the messengers of the churches at the meeting at Tetsworth appointed to begin the 30th day of the first moneth 1658. Your endeared brother in Christ Nathanaell Strange saluteth you, desiring that you may all be filled with the Holy Spirit and that your meeting may be of much advantage to the glorie of Christ and the good of his people.

Precious and dearely beloved in the Lord,

Being, as I judge, by a hand of providence prevented of coming to you at your assembly, I was willing to present a few lines unto you. You may by these be assured of my deare love both to yourselves and the respective churches to which you pertaine. But, by reason of the worke of the Lord in these parts, which appeares to be great and lyeth much upon me (after sometime set apart in seeking the Lord) I doe judge the Lord calls me as yet to abide in this country in and about Barnstable and so am prevented of my expectation of being with you at your assemblye.

Those things that were upon my thoughts at your last assemblye about visiting the severall churches in the association in order to the settling of officers and some other particulars which I then layd before you, have not bene forgotten by me. I did by letter present it to the brethren at London, signifying my willingnes to meet any one or more of them to accompanie them in the worke if it were needfull. But whether they have bene down about it or what is done I know not, for I have [not received] a word of answeere from them I am still readie [and willing] to meet them through grace, if their presence may be obtained, for I desire and long to see the churches in the blessed primitive patterne and that they might stand compleate in the whole will. of God who is a God of order, hoping that you are of a Nehemiah-like spirit.

These may acquaint you and the churches to which you belong that, through grace, the westerne churches are kept stedfast in the truth: onely

that about the deitie of Christ appeares neare as formerly and through grace I discerne but little encrease of it. Our number of members is little increased: onely in Cornwall the Lord hath much increased them not onely in number but in life also. The Lord doth make good that promise in Ps. 122.6 of prosperitie to the lovers of Syon.

A dead, carnall, lukewarme, sleepe, worldlie spirit hath almost overcome most of the churches. The discouragement I meet with upon that account hath even weighed me downe and caused me to cry out with the prophet, Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place that I might goe and leave them! And I would faine be gone, but God seemes to say, Stay. The greatnes of the worke and what corruption I find within, and these things without, doe weigh downe my spirit. Oh, that I might have a large roome in your breathings to God! Here are severall open doers in and about Barnstable and some of late are come in to owne Christ in his wayes: but, alas, it is so dead within, that I have little ground to encourage yong converts to come in.

The Lord hath wonderfully appeared of late in this towne in owning the great worke of prayer and fasting to the rebukeing and casting out of the devill out of the bodies of two maides, the one of them not twelve yeares old, which both were apparently possesst. And I 'have good ground to judge that the worke of grace is passed upon both their soules. Many strange and, I thinke, unheard-of passages have fallen out in the businesse, both of the mightie power of God and the violent rage of the devill. I hope it may proove much to the glorie of God and the furtherance of the Gospell in this place and it may also proove to the hardening of some. The last was done but⁹³ the 4th day of this weeke, in a meeting of three churches at this place appointed to waite for the Spirit and the great things promised. But God had even provided this mercy for them. The relation is too large to write but, I suppose, it may ere long be put to the presse and I hope it may be of much use to manic soules.

I should rejoyce to receive a briefe account of your state, if any brother may spare so much time: and if it be sent to brother William Cree's⁹⁴ at the Adam and Eve upon the Old Exchange or to brother Tull's, it will be sent to me. I de[sire] also to know the time of your next meeting.

I desire to have my deare love presented to the severall churches to which you belong. The Lord keepe them stedfast and deliver them and you from the evill of the world and give them a publike spirit for Christ's cause and kingdome that they may preferre Jerusalem above their chiefe

joy. Thus, committing them and you to the Lord, I remaine,

Your brother and servant in Christ,

Nathanaell Strange.

The messengers having received this letter and seriously considered it, appointed a brother to draw up an answer to it, giving him directions to this effect:

After Christian salutation, signifye to our brother Strange our receiving and weighing of his letter and our loving and thankfull acceptance of it. That it would have bene a jay to us if providence had brought him to this our meeting. That since his being in these parts there have bene no brethren of London downe with the churches about the businesse that he writes of. That we much desire that the businesse may still be upon his hearte and may be more upon the hearts of all the saints etc. That we desire to have a tender feeling of his burdens and to mourne for the like deadnes and worldlynes lamentably appearing and sadly complained of in these parts also. That we rejoyce for the manifestations of God's power and grace which his letter mentions. That the Lord hath given us the Spirit of love and peace in this our meeting but hath also let us see the great need we have of further enlightening and strengthening. That the state of the churches here declared by the messengers gives cause of mourning and yet, withall, of some rejoycing and thanksgiving to God. That the next meeting of messengers here is to begin on the 14th of Septenber next.

An answer being accordingly drawne up to this effect with some enlargement and some small addition which the messengers did also fully approve of, it was in the name and by the appointment of all subscribed by some and sent etc.

At this meeting there was also some loving debate touching the difference betweene noting and cutting off. Some judged noting and withdrawing from to be a full cutting off. And some judged otherwise. It was agreed that hereafter the question should be further enquired into in this forme: whether in case a church member be withdrawn from or noted as one with whom the saints should have no companie, according to 2 Thess. 3.6, [or if a] church have any further worke to doe in cutting [off].

At this meeting it was also considered (the state of one of the churches requiring it) how far a woman may speak in the church and how far not.

And whereas the same quere had bene answered at a like meeting of messengers of other churches at Morton-hinmarsh in the year 1656 and, by providence, the answer of those messengers was now readie to be shewed. It was accordingly shewed and considered. And the first part of the answer was now fully approved of and the second part also as to the 1st, 2nd and 5th cases.

That answer thus approved of here follows:

Query. How far women may speake in the church and how far not?

Answer. We answer: that women in some cases may speake in the church and in some cases againe may not.

1. That in some case they may not speake manifestly appears in 1 Cor. 14.34f. and 1 Tim. 2.11f. They may not so speake as that their speaking shall shew a not acknowledging of the inferioritie of their sexe and so be an usurping authoritie over the man, more particularly,
 - i A woman may not publikely teach in the church. This appears to have bene much in the apostle's eye in 1 Cor. 14.
 - ii She may not stand up as a ruler in the church and so speake upon that account.
 - iii She may not speake in the church by way of passing sentence upon doctrines or cases in the church.
 - iv She may not speake in prayer as the mouth of the church. This is verie cleare in 1 Tim. 2.
2. Yet in the cases that follow and possibly in some other like cases a woman may speake in the church and not be found to offend against the rules of the apostle.
 - i If she desire to make confession of her faith and to expresse her desire of baptisme and communion with the church.
 - ii If she be a witsesse concerning the admonition of one that the church is to deale with or must herselfe tell a matter to the church according to the rule in Mat. 18.17.
 - iii If a woman hath sinned and be cast out of the church and God hath given her repentance undoubtedly she may manifest it in the church.

To these cases the messengers now mett at Tetsworth added as followeth:

Query. Whether when a person propounds to a church for communion and some sister knowes something concerning this person which she judgeth doth render this person unfit for the same and which she conceives the church is ignorant of, it be not her libertie to signify to the church [by] her owne mouth her not being satisfied.

[Answer. We]e judge it is her libertie.

The twentieth General Meeting

At the meeting at Tetsworth beginning the 14th day of the 7th month 1658 these messengers were present and joyned together in the worke which the Lord did then put into their hands, viz., Of the church at Abington — John Tomkins.

Of Reading — Williarn Millward, William Goodale.⁹⁵

Of Henly — Richard Bolt.

Of Wantage — Robert Keate.

Of Watlington — James Harrison and (some part of the time) Richard Harris.

Of Longworth — Thomas Jones⁹⁶

Of Andover, Stoke and Whitchurch — Edward Spreadburie.⁹⁷

Of Hadnam — Edward Coxe⁹⁸

Of Kingston — Christopher North⁹⁹

Of North-Warmborow — Richard Greene.

Of Oxford — Lawrence King¹⁰⁰ who came not till the 15th day etc.

Of the association of churches in Hertfordshire etc., whose messengers lately mett at Hempsteed — Benjamin Coxe, Thomas Cooke.

Of Thistleworth — Richard Deane.

Of the church using to meet at Dunstan's Hill¹⁰¹ in London John Sowden with whom came William Gant,¹⁰² a faithfull brother, who was received to assist, though not a sent messenger.

Of the church of Newberie¹⁰³ — Thomas Robie,¹⁰⁴ whose letter not onely signified the desire of that church to be received into association but also the great need and earnest desire of that church to be better supplied by gifted brethren for the holding forth of the word.

The messenger of the church at Oxford not coming till the 15th day and the messengers of that church having twice before in like manner failed as

to coming in the appointed time to the meeting of the messengers, the rest of the messengers sent a loving epistle to that church, beseeching them to consider their acting in this respect and that this might be reformed for the future, laying before them, amongst other things, these scriptures, Ro. 12.11 and Titus 2.14.

Also the messengers, having related the state of the severall churches that sent them, as they endeavoured to take an effectual course for the reliefe of such as were in danger of want as to outward things, so they likewise tooke into consideration the low estate of the church at Newberie as to abilityes to hold forth the word, and their great need and earnest desire of helpe in this respect. And did agree verie earnestly to intreat the church at Andover (of which the church at Newberie had formerly bene a branch) to be herein helpfull unto them and did desire the messenger of the church of Andover [to consider] this their request, who did readily undertake to signify [it to the church].

They also sent a letter to brother Weden,¹⁰⁵ desiring his ready and constant helping of the church at Andover at such times as they upon this account should need him, that so they might be the more able thus to help the church at Newberie. They also sent severall epistles to the churches of Reading, Abington and Wantage (being likewise adjacent churches) intreating and exhorting them also to be assistant in this good and needfull worke.

At this meeting the following queres were answered by the messengers as followeth:

From the church at Reading.

Query. If a brother, engaging himselfe by promise and contract to a maid to marrie her (the parents on both sides giving their consent and leaving him to his libertie to marrie her when he will), doe before the consummation of mariage goe in unto this maide, then what is this act by scripture to be judged?

Answer. This act thus committed will be found to be a great sin and, indeed, a very evill fruit of uncleane lust, being not onely a scandalous act much differing from those things which are both honest and just and pure and of good report, but also being in itselfe an irregular act of persons coming together and using each other as if they were actually man and wife whereas, indeed, this relation betwixt them is as yet promised and not consummated, Phil. 4.8, 1 Thess. 4.4f.

From the church at Andover etc.

Query. In case a member in church fellowship withdraw from or refuse the use of the Supper time after time but in other things doe walke orderly, what ought the church to doe in order to his reformation?

Answer. The church, in the first place, ought by scripture light to shew him his sin and then to admonish him to turne from it, yet to be very tender towards him and not to withdraw from him so long as he doth not onely walke orderly in all other things and very carefully avoyd (what in him lyes) the disturbance of the churches' peace and union. But also it may groundedly be hoped and believed that this his refusing of the Supper proceedes neither from prophanenesse nor frowardnes but onely from want of cleare light and of satisfaction in his conscience, 2 Thess. 2.15, 1 Cor. 11.2, 23 etc., Gal. 6.1. But if his refusall appeare to be a fruit of frowardnesse and, after due admonition, he still persist therein, he is then in an orderly way to be withdrawne from.

[From the] church of Kingston.

[Query]. Whether saints in gossell dayes may lawfully take an oath before a magistrate, yea or no. And, if it be judged by any that they may, we desire to know in what cases and in what forme, with reasons and grounds from Scripture.

Answer. In some cases we conceive it may be lawfull solemnely to call God to witness to the truth of an action or expression and that this way be done before a magistrate, which is accepted as and usually termed, an oath, Heb. 6.16, Ro. 9.1, 2 Cor. 1.23. That of Jas. 5.12 we beleewe to be of the like purpose with that of Mt. 5.34 and considering the time when the Lord gave the direction, we conclude that no part of the Law was then abrogated and particularly that Ex. 22.10f., Deut. 6.13 and 10.20 remained still in force.

From the church at Thistleworth.¹⁰⁶

Query 1. When a brother knowes another so to have sinned or trespassed as that he judgeth himselfe bound to deale with him according to the rule in Mt. 18.15 etc.. whether he may finish that whole dealing in one day, if the church doe that day meet or whether it doe necessarily require some longer space of time?

Answer. The case may so stand as that it may not be convenient nor regular for him to endeavour to finish that whole dealing in one day, though the church doe that day meet. For the offending brother may possibly be in such a passion or distemper as that he may not be in such a capacitie to be presently dealt with, as it may be groundedly hoped

he will afterwards be in. The discretion and moderation which Abigail used towards her husband is much more to be used in this case. And, as the end of this dealing with an offending brother ought to be the gaining of him, so the same is to be ordered both for manners and time in such sort as may most tend unto this end. See Prov. 25.11f. But the first convenient and good opportunitie that can be gained is to be made use of as for the beginning so also for the carying on and finishing of this worke, Lev. 19.17.

Query 2. If the opportunitie of dealing with the offending brother the first and second time according to the rule, have bene let slip, or such opportunitie cannot be gained and made use of before the time of the next church meeting, whether in this case the brother offended may carie the matter to the church before he have satisfied the rule in that behalfe in Mt. 18?

Answer. He may not; but ought exactly to conforme to the rule of Christ remembring that neither any negligence of his owne (though repented of) nor any such want of present opportunitie, can beare him out or justify him, in the transgression of Christs rule.

Query 3. Whether the brother offended as aforesaid, being [not] able to bring the matter orderly to the church, may either desire the brother offending to forbear communion with the church, either in the Supper or in any other ordinance of Christ, or may himselfe withhold at present his communion with the church that he may thereby avoyd communion with the brother offending?

Answer. He ought to doe neither of these: not to withhold his owne communion for then should he transgresse the rule in Heb. 10.24f. Not to desire the offending brother to forbear for I This would put him also upon sin, it being as yet both his right to enjoy communion with the church and also his duty to make use of this his right to the glorie of God in the good of his soule. ii. This would be, in effect, to usurpe that power which Christ hath placed in his church but not allowed any particular church member to exercise it singly, himselfe alone. The power of excluding and withdrawing from as well as of receiving in, being committed to the whole church and not to any particular member alone. iii. This would be to inflict a punishment before judgement. Yea, to inflict a punishment on him of whom it is yet in some measure to be hoped that he will not be found punishable. For. if being orderly dealt with, he heare and repent (,as it is to be in some measure hoped that he will, the contrarie not

appearing) then is he not in any measure to be withdrawne from for his sin.

The twenty-first General Meeting

1659. At the meeting of messengers at Tetsworth beginning on the 5th day of the second moneth and continuing till the 7th day of the moneth and till the afternoone of the day, the messengers were:

Of the church at

Abington — John Tomkins.

Reading — Thomas Smith,¹⁰⁷ John Millsop.¹⁰⁸

Henlie — Thomas Wooddison.

Wantage — Robert Keate.

Oxford — Richard Tidmarsh.

Kingston — Isaak Chowne.

Hadnam — Robert Coxe.

On the sixth day of the moneth brother Edward Coxe and brother Philip Willmot, though they were not sent messengers, yet were admitted to be present etc.

Watlington — James Harrison.

Longworth — Francis Wace.¹⁰⁹

North Warmborowe — William Vicarie¹¹⁰

Newberie — Samuell Gylis.¹¹¹

Wallingford — brother Foxe.¹¹²

Stoke and Andover — Richard Bunnie.

The association of churches in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire — Edmund White, Benjamin Coxe.

On the fifth day of the moneth (which was the 3rd day of the weeke) at night, a certaine tailour of Ailsburie made a long speech to the messengers, pretending many visions etc., but the messengers approved not his speech.

This night the messengers did read the letters which were brought from the respective churches etc. They took notice also of the queres which some of the churches had sent by their messengers that they might be the more ready to answeere them in their proper place.

On the 6th day of the moneth (which was the 4th day of the weeke) the first worke of the messengers, after seeking of the Lord, was to declare

and heare the state of the churches, which was declared, in effect, as followeth:

The church of *Abington* acknowledgeth God's goodnes in keeping them under diverse tryalls. As to the enemy's endeavour they have had great shakings but have bene hitherto kept by the good hand of God. They have had of late small increase as to number and one of their members is now under admonition. They blesse God for that they are (for the moste part) in a lively condition and none of them doe now appeare to be under shaking save the one that is under admonition. They are also kept unanimous and in much love and union and doe mind the work of the Lord although they are sensible of their falling short as to measure etc.

One is deceased since the last meeting. They are now for the most part in health, one member onely being now sick. One of the brethren hath lately experienced and acknowledged the great goodnes: of God which hath appeared in the alteration of the ill frame of his wife. Also severall remarkable answers of prayer have been received and observed amongst them.

Reading. The church appointed their messengers thus to signifye: that through mercie they are unanimous and sound in fundamentalls. That they are well settled as to the order of the Gospell, though some among them have bene formerly staggered etc. Yet generally as [to the] generalitie of their members, they confesse, a declination as to the measure of their love to God and to his wayes and to the saints — but they have a sense of it upon their hum and are troubled. And yet some of them are found through the grace of God verie lively and vigorous.

The messengers as upon their owne knowledge did further declare that one brother desired his particular state to be signified, viz., that he is sore burdened with a dead and dull hearte. Also that one member, having bene long sicke is, as it is judged, at the point of death but is sweetely comforted in spirit. One member hath bene cast out since the last meeting.

Henlie complaines of a sad condition by reason of a dull and low and flat spirit in them appearing by their backwardnes as to waiting on God (Margin: some are constant in making use of opportunities to breake bread. Others judge they have yet cause to stand off) and carying on his worke and as to a due manifesting of brotherly love proceeding, as is judged, from the uneven acting of some eminent members and dissatis-

faction proceeding from the same. They desire that this their sad state be made knowne to the churches, that they may pray to the Lord for cure thereof and may be ready to helpe as God shall give opportunitie and ability.

Wantage. Through mercy they are kept together in love and peace in a good measure allthough the enimie have much endeavoured the contrarie. They are also sound in faith and order. The frames of their members are various: some are under bondage through the oppositions of their relations. Some complaine of coldnes and deadnes and seeme to lament it: this their coldnes and deadnes appeares to be the fruit of a worldly frame of spirit. Some appeare verie livelie and comfortable and joyfully expecting the carying on of God's worke. One hath bene very sweetly delivered out of sad temptations. One yet remaines under a sad temptation, questioning his owne condition and (as is doubted) questioning the Scriptures also. Yet he makes good his place, keepes the meetings, quits not his profession, neither breakes out into an evill life.

The church is kept from the spreading errours of the times viz., of the people called Quakers and of those that hold the Seventh-day Sabbath. There hath bene one baptized, who now walkes with the church of Oxford.

Oxford. Through grace they are preserved and kept in the faith of the Gospell: none herein staggering though many tryalls have bene undergone. God beares up their spirits. They have found by experience that comfort and refreshing doth follow a diligent waiting upon God. Two among them doe observe the Seventh-day Sabbath yet forsake not the church. Two have bene lately cast out, viz., Thomas Hatchman,¹¹³ a butcher who brake and ran away and hath wronged many and much blurred the Gospell. The other is a sister who is cast out for backbiting and other evils. One member is very low in spirit and in a very sad condition but not in so great extremity. There have bene added about foure.

Kingston. They blesse God for being kept together in a good spirit and in the faith and order of the Gospell. Yet they complaine that they are low in spirit, wanting that heat of zeale that is desired. They have had, since the last meeting, no addition nor diminishing.

Hadnam. God hath preserved them in owning the faith and order of the Gospell. They complaine of lownesse but declare that there is among them generally an union of spirit in the things of the Lord. Since the last meeting they have had no increase of members. Two are deceased and

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one, being very aged, is probably somewhat neere unto death. As their strength is small so God hath kept them from great and sore temptations. One member is under dealing and likely to be cast out.

Watlington. Through mercie they are kept in unities and love and are firme in the faith. They have undergone much trouble by a sister declaring her conceived light touching laying on of hands and sometimes hearing the free-willers to whom now at last she is joynd as the church was informed the last first day. Another sister also went often to heare them but now is better settled. One sister hath bene cast out since the last meeting. One sister East hath bene of late greatly visited with sicknes and likewise three of her children. Her spirit is lively in the Lord.

Longworth. They are firme in the faith and order of the Gospell. Some deadnes hath appeared among them but of late there hath bene some reviving. Many among them are much affected with Syon's condition and are comforted with the promises made to her and accordingly with confidence doe seeke unto God for her. Five members have bene added viz., four [have been] baptized and one that had formerly strayed now [showing re]pentance againe received. One hath bene [sick? and] one deceased. God's hand hath bene heavie on severall poore families in the congregation visited with sicknes of whom some are in some measure recovered and some others (as is hoped) recovering.

North-Warmborow. They are kept alive in the faith and order of the Gospell and the unities of the spirit. Some members complaine of deadnes and sluggishnes of spirit which is their burden. As to gifts, they are very meane and they have layn under a very great want in this regard by reason of the sore visitation of their brother Barnham by a 3 dayes ague but God hath begun to recover him. Also a brother from Worcester House was with them for a moneth and they hope he will come and sit down with them and help to carie on the work of the Lord among them.

As to temporalls, the most part are very meane and some very poore. Three families needing reliefe and the rest being few and for the most part meane, they are not able sufficiently to relieve them. The church is allready somewhat endedebted (viz., 17s) for the charge of church affaires and the necessarie reliefe of their poore.

God's mercy hath much appeared to one sister (viz., sister Johns) who being both inwardly distressed and outwardly [weakened] with sicknes and desiring the prayers of the church was in answer to prayer very speedily help both outwardly and inwardly. None have bene added nor

cast out since the last meeting but it is judged that one deserves to be dealt with.

Newberie. They take notice of God's good hand in preserving them together etc., yet some doe feare that some members are inclining to the Quakers.

They complaine of lukewarmnesse and indifference in the things of God which (they conceive) proceedes in part from want of meanes and of a continuall supply as to the holding forth of the word. God hath composed beyond expectation some vast differences betwixt some members. They are low to the world, not able of themselves to subsist and have now some charge upon them which they have not present abilitie to beare.

Their number is about 20: none have been lately added nor diminished.

Wallingford. The members appeare right as to the faith and order of the Gospell and there is comfort, they rejoycing in the goodnes and grace of God. Some God hath raised from a state of deadnes and they are now in a very lively condition. Two have been added by baptisme and one [has] come to them from the church of Abington. They desire prayers for establishment.

Stoke and Andover. They admire God's mercie in their being kept stedfast and unanimous in the faith and order of the Gospell. Yet in many there appeares a great spirit of negligence and indisposednes to the practicall part of religion and, which is most sad, the persons in whom this appeares doe not yet shew a sense either of the greatnes or of the nature of this sin. Also worldly incumbrances doe hinder some that are better spirited and affected that they cannot be so usefull and helpfull to the church as they desire yet, so far as they can labour in the Lord's worke a blessing followes.

Three have bene added. Two are deceased. Two brethren are under dealing, of which one, though he be not totally cut off and cast out, yet he is withdrawne from and since his being withdrawne from, he bath encreased his sin by going naked, etc.

The state of the associated churches of Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire whose messengers met at Dunstable the 3rd and 4th dayes of the first moneth 1659 viz., of Kensworth, Eversholt, Pirton, Hempsteed, Luton¹¹⁴ Stukeligh,¹¹⁵ Watford¹¹⁶ Newport Pagnell¹¹⁷ and Bedford.¹¹⁸

For these churches since the meeting at Tetsworth in the 7th month 1658 the Lord hath taken away by death 8 church members viz.,

1 *The Abingdon Association records*

Of the church of Eversholt, three.

Of the church of Pirton, one, viz., brother William Flare.

Of the church of Hempstead, one, viz., brother John Baker which two were leading brethren holding forth the word.

Of the church of Luton, two.

Of the church at Bedford, one.

There have bene cast out:

Of the church of Hempstead, one.

Of the church of Watford, eight who were not onely gone off the 7th day Sabbath but also quite neglected the church meetings and refused communion with the church and, having bene often admonished, refused to amend.

Also one member of the church of Bedford, whose name is John Taylor, is withdrawne from as to communion in the Supper or speaking in the church meetings in prayer or in holding forth anything of the word of doctrine or exhortation. His evill was an attempt to take away his owne life by poyson when he was in some measure in a distracted condition partly through a melancholike frame and also being in a great measure overcome by earthly-mindednes and distrust. He doth manifest some [sor]row for his evill but the church doth not [discern a] satisfactorie manifestation of sound Gospell [repentance] in him and they judge themselves bound to manifest their detestation of his great evill by this withdrawing from him till they can see good ground of receiving him againe into communion.

There have been added:

In the church of Eversholt, two.

In the church of Hempstead, one.

Also the Lord hath lately raised up an orderly walking church at Woollaston¹¹⁹ in Northamptonshire which sent a messenger to the last meeting at Dunstable and all the messengers there mett were very well satisfied touching the baptisme and constitution of that church and touching their faith and order and the grace of God appearing in them. And the said church at Woollaston doth desire to be in full association with us onely they desire first to see and consider those sixteene articles of faith and order that we professedly agree in and those twelve conclusions which we have consented unto.

In some of the churches (as namely, Kensworth, Pirton and Stuke-ligh) there is a sad complaining of much deadnes and flames but all the churches desire to blesse God as for the enjoyment of outward peace, so

also for that they generally enjoy peace among themselves. And where deadnes and coldnes is much complained of it is hoped that there doth yet remaine a spirit of integritie and truth towards God. And, through mercie, the churches are kept in the professed beliefe of the truth and in owning the way of God and the order of the Gospell and, in some of the churches, some quickning is also observed.

One church (Margin: viz., Kensworth) declared that the people called Quakers have by craftie instruments much divulged their tenets among them but God bath bene good in keeping his people from being caryed away by them.

In some of the churches (viz., Kensworth, Pirton and Newport Pagnell) some are sore buffeted with temptations. At the time of the last meeting at Dunstable some church members remained very sicke (viz., of Pirton, Hempsteed, Stukeligh and Newport Pagnell) and of the church of Bedford some are now very sick and also one sister of the church of Eversholt. Many of the churches complaine of the fewnesse of instruments to carie on the speciall worke of the Lord.

One church (margin: viz., Stukeligh) declared that God hath drawne forth some gifts among them which formerly lay hid. And another (margin: viz., Watford) that some members were hopefully coming on to the carying on of the worke of the Lord. A third (margin: viz., Kensworth) also signified that some hopefull branches doe appeare among them very comfortably growing up as to the worke of the Lord for whom they desire the prayers of the saints.

The messengers agreed that the state of the church of North Warmborow (as to the povertie thereof) should be presented to the churches and that the present charge of their messenger should now be borne and that the present charge of the messenger from Newberie should be borne likewise, which was [agreed] accordingly; onely the raising of this charge on the churches of Longworth and Watlington, was by consent of all forborne. Also the church of Newberie was allowed for time to come to joyne with the church at Stoke and Andover as to the sending of one messenger to act for both those churches.

The messengers taking into consideration the declaration of the sad estate of the church of Henlie both now and at former meetings, did agree to send an epistle to the said church which also they did, therein signifying their desire and resolution to send unto them sixe brethren, viz., John Combes, John Tomkins, William White, John Deane, Richard Harris

and Edmund White to whom, in a postscript, they added a seventh, viz., Benjamin Coxe, to search out in an orderly, brotherly and loving way, the full [circumstances] of their state and condition and not onely to seeke the Lord for them and with them, as the case should be found to require but also, according to the understanding that God should give them to hold forth unto them from Scripture grounds such counsaile and advice as should be seasonable and through the blessing of God might be profitable, desiring that these brethren might be received in the Lord and that, at their coming, there might be a full church meeting, which they desired that it might be on the 17th day of the 2nd month 1659 and that all their divisions and differences and the grounds and causes of the same might then be debated and discussed. In their salutation they made use of Ro. 15.5f. though not naming the place towards the end of their epistle they expressly made use of Phil. 2.14, though not as comparing or equalling themselves with the apostle. Also, in the beginning of their epistle, they tooke expresse notice both of the sad declarations which had bene made of the state of the church and also of the agreement of the churches and their mutuall agreement therein and the declared grounds and ends of the same. And, in their conclusion, they signified some hope of hearing at their next meeting some comfortable report of the fruit of this their endeavour etc.

The messengers did also send an epistle to the church of Newberie, stirring up by scripture motives the gifted brethren there to the use and improvement of their gifts to the glorie of God and the edification of his people.

The church of Kingston, not onely in their owne behalfe but also in the behalfe of the churches of Watlington and Hadnam propounded unto the messengers and queried as followeth: it was the desire of the baptized people of Bledlow, most of which doe now hold the 7th day Sabbath that the three churches which did formerly hold communion with them would now give them a meeting to the end that they might [decide how] far they can all walke together or in what [things they] can have communion together. Hereupon we querie:

1. Whether it be our dutie or whether it be expedient for us to give them a meeting.
2. Whether it be expedient for us to hold communion with them and, if yea, then how and how farr.

As to the first of these two queries, considering some former engagement and relation of these churches, the messengers judged it the dutie of these churches to grant such a meeting. And the messengers of the said three churches did accordingly agree to appoint such a meeting and appointed it to be at the house of brother North in Kingston on the 20th day of the 2nd month 1659 and brother Foxe and brother Tidmarsh were desired to assist at that meeting. And some of the messengers did afterwards desire one of the brethren that came out of Bedfordshire to assist in like manner.

As to the second query, the messengers did not give a positive answer to it but left it to the churches and brethren that should meet as aforesaid to judge and advise and doe therein as they should discern to be regular and expedient. Yet it was desired of diverse of the messengers that in case nothing else should be found amisse but the bare observing of the 7th day Sabbath, then the saying of the apostle in Ro. 14.1, 5f., might be well minded.

Also the messengers taking into consideration the poore and low estate (as to temporalls) of the church of Longworth, desired that the same might be signified and commended to the churches of Reading, Henlie, and Kingston, for as to other able churches of this association that churches state had bene allready minded and should be further minded by them.

Also touching the povertie of sister East of the church of Watlington whom the church is not able sufficiently to relieve, it was agreed that those churches who had among them for some time past contributed three shillings and six pence weekly to her reliefe should be desired to continue this their contribution three moneths longer (yea and longer then that too in case her need should appeare still to continue) and this the messengers of those churches did agree unto and undertake that it should be performed. Also the messenger of the church of Wallingford was desired to present her condition to that church likewise that from thence some further addition might be made to her reliefe.

The church of Watlington propounded to the messengers a query to this effect:

Query. Whether because they were, as was alleadged, weake in gifts and few in number being onely seven brethren and eleven sisters, they might not cease to stand up as a distinct church and might not sit downe with an adjacent church as name[ly] the church of Kingston or the church

of Wallingford.

The substance and effect of the answer of the messengers [was] as followeth:

Answer. It is judged not good for them so to doe sith they are not so few nor so weake but that the work of the Lord both may be and is, comfortably caried on among them. Also their ceasing to stand up as a church would occasion in a great measure a ceasing of the holding forth of the word and way of Christ in Watlington and the opening of mouths of adversaries against us and would deprive some church members of opportunities of hearing and enjoying church communion and expose them to temptations to heare where they ought not etc.

At this meeting these ensuing queries were also answered by the messengers as followeth:

A query from the church of Oxford:

Query. How and how farre a church is to deale with a member that holds communion with one lawfully cast out by another true church? This query is understood not of civill communion but of communion in worship and the things of God.

Answer. They ought to deale with him as with one that manifestly and scandalously sins inasmuch as his action makes voyd the ordinance of Christ which requiers that a person lawfully cast out be looked upon as one whom the saints doe and must put away from among themselves, 1 Cor. 5.13, and whom they doe and must turne away from, 2 Tim. 3.5, and whom they doe and must avoyd and reject Ro. 16.17, Titus 3.10. And if we may not have companie with such a one as is signified in 2 Thess. 3.14 then surely we may not have communion with him in the things of God. And because this action not onely dissolves (as to the manifest tendencie of it) the union betwixt church and church and breakes off that communion which is and ought to be betwixt the true churches of Christ but likewise contains in it a condemning of that church which did cast out the person.

And if it shall be objected that the church which did cast out the person did not act lawfully and orderly therein, it is then to be minded, that a true church ought not thus to be censured without a sufficient prooffe of the same; and not each particular member singly but the churches that shall therein be concerned ought to judge hereof and to give their sentence in such a case after an orderly proceeding herein. Else nothing can follow but confusion of which God is not the author, 1 Cor. 14.33.

Yea, and otherwise the power that Christ have given to his churches will be found to be in vaine and the person so censuring a church will be found to exercise a pretended power which the Lord hath not committed to him.

Also, because such communion with an excomm [unicated per] son doth both harden him in his sin and also embolden [others to] follow his evill example.

From the church of Hadnam a query was offered which was to this effect.

Query. What is to be done by bretheren that are troubled and sued at the law by a nationall minister for tithes. And two brethren who, as to their present condition, were concerned in this query were present and declared their case.

Answer. The messengers did not all unanimously agree in a particular positive answere and resolution but did all agree to an answer in generall which was to this effect: that the brethren herein concerned, seeking to the Lord for direction and helpe, should endeavour to use all such prudence and policie as might and should consist with the simplicitie and innocencie of doves. And should have a great care as no way to wrong those that were joyned with them in the suite, so also no way to wound their owne consciences nor anyway to dishonour God etc.

On the 7th day of the moneth, which was the fifth day of the weeke and the last day of the meeting, the ensuing queres were also answered, viz., two queres from the church of Newberie and one from the church of Stoke and Andover.

From the church of Newberie.

Query 1. Whether a church member, being reprovved by the church for some sin and admonished to repent but as yet not cut off from membership nor withdrawne from, may breake bread with the church before he have manifested repentance of that particular sin for which he was so reprovved.

Answer. We judge that he may and that he ought not to be discouraged from so doing, considering that his right (which he hath as a church member) unto this ordinance doth still continue and that when many church members at Corinth were layd under the apostle's reproofe in 1 Cor. 11, he gives them this direction and charge, Let a man examine himselfe and so let him eate of that bread and drinke of that cup.

Query 2. Whether a member of a true and rightly constituted church

may, without the consent of the church to which he belongs, joyne himselfe as a member to another church.

Answer. We judge that he may not; no more then a church may require a member to joyne himselfe to another church against his owne mind and will; considering that such a breaking off of a member from a church, as it hath no warrant at all in the word so also it is contrarie to that engagement which a church member makes, or ought to make, at least implicitly, at the time of his joyning. And if one church member may so at his owne pleasure leave the church to which he belongs, then others also may doe the like and so a church shall have no power to retaine her members. But this would overthrow all church [rule] and order and set up confusion of which God is not the author, 1 Cor. 14.33.

From the church of Stoke and Andover.

Query. Whether it be a duty incumbent upon a brother made able thereto, to goe abroad preaching the Gospell, though in the prosecution thereof he neglect his owne familie.

Answer. 1. If the brother be engaged by the appointment of the church to which he belongs to goe abroad preaching the Gospell, then we judge he ought so to doe though in the prosecution thereof he neglects his familie: for the church ought to take care for their supply. 2. If not so engaged, we judge he ought so to be in the practise of preaching the Gospell as that he may also performe his duty in providing for his familie.

The next meeting is appointed to begin (if the Lord be so pleased) in the evening of the 3rd day of the weeke called Easter weeke in the year 1660 at Tetsworth. But, if to some of the associated churches there shall appear to be some necessitie of a meeting of messengers before that time then the said churches are by letters to give information thereof to the rest of the churches and to signify a convenient time for the beginning of such a meeting etc.

The twenty-second General Meeting

At the meeting of messengers at Tetsworth the 24th and 25th of the 2nd moneth 1660 the messengers were: of the church of Reading, William Goodale; Kingston, Nicholas Allen;¹²⁰ Hadnam, Robert Coxe; Wallingford, Thomas Sutton¹²¹ Stoke and Andover, Richard Bunnie. From the association of churches in Hertfordshire etc., James Pope, John Child¹²²

and Benjamin Coxe received as on assistant.

The state of the churches was declared in effect as followeth:

Reading. As to the foundation truths of the Gospell, they remaine firm and also as to matter of order. But, as to spirituall gifts, they are sensible of a decay and are groaning under it. Also complaints are made of little growth in grace and little love manifested. It is desired that praise be given to God for their aforesaid establishment and prayers made for the supply of what is wanting.

Kingston. The Lord hath kept them close to the truth that hath formerly been believed and received amongst them. Something hath bene done by them for the setting of brethren apart for the office and work of elders and a good step taken towards it. Some sweet soule renewings have of late appeared amongst them. Being sensible of backsliding they are now brought to a diligent seeking the Lord for quickning and healing grace and they desire to be sensible of present favours so as to have their hearts enlarged in thankfullnes unto God. Their meetings are comfortable. One member is cast out. One is gone off to the 7th day Sa[bbath and] two more are inclined to the 7th day. For outwards [they are in] good condition and in a capacitie to help others.

Hadnam. They are stedfast in the foundation truths of the Gospell. But there have bene some differences among them through want of a right knowledge of the order of the Gospell. They are sensible of weaknes and of a decrease rather then increase as to spirituall gifts. Also some particular members doe complaine of deadnes and of their want of zeale and affection. They have experienced God's goodnes in vouchsafing his presence to them when they have solemnely sought him in prayer. One hath bene lately received, none rejected. As to outwards, there are few of them considerable as to the world, yet they are not in want, but rather capable of helping others.

Stoke and Andover. They are in peace in some good measure, yet some contention is among them concerning the grace of God but not such as to break communion. There is a neglect complained of as to the administration and use of the Lord's Supper, also that their poore are neglected because many times they that are most able to give doe not make good their place. And it is feared that some are too much in love with the things of this life. Two have been added to the church and one excluded.

Wallingford. Some are much cast downe at the low estate that Syon

seemes to be in at this day. Their desires are that all the Lord's people may be earnest in prayer that he would appeare for their deliverance as in former times. Some of them are in great hope that God will doe his church much good by his dispensation now upon us. There is peace amongst them through mercie in a good measure. Two members have bene added, none excluded. As to gifts there is a blessed increase. As to outwards, though there be few to contribute yet (through mercie) there is no want.

North-Warmborow. (Declared in a letter). It was by reason of their generall povertie and great charge that they sent no messenger. Their brother Richard Greene is gone from them they know not whither: they judge he is gone away for debt. Before his going lie drew a brother amongst them to be bound for him for five pounds who now is not in a capacitie to pay it and the church is not able to help him but judge it their duty to help him if they were able. Also their brother Barnham that caries on the work of the ministrie among them, is by reason of great losses, and his late great sicknes, fallen into such want, as that he is not able to maintaine his familie, neither are they able to help him. They desire these sad cases to be layd before the churches. They have had one lately baptized and added. They continue close in communion each with other.

Newberie. (Declared also by a letter). They signify that through mercie their hearts are so established in the way of the Lord that he hath acquainted them with as that they are resolved through grace to continue stedfast unto death. Yea, doe also signify a desire to be prayed for that they may be kept stedfast. Through the presence and blessing of the Lord their hearts are in some measure alive towards him. Yet they complaine of the coldnes of their affections in the perf ormance of duties and that there is not a due living up to the Lord sutable to his manifold mercyes etc. There hath bene for some season and yet is some discord about one member among them. They have one sister under a sad temptation sometimes questioning God's love to her. As to the world it is very low and meane with them. They sent a query to the messengers which was, and was answered by them, as follows:

[Whether] a member of a church doing anything whereby the [rest of I the members are in tendernes to the glorie of God offended [may he by] the Scriptures goe on in such a work or forbear?

Answer. 1. We desire the church members that offer this query to

consider that they onely may be truly said to be in a true, right and reall tendernes to the glorie of God, offended at an action, who are offended at the same because they see and can proove it to be contrarie to the rule of God's word. If an action be no way contrarie to any rule of God's word, then the offence that is taken at the same, is reprooveable and ought not to be continued but repented of. 2. In case a lawfull action doe become an offence to church members through their owne weaknes and ignorance: if the doing of the action be in no wise a dutye but may without any irregularitie or offence be forborne, then we judge it ought to be forborne for the avoyding of offence. But, if the action be a duty or any circumstances doe make it a duty for the present, then we conceive it ought not to be forborne for the offence that is taken thereat as aforesaid.

At this meeting the ensuing epistle was written and subscribed by all the messengers aforementioned:

The messengers of diverse of the associated churches mett at Tetsworth (according to former appointment) on the 25th day of the 2nd moneth 1660 to those churches whose messengers did not meet according to appointment at the time and place aforesaid, send greeting in the Lord Jesus.

Precious brethren,

The Lord our God whose work it is to quicken his people and to make them strong in the power of his owne might, be graciously pleased to awaken and quicken and encourage and strengthen your soules and to enable you to lift up the hands which hang downe and the feeble knees and to make straight paths for your feet.

The Lord our Father having brought us here in peace and safety and having thus farr so commanded peace for us as that we have not bene here molested by any disturbance and we, being very sensible how much it concerned both you and us and the associations and churches to which we stand related, yea and (which is most to be minded) the glorie of God, that your messengers also should here have mett us and joyned with us, we could not but write a few lines unto you, to acquaint you with the grieffe of heart in us and that hinderance and obstruction of our great and now presently needfull work which this neglect or failing either of you or of your messengers hath at present caused. And to stir you up to thinke of your wayes as to this particular as that you may not hereafter also shew the like slacknes. Some of us are come hither from remote places and it troubleth us to see ourselves thus deserted and our travaile in a

great measure made frustrate, by the not meeting of the messengers of some (in comparison) adjacent churches.

We are here presented with the sad object of want and povertie in some of the associated churches and, namely, the church of North Warmborow. One brother of that church is gone away they know not whither and it is judged that it is for debt. Before his going away he drew in another brother to be bound for him for five pounds and hath left him so engaged and he is not able to pay it, neither is the church in a capacitie to help him. Also that brother who doth carie on the work of the ministry among them, having had great losses in the late wars and having also lately had a great sickness is come into so great want as that he [hath not] a capacitie to maintaine his familie neither is the church fable to help] him. And now we pray you to consider, not onely what [could be] done by you (according to your abilitie) for helpe in such [cases but] also what need there was of the assistance of your messengers to give their advice and furtherance in things of this nature. We doe also now meet with other things of no small difficultie in which the peace and spirituall welfare of some churches is much concerned and in which our counsaile and help is earnestly desired in which we ought not to have bene so far alone as now we are. We desire you seriously to consider whether you (or your messengers) have not much forgotten your just engagement and said, There is a lyon in the way. The same God who hath thus far preserved us here in peace was no lesse able to have preserved your messengers also. If we had bene, or should be, called into question for our meeting here our just and true answer is ready and cleare, viz., that this is but the continuance of a meeting that hath bene here peaceably kept for diverse yeares; that this particular meeting was appointed above a yeare ago; that our work here hath bene, and is, not to intermeddle with civill affaires, but with the affaires of God's house wherein the spirituall peace and flourishing of the churches is concerned etc. We intreat you also to lay to heart what sweet experience we have formerly had of God's gracious presence with us at these meetings and what little reason we have had to doubt of the continuance of his goodnes; also, what speciall need both we and all the churches have of speciall quickning, and wholesome counsell in this day. We might easily enlarge ourselves in this subject but, as time will not permitt, so we hope to you it shall not need.

We have appointed the next meeting at the same place on the 19th day of the 4th moneth next coining, desiring and hoping that there may

not then be a farther need of a farther pressing of this matter. Although we be very sensible of the travaile and expenses that these meetings doe cause and therefore could have desired that the next meeting might not have been so soone yet, the failing now complained of, having hindered very much the compleating of our work, we have thereby bene induced to appoint the next meeting to be at the time now specifed. Thus, desiring the Most High to prosper the same, we committ both you and ourselves unto the guidance and protection of our deare Lord and Saviour in whom we remaine,

Your affectionate brethren,

William, Goodale, Thomas Sutton etc.

Postscript. Taking into consideration the present state of Syon in generall and, more especially of the assemblyes of Syon in this land, and more particularly of those particular churches who have partly by their messengers and partly by their letters, now made known unto us their particular states, we have judged it expedient as part of our duty, now to offer it to your serious consideration, whether it be not now seasonable and necessarie for all the churches, both to be very earnest in seeking the face of the Lord and also (in this work) to set apart such time or times as they shall see to be most convenient for the seeking of the Lord by prayer with fasting.

At this meeting the messenger of the church of Reading did by word of mouth propound to the rest of the messengers a case which that chur[ch had] needed a resolution of. And the messengers did in like manner [give] by that messenger their judgement in the case.

[Thus was] layd before the messengers the condition of the disciples at Hempsteed Norris¹²³ in Barkshire who having formerly, with others there, stood up as a church, did desire now to be enabled to stand up so againe and find counsell and help herein. It was agreed unto by the messengers that some able brethren should be desired to visit them and, upon full knowledge of their state and condition, to give them from scripture grounds the best advice they could and to encourage and help them as God should enable etc.

The twenty-third General Meeting

At the meeting of messengers at Tetsworth the 19th and 20th dayes of the 4th moneth 1660 the messengers were: of the church of Abingdon, Richard Tirrall;¹²⁴ Reading, Thomas Smith; Wantage, Henrie Tull;¹²⁵ Henlie, John Tiler; Kingston, Nicholas Allin; Watlington, James Harrison; Hadnam, William Cowley; Oxford, Roger Hatchman;¹²⁶ Longworth, John Jones; Wallingford, Consolation Foxe; Newberie, Gabriel Tinsley;¹²⁷ of the association in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire etc., Benjamin Coxe.

At this meeting the state of the churches was declared as followeth: of the church of

Abingdon. Through grace they remaine stedfast in the profession of faith. The cloud that hath hung over them and the beginnings of persecution have bene of advantage to the strengthening of their faith and to a quickning of them unto prayer. They enjoy a very full peace among themselves, so full, as that they never had peace more fully since they were a church. They have had 8 or 10 added. One cast out. As to gifts, they have for their supply and some to spare for the help of other churches. As to outwards they doe not want. They have set severall dayes apart to seek the Lord who hath bene found of them.

Reading. They remaine as it was declared at the last meeting. They are generally in peace but one brother is under admonition. They have had no addition.

Wantage. They are generally stedfast in the profession of faith and Gospell order and have peace among themselves. Diverse of them have bene much quickned after their seeking of the Lord by prayer with fasting. As to gifts, they are enabled to carie on the work of the Lord. As to outwards, they are poore, yet have hitherto maintained their owne poore. One hath bene added and one [cast] out for drunkennesse.

Kingston. They remaine in peace among themselves and in other things also they are as at the last meeting excepting some alteration in outwards by reason of one brother appearing to be fallen into povertie. They have not bene dismayed by the persecution and troubles of the time but rather have got more strength and courage.

Watlinton. Sadly complains of deadnes and backwardnes in God's service and admires God's goodnes in that they have not thereby bene brought to nothing. They are in peace. They are few in number. As to

1 The Abingdon Association records

outwards, they are very poore saving one brother whom God hath made both able and willing and ready to be helpfull. The late troubles seemed to have in some measure quickned some of them. But there is some feare lest the returne of peace will cause a relapse into lukewarmnes. There hath one brother bene added who, it is hoped, will be very usefull.

Henlie. Their meetings have bene kept up constantly on the first and fift dayes of the weeke but they have not enjoyed the use of the Supper for a considerable time viz., a yeare or more. Some members think it fit thus to stand and waite sith meanes have bene used and successe (as to composing of differences) hath not followed. Others judge there should be farther endeavour as to the use of meanes and doe desire helpe. Two brethren are shaken in their judgement as to infant baptisme but doe keep close as to hearing. Their poore are not many so they crave not assistance on that account.

Hadnam. There hath bene no considerable declarable alteration since the last meeting.

Oxford. They are, through grace, in a good frame, waiting upon God in the use of his ordinances. And the present dispensation hath bene unto them to the furtherance of zeale and quickning and encouraging. Three sisters have bene received in. None cast out but two members are lately fallen to the Quakers and not yet dealt with; one sister is under dealing. As to outwards, they are in a condition to be helpfull to others.

Some feares of the prevailing of corruption doe trouble some who yet have a sense of their corruptions etc., but generally they are lively in God's wayes and they have great hopes of a good issue out of all appearing crosse providences.

Longworth. They are stedfast both in faith and order. [They] are in a great measure confident of a wonderfull deliverance. But some have been very weake and ready to stumble at the crosse providences but now they begin to get some strength. They have much peace and love one towards another. Five or sixe have been added, two of which were chearefully baptized in the extreme frost. One hath bene rejected. Many are poore and few in a capacitie to give so the church is very low.

Wallingford. No declarable alteration since the last meeting.

Newberie. In a letter brought by their messenger, their state was declared to this effect: some complaine of deadnes and coldnes in the things of God. Some have bene questioning how they should be able to endure tryalls; some are attended with passion yet loathing it. They all owne

the faith and order of the Gospell. One sister is questioning her interest in God. One sister is visited with lamenes and weaknes: the rest of the members are in bodily health. The church is in want as to outwards being not able to performe what she is allready engaged as to debt to two brethren. By reason of some acting by one brother they are much troubled.

Stoke and Andover, etc. (Declared also in a letter). Their condition is indifferent peaceable. Their hearts are established in this shaking day and resolved to stand in God's strength and to abide what he shall visit them with. One brother being imprisoned on a false accusation of high treason the church is put to it to relieve his familie.

At this meeting the messengers subscribed and sent an epistle to the church of Henlie in which they exhorted that church to renew and revive their endeavours after a composing and ending of the differences that are among them. They layd before them Paul's exhortation in Eph. 4.1-6 and Phil. 2.1-4 and Col. 3.12-15. They desired and encouraged them in this worke to seeke and make use of the assistance of some other of the associated churches and to this end they minded them of the Agreement of the churches and the conclusion and the scripture grounds on which it was founded.

At this meeting also all the messengers, save one, did approve of the ensuing request to the churches whom the same might concerne as touching John Belchar and did agree to the subscribing of the said request.

Whereas we understand to our grieft that som[e mem]bers of some of the associated chur[ches do] willingly heare (as they can gaine opportunitie) the preaching of John Belchar and doe also allow him to be their mouth in prayer, though he standeth excommunicate by the church of Abingdon of which he was formerly a member; although no reason appears why we should not judge him to have bene, and so to stand, truly and justly excommunicate by that church: which holding of communion with him in either of the aforesaid wayes doth clearely appeare to be irregular and sinfull, even as it would be if they had communion with him in the Supper and doth harden him in all that evill for which he was excommunicate; and doth utterly make voyd the authoritye given of Christ to the churches to excommunicate such members as Gospell rule requires to be layd by and so doth open a wide dore to confusion and licentiousnes; we therefore humbly intreat all the churches whom this may concerne to watch over their members with reference to this thing and,

as they shall see it needfull, to advise them to breake off this evill and to keep themselves pure from such an irregular and sinfull acting for time to come.

Tetsworth, the 20th day of the 4th moneth 1660.

From this meeting also the ensuing writing was sent by the messengers to the church of Newberie.

The judgement of the messengers mett at Tetsworth the 20th day of the 4th moneth 1660, touching the practice of a teaching brother whom his owne want of outwards and the povertie of the church to which he stands related, and the advice and furtherance of a brother pitying his condition and endeavouring his helpe, hath put upon a carying of tobacco and small pedlarie wares about the countrie to sell the same thereby to get a livelihood for himselfe and his familie.

We judge the action in itselfe not unlawfull nor deservedly, or among wise Christians, of evill report and, in the case above stated, not re-prooveable; nor, though the brother that first advised and holp have now changed his mind. And we judge that the teaching brother so acting, whilest his case continues as aforesaid is not to be dissuaded, much lesse driven from so acting, he not joyning therewith any basenes truly so called nor any dishonestie but so carying himselfe as that he may justly be commended for his diligence and humilitie.

From this meeting also this desire was sent in the mouth of each messenger to each respective church viz., that, according to the order given in I Cor. 16.1f. the church members in everie church would contribute everie first day of the week and this whether they then meet in one place onely or in moe places then one and whether they doe break bread or not and that they would proportion their contribution according to their abilitie with [som]e respect not onely to the need of the poore members of their owne congregation but to the need of others also.

The ensuing desires were also signified at this meeting. The severall messengers are joyntly by all the messengers desired to stirre up the severall churches to be much in seeking the Lord by prayer and fasting that they may be kept stedfast in the day of tryall and may well mind Mk. 8.38 and in some speciall maner to mind this duty of prayer when the next meeting shall draw neere and to have the meeting then in their mind. Also the churches are desired to appoint their severall messengers some convenient time before the day of the meeting that they may be ready for the worke and may gaine a good and full understanding of the

state of the respective churches as they see them to declare it.

The next meeting of messengers at Tetsworth is appointed to begin on the 3rd day in Easter weeke 1661 in the afternoone.¹²⁸

Further abbreviations used in the footnotes

1. *Jessey* — Henry Jessey, *The Lord's loud call to England*, London 1660.
2. *Narrative* — *A narrative of the proceedings of the General Assembly*, London, 1689.
3. *Nickolls* — John Nickolls, *Original Letters . . . addressed to Oliver Cromwell*, London 1743.
4. *Payne* — Ernest A. Payne, *The Baptists of Berkshire through three centuries*, London 1951.
5. *Testimony* — *A testimony to truth, agreeing with an Essay for settlement*, London 1659.
6. *Tibbutt* — G. Tibbutt, *Some early nonconformist Church Books*, Bedford 1972.
7. *V.C.H.* Victoria County History.

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¹As the records themselves show, this association can hardly be termed 'the Berkshire Association.' See White, 'Organisation,' 216, note 4.

²The Longworth Churchbook MS is deposited in the Angus Library at Regent's Park College, Oxford. It contains records of the foundation of the congregations at Longworth and Faringdon together with records of the early days of the Abingdon Association and another local grouping from the early years of the eighteenth century.

³The Abingdon Association MS, also in the Angus Library, reports meetings of representatives of the churches over a wide area in Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Hampshire, December 1652–June 1660. It contains 87 pages (9 inches by 5) in the small neat hand of a single scribe, prefaced by an index.

⁴For Wormsley see Appendixes I and II in *Payne*. In Appendix I Dr Payne provided a transcript of the records of two meetings at Wormsley and one later at Tetsworth from the Longworth Churchbook. The record there led him to believe that Abingdon,

Reading, Henley, Kensworth and Eversholt were at once joined by other churches. This, the Abingdon Association MS makes clear, was not so.

⁵B. R. White, 'The doctrine of the Church in the Particular Baptist Confession of 1644,' *J. T. S.* (New Series), XIX, 570–590, discusses both the sources and the doctrinal emphases of this document.

⁶An article by W. T. Whitley, *T. B. H. S.*, VI.50–59, is still the only attempt to reconstruct Benjamin Cox's biography. Cox represented Kensworth at the 4th and 5th meetings in these records. At the 10th it was suggested that he, there described as 'of Dunstable,' and John Pendarves should represent the association at the meetings of the Midland Association. See his contribution to the Midland Association discussions earlier in these records, 48, 52, note 31, and his letter to Richard Harrison on ministerial maintenance, 53ff. After the 19th, at which the churches of the eastern wing became a separate association, Cox usually represented them at Tetsworth. At the 21st he was one of those sent to counsel Henley.

⁷B. Cox, *An appendix to a confession of faith*, London 1646. Reprinted in *Confessions of faith*, 1854, 49–60.

⁸On John Pendarves and the Abingdon Church see B. R. White, 'John Pendarves, the Calvinistic Baptists and the Fifth Monarchy,' *B. Q.* XXV. No. 6. A broadsheet printed in 1659, entitled *A testimony of truth*, was signed by representatives of five churches, Abingdon, Wantage, Oxford, Longworth and Faringdon. This embodied a republican and radical demand for government by the saints and followed, mostly verbatim, a similar publication printed earlier in the name of such men as Henry Jessey, Vavasour Powell, John Vernon and others.

⁹Henley was a founder member of the association. A number of its members signed a letter to Cromwell, 24 May 1653, recommending 'Richard Castell of Cawshame' (Caversham?) for the Barebones Parliament, *Nickolls*, 95. John Tyler, who seems to have led the church throughout this period. had his house licensed in 1672 as a Congregationalist (*O. R.*, 11. 830 — one of the many mistakes in this record?). W. T. Whitley, *Baptist Bibliography*, I.21–688 notes that the church's records begin in 1688. The church was not represented at the 1689 Assembly.

¹⁰B. R. White, 'The Baptists of Reading, 1652–1715,' *B. Q.*, XXII.1967–68.

¹¹See note 8.

¹²*Tibbutt*, 10–18, lists the sources for the history of this church and transcribes the records 1675–94. The *Narrative* reports that the church was represented at the 1689 Assembly by James Hardinge and Daniel Finch, both designated 'ministers.' Finch and Harding were appointed in November 1688, *Tibbutt*, 16f.

¹³Edmund White appears to have led at Eversholt during the period of these records. The *Narrative* reports that Edward White represented Eversholt as pastor in 1689. See note 23 below.

¹⁴This marks the end of the material from the Longworth Churchbook. The following paragraph is the heading of the first page of the Abingdon Association MS. Evidently this manuscript represents a fair copy from earlier materials made in 1658 and then carried forward to 1660.

¹⁵The remaining meetings all took place at Tetsworth, 12 miles from Oxford on the London road: there is no evidence that there was ever a Baptist church there. It was a coaching stage with several notable inns, among them the Swan, during the seventeenth century. 'The Compton census of 1676 recorded three nonconformists, but

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otherwise there is no record of Protestant dissent before the 19th century,' *V.C.H., Oxford*, VII, 159.

¹⁶John Tomkins (1621–1708). His father was a yeoman and John did sufficiently well as a maltster to leave some £6,000 in his will, L. G. R. Naylor, *The malthouse of Joseph Tomkins*, n.d., 7ff. He is known to have represented Abingdon at the 4th, 7th, 20th and 21st meetings and, at the last of these, was sent with others to counsel Henley. Signed *Testimony*, 1659. In 1669 he was active in Abingdon, *O.R.*, II.942, and represented Abingdon at the 1689 Assembly. There the *Narrative* says he was accompanied by Philip Hockton but this was, almost certainly, Philip Lockton who had been active earlier and who had also signed *Testimony*.

¹⁷Edward Penner is not otherwise known.

¹⁸William Millward is known to have represented Reading at the 4th, 5th, 7th, 13th, 14th, 15th and 20th meetings but is not otherwise known.

¹⁹John Deane is known to have represented Reading at the 4th, 7th and 21st meetings. At the 21st he was sent with others to counsel Henley. He may have been a J.P. in Reading in 1659. *T.B.H.S.*, III.253.

²⁰John Tyler is known to have represented Henley at the 4th, 5th, 7th and 23rd meetings. He signed the Henley letter to Cromwell, 24 May 1653, *Nickolls*, 95. His house was licensed in 1672 (*O.R.*, II.830 — as Congregationalist).

²¹John Ewin signed the letter of May, 1653, *Nickolls*, 95; otherwise he is unknown.

²²Robert Knight is known to have represented Kensworth at the 4th and 5th meetings. The *Narrative* reports that a Robert Knight represented 'Stewkeley' as pastor in 1689.

²³Edmund White is known to have represented Eversholt at the 4th, 5th, 7th and 15th meetings. After the division he represented the new association at the 21st meeting with Cox and was sent as one of those to counsel Henley. He is identified as a Quaker teacher at Bow Brickhill in 1669 at the home of Thomas Cooke senior, *O.R.*, II.841. Was he, in fact, the Edward White listed in the *Narrative*? Edmund was pastor at Eversholt in 1691, *Tibbutt*, 35.

²⁴Thomas Vaux (Vaus, Varrse, Vauxe), had signed *Heartbleedings*, in 1650. 'Tho. Varrse' signed the Bedford letter of May 1653 to Cromwell, *Confessions*, 320f. Vaux is known to have represented Eversholt at the 4th and 7th meetings. In 1669 he was teacher to some Baptists in Edworth, Beds., though 'a prisoner in Hertford goale.' In 1672 he was licensed as a teacher at Pyrton, Herts., *O.R.*, II.859, 882. He signed the 1689 Assembly letter, *Narrative*, as pastor of Broadmead, Bristol.

²⁵Thomas Tisdale represented Abingdon at the 5th meeting and Oxford at the 13th. He signed the letter ('Tesdale') to Warwick from the 15th meeting. As Thomas Tesdall he signed *Testimony* in 1659 from Oxford. He may have been the mercer mentioned in M. G. Hobson, *Oxford Council Acts 1665–1701*, Oxford 1939, *passim*.

²⁶John Combes is known to have represented Abingdon at the 5th, 7th and 14th meetings. At the 21st he was one of those sent to counsel Henley. Meanwhile he had shared, 12 December 1656, in the foundation of the Longworth congregation and, 27 November 1657, in the foundation of Faringdon, Longworth Churchbook. He signed the *Testimony* from Faringdon in 1659 and the letter from Reading gaol, July 1660, *Jessey* 26. He was licensed at Abingdon as a preacher in 1672, *O.R.*, II.950.

²⁷James Cowdery is only known here.

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²⁸Edward Tub is only known here and from signing the Henley letter to Cromwell in 1653, *Nickolls*, 95.

²⁹John Spilsbury was known as a Calvinistic Baptist before signing the *Confession* of 1644; he signed its revisions in 1646, 1651; *Heartbleedings* in 1650; the letter to Ireland in 1654, *Confessions*, 322–6; the letter to Cromwell opposing his acceptance of the crown in 1657, *Confessions*, 335–8; the *Humble apology* of 1660, *Confessions*, 343–52. It was in his home that the London messengers held their weekly meetings in May 1657 — see the record of the 17th meeting.

³⁰William Kiffin (1616–1701) has a place in *D.N.B.* See also: W. Orme, *Remarkable passages in the life of William Kiffin*, London 1823; B. R. White, ‘William Kiffin, Baptist pioneer and citizen of London,’ *Baptist History and Heritage*, 11. 2, Nashville, U.S.A. and ‘How did Kiffin join the Baptists?’ *B.Q.*, XXIII, 201–7.

³¹Margin: ‘Baptized persons’ neglect of joyning to some church of Christ and administratours’ neglect of exhorting them so to doe.’

³²Thomas Woddeson is known to have represented Henley at the 7th and 21st meetings. He also signed the Henley letter to Cromwell, *Nickolls*, 95.

³³Thomas Hayward is known to have represented Kensworth at the 7th and 14th meetings. He was reported in 1669 as ‘of Kinsworth, Herts’ teaching at Houghton Regis (which was the home of a number of Kensworth members, *Tibbutt*, 12), *O.R.*, II.860. In (?) 1675 a member of Kensworth living at St Albans. named ‘Brother Haward,’ was elected elder and, in November 1688, the death of Thomas Hayward was reported and steps were taken to replace him, *Tibbutt*, 10, 16.

³⁴Richard Woodhouse is not otherwise known.

³⁵See the Midland section of these records for Warwick and the Midland Association. From this letter it can be seen that the Midland churches had ‘the Agreement of the Churches’ of the Abingdon Association in their hands six months before they drew up their own.

³⁶Captain John Turner appears, from this letter, to have been in membership either with the Warwick church or with one of those soon to be linked in association with it. A John Turner had signed (*Whitley* 56–647) with Hobson, Strange and others and had contributed a foreword (as had John Spilsbury) to Jane Turner’s *Choice experiences of the kind dealings of God* (1654). It seems most unlikely that Captain Turner wrote 25–641, 41–645 or 52–645. The author was a Congregationalist, all three works were by him, but Jane Turner suggests that the Baptists provided both her and her husband with their first taste of dissent. In 1669 a ‘Capt. Turner’ was a teacher of a Baptist group at Rickmansworth, Herts. *O.R.*, II.883.

³⁷John Sackwell is not otherwise known.

³⁸Samuel Tull was one of the signatories of the Glaziers’ Hall correspondence with the Welsh churches, 1650–52. He signed the letter from Petty France in these records dated 18.11.1656/7. Nathanael Strange, in a letter to the 19th meeting, also mentions him as one to whom letters could be addressed to be sent on. He signed the letter asking Cromwell not to accept the crown, 1657, *Confessions*, 335–8 and the *Humble Apology*, 1660, *Confessions*, 342–52. In 1664 he was reported leading a meeting in Cheapside, *T.B.H.S.*, VI.57. He died in 1677, *B.Q.*, VIII.219.

³⁹According to the account prefacing their first extant Churchbook (1760) the Wantage church was formed c.1648. Their first pastor was Robert Keate. In 1653 he and fourteen others signed a petition to Cromwell seeking renewed permission to use Want-

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age town hall and a hall at Grove for worship, *T.B.H.S.*, II.237, *C.S.P.D.*, 1652/3, 381 (4 June 1653). At the 14th meeting the Wantage messengers resisted a hard line against tithes. In 1672 Robert Keate secured a license to teach in Wantage, Aaron Jones's house was licensed for meetings and Bartholomew Tull also secured a licence to teach and in his own house at Grove. These four licences were all obtained with the help of William Kiffin — but Keate, Jones and Tull were all listed as Presbyterians! *O.R.* II.943. Keate represented Wantage at the 1689 Assembly, *Narrative*. In 1659 Wantage signed the *Testimony*.

⁴⁰John Pendarves appears to have been the first to teach Baptist views in Watlington when he had an encounter with Jasper Mayne, the royalist vicar of Pyrton, Oxon., in 1652. At the 21st meeting the church was very weak but asked whether, in company with Haddenham and Kingston, they should renew relations with the church at Bledlow most of whose members were Seventh Day Baptists. By 1669 the Sabbatarians appear to have taken over and 'seem to have been the dominant sect in the town until the arrival of the Methodists,' *V.C.H. Oxford*, VIII.245. In 1690 it was reported that Edward Stennet, Seventh Day pastor at Wallingford, still had a remnant linked with him from 'Watleton,' *B.Q.*, XIV. 165.

⁴¹*Payne*, 19 seems to suggest that this was Kingston-upon-Thames but since this church, with its neighbours at Haddenham and Watlington, wanted to renew relations with Bledlow, Kingston Blount seems more likely. No other references outside these records have been found. See p. 242 of these Records.

⁴²Nothing is known of Haddenham before this meeting. Among their messengers during these years were Robert Coxe, Edward Coxe and Philip Willmot. In 1669 Philip Willmot's house was licensed for Baptists but he, and the other two men, were listed as Quakers, *O.R.*, II.840, 842. This seems likely to be another error. The church was represented at the 1689 Assembly by Peter Tyler, *Narrative*.

⁴³Pyrton, Hertfordshire. *Payne*, 19 seems to think this was Pyrton, Oxon., and, bearing in mind the Mayne/Pendarves encounter (see note 40 above) this seemed plausible and I accepted it in 'Organisation.' However, another fact from these records seems to deny the Oxon. identification. When the association divided 'Pyrton' went not with the Abingdon and Oxford wing but with Kensworth, Eversholt and Hemel Hempstead. Further support for the Herts. identification is given by the fact that Thomas Vaux, formerly of Eversholt, was one of the Baptist teachers licensed for Pyrton, Herts. in 1672.

⁴⁴The Chard association letter, which is not here reprinted, appears earlier in these records, 76ff., dated 28 September 1655.

⁴⁵Oxford joined the association here and was represented by Thomas Tisdale and Richard Tidmarsh. Lawrence King was appointed messenger to a later meeting and arrived a day late. All three, with other members, signed the *Testimony*, 1659. In 1672 King and Tidmarsh were licensed as teachers and Tidmarsh's home was licensed for meetings, *O.R.*, II.830. Tidmarsh represented Oxford at the 1689 Assembly, *Narrative*.

⁴⁶The Hemel Hempstead church does not appear outside these records until, according to the *Narrative*, Samuel Ewer as pastor with William Aldwin attended the 1689 Assembly.

⁴⁷John Jones represented Abingdon at this meeting only. At Pendarves' funeral in September 1656 he was described as 'an ancient grave Christian, who was formerly

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persecuted by the bishops,' *Payne*, 30. He joined Longworth at its foundation, 12 December 1656, Longworth Churchbook. He signed the *Testimony* from Longworth and also the letter from Reading gaol, 16 July 1660, *Jessey* 26.

⁴⁸John Man is only known to have represented Reading on this occasion. A John Man had represented the church at Moreton-in-the-Marsh at that town for the Midland Association meeting held there in June 1655. A John Man signed the *Humble Apology* in 1660, *Confessions*, 343–52. A man of the same name was licensed for Abingdon and Longworth in 1672, *O.R.*, II.950.

⁴⁹Richard Boulton is known to have represented Henley at the 13th and 20th meetings. He signed the Henley letter to Cromwell in May 1653, *Nickolls*, 95.

⁵⁰Thomas Smith is only known in these records and at this point unless he were the Thomas Smith who attended the 21st and 23rd meetings as the representative of Reading.

⁵¹John Mettmoth is not otherwise known.

⁵²Thomas Cooke is only known to have represented Eversholt at this meeting but he represented the new association with Benjamin Cox at the 20th meeting. He had signed the Bedfordshire letter of 1653, *Confessions*, 320f. Thomas Cooke senior — perhaps the same man — is listed at Bow Brickhill, Bucks., as being, with Edmund White, among the Quakers in 1669, *O.R.*, II.842.

⁵³Clement Berridge only appears in these records at this point. He had earlier signed the Bedfordshire letter of 1653, *Confessions*, 320f.

⁵⁴Robert Keate was, according to the 1760 Churchbook, only 23 or 24 when he came to Wantage as pastor in c. 1648. He had an assistant, John Tull, from 7 February 1696 and died 5 March 1710. He is known to have represented Wantage at the 13th, 20th and 21st meetings. In 1653 Keate and 14 others petitioned Cromwell, *T.B.H.S.*, II.237, *C.S.P.D.*, 1652/3,381. He signed the *Testimony*, 1659, and the letter from Reading gaol, July 16 1660, *Jessey*, 26. In 1672 Kiffin helped him to get a licence at Wantage, *O.R.*, II.943. *Narrative* shows he represented Wantage at 1689 Assembly. In 1692 he served on a committee to deal with the hymn-singing dispute, *T.B.H.S.*, VI.237.

⁵⁵John Beale appears only here in these records but his name appears immediately below Keate's in the Wantage 1760 Churchbook. He signed the 1659 *Testimony*.

⁵⁶John Belcher, here representing Kingston Blount, may have been the man later to become wellknown for his Seventh Day and Fifth Monarchy views. Oddly, according to the record of the 23rd. meeting, he had been excommunicated by Abingdon but there were still people in the district willing to hear him preach and pray. If this identification is correct, see B. S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*, London 1972, 242. Also: Belcher witnessed Peter Chamberlen's will, *T.B.H.S.*, III.188; signed letter in 1685 from Bell Lane to Newport R.I, *ibid.*, IV.128; ordained Joseph Stennet, *ibid.*, VII.187, and died in 1695, *ibid.*, III.16.

⁵⁷Isaak Chowne is only known to have represented Kingston Blount at the 13th and 21st meetings.

⁵⁸James Harrison is known to have represented Watlington at the 13th, 20th, 21st and 23rd meetings.

⁵⁹Richard Harris is known to have represented Watlington at the 13th 20th and 21st meetings. At the last of these he was sent with the group to counsel Henley.

⁶⁰Robert Coxe represented Haddenham at the 13th, 21st and 22nd meetings. In 1669 he was implausibly listed as a Quaker. See note 42.

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⁶¹William Cowlie is known to have represented Haddenham at this meeting and the 23rd but nothing else is known.

⁶²Richard Tidmarsh is known to have represented Oxford at the 13th and 21st meetings. At the latter he joined those sent to counsel concerning negotiations with the Bledlow Seventh Day men. He signed the *Testimony* in 1659. He and his home were both licensed in 1672, *O.R.*, II.830. At the 1689 Assembly he represented Oxford, *Narrative*. In 1689/90 he journeyed through Essex and Suffolk visiting the churches, *B.Q.*, IV. 119f. Tidmarsh was a tanner and was fairly prominent in Oxford, M. G. Hobson and H. E. Salter, *Oxford Council Acts 1626–1665*, Oxford 1933, and M. G. Hobson, *Oxford Council Acts 1665–1701*, Oxford 1939, 197, 201f., which show him a dissenting pawn in James II's desperate efforts in 1688.

⁶³John Baker represented Hempstead at the 13th meeting. However, it was reported at the 21st that he, a leading brother, 'holding forth the word' had died since the 20th meeting.

⁶⁴William Bradles is only known at this meeting.

⁶⁵William Hare represented Pyrton here but his death was reported at the 21st meeting for he, like Baker (note 63), had been a 'leading brother' 'holding forth the word.'

⁶⁶Laighton, that is, Leighton Buzzard. In 1675 there were still thirteen Kensworth members living at 'Laighton,' *Tibbutt*, 12.

⁶⁷At this point there was a footnote to the effect that, 'What is written from the figure 4 at the foot of p.36 hitherto was first written in shorthand by one of the messengers so in this transcribed copie there may be in this section some defect or imperfection.' While 'p. 36' is irrelevant the scribal comment may be allowed to stand for the whole of section 4.

⁶⁸This meeting was, presumably, carried through by one or more churches from those led by Thomas Collier. Collier reported the planting of a Baptist church in Poole in the early weeks of 1646, *B.Q.*. XXIV.100.

⁶⁹Ciceter, that is Cirencester, Gloucestershire. The meeting does not seem to have been one of the regular Midland association meetings. See above, 22–5.[]

⁷⁰It is not clear which church James Pope represented. When he next came it was as the representative, at the 22nd meeting, of the new association of the churches in Herts. etc. A tradition at Watford suggests that he became pastor at Hemel Hempstead, probably by the 1670's, but he had certainly been replaced by 1689, J. Stuart, *Beechen Grove Baptist Church*, Watford, London 1907, 10.

⁷¹North Warmborough, now part of Odiham, Hants. This small, poverty stricken community is not known from any other records of the period.

⁷²Edward Dinnett is only known at this meeting.

⁷³Richard Greene attended the 15th and 20th meetings as messenger from North Warmborow but at the 22nd the church letter reported that he had moved away leaving debts behind him.

⁷⁴Robert Nash signed a church letter from North Warmborow. In 1669 there was one 'Nash' a Baptist teacher, at Newnham or 'Newnam,' Hants.

⁷⁵John Trimear is only known as a signatory of this letter.

⁷⁶George Warner is only known as a signatory of this letter.

⁷⁷Benjamin Barnham seems to have led the group but his three days' ague and his 'great losses in the late wars' had made it impossible, so it was reported in April 1660,

for him to support his own family.

⁷⁸Some of the story of the Baptist churches in the Newcastle area during the 1650's can be reconstructed from the Hexham Records. It is set in the wider context of the period and the area by R. Howell, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the Puritan Revolution*, Oxford 1967, 248–254.

⁷⁹Nathanael Strange had signed *Whitley* 56-647 with others who were to be Baptist leaders, was active in the development of association life and, especially, in gathering a Baptist congregation once more in Barnstaple during 1657/58. See above, []96f., 132, note 29. B. S. Capp, *op. cit.*, 264 suggests he was known as a Fifth Monarchist 'only after 1660' when he had moved from the provinces to settle in London. In *A memorial on the death of Nathaniel Strange, Whitley* 18-666, his death was given as 4 October 1666.

⁸⁰For this meeting see above in these records, 36ff.

⁸¹During the period of these records the church at Petty France was led by Edward Harrison — probably until his death, W. T. Whitley, *The Baptists of London*, n.d., 105f. It is worth noting that even in the years of persecution there is evidence that this church kept in touch with the churches belonging to the area of the Abingdon Association. Nehemiah Coxe (ordained 21 September 1675) was sent as messenger to 'the meeting of the messengers of the associated churches to be had at Hempstead' on 2 April 1678. Another meeting, this time held at Abingdon, received Coxe as messenger from Petty France on 24 September 1678. The same association evidently met in London in April 1679 and again at Hemel Hempstead in October that year. In the spring of 1680 there was a meeting at St Albans and the following spring in Abingdon once more. It looks as if annual meetings were held in the spring both of 1682 and 1683 but by May 1683 persecution was bearing heavily on the church in Petty France. (This information is taken from the Devonshire Square Churchbook C.) In 1689, the *Narrative* reports, Petty France was represented by John Collet and Thomas Harrison.

⁸²See *B. Q.*, VII. 214–20 for the only attempt to summarise Harrison's career. He had signed *Heartbleedings*, 1650; the 1651 edition of the 1644 *Confession*; the London commendation of the Irish initiative of 1653, we above 111f.; the letter urging Cromwell not to accept the crown, 1657, *Confessions*, 335–8; the *Humble Apology*, 1660, *Confessions*, 343–52. He was indicted for conventicling in 1669, *B. Q.*, VII.124, but his house was licensed for meetings in 1672, *O. R.*, II.989. He died in 1689, *B. Q.*, VII.124.

⁸³Abraham Chayer. Abraham Cheare, see above 133 note 46.

⁸⁴See above, 133 note 41.

⁸⁵John Cox not only signed this letter but is known to have signed the *Humble Apology*, 1660, *Confessions*, 343–52, and the dedicatory epistle to Pendarves, *The Fear of God*, 1657.

⁸⁶Thomas Paul signed the 1651 edition of the 1644 *Confession*. He may have been the author, as Whitley believed, of 4–673. He certainly shared in the Calvinistic Baptist attack upon the Quakers, *The Quakers appeal answered*, 24–674.

⁸⁷Edward Grainge is only known from this letter.

⁸⁸Richard Mariman signed the address urging Cromwell to refuse the crown, *Confessions*, 335–8, and a Mr Merriman served the church at in 1650's, J. Stuart, *op. cit.*, 10.

⁸⁹Henrie Jackson also signed the letter urging Cromwell not to accept the crown,

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Confessions, 335–8.

⁹⁰See A. H. J. Baines, ‘Monmouth, Kiffin and the Gosfrights’ for George Gosfright; also *A letter sent to the Lord Mayor of London*, 1660 and 31–661.

⁹¹John Sowdin was to come down from the so far unidentified church at ‘Dunstan’s Hill’ in the London area for the 20th meeting. He is otherwise unknown.

⁹²The Church at Andover appears rather unexpectedly since no note has been given of its former reception into membership of the association. It is variously described in these records ‘Andover Stoke and Whitchurch’ or, most often, ‘Stoke and Andover.’ Since Andover appears first as being linked with the Western churches, see above [131](#) note [28](#), it is quite possible that it developed from the Porton and Amesbury congregation. Miss Marjorie Reeves has written, ‘The clearest example of a single Baptist church organized from a whole group of villages is that of Porton, with its conventicles and leaders scattered along the valleys of the Wylye, Avon, Bourne and Ebbble,’ *V.C.H., Wilts*, III.112. The Whitchurch congregation is continuous with the Andover one of the 1650’s. Two pieces of evidence support this — the possession of the 1656 Western association letter at Whitchurch with Andover’s name upon it, the representation of the church at the 21st and 22nd meetings by Richard Bunnie and a letter of 1691 from Southampton to the congregation at Whitchurch ‘of which Brother Bunny is the elder.’ By 1698, Richard Kent who, with his brother Stephen, had been to the 1689 Assembly, *Narrative*, had taken over from Bunny. But it had been his house at St Mary Bourne which had been licensed in 1672. *O.R.*, II.1049f.

⁹³Margin: ‘the 17th of the first in 1658.’

⁹⁴William Cree is only known through this letter.

⁹⁵William Goodale attended this meeting and the 22nd to represent Reading. Otherwise he is unknown.

⁹⁶Thomas Jones’s name., appears second to John Jones on the Longworth membership list. He signed the *Testimony* as a Longworth member, and the letter from Reading gaol on July 1660, *Jessey* 26. In 1669 his house was a Baptist centre in Longworth and his hop garden was their burial ground, *O.R.*, II.950.

⁹⁷Edward Spreadburie is only known from this occasion.

⁹⁸Edward Coxe represented Haddenham on this occasion and attended the 21st meeting with Willmot as a visitor. In 1669 Coxe was listed, wrongly, as a Quaker.

⁹⁹Christopher North provided the venue in his home for the meeting between members of the association messengers group and the Bledlow Seventh Day men, 20 April 1659 as decided at the 21st association meeting.

¹⁰⁰Lawrence King signed the *Testimony* in 1659. Licensed with Tidmarsh to preach in 1672, *O.R.*, II. 830.

¹⁰¹The Church at Dunstan’s Hill has not been identified. See note [91](#) above.

¹⁰²William Gant is only known from this visitation.

¹⁰³According to Newbury tradition a ‘Mr. James’ was minister among the Newbury Baptists during this period and he served them for sixty years, W. J. Lewendon, *Notes on Newbury Baptists 1640–1940*, Newbury 1940, 9. In 1669 they gathered in Thomas Merriman’s house for their meetings, *O.R.*, II.951.

¹⁰⁴Thomas Robie is only known from this occasion.

¹⁰⁵Since ‘Brother Weden’ is not known from any other reference it is impossible to judge in which church he was located or, indeed, whether he belonged to any church in the association.

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¹⁰⁶The Thistleworth (Isleworth in London) church was represented by Richard Deane. It found no place in Whitley's record of the *Baptists of London, op. cit.*

¹⁰⁷Unfortunately it is impossible to decide whether this was the same Thomas Smith who had represented Henley in March 1656. This man, representing Reading, attended the 21st and 23rd meetings but is otherwise unknown.

¹⁰⁸John Millsop is only known from this occasion.

¹⁰⁹Francis Wace was one of the original group of members so, presumably, he had been a member at Abingdon before the Longworth church was founded. He signed the *Testimony* in 1659 as a member of Longworth.

¹¹⁰William Vicarie is only known from this occasion.

¹¹¹Samuel Gylis is only known from this occasion.

¹¹²Consolation Foxe represented Wallingford at this meeting and the 23rd. It may well have been that it was because Wallingford was captured later by the Seventh Day men and Edward Stennet that Foxe returned to Abingdon. In 1669 his house in St Helen's parish was being used by the Abingdon Baptists, *O.R.*, II.941.

¹¹³Thomas Hatchman had apparently been admitted free in the summer of 1654 as a butcher and appeared, in June 1658, to be on the edge of trouble with the city authorities, M. G. Hobson and H. E. Salter, *op. cit.*, 202f., 464.

¹¹⁴The appearance of Luton is rather unexpected. The present church at Park Street, Luton, dates from a secession from Kensworth in 1694, *Tibbutt*, 17f. The church mentioned in these records appears to have no further history.

¹¹⁵In 'Organisation' I placed Stukeley in Huntingdonshire but there can be no doubt that Mr A. H. J. Baines is right to argue that this church centred on Stukeley, Bucks. There were Baptists meeting in Thomas White's house at Stukeley in 1669, *O.R.*, II.839, and the church there was represented at the Assembly in 1689 by its pastor Robert Knight, *Narrative*.

¹¹⁶The church at Watford is known from one external source. In 1669 John Crawley taught in that town in his own house and John Coleman was also a Baptist teacher, *O.R.*, II.883. James Stuart, *op. cit.*, 9ff., quotes church records to indicate that the Baptists there in the 1650's grew from 'a branch of a church in London meeting at a place called Coal Harbour, Mr. John Spilsbury being pastor.' Among local preachers were Richard Coleman, George Eve, John Crawley and John Reeve. The church was maintained, with help from London preachers, for a number of years but during the years of persecution, while one group tended to keep their links with London, many others joined the Hemel Hempstead congregation.

¹¹⁷Newport Pagnell, Bucks., appears only here and in the report from 1669 that their teacher was John Child then, *O.R.*, II.838.

¹¹⁸The Bedford church reported that one of their members, John Taylor, had been suspended for attempted suicide. This helps to prove that the church was not the one now known as Bunyan Meeting. In any case these associations were 'closed-membership' Calvinistic Baptists and so neither Bunyan Meeting or any other which tolerated infant baptism would be welcome to join. In any event no such case as John Taylor's figures at that period in Bunyan Meeting's records.

¹¹⁹It is clear that this church must have practised 'closed membership' to be considered 'orderly walking' by Benjamin Coxé and his friends. Yet, 26 June 1656, 'Bunyan Meeting,' an Independent church which tolerated (without enthusiasm) 'baptist' views had noted that 'some brethren at Woollaston' were 'desiring to joyne

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in fellowship with us.' Nothing more was heard of this and it seems that this group was eventually scooped into fellowship by Coxe and his friends. *The Churchbook of Bunyan Meeting 1650–1821*, ed. G. B. Harrison, Bedford 1928, 18.

¹²⁰Nicholas Allen, who represented the Kingston Blount church at the 22nd and 23rd meetings is not otherwise known.

¹²¹Thomas Sutton is only known from this meeting.

¹²²John Child. It seems probable that this was the John Childe whose withdrawal from 'Bunyan Meeting' occupied space in their records intermittently from October 1658 until October 1659 when all other events tended to be eclipsed by their pastor's last illness. While the 'Bunyan' record does not mention baptism, a very touchy subject with them at the time, it is clear that Child was not going to join the Quakers but that he linked up with 'Mr. Harris congregation' avoiding those he had been recommended to meet such as Simpson, Jessey and Rogers. This could have been Edward Harrison's congregation — cf. 'Mr Hars,' *T.B.H.S.*, VI.5. In 1673 Bunyan wrote, 'I had not set pen to paper about this controversy, had we been let alone at quiet in our Christian communion. But being assaulted for more than sixteen years, wherein the brethren of the baptized way, as they had their opportunity, have sought to break us in pieces, merely because we are not, in their way, all baptized first: I could not, I durst not, forbear to do a little, if it might be, to settle the brethren, and to arm them against the attempts, which also of late they begin to revive upon us.' *The Works of John Bunyan*, ed. G. Offor, London 1853, 11. 616f. Here is clear evidence that, in the 1650's, there was considerable tension in Bedfordshire over believer's baptism and close communion. See note 118 above for another indication of possible conflict. Child had been born in Bedford c. 1638. From c. 1659 he had spent 'about twenty years among the Baptists. He was active as a teacher at Newport Pagnell in 1669, *O.R.*, II.838, wrote against the Quakers, *Whitley* 27–676, and then conformed to the Church of England c. 1682 and brought out a sharply critical attack on his former friends. Having come to London to pursue his trade as a 'slopseller' (cheap, readymade coats, cloaks, etc.), near 'Ratcliffe-cross,' he was overcome with remorse at his apostasy and, in spite of conference with Baptist leaders in the city, committed suicide in 1684. See Thomas Plant and Benjamin Dennis, *The mischief of persecution exemplified*, London 1688. W. T. Whitley, *The Baptists of London, op. cit.*, 117 has more information but this appears to be guesswork.

¹²³Nothing further is known of this group.

¹²⁴Richard Tirrall is only known here.

¹²⁵Henry Tull's name in the Wantage (1760) Churchbook is preceded by over sixty others — an indication of the size of this congregation in the 1650's. Nothing else is known of him although there were a number of members of this family in the church.

¹²⁶Roger Hatchman, son of a radical parliamentarian citizen of Oxford, was admitted a freeman in 1651. M. G. Hobson and H. E. Salter, *op. cit.*, 115, 134, 183.

¹²⁷Gabriel Tinsley is only known from this appearance.

¹²⁸For later association meetings during the reign of Charles II see note 81 above.

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