

A Double Scheme, or Table;

containing, in the first column, the sins most incident to the members of particular churches, plainly forbidden in the Word, and for which God sets marks of his displeasure on them and, in the second, the duties enjoined on them in the Scripture, in the conscientious discharge whereof, they receive signal fruits of his favour.

by John Flavel (*English Puritan, 1628-1691*)

I. *Sin.* The first, and more general sin of church members, is a defect in their care and circumspection, to prevent all just offences to them that are without: forbidden, Col. 4:5: "Walk in wisdom towards them which are without." By a careless disregard of this rule, we harden the wicked in their sins, bring guilt upon ourselves, and reproach upon the *name and ways of God.*

II. *Sin.* The second, and more particular sin of some church members, is idleness, and neglect of their civil callings; against the express rule, II Thess. 3:11-12: "There are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all: Such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." This brings poverty on themselves, and scandal on religion.

III. *Sin.* The third sin is talebearing, and revealing the secrets of families, and persons; whence many strifes arise, to the cooling and quenching of mutual love; expressly forbidden, Lev. 19:16: "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people." And I Tim. 5:13: "Not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not."

IV. *Sin.* The fourth sin is an easy credulity of private whispers, and rash censures thereupon. This we ought not to do against the meanest members. II Cor. 12:20: "Lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings ..." Much less against church-officers; I Tim. 5:19: "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." This strikes at the bond of peace.

V. *Sin.* The fifth sin is in their neglect of God's ordinances upon slight diversions, when they are neither disabled by works of necessity, or mercy, contrary to Heb. 10:25: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." Trivial occasions should divert no Christian from attending upon God's ordinances.

VI. *Sin.* The sixth sin is a defect in zeal for God's ordinances, manifested in their dilatory attendance; contrary to Ps. 122:1: "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." And unsuitable to their first practice, Gal. 4:5: "Where is then the blessedness? ..."

VII. *Sin.* The seventh sin is the irreverence, and want of seriousness under ordinances: contrary to Ps. 89:7: "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; and to be had in reverence of all that are round about him." And this is manifest in vain attires; I Cor. 11:10: "The woman ought to have power on her head, because of the angels." And unseemly postures and gestures; Ecc. 5:1: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God; and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools."

VIII. *Sin.* The eighth sin reproveable in them, is, the neglect of giving and taking due reproofs from each other; contrary to Lev. 19:7: "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." And Christ's own rule, Matt. 18:15: "Go, and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." And so for taking reproofs, see Ps. 141:5: "Let the righteous smite me ..."

IX. *Sin.* The ninth sin is, mutual strifes and animosities, not seasonably and prudently composed among themselves, but scandalously exposed to the view of the world; contrary to the apostle's rule, I Cor. 6:5-6: "Is there not a wise man among you ... But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers? Now therefore, there is utterly a fault among you."

X. *Sin.* The tenth sin is, the privateness of their spirits, centering too much in their own concerns; expressly condemned, Phil. 2:21: "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." And contrary to scripture example, II Cor. 11:29: "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?"

I. *Duty.* Their first duty is, to be often together in acts of Christian communion. Mal. 3:16: "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another ..." Such meetings for prayers, repetition of sermons, and Christian conference, greatly conduce to mutual edification; which is the principal intention of Christian fellowship, Eph. 4:16.

II. *Duty.* Their second duty is, to follow and back the great design of the gospel in the world, and therein assist the public ministry, by their private and prudent helping on the conversion of the carnal and careless world, Phil. 4:3: "Help those women that laboured with me in the gospel ... For the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, strive together with me," Rom. 15:30.

III. *Duty.* Their third duty is humble condescension to the infirmities of their weaker brethren, and denying themselves in what they can, without sin, that they give them no offence. Rom. 15:1: "We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." And ver. 2: "Let every one of us please his neighbour, for his good to edification."

IV. *Duty.* Their fourth duty is to be exceeding tender of the church's unity, both in judgment, love, and practice; avoiding (as much as may be, and as far as the gospel rule allows) all causes and occasions of division and separation. Rom. 16:17: "Mark them which cause divisions and offences, and avoid them." And Phil. 2:1-2: "If there be any consolation in Christ ... be ye like minded."

V. *Duty.* Their fifth duty is a respectful carriage towards the meanest Christian, and to have higher esteem of others than themselves. External things make no difference with Christ; Rom. 12:10: "In honour preferring one another." Gal. 3:28: "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Yet a decorum is to be kept suitable to civil differences; Eph. 5:21: "Submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God."

VI. *Duty.* Their sixth duty is, meekly to receive reproofs from each other for their sins, especially when the matter is just, and the manner of delivering it regular; Ps. 141:5: "Let the righteous smite me it shall be a kindness: And let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil ..."

VII. *Duty.* Their seventh duty is, to communicate their spiritual stock of gifts, graces, and experiences, not interfering with public officers, nor by sinful partiality including some, and excluding others (to whom it is as due, and who may have more need) from the benefit thereof; I Pet. 4:10: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another." I Tim. 5:21: "Observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality."

VIII. *Duty.* Their eighth duty is, cheerfully to communicate their outward good things for the relief of their brethren; Heb. 13:16: "To do good, and to communicate, forget not." And the better to enable them hereunto, to be diligent in their callings; Eph. 4:28: "Working with his hands, that he may have to give to him that needeth." And especially to make comfortable provision for their ministers, not by way of courtesy, but duty; I Cor. 9:14. "Even so hath God ordained, That they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel."

IX. *Duty.* Their ninth duty is, not only to relieve the distressed members of Christ, but to seek out, and visit them; to know their spiritual and temporal wants, in order to a full discharge of that duty; Jam. 1:27: "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction ..."

X. *Duty.* Their tenth duty is, to put charitable constructions upon doubtful words and actions; and if either will admit a double sense always to take it in the fairest, according to the law of charity; I Cor. 13:7: "Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." And such a charity will defend and maintain church peace and unity.