

FOR TUESDAY (THE CHURCH COVENANT)

PLATFORM OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE, Cambridge, Massachusetts Bay
Colony, 1649.

Of the Form of A Visible Church & of Church Covenant.

Saints by Calling, must have a Visible-Political-Union amongst themselves, or else they are not yet a particular church: as those similitudes hold forth, which Scripture makes use of, to shew the nature of particular Churches: As a Body, A building, or House, Hands, Eyes, Feet, & other members must be united, or else, remaining separte are not a body. Stones, Timber, though squared, hewen & pollihed, are not an house, untill they are compacted & united: so Saints or believers in judgment of charity, are not a church, unless Orderly knit together.

2 Particular churches cannot be distinguished one from another but by their formes. Ephesus is not Smyrna, & Pergamus Thyatira, but each one a distinct society of itself, having officers of their owne, which had not the charge of others: Vertues of their own, for which others are not prayed: Corruptions of their owne, for which others are not blamed.

3 This Form is the Visible Covenant, Agreement, or consent wherby they give up themselves unto the Lord, to the observing of the ordinances of Christ together in the same society, which is usually called the Church-Covenant; For wee see not otherwise how members can have Church-power one over another mutually.

The comparing of each particular church unto a City, & unto a Spouse, seemeth to conclude not only a Form, but that that Form, is by way of a Covenant.

The Covenant, as it was that which made the Family of Abraham and children of Israel to be a church and people unto God, so it is that which now makes the severall societyes of Gentil believers to be churches in these dayes.

4 This Voluntary Agreement, Consent or Covenant (for all these are here taken for the same): Although the more express & plain it is, the more fully it puts us in mind of our mutuall duty, & stirreth us up to it, & leaveth lesse room for the questioning of the Truth of the Church-estate of a Company of professors, & the Truth of membership of particular persons: yet wee conceive, the substance of it is kept, where there is a real Agreement & consent, of a company of faithful persons to meet constantly together in one Congregation, for the publick worship of God, & their mutuall edification: which real agreement & consent they doe express by their constant practise in comming together for the publick worship of God, & by their religious subjection unto the ordinances of God there: the rather, if wee doe consider how Scripture covenants have been entred into, not only expressly by word of mouth, but by sacrifice; by hand writing, & seal; & also sometimes by silent consent, without any writing, or expression of words at all.

5 This forme then being by mutuall covenant, it followeth, it is not faith in the heart, nor the profession of that faith, nor cohabitation, nor Baptisme; 1 Not faith in the heart? becaus that is invisible; 2 not a bare profession; because that declareth them no more to be members of one church

COVENANT OF PILGRIM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH