

was but receiving into brotherly affection such as were in church fellowship, but not a receiving of such as were weak into the church:

For answer unto which, consider,

That in the text are two things to be inquired into.

First.—What weakness of faith this is that must not hinder receiving.

Secondly.—By whom, and to what, he that is weak in the faith is to be received.

To the first, What weakness of faith this is that must not hinder receiving; whether was it weakness in the graces of faith, or in the doctrine of faith? It is conceived the first is included, but the second principally intended.

First.—That some of the Lord's people are weak in the graces of faith, will be confessed by all: and that the Lord would have his lambs fed as well as his sheep, and his children as well as grown men, and that he hath given the right to Gospel privileges, not to degrees of grace, but to the truth. "Him that is weak in the faith, receive you;" or unto you, as some good translations read it. (Rom. xiv. 1.)

Secondly.—It is supposed this command of receiving him that is weak in the faith, doth principally intend, that is weak in the doctrine of faith, and that not so much in the doctrine of justification, as in Gospel institutions, as doth appear by the second and sixth verses, which shew that it was in matters of practice, wherein some were weak, and at which others were offended; notwithstanding the glorious Lord who bears all his Israel upon his heart, receives (verse 3) and commandeth, "Him that is weak in the faith, receive you," or, unto you.

Therefore, here we are to inquire of the receiving in the text, "by whom, and to what," he that is weak in the faith should be received?

In which inquiry there are two parts.

First.—By whom?

Secondly.—To what?

To the first The text makes answer, "Him that is weak in the faith receive you," or, unto you; which must be the Church at Rome, to whom the epistle was writ; as also to all the beloved of God, called to be saints. (Rom. i. 7.) And as to them, so unto all churches and saints beloved and called throughout the world.

Note: That epistles are as well to direct how churches are to carry things towards saints without, as to saints within; and also towards all men, so as to give no offence to Jew or Gentile, nor to the Church of God.

The second part of the inquiry is, To what he that is weak in the faith is to be received?—Whether only unto mutual affection, as some affirm, as if he were in church fellowship before that were weak in the faith? Or whether the text doth as well, if not rather intend the receiving such as were and are weak in the faith, not only unto mutual affection if in the Church, but unto church fellowship also, if they were out. For clearing of which, consider to whom the epistle was written. (Rom. i. 7.) Not only to the church there, but unto all that were beloved of God, and called to be saints in all ages. And as at Rome it is like there then were, and in other places now are, saints weak in the faith, both in and out of church fellowship; and it is probable there then were, and elsewhere now are, those that will cast such out of their mutual affection. And if they will cast such out of their mutual affection that are within, no doubt they will keep out of their church fellowship those that are without.

• *Argument 1.*—Whereas the Lord's care extends to all his, and if it were a good argument in the third verse for them to receive those within, because God hath received them, it would be as good an argument

to receive in those without, for God hath received them also; unless it could be proved that all that were and are weak in the faith, were and are in church fellowship, which is not likely: for if they would cast such out of their affection that are within, they would, upon the same account, keep them out of church fellowship that were without. Therefore, as it is a duty to receive those within unto mutual affection, so it is no less a duty, by the text, to receive such weak ones as are without, into church fellowship.

*Argument 2.*—Is urged from the words themselves, which are, "Receive him that is weak in the faith;" wherein the Lord puts no limitation in this text or in any other; and who is he then that can restrain it, unless he will limit the Holy One of Israel? And how would such an interpretation foolishly charge the Lord, as if he took care only of those within, but not like care of those without; whereas he commandeth them to receive them, and used this motive, he had received them; and he receiveth those that are weak in the faith, if without, as well as those within.

From the example, viz., That God had received them; whereas had he been of the church, they would have been persuaded of that before the motive was urged; for no true church of Christ's would take in, or keep in, any, whom they judged the Lord had not received; but those weak ones were, such as they questioned whether the Lord had received them, else the text had not been an answer sufficient for their receiving them. There might have been objected, They hold up Jewish observations of meats and days, which by the death of Christ were abolished, and so did deny some of the effects of his death; yet the Lord, who was principally wronged, could pass this by, and commandeth others to receive them also. And if it be a good argument to receive such as are weak in anything, whom the Lord hath received, then there can be no good argument to reject for anything for which the Lord will not reject them; for else the command in the first verse, and this example in the third verse, were insufficient, without some other arguments unto the church, besides his command and example.

Some object, "Receive ye one another, as Christ hath received us unto the glory of God," and from thence supposing they were all in church fellowship before, whereas the text saith not so; for if you consider the 8th and 9th verses, you may see he speaks unto Jews and Gentiles in general, that if the Jews had the receiving, they should receive Gentiles, and if the Gentiles had the receiving, they should receive Jews; for, had they not been on both sides commanded, the Jews might have said to the Gentiles, you are commanded to receive us, but we are not commanded to receive you; and if the weak had the receiving, they should receive the strong,—and if the strong had the receiving, they should not keep out the weak; and the text is reinforced with the example of the Son's receiving us unto the glory of God, that as he receiveth Jews and poor Gentiles, weak and strong, in church fellowship, or out of church fellowship; so should they, to the glory of God. And as the Lord Jesus received some, though they held some things more than were commanded, and some things less than were commanded, and as those that were weak and in church fellowship, so those that were weak and out of church fellowship, and that not only into mutual affection, but unto fellowship with himself; and so should they not only receive such as are weak within into mutual affection, but such as were without, both to mutual affection and to church fellowship; or else such weak ones as were without, had been excluded by the text. Oh! how is the heart of God the Father and the Son set upon this, to have his children in his house, and in one another's hearts as they are in his, and are borne upon the shoulders