

# THE GOSPEL TRIBUNE,

FOR ALLIANCE AND INTERCOMMUNION

THROUGHOUT

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"One is your master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren."

### The Topic for the Month,

Having already had as prominent topics—The Gospel plan of reconciliation—The Duty of mutual forbearance and union among Christians—and the propriety of all true believers, welcoming each other to the table of their common Lord, irrespective of all the doctrinal differences that *can* exist among them; it is considered *now* in place to present as the leading topic for this month—

#### QUALIFICATIONS FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.

[BY JONATHAN EDWARDS, A. M.]

In relation to such members of the visible church as continued in the same good standing and visibility of Christianity, wherein they were admitted, it is evident by the Epistles of the Apostles, they were all, in the eye of a Christian judgment, *truly pious* or *gracious* persons. And here I desire the following things may be particularly observed.

The Apostles continually, in their Epistles, speak to them and of them, as supposing and judging them to be gracious persons. Thus the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the church of the Romans, chap. i. 7, speaks of the members of that church as *beloved of God*. In chap. vi. 17, 18, &c. he "thanks God, that they had obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which had been delivered them, and were made free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness," &c. The Apostle in giving thanks to God for this, must not only have a kind of *negative charity* for them, as not knowing but they were gracious persons, and so *charitably hoping* (as we say) that it was so; but he seems to have formed a *positive judgment* that they were such. His thanksgiving must at least be founded on rational probability; since it would but be mocking of God, to give him *thanks* for bestowing a mercy which at the same time he did not see reason positively to believe was bestowed. In chap. vii. 4, 5, 6, the Apostle speaks of them as those that once *were in the flesh, and were under the law, but now delivered from the law, and dead to it*. In chap. viii. 15, and following verses, he tells them, *they had received the Spirit of adoption*, and speaks of them as *having the witness of the Spirit that they were the children of God, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*. And the whole of his discourse, to the end of the chapter, implies, that he esteemed them truly gracious persons. In

chap. ix. 23, 24, he speaks of the Christian Romans, together with all other Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, as *vessels of mercy*. In chap. xiv. 6, 7, 8, speaking of the difference that then was among professing Christians, in point of regard to the ceremonial institutions of the law, he speaks of both parties as acting from a gracious principle, and as those that lived to the Lord, and should die unto the Lord; "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord, &c. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man [i. e. none of us] dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: Whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's." In chap. xv. 14, he says, "I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye are full of goodness." His being thus persuaded implies a positive judgment of charity.—And the same Apostle, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, directs it to "the church at Corinth, that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus;" i. e. to all visible Christians through the world, or all the members of Christ's visible church, every where: And continuing his speech of these, chap. i. 8, he speaks of them as those "that God would confirm to the end, that they may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Plainly speaking of them all as persons, in Christian esteem, savingly converted. In the next verse, he speaks of them *the faithfulness of God* as engaged thus to preserve them to salvation, *having called them to the fellowship of his Son*. And in the 30th verse, he speaks of them as having a saving interest in Christ; "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus; who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." In chap. iii. 21, 22, 23, he says to the members of the church of Corinth, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's." In chap. iv. 15, he tells them, *he had begotten them through the gospel*. In chap. vi. 1, 2, 3, he speaks of them as "those who shall judge the world, and shall judge angels." And in ver. 11, he says to them, "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God." And in chap. xv. 49, to the end, he speaks of them as having an interest, with him and other Christians, in the happiness and glory of the *resurrection of the just*. And in his Second Epistle, chap. i. 7, he says to them, "Our hope of you is steadfast; knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation." This steadfast hope implies a positive judgment. We must