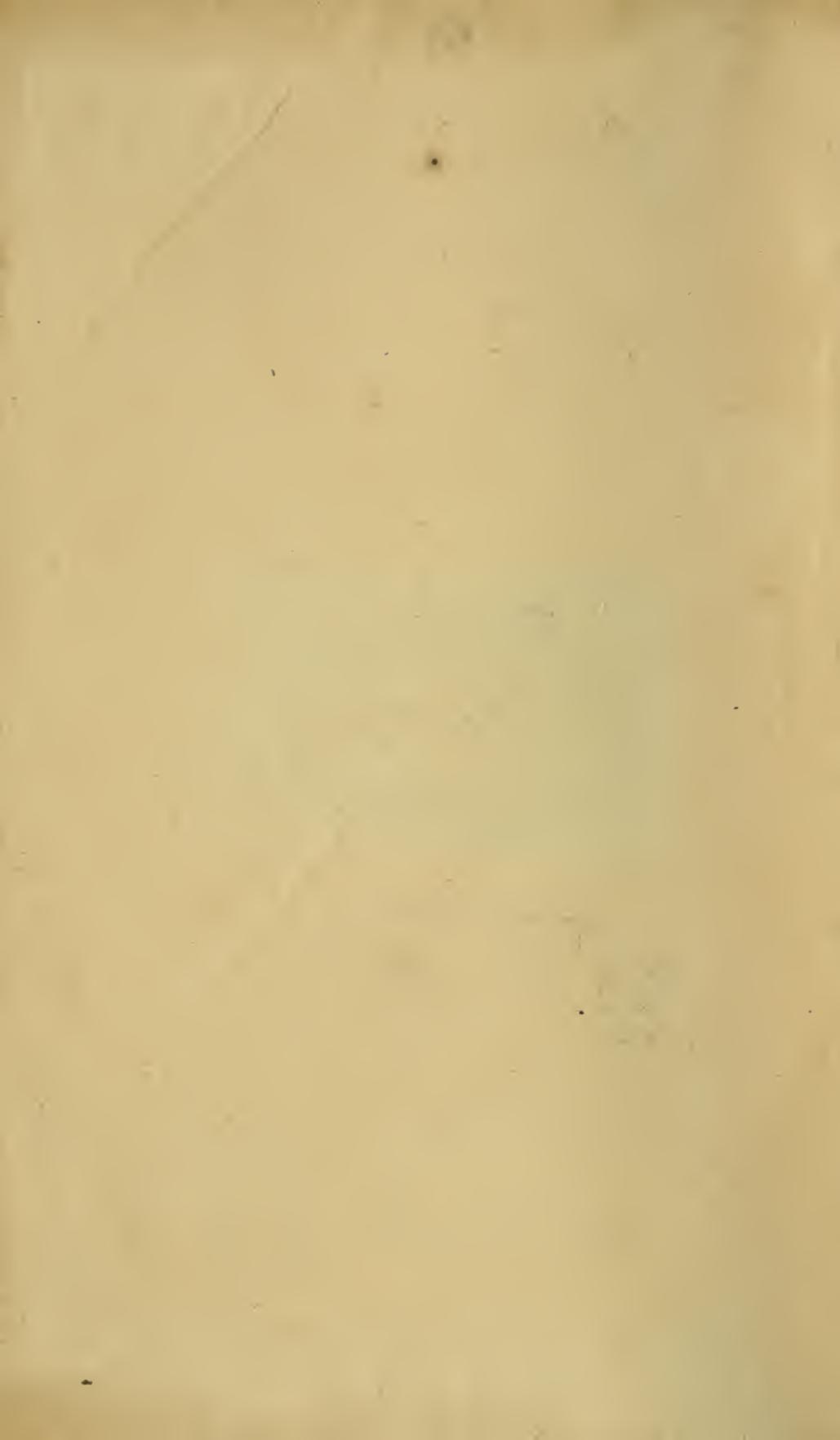




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Flavel, John, 1630?-1691.  
The whole works of John  
Flavel









THE WHOLE

WORKS

OF THE

REV. MR. JOHN FLAVEL,

LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT DARTMOUTH, DEVON.

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TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN ALPHABETICAL TABLE

OF THE PRINCIPAL MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE WHOLE.

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IN SIX VOLUMES.

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VOL. III.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR W. BAYNES AND SON, 23 & 54, PATERNOSTER-ROW;  
WAUGH AND INNES, EDINBURGH, AND M. KEENE, DUBLIN.

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1820.



## 2 PET. i. 13, 14.

*Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance. Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.*

**A**T the tenth verse of this chapter, the apostle sums up his foregoing precepts and exhortations in one great and most important duty, the “making sure of their calling and election.” This exhortation he enforceth on them by a most solemn and weighty motive, ver. 11. “Even an abundant entrance into the “everlasting kingdom.” No work of greater necessity or difficulty, than to make sure our salvation, no argument more forcible and prevalent, than an easy and free entrance into glory at death, an *ευθανασία*, a sweet and comfortable dissolution, to enter the port of glory before the wind, with our full lading of comfort, peace, and joy in believing, our sails full, and our streamers flying: Oh! how much better is this, than to lie wind-bound, I mean heart-bound, at the harbour’s mouth! tossed up and down with fears, doubts, and manifold temptations, making many a board to fetch the harbour; for so much is signified in his figurative and allusive expression, ver. 11.

And for their encouragement in this great and difficult work, he engageth himself by promise to give them all the assistance he can, whilst God should continue his life; and knowing that would be but a little while, he resolves to use his utmost endeavour to secure these things in their memories after his death, that they might not die with him. This is the general scope and order of the words.

Wherein more particularly we have,

1. His exemplary industry and diligence in his ministerial work.

2. The consideration stimulating and provoking him thereunto.

1. His exemplary industry and diligence in his ministerial work.

In which two things are remarkable, viz. (1.) The quality of his work, which was *\* to stir them up, by putting them in remembrance*, to keep the heavenly flame of love and zeal lively upon the altar of their hearts. He well knew what a sleepy disease the best Christians are troubled with, and therefore he had need to be stirring them up, and awaking them to their duty. (2.) The constancy of his work: *as long as I am in this tabernacle*; i. e. as long as I live in this world. The body is called a tabernacle, in respect of its

\* *Διεγείρειν*, signifies to raise up, or awake, i. e. your minds, which are, as it were, sleepy or slumbering, and dull, &c. *Pool’s synopsis.*

moveableness and frailty, and in opposition to that house made without hands, *eternal in the heavens*. And it is observable how he limits and bounds his serviceableness to them, by his commoration in his tabernacle or body, as well knowing after death he could be no longer useful to them or any others in this world. Death puts an end to all ministerial usefulness: but till that time he judged it meet, and becoming him, to be aiding and assisting their faith: our life and labour must end together.

2. We have here the motive, or consideration, stimulating and provoking him to this diligence; "knowing that I must shortly put off this tabernacle, even as the Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me." In which words he gives an account of, (1.) The speediness; (2.) necessity; (3.) voluntariness of his death, and the way and means by which he knew it. All these must be considered singly and apart, and then valued all together, as they amount to a weighty argument or motive to excite him to diligence in his duty.

(1.) He reflects upon the speediness or near approach of his death. "I must [\* shortly] put off this my tabernacle;" which is a form of speech of the same importance with that of Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 6. "The time of my departure is at hand," my time in the body is almost at an end.

(2.) The necessity of his death: It is not I *may*, but I *must* put off this my tabernacle; yea, I must put it off shortly; for so the Lord hath shewed him; Christ had signified it expressly to him, John xxi. 18, 19. And beside this, most expositors think this clause refers to some special vision or revelation which Peter had of the time and manner of his own death; so that besides the natural necessity, or the inevitableness of his death by the law of nature, he was certified of it by special revelation. We have here also,

(3.) The voluntariness of his death; for voluntariness is consistent enough with the necessity of the event. I must put off, or lay down my tabernacle; he saith not, I must be torn, or rent by violence from it; but I must *depose*, or *lay it down*. † Camero will have the word here used for death, properly to signify the laying down of one's garments: he made no more of putting off his body than his garment.

Upon the consideration of the whole matter, the speediness of

\* *Tαυτην brevi futurum*. Every Christian knows not the time of his death, as Peter did, by special revelation.—But though we know it not by a word spoken to us in particular, we know it by a word written for all in common, Eccl. ix. 5. "The living know that they must die."

† He calls it a putting off or laying down, thereby signifying his willingness to die for Christ. *Pool*.

his death which he knew to be at hand ; the necessity of it, that when it came he must be gone from, and could be no more useful to them ; and his own inclination to be with Christ in a better state, being as willing to be gone, as a weary traveller to be at home ; he judged it meet, or becoming him, as he was called of Christ to feed his sheep, as he was gifted extraordinarily for the church's service, full of spiritual excellencies, all which in a short time would be taken away from them by death : I say, upon all these accounts, he could not but judge it meet to be stirring them up, and every way striving to be as useful as he could. Hence the note will be,

*Doct. How strong soever the affections and inclinations of souls are to the fleshly tabernacles they now live in, yet they must put them off, and that speedily.*

The point lies very plain before us in the scriptures. That is a remarkable expression we have in Job xvi. 22. "When a few years are come, I shall go the way whence I shall not return." In the Hebrew it is, \* "When the years of number, or my numbered years are come ; years so numbered, that they are circumscribed in a very short period of time." When those few years are past, then I must go to my long home, my everlasting abode, never more to return to this world : "The way whence I shall not return ;" elsewhere called "the way of all flesh," Josh. xxiii. 15. and "the way of all the earth," 1 Kings ii. 2.

"There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit ; neither hath he power in the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war," Eccl. viii. 8. By spirit understand the natural spirit, or breath of life, which, as I shewed before, connects or ties the soul and body together. This spirit no man can retain in the day of death. *We can (as one speaks) as well stop the chariot of the sun when posting to night, and chase away the shadows of the evening, as escape this hour of darkness that is coming upon us*†. A man may escape the wars by pleading privilege of years, or weakness of body, or the king's protection, or by sending another in his room ; but in this war the press is so strict, that it admits no dispensation ; young or old, weak or strong, willing or unwilling, all is one, into the field we must go, and look that last and most dreadful enemy in the face. It is in vain to think of sending

\* *Anni numeri, (i. e.) qui numerati sunt adeo ut brevissima periodo circumscripti.*

† No diligence avoids, no happiness tames, and no power overcomes death, says Seneca.

another in our room, for no man dieth by proxy? or to think of compounding with death, as those self-deluded fools did, Isa. xxviii. 15. who thought they had been discharged of the debt by seeing the serjeant: No, there is no discharge in that war. *Nihil prodest ora concludere, et vitam fugientem retinere*, saith Hierom on that text; Let us shut our mouths never so close, struggle against death never so hard, there is no more retaining the spirit, than a woman can retain the fruit of her womb, when the full time of her deliverance is come. Suppose a man were sitting upon a throne of majesty surrounded with armed guards, or in the midst of a college of expert and learned physicians, death will pass all these guards to deliver thee the fatal message: Neither can arts help thee, when nature itself gives thee up.

The law of mortality binds all, good and bad, young and old, the most useful and desirable saints, whom the world can worst spare, as well as useless and undesirable sinners, Rom. viii. 10. "And if Christ (or though Christ) be in you, the body is dead "because of sin." Peter himself must put off his tabernacle, for they are but tabernacles, frail and moveable frames, not built for continuance; these will drop off from our souls, as the shells fall off from the bird in the nest; be our earthly tabernacles never so strong or pleasant, we must depose them, and that shortly; our lease in them will quickly expire, we have but a short term. James iv. 14. like a thin mist in the morning, which the sun presently dissipates; this is a metaphor chosen from the air: You have one from the land, where the swift post runs, Job ix. 25. So doth our life from stage to stage, till its journey be finished; and a third from the waters, there sail the swift ships, Job ix. 26. which weighing anchor, and putting into the sea, continually lessen the land, till at last they have quite lost sight of it: from the fire, Psal. lviii. 4. The lives of men are as soon extinct as a blaze made with dry thorns, which is almost as soon out as in. Thus you see how the Spirit of God hath borrowed metaphors from all the elements of nature, to shadow forth the brevity and frailty of that life we now live in these tabernacles; so that we may say as one did before us, *Nescio an dicenda sit vita mortalis, an vitalis mors*; I know not which to call it, a mortal life, or a living death.

The continuance of these our tabernacles or bodies is short, whether we consider them *absolutely*, or *comparatively*.

1. *Absolutely*. If they should stand seventy or eighty years, which is the longest duration, Psal. xc. 10. how soon will that time run out? What are years that are past but as a dream that is vanished, or as the waters that are past away? it is *in fluxu continuo*: there is no stopping its swift course, or calling back a moment that is past. Death set out in its journey towards us the

same hour we were born, and how near is it come this day to many of us? It hath us in chase, and will quickly fetch us up, and overtake us; but few stand so long as the utmost date.

2. *Comparatively.* Let us compare our time in these tabernacles, (1.) either with eternity, or with him who inhabits it, and it shrinks up into nothing; Psal. xxxix. 5. "Mine age is nothing unto thee." So vast is the disproportion, that it seems not only little, but nothing at all. Or (2.) with the duration of the bodies of men in the first ages of the world, when they lived many hundred years in these fleshly tabernacles. The length of their lives was the benefit of the world, because religion was then *απαλογοπαραδοτον*, a thing handed down from father to son; but certainly it would be no benefit to us that are in Christ, to be so long suspended the fruition of God in the everlasting rest.

The grounds and reasons of this necessity that lies upon all, to put off their earthly tabernacle so soon, are

1. The law of God, or his appointment.
2. The providence of God ordering it suitably to this appointment.

1. The law or appointment of God which came in force immediately upon the fall; Gen. ii. 17. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And accordingly it took place upon all mankind immediately upon the first transgression, Rom. v. 12. *Death entered by sin.* The threatening was not his immediate, actual, personal death in the day that he should eat, but a state of mortality to commence from that time to him and his posterity; hence it is said, Heb. ix. 27. "It is appointed to all men once to die."

2. The providence of God ordering and framing the body of man suitably to this his appointment; \* a frail, weak creature, having the seeds of death in his constitution: Thousands of diseases and infirmities are bred in his nature, and the smallest pore in his body is a door large enough to let in death. Hence his body is compared to a piece of cloth which moths have fretted, Psal. xxxix. 11. it is become a sorry rotten thing which cannot long hang together. And indeed it is a wonder it continues so long as it doth.

And both these, viz. the divine appointment and providence, are in pursuance of a double design, or for the payment of a two-fold debt, which God owes to the first and to the second Adam.

- (1.) By cutting off the life, or dissolving the tabernacles of wick-

\* We die daily, for some part of life is taken away daily, and then also when we increase, life decreases, for first we lose infancy, then youth, even to yesterday. Whatever part of time passes is lost.

ed men, God pays that debt of justice owing to the first Adam's sinful posterity, whose sins cry daily to his justice to cut them off. Rom. vi. 23. "The wages of sin is death." And indeed it is admirable that his patience suffers ungodly men to live so long as they do, for he endures with much long-suffering, Rom. ix. 22. He sees all their sins, he is grieved at the heart with them; his forbearance doth but encourage them the more to sin against him; Eccl. viii. 11. "Because sentence," &c. yet forbears: "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation," Psal. xcv. 10. And it is wonderful that he hath so much patience under such a load. Habakkuk admired it, Hab. i. 13. "Thou art of purer eyes," &c. Yet he suffers them to spend lavishly upon his patience from year to year, but justice must do his office at last.

(2.) By cutting off the lives of good men, God pays to Christ the reward of his sufferings, the end of his death which was to bring many sons to glory, Heb. ii. 10. Alas! it answers not Christ's end and intention in dying, to have his people so remote from him; John xvii. 24. "He would have them where he is, that they might behold his glory." Two vehement desires are satisfied by this appointment of God, and its execution, viz.

1. Christ's.

2. The saints.

1. Christ's desires are satisfied; for this is the thing he all along kept his eye upon in the whole work of his mediation; it was to bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. Though he be in glory, yet his mystical body is not full till all the elect be gathered in by conversion, and gathered home by glorification, Eph. i. 23. The church is his fulness. He is not fully satisfied till he see his seed, the souls he died for, safe in heaven; and then the debt due to him for all his sufferings is fully paid him, Isa. liii. 11. He sees the travail of his soul; as it is the greatest satisfaction and pleasure a man is capable of in this world, to see a great design which hath been long projecting and managing, at last, by an orderly conduct, brought to its perfection.

2. The desires of the saints are hereby satisfied, and their weary souls brought to rest. Oh! what do gracious souls more pant after than the full enjoyment of God, and the visions of his face! the state of freedom from sin, and complete conformity to Jesus Christ! From the day of their espousals to Christ, these desires have been working in their souls. Love and patience have each acted its part in them, 2 Thess. iii. 5. Love hath put them into an holy ardour and longing to be with Christ: patience hath qualified and allayed those desires, and supported the soul under the delay. Love cries, come, Lord, come; patience commands us to wait the appointed time. This appointed time on which so great

hopes and expectations depend, is the time of dissolving these tabernacles; for till then the soul's rest is suspended; and if it were perfectly freed from all other loads and burdens, both of sin and affliction, yet its very absence from Christ would alone make it restless, for it is with the soul in the body, as it is with any other creature that is off its centre, it doth and must gravitate and prehend, it is still moving and inclining farther, and feels not itself easy and at rest where it is, be its condition in other respects never so easy. 2 Cor. v. 6. "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." You have a little shadow, or emblem of this in other creatures: You see the rivers, though they glide never so sweetly betwixt the fragrant banks of the most pleasant meadows in their course and passage, yet on they go towards the sea; and if they meet with never so many rocks or hills to resist their course, they will either strive to get a passage through them, or if that may not be, they will fetch a compass, and creep about them, and nothing can stop them till by a central force they have finished their weary course, and poured themselves into the bosom of the ocean. Or as it is with yourselves, when abroad from your habitations and relations: this may be pleasing a little while; but if every day might be a festival, it would not long please you, because you are not at home.

The main motives that persuade gracious souls to abide here, are to finish the work of their own salvation, and further other men's; but as their evidences for heaven grow clearer to themselves, and their capacity of service less to others, so must their desires to be with Christ be more and more enflamed.

Now the case so standing, that Christ's condition in heaven, being a condition of desire and longing for the enjoyment of his people there, and all the glory of heaven would not content him without that; and the condition of his people on earth being also a state of longing, groaning, and panting to be with him, and all the pleasures and delights and comforts they have on earth, will not content them without it: How wise and gracious an appointment of heaven is it, that these our tabernacles shall and must be put off, and that shortly! For hereby a full and mutual satisfaction is given to the restless desires both of Christ's heart and of theirs: See the reflected flames of love betwixt them, in Rev. xxii. "The spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that is athirst come; Behold, I come quickly. Even so, Lord Jesus; Come quickly." Delays make the heart sad, Prov. xiii. 12. should our commoration on earth be long, our patience had need be much greater than it is; but under all our burdens here, this is our relief, it is but a little while, and all will be well, as well as our souls can desire to have it.

*Inf.* 1. Must we put off these tabernacles? Is death necessary and inevitable? *Then it is our wisdom to sweeten to ourselves that cup which we must drink; and make that as pleasant to us as we can which we know cannot be avoided.* Die we must, whether we be fit or unfit, willing or unwilling: It is to no purpose to shrug at the name, or shrink back from the thing. In all ages of the world, death hath swept the stage clean of one generation, to make room for another, and so it will from age to age, till the stage be taken down, in the general dissolution.

But though death be inevitable by all, it is not alike evil, bitter, and dreadful to all. Some tremble, others triumph at the appearances of it. Some meet it half-way, receive it as a friend, and can bid it welcome, and die by consent; making that the matter of their election, which, in itself, is necessary and unavoidable; so did Paul, Phil. i. 23. But others are drawn, or rent by plain violence from the body, Job xxxvii. 1. when God draws out their souls.

That man is happy indeed, whose heart falls in with the appointment of God, so voluntarily and freely, as that he dare not only look death in the face with confidence, but go along with it by consent of will. Remarkable to this purpose, is that which the apostle asserts of the frame of his own heart, 2 Cor. v. 8. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." Here is both confidence and complacency, with respect to death, *Θαρραμεν*. The word signifies courage, fortitude; or, if you will, an undaunted boldness and presence of mind, when we look the king of terrors in the face. We dare venture upon death, we dare take it by the cold hand, and bid it welcome. We dare defy its enmity, and deride its noxious power, 1 Cor. xv. 55. "O death! where is thy sting!" And that is not all, we have complacency in it, as well as confidence to encounter it. *Ευδοκουμεν*, *we are willing*; the translation is too flat, *We are well pleased*; it is a desirable, a grateful thing to us to die; but yet not in an absolute, but comparative consideration, *ευδοκουμεν μαλλον*, *we are willing rather*, i. e. rather than not see, and enjoy our Lord Jesus Christ; rather than to be here always sinning and groaning. There is no complacency in death; in itself it is not desirable. But if we must go through that strait gate, or not see God, we are willing rather to be absent from the body. So that you see death was not the matter of his submission only, he did not yield to what he could not avoid, but he balances the evils of death, with the privileges it admits the soul into, and then pronounces, *ευδοκουμεν*, *we are content, yea, pleased to die.*

We cannot live always if we would, and our hearts should be wrought to that frame, as to say, we would not live always if we could, Job vii. 16. "I would not live always;" or *long*, saith he.

But why should Job deprecate that which was not attainable? "I would not live always; he needed not to trouble himself about that, it being impossible that he should: both statute and natural law forbid it. Ay, but this is his sense: supposing no such necessity as there is, if it were pure matter of election; upon a due balancing of accounts, and comparing the good and evil of death, I would not be confined always, or for any long time to the body. It would be a bondage unsupportable to be here always.

Indeed those that have their portion, their all, in this life, have no desire to be gone hence. They that were never changed by grace, desire no change by death; if such a concession were made to them, as was once to an English parliament, That they should never be dissolved, but by their own consent, when would they say as Paul, "I desire to be dissolved?" But it is far otherwise with them, whose portion and affections are in another world; they would not live always if they might; knowing, that never to die, is never to be happy.

*Quest.* If you say, *This is an excellent and most desirable temper of soul; but how did these holy men attain it? or what is the course we may take to get the like frame of willingness?*

*Sol.* They attained it, and you may attain it in such methods as these.

1. They lived in the believing views of the invisible world, and so must you, if ever death be desirable in your eyes, 2 Cor. iv. 18. "It is said of all that died comfortably, that they died in faith," Heb. xi. 13. You will never be willing to go along with death, except you know where it will carry you.

2. They had assurance of heaven, as well as faith to discern it. Assurance is a lump of sugar, indeed, in the bitter cup of death; nothing sweetens like it. So 2 Cor. v. 1. so Job xix. 26, 27. This puts roses into the pale cheeks of death, and makes it amiable, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56. and Rom. viii. 38, 39.

3. Their hearts were weaned from this world, and an inordinate affection to a terrene life, Phil. iii. 8. all was dung and dross for Christ; they trampled under foot what we hug in our bosoms. So it is said, Heb. x. 34. "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves," &c. And so it must be with us, if ever we obtain a complacency in death.

4. They ordered their conversations with much integrity, and so kept their consciences pure, and void of offence; Acts xxiv. 16. "Herein do I exercise myself," &c. and this was their comfort at last, 2 Cor. i. 12. "This is our rejoicing," &c. So Job xxvii. 5. "My integrity will I not let go till I die." Oh! this unstings death of all its terrors.

5. They kept their love to Christ at the height: that flame was

vehement in their souls, and made them despise the terror, and desire the friendly assistance of death, to bring them to the sight of Jesus Christ, Phil. i. 23. So Ignatius, *O how I long*, &c. Thus it must be with you, if ever you make death eligible and lovely to you, which is terrible in itself. There is a loveliness in the death, as well as in the life of a Christian: "Let me die the death of the "righteous," said Balaam.

*Inference 2.* Must we put off these tabernacles of flesh? *How necessary is it, that every soul look in season, and make provision for another habitation?* \* If you must be turned out of one house, you must provide another, or lie in the streets. This the apostle comforted himself with, that "if unclothed, he should not be found "naked," 2 Cor. v. 1. a building of God, an house not made with hands. You must turn out, and that shortly, from these earthly habitations. Oh! what provision have you made for your souls against that day? The soul of Adrian was at a sad loss, when he saw he must be turned out of this world; *O animula vagula, blandula, heu quo vadis!* But it was Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's privilege, that God had prepared for them a city, Heb. xi. 16.

I know it is a common presumption of most men, that they shall be in heaven, when they can be no longer on earth. *Presumendo sperant, et sperando pereunt.* But a few moments will convince them of their fatal mistake; their poor souls will meet with a confounding repulse, like that, Matth. vii. 22. There is indeed a city full of heavenly mansions prepared for some; but who are they that are entitled to it, and may confidently expect to be received into it? To be sure, not the presumptuous, who make a bridge of their own shadows, and so fall and perish in the waters. Brethren, it is one of the most solemn enquiries you were ever put upon: and therefore I beseech you, see whether your characters set you among those men, or no.

1. Those that are new-born, shall be clothed with their new house from heaven, when death unclothes them of these tabernacles: the *New Jerusalem* hath none but new-born inhabitants, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. and Christ tells us, John iii. 3. *all others are excluded.* Glory is the privilege of grace. Let nature be adorned, and cultivated how it will, if not renewed by grace, there is no hope of glory. You must be born again, or turned back again from the gates of heaven disappointed. You must be regenerated, or damned. This alters the temper of thy heart, and suits it to the life of God, which is indispensably necessary to them that shall live with him.

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\* Many cry out on a death-bed, O send for ministers and Christians to pray! Alas! what can they do then? Is that a time for so great a work to be shuffled up in a hurry, amidst distractions, and agonies.

Else heaven would be no heaven to us, Rom. viii. 7. and therefore we must be brought this way to it, 2 Cor. v. 5. No privilege of nature, no duties of religion avail without this, Gal. vi. 15. If morality, without regeneration, could bring men to heaven, why are not the Heathens there? If strictness in duty, without regeneration, why are not the Pharisees there? Believe it, neither names, nor duties, no, nor the blood of Christ, ever did, or shall bring one soul to glory without it. O then, thou that boastest of a house in heaven, lay thine hand on thy heart, and ask it; Am I a new creature, i. e. Am I renewed, (1.) In my state and condition? 1 John iii. 14. past from death to life. (2.) In my frame and temper? Eph. v. 8. "Once darkness, now light in the Lord." (3.) In my practice and conversation? Eph. ii. 12, 13. 1 Cor. vi. 11. If not, my soul is destitute of an habitation in the city of God; and when I die, my body must lie in the lonely house of the grave, that dark vault and prison, and my soul be shut out from God into outer darkness.

2. Those that live as strangers, and pilgrims on earth, seeking a better place, and state, than this world affords them; for them God hath made preparations in glory, Heb. xi. 13, 16. If you be strangers on earth, you are the inhabitants of heaven. Now there be six things included in this character. 1. They look not on this world as their own home, nor on the people of it, as their own people, 2 Cor. v. 8. *ἐκδημησαι*, to be unpeopled. These are none of my fellow-citizens, we must go two ways at death. 2. They set not their affections on things present, as their portion, 2 Cor. iv. 18. Psal. xvii. 13, 14. Their bodies are here, their hearts in heaven. 3. Their carriage, and manner of life, not like the men of this world, 1 Pet. iv. 4. *ξενίζονται*. So the rule guides them, Rom. xii. 2. and so their course is steered; at least intended, Phil. iii. 20. *οὐρ το πολίτευμα*, our trade is in heaven. (4.) Their dialect and language differ from the natives of this world. Their language is earthly, 1 John iv. 5, 6. but these have a pure lip, Zech. iii. 9. (5.) Their society, and chosen companions are not of this world, Psal. xvi. 3. They are a company of themselves, Acts iv. 21. (6.) Their spirit, and temper of heart are not after the world, 1 Cor. ii. 12. They have another spirit, Numb. xiv. 24. These things discover us to be strangers on earth, and consequently, the men for whom God hath prepared heavenly habitations when we die.

3. Those that live and die by faith, shall not fail to be received into a better habitation by death. This is another character of them that shall be received into glory, laid down in the same place, Heb. xi. 13. They lived by faith, and when they died, they died em-

bracing the promises, which is characteristic of those that shall dwell in that heavenly city; and implies, (1.) Intimate acquaintance with the promises, they are things well known, and familiarized to them. The word *ασπασαμενοι*, *Salutantes*, saluting them, is a metaphor, from the manner of parting betwixt two dear and intimate friends. The faith of a Christian embraces the promises in its arms, as dear friends use to do at parting, and saith, Farewell, sweet promises, from which I have sucked out so much relief and refreshment in all the troubles of my life; I must now live no more by faith on you, but by sight: O you have often cheered my soul, and been my song in the house of my pilgrimage. (2.) It implies the firm credit that a believer gives to things unseen, upon the grounds of the promises, as if he did sensibly take and grasp them in his very arms and bosom. They take Christ, and all the invisible things in the promises, into their sensible embraces, 1 Pet. i. 8. Faith is to them instead of eyes. (3.) It implies the sincerity of a believer's profession, who dares trust to that at the last gasp, which he professed to believe in the midst of life, and the comforts of this world. As he professed to believe in health, so you shall find his actings, when his eye and heart-strings are cracking, Rom. xiv. 9. Christ, in the promises, was his professed joy and life, and this is what he grasps at death, and lays his last hold on. (4.) It shews you whence all a believer's comforts come, in life and death. O, it is from the promises, Christ in the promises is the spring of their consolation. This they fetch their comfort from, when the world cannot administer one drop of refreshment to them. There be two great works faith performs for the saints, one in life, the other in death: in life, it is the principle of mortification to their sins; in death, it is the spring of consolation to their hearts; it makes them die whilst they live, and live when they die.

4. Those that love the person and appearance of Christ, have a mark that sets them among the inhabitants of heaven, and glory, 2 Tim. iv. 8. but then this love must be, (1.) Sincere, and without hypocrisy. (2.) Supreme, and above all other beloveds. (3.) Conforming the soul to Christ; if sincere and supreme, it will be transformative. (4.) Longing to be with him. Such love is a mark of souls for whom heaven is prepared.

*Inf. 3.* Must we put off our tabernacles, and that shortly? *What a spur is this to a diligent redemption, and improvement of time?* This is the use Peter made of it here, and every one of us should make. It was said of Bishop Hooper, he was spare in his diet, spare in his words, but most of all spare of his time. You have but a little time in these tabernacles; what pity is it to waste much out of a little?

(1.) Great is the worth and excellency of time, all the treasures of the world cannot protract, stop, or call back one minute of time. O what is man that the heavenly bodies should be wheeled about by Almighty Power in constant revolutions, to beget time for him! Psal. viii. 3.

(2.) More precious are the seasons and opportunities that are in time for our souls; those are the golden spots of time, like the pearl in the oyster-shell, of much more value than the shell that contains it. There is much time in a short opportunity. There is a day on which our eternal happiness depends, Luke xix. 41, 42. Heb. iv. 7.

(3.) Invaluable are the things which God doth for men's souls in time. There are works wrought upon men's hearts in a seasonable hour in this life, which have an influence into the soul's happiness throughout eternity. There is a time of mercy, a time of love, viz. of illumination, and conversion; and on that point of time, eternal life hangs in the whole weight of it.

(4.) Lost opportunity is never to be recovered by the soul any more, Ezck. xxiv. 13. Rev. xxii. 11. To come before the opportunity, is to come before the bird is hatched; and to come after it, is to come when the bird is flown. There is no calling back time, when it is once past. See this in the examples you find, Luke xiii. 26. Eccl. ix. 10.

(5.) It is wholly uncertain to every soul, whether the present day may not determine his lease in this tabernacle, and a writ of ejection be served by death upon his soul to-morrow, James iv. 13. Luke xii. 20.

(6.) As soon as ever time shall end, eternity takes place. The stream of time delivers souls daily into the boundless ocean of vast eternity. *Ab hoc momento pendet æternitas.* We are now measured by time, hereafter by eternity.

(7.) In eternity all things are fixed and unalterable. We have no more to do, all means and works are at an end, John ix. 4. and Eccl. xi. 3. "As the tree falls, so it lies." Oh that these weighty considerations might lie upon your hearts, as long as you are in these tabernacles! If they did, (1.) The unregenerate would not so desperately hazard their eternal happiness, by trifling away their precious seasons under the gospel. Oh how many aged sinners, gray-headed sinners, hear me this day, who in fifty or sixty years never redeemed one solemn hour, to take their poor souls aside out of the clutter and distracting noise of the world to ask and debate this question with them, *Oh my soul, how stands the case with thee in reference to the world to come!* They have found no time to bethink themselves in what world their souls shall be landed, when time shall deliver them up into eternity. Their whole life

hath been but a continual diversion from one trifle to another : they have been serious in trifles, and trifled in things most serious ; this will afford horrid reflections in the world to come. (2.) The regenerate would not cast away the comfort of their lives, in the evidences of eternal life, at so cheap a rate as they do. May I not say to you as the apostle doth, Heb. v. 12. for the time you have had under the gospel you might have attained a rich treasure, both of grace and comfort ; *Turpe est esse senex elementarius*. Is it not shameful and inexcusable, to be where you were twenty years past ? Oh ! let these things sink deep into every soul.

*Inf.* 4. Must we shortly put off these our tabernacles ? *Then slack your pace, and cool yourselves ; be not too eager in the prosecution of earthly designs.* O what bustling is here for the world, and for provision for futurity, whereas far less would serve the turn ! We need not victual a ship to cross the channel to France, as if she were bound to the Indies. Most men's provisions, at least their cares and thoughts, are far beyond the preparations of their abode in this world. The folly of this, Christ discovers in that parable, Luke xii. 19. and on this very account gives him the title of a fool, who provided for years, many years ; when poor soul, he had not one night to enjoy these provisions.

Oh the multitude of thoughts and cares this world needlessly devours ! We keep ourselves in such a continual hurry and crowd of cares, thoughts, and employments about the concerns of the body, that we can find little time to be alone, communing with our own hearts about our great concernments in eternity. It is with many of us, in respect of our souls, and their great interests, as it is with a man that is deep in thoughts about some subject that wholly swallows him up, he seeth not what he seeth, nor heareth what he heareth of any other matter : his eyes seem to look upon this or that, but it is all one as if he did not. So it was with Archimedes, who was so intent upon drawing his mathematical schemes, that though all the city was in an alarm, the enemy had taken it by storm, the streets filled with dreadful cries, and dead bodies, the soldiers came into his particular house, nay, entered his very study, and plucked him by the sleeve, before he took any notice of it : even so many men's hearts are so profoundly immersed, and drowned in earthly cares, thoughts, projects, or pleasures, that death must come to their very houses, yea, and pull them by the sleeve, and tell them its errand, before they will begin to awake, and come to a serious consideration of things more important.

*Inf.* 5. If we must shortly put off these tabernacles, *then the groaning and mourning time of all believers is but short ; how heavy*

*soever their burden be, yet they shall carry it but a little way.* It is said, 2 Cor. v. 4. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being "burdened." Good souls, in this state, are every where groaning under heavy pressures. Their burdens are of two sorts, sympathetic, whereby they grieve with, and on the account of others, and so every true member of the church of God ought to sympathize, both with God, Psal. cxxxix. 21. "Am not I grieved with them "that rise up against thee?" Psal. xlii. 10. "It is as with a sword "in their bones;" and with the people of God, Zeph. iii. 18. sorrowful for the solemn assembly; so 2 Cor. xi. 29. "Who is "offended, and I burn not?" And indeed, it is an argument of rich, as well as true grace, that we can, and do heartily mourn with, and for the interest and people of God, though our own lot in the world, as Nehemiah's, be never so comfortable. Or else our burdens are idiopathical, i. e. such as we bear upon our own proper account and score. And where is the Christian that hath not his own burden, yea, many burdens on him at once? Some groan under the burden of sin, Rom. viii. 24. Scarce one day are the tears off from some eye-lids on this account. And who groans not under the burden of affliction, either inward upon the soul, Prov. xviii. 14. Job vi. 1, 2, 3. or outward upon the body, state, relations, &c. These things make the people of God a burden to themselves, Job vii. 20, 21. Yea, under these burdens they would sink, did not the Lord sustain them, Psal. lv. 22.

But God will put a speedy and final end to all these things. When you put off this tabernacle, you put off with it all those burdens, inward and outward. The soul presently feels a great load off his shoulders; it shall never groan more, God shall thenceforth wipe away all tears from their eyes; for why are those burdens now permitted and imposed by the Lord upon you, but (1.) To prevent sin, Hos. ii. 6. They are your clogs to keep you from straying. (2.) To purge out sin, Isa. xxvii. 9. (3.) To make you long more for heaven, and the rest to come. But all these ends are accomplished in that day you put off your tabernacles, for then sin is gone, and the rest is come.

*Inf. 6.* Must you shortly put off those tabernacles? *Then spare them not whilst you have them, but employ them for God with all diligence.* Shortly they shall be useless to you, yea, meat for worms; now they may be serviceable, and their service is their honour: you received them not for such low ends as you employ them for. See 1 Cor. vi. 20. "Glorify God in your souls and bodies, which "are his:" You expect to have their glorious bodies one day; O then let them be serviceable bodies now! Be not fond of them to that degree many are, who chuse rather to have them *eaten up*

*with rust, than worn out with service* \*. It is your present honour to be active, and will be your singular comfort another day. What greater comfort, when you come to put them off at death, than this, that you have employed them faithfully for God

*Inf. 7.* Look beyond this embodied state, and learn to live now as you hope to live shortly; begin to be what you expect to be. You know the time is at hand, that you shall live above all bodily concerns and employments, the soul shall be a drudge to the body no more. You shall be as the angels, Matt. xxii. 30. not marrying, nor giving in marriage, which is, by a *synecdoche*, put for all carnal employments and enjoyments; eat no more, drink no more, sleep no more, buy and sell no more. Now suit yourselves as much as your state and the duties of religion will suffer you to that state before hand. The sum of what I aim at is in 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. Be in all your relations as if you had none. Look on those things as if already they were not, which shortly must be none of yours; and both acquaint and accustom your thoughts to the life of separation from the body, which you must shortly leave. Which brings me home to the next point, *viz. The condition of human souls in the state of separation.*



HEB. xii. 23.

—Και πνευμασι δικαιων τετελειωμενων.—*And to the spirits of just men made perfect.*

**T**HE particular scope of this context falls in with the general design of the whole gospel, which is to persuade men to a life of holiness. The matter of the exhortation is most weighty, and the arguments enforcing it most powerful: He doth not talk, but dispute; he doth not say, but prove, that greater and more powerful engagements unto holiness lie upon those who live under the gospel, than upon the people who lived under the law. And thus the argument lies in this context.

If God, at the delivering of the law upon *mount Sinai*, strictly enjoined, and required so great purity and holiness in that people, signified by the ceremonies of two days preparation, the washing of their clothes, abstinence from conjugal society, &c. Exod. xix. 10. much more doth he require, and expect it in us, who are come under a much more excellent and heavenly dispensation than theirs was.

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\* Ambrose said of Valentinian,—No man was ever such a servant to his master, as Valentinian's body was to his soul.

To make good the *sequel*, he compares the *legal* and *evangelical* dispensations in many particulars, ver. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23. giving the gospel the preference throughout the whole comparison.

Hence the privileges of the New-Testament believers are stated, both *negatively* and *positively*.

1. *Negatively*, By shewing what we are exempted from.

2. *Positively*, Shewing what we are to come unto.

1. *Negatively*, What we are exempted, or freed from; ver. 18, 19, 20, 21. "We are not come unto the mount that might be "touched," &c.

The sum of all is this, that the promulgation of the law was accompanied with amazing dread and terror. For, after Moses, by command from God, had sanctified the *mount*, and set rails about it, that neither priest nor people, man nor beast, might touch the very borders of it, lest they die; the Lord descended in fire upon the top of the *mountain* the third day, in the morning, with most terrible tokens of divine majesty, *to wit*, with thunderings, lightnings, dark clouds, and the noise of a *trumpet*, exceeding loud; the *mount* was covered with smoke, as the smoke of a furnace, and \* flames mounting up into the midst of heaven, the whole mountain shaking and trembling exceedingly: Out of this horrid tempest the awful voice of God was heard, all the people in the camp trembling, yea, and Moses himself quaking for fear.

This was the manner of the law's promulgation: But to such a terrible dispensation as this we are not come, which is the negative part of our privilege.

2. He opens the positive privileges to which we are come.

(1.) "Ye are come, saith he, to mount Sion,] not the earthly, but the spiritual Sion. Mount Sion was the place celebrated above all the world for the worship of God, Psal. lxxxvi. 7. "All my "springs, saith God, are in thee." There was the temple, the ark of the covenant, the glory of the Lord dwelling between the *cherubims*. The *priests* that attended the service of God had their residence there, as the angels have in heaven. Thither the tribes went up from all quarters of Judea, Psal. lxxxiv. as the children of God now do to heaven, from all quarters of the world. Judea was the best kingdom in the world; Jerusalem the best city in that kingdom; and Sion the most glorious place in that city. Here Christ taught his heavenly doctrine; near to it he finished his glorious work of redemption. Hence the everlasting gospel went forth into all the world: And, on these considerations, it is put to signify the gospel-church, or state in this place, and is therefore called *the heavenly Jerusalem*, in the following words, We do not

\* *Crebris micat ignibus æther*; i. e. The sky shines with frequent lightnings,

come to the literal *Sion*, nor to the *earthly Jerusalem*; but to the gospel-church, or state, which may be called a heaven upon earth, compared with that *literal Jerusalem*.

(2.) Ye are come “to an innumerable company of angels.”] To \* *myriads of angels*, a *myriad* is ten thousand, but *myriads* in the plural number, and set down indefinitely too, may note many millions of angels: And therefore we fitly render it, “to an innumerable company of angels.”

They had the ministry of angels as well as we, thousands of them ministered to the Lord in the dispensation of the law at Sinai, Psal. lxxviii. 17. But this notwithstanding, we are come to a much clearer knowledge, both of their present ministry for us on earth, Heb. i. 14. and of our fellowship and equality with them in heaven, Luke xx. 36.

(3.) “Ye are come to the general assembly, and church of the “first-born, whose names are written (or enrolled) in heaven.”] This also greatly commends and amplifies the privileges of the New-Testament believers. The church of God in former ages was circumscribed and shut up within the narrow limits of one small kingdom, which was a garden inclosed out of a waste wilderness: But now, by the calling in of the Gentiles, the church is extended far and wide, Eph. iii. 5, 6. It is become a great assembly, comprising the believers of all nations under heaven; and so speaking of them collectively, it is the general convention or assembly, which is also dignified, and ennobled by two illustrious characters, viz. (1.) That it is *the church of the first-born*, i. e. consisting of members dignified and privileged above others, as the first-born among the Israelites did excel their younger brethren. (2.) That their *names are written in heaven*, i. e. registered or enrolled in God’s book, as children and heirs of the heavenly inheritance, as the first-born in † Israel were registered in order to the priesthood, Numb. iii. 40, 41.

(4.) Ye are come “to God, the Judge of all.”] But why to God the Judge? This seems to spoil the harmony, and jar with the other parts of the discourse. No, they are come to God as a righteous Judge, who, as such, will pardon them, 1 John i. 9. *Crown* them, 2 Tim. iv. 8. and *avenge* them on all their oppressing and persecuting enemies, 1 Thes. i. 5, 6, 7.

(5.) “And to the spirits of just men made perfect.”] A most glorious privilege indeed; in which we are distinctly to consider,

\* *Μυριασιν αγγελων*, i. e. Myriads of angels. The Hellenists use the word *μυριαδας*, i. e. Myriads, without any addition to signify an innumerable multitude. *Grot.*

† The first-born of the Israelites were registered in an earthly register, but these in an heavenly register.

1. The quality of those with whom we are associated or taken into fellowship.

2. The way and manner of our association with them.

1. The quality of those with whom we are associated, or to whom we are said to be come; and they are described by three characters, viz.

(1.) Spirits of men.

(2.) Spirits of just men.

(3.) Spirits of just men perfected, or consummated.

(1.) They are called spirits, that is, immaterial substances, strictly opposed to bodies, which are no way the objects of our exterior senses, neither visible to the eye, or sensible to the touch, which were called properly souls whilst they animated bodies in this lower world; but now being loosed and separated from them by death, and existing alone in the world above, they are properly and strictly stiled spirits.

(2.) They are the *spirits of just men.*] Man may be termed *just* two ways, (1.) By a full discharge and acquittance from the guilt of all his sins, and so believers are *just men*, even whilst they live on earth, groaning under other imperfections, Acts xiii. 39.

Or, (2.) By a total freedom from the pollution of any sin. And though in this sense there is not "a just man upon earth that doth good, and sinneth not," Eccl. vii. 22. yet even in this sense Adam was just before the fall, Eccl. vii. 29. according to his original constitution; and all believers are so in their glorified condition; all sin being perfectly purged out of them, and its existence utterly destroyed in them. On which account,

(3.) They are called the spirits of just men *made perfect,*] or consummate. The word perfect is not here to be understood absolutely, but by way of *synecdoche*; they are not perfect in every respect, for one part of these just men lies rotting in the grave; but they are perfected, for so much as concerns their spirit; though the flesh perish and lie in dishonour, yet their spirits being once loosed from the body, and freed radically and perfectly from sin, are presently admitted to the facial vision and fruition of God, which is the culminating point (as I may call it) higher than which the spirit of man aspires not; and attaining to this, it is, for so much as concerns itself, made perfect. Even as a body at last lodged in its centre, gravitates no more, but is at perfect rest; so it is with the spirit of man come home to God in glory, it is now consummate, no more need to be done to make it as perfectly happy as it is capable to be made; which is the first thing to be considered, viz. the quality of those with whom we are associated.

2. The second follows, namely, the way and manner of our as-

sociation with these blessed spirits of just men, noted in this expression, [*we are come.*] He saith not, *we shall come* hereafter, when the resurrection had restored our bodies, or after the general judgment; but, *we are come* to these spirits of just men. The meaning whereof we may take in these three particulars.

(1.) We that live under the gospel-light, are come to a clearer apprehension, sight, and knowledge of the blessed and happy estate of the souls of the righteous after death, than ever they had, or ordinarily could have, who lived under the types and shadows of the law, Eph. iii. 4, 5. And so we are come to them in respect of clearer apprehension.

(2.) We are come to those blessed spirits in our representative, Christ, who hath carried our nature into the very midst of them, and whom they all behold with highest admiration and delight. By Christ, who is entered into that holy place where these spirits of just men live, we are come into a near relation with them: for he being the common head, both to them in heaven, and to us on earth, we and they consequentially make but one body or society, Eph. ii. 10. Whereupon (notwithstanding the different and remote countries they and we live in) we are said "to sit down with them in heavenly places," Eph. iii. 15. and ii. 6.

(8.) [*We are come.*] That is, we are as good as come, or we are upon the matter come; there remains nothing betwixt them and us but a puff of breath, a little space of time, which shortens every moment: We are come to the very borders of their country, and there is nothing to speak of betwixt them and us: And by this expression, *we are come*, he teacheth us to account and reckon those things as present which so shortly will be present to us, and to look upon them as if they already were, which is the highest and most comfortable life of faith we can live on earth. Hence the note is,

Doct. *That righteous and holy souls, once separated from their bodies by death, are immediately perfected in themselves; and associated with others alike perfect in the kingdom of God.*

That the spirits of just men at the time of their separation from their bodies do not utterly fail in their beings, nor that they are so prejudiced and wounded by death, that they cannot exert their own proper acts in the absence of the body, hath been already cleared in the foregoing parts of this treatise, and will be more fully cleared from this text.

But the true level and aim of this discourse is at a higher mark, viz. the far more excellent, free, and noble life the souls of the just begin to live immediately after their bodies are dropt off from

them by death, at which time they begin to live like themselves, a pleasant, free, and divine life. So much at least is included in the apostle's epithet in my text, spirits of just men made perfect; and suitable thereto are his words in 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 12. "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know, even as also I am known."

These two adverbs, *now* and *then*, distinguish the twofold state of gracious souls, and shew what it is whilst they are confined in the body, and what it shall be from the time of their emancipation and freedom from that clog of mortality. *Now* we are imperfect, but *then* that which is perfect takes place, and that which is imperfect is done away, as the imperfect twilight is done away by the opening of the perfect day.

And it deserves a serious animadversion, that this perfect state doth not succeed the imperfect one after a long interval, (as long as betwixt the dissolution and resurrection of the body) but the imperfect state of the soul is immediately done away by the coming of the perfect one. The glass is laid by as useless, when we come to see face to face, and eye to eye.

The waters will prove very deep here, too deep for any line of mine to fathom; there is a cloud always overshadowing the world to come, a gloom and haziness upon that state: Fain we would, with our weak and feeble beam of imperfect knowledge, penetrate this cloud, and dispel this gloom and haziness, but cannot. We think seriously and closely of this great and awful subject, but our thoughts cannot pierce through it: we reinforce those thoughts by a sally, or thick succession of fresh thoughts, and yet all will not do, our thoughts return to us either in confusion, or without the expected success. For alas! how little is it that we know, or can know of our own souls now whilst they are embodied! much less of their unembodied state. The apostle tells us, 1 Cor. ii. 9. "That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." And another apostle adds, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," 1 John iii. 2.

Yet all this is no discouragement to the search and regular enquiry into the future state; for though reason cannot penetrate these mysteries, yet God hath *revealed them to us*, (though not perfectly) *by his Spirit*. And though we know not particularly, and circumstantially what we shall be, yet this we know, that "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." And it is our privilege and happiness, that we are come to the spirits of just men made perfect, i. e. to a clearer knowledge of that state than was ordinarily attainable by believers, under former dispensations.

These things premised, I will proceed to open my apprehensions of the separate state of the spirits of just men made perfect, in *twelve propositions*: whereby, as by so many steps, we may orderly advance as far as safely and warrantably we may, into the knowledge of this great mystery, clearing what afterwards shall remain obscure, in the solution of several questions relating to this subject, and then apply the whole, in several uses of this great point: And the first proposition is this:

*Proposition 1.* There is a twofold separation of the soul from the body: viz. one mental, the other real: Or,

1. Intellectual, by the mind only.
2. Physical, by the stroke of death.

1. Of intellectual, or mental separation \*, I am first to speak in this proposition; and it is nothing else but an act of the understanding, or mind, conceiving, or considering the soul and body, as separate and parted from each other, whilst yet they are united in a personal oneness by the breath of life. This mental separation may, and ought to be frequently and seriously made, before death make the real and actual separation; and the more frequently and seriously we do it, the less of horror and distraction will attend that real and fatal stroke, whenever it shall be given. For hereby we learn to bear it gradually, and, by gentle essays, to acquaint our shoulders with the burden of it. *Separation* is a word that hath much of horror in the very sound, and useth to have much more in the sense and feeling of it, else it would not deserve that title, Job viii. 14. "The kind of terrors," or the most terrible of all terribles: But acquaintance and familiarity abates that horror, and that two ways especially.

(1.) As it is preventive of much guilt.

(2.) As it gains a more inward knowledge of its nature.

(1.) The serious and fixed thoughts of the parting hour, is preventive of much guilt; and the greatest part of the horror of death rises out of the guilt of sin; "The sting of death is sin," 1 Cor. xv. 56. † Augustine saith, "Nothing more recalls a man from sin, than the frequent meditation of death." I dare not say it is the strongest of all curbs to keep us back from sin, but I am sure it is a very strong one.

Let ‡ a soul but seriously meditate what a change death will

\* Mental separation, is a conceiving of two things separately, which really are united. *Conimbr. on the soul*, p. 595.

† *Nihil sic revocat a peccato, quam frequens mortis meditatio.* Aug.

‡ He who considers, what he will be in death, will always act with a fear of caution, and live as in the sight of his Creator, he desires nothing that is transitory, and considers himself as almost dead, because he knows he must soon die. *Greg. Mer.* 12.

make shortly upon his person and condition; and the natural effects of such a meditation, through the blessing of God upon it, will be a flattening and quenching of its keen and raging appetite after the ensnaring vanities of this world (which draw men into so much guilt) a conscious fear of sin, and an awakened care of duty. It was once demanded of a very holy man (who spent much more than the ordinary allowance of time in prayer, and searching his own heart) why he so macerated his own body by such frequent and long-continued duties! His answer was, *O! I must die, I must die!* Nothing could separate him from duty, who had already separated his soul from his body, and all this world, by fixed and deep thoughts of death.

(2.) Hereby we gain a more inward knowledge and acquaintance with it, the less it terrifies us. A lion is much more dreadful to him that never saw him, than he is to his keeper who feedeth him every day. A pitched battle is more frightful and scaring to a new-listed soldier, that never took his place in the field before, nor saw the dreadful countenance of an army ready to engage, nor heard the thundering noise of cannon, and volleys of shot, the shouts of armies, and groans of dying men on every side, than it is to an old soldier who hath been used to such things. The like we may observe in seamen, who it may be trembled at first, and now can sing in a storm.

Scarce any thing is more necessary for weak and timorous believers to meditate on, than the time of their separation. Our hearts will be apt to start and boggle at the first view of death; but it is good to do by them as men use to do by young colts; ride them up to that which they fright at, and make them smell to it, which is the way to cure them. "Look, as bread, saith one \*, is "more necessary than other food, so the meditation of death is "more necessary than many other meditations." Every time we change our habitations, we should realize therein our great change: our souls must shortly leave this, and be lodged for a longer season in another mansion. When we put off our clothes at night, we have a fit occasion to consider, that we must strip nearer one of these days, and put off, not our clothes only, but the body that wears them too.

Holy Job had, by frequent thoughts, familiarized death and the grave to himself, and could speak of them as men use to speak of their houses and dearest relations, Job xvii. 14. "I have said to "corruption, Thou art my father, to the worm, Thou art my "mother and sister." But it needs much grace to bring, and to

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\* *Sicut panis necessarius est præ cæteris alimentis, ita intenta mortie meditatio necessaria est præ cæteris donis et exercitiis.* Dionys.

hold the heart to this work ; and therefore Moses begs it of God, Psal. xc. 12. " So teach us to number our days ; and David, Psal. xxxix. 4. " Lord, make me to know my end." Yea, the advantages of it have been acknowledged by men, whose light was less, and diversions more than ours. The Jews, for this use and end, had their sepulchres built before-hand, and that in their gardens of pleasure too, that they might season the delights of life with the frequent thoughts of death, John xix. 41.

Philip of Macedon would be awakened by his page every morning with this sentence, *memento te esse mortalem* : Remember, O king, that thou art a mortal man. A great emperor of Constantinople, not only at his inauguration, but at his great feasts, ordered a mason to bring two stones before him, and say, " \* Chuse, " O emperor, which of the two stones thou wilt for thy tomb- " stone?" Reader, thou wilt find mental separation much easier than real separation : it is easier to think of death, than it is to feel it ; and the more we think of it, the less we are like to feel it.

*Prop. 2. Actual separation may be considered either in fieri, in the previous pangs, and foregoing agonics of it ; or in facto esse, in the last separating stroke, which actually parts the soul and body asunder, lays the body prostrate and dead at the feet of death, and thrusts the soul quite out of its ancient and beloved habitation.*

Let it be considered in the previous pangs and forerunning agonies, which commonly make way for this actual dissolution : and to the people of God, this is the worst and bitterest part of death (except those conflicts with Satan, which they sometimes grapple with on a death-bed) which they encounter at that time. There is (saith one) no poinard in death itself, like those in the way or prologue to it. I like not to die, said another) but I care not if I were dead ; the end is better than the way. The conflicts and struggles of nature with death are bitter and sharp pains, unknown to men before, whatever pains they have endured : nor can it be expected to be otherwise, seeing the ties and engagements betwixt the soul and body are so strong, as we shewed before.

The soul will not easily part with the body, but disputes the passages with Death, from member to member, like resolute soldiers in a stormed garrison, till at last it is forced to yield up the fortroyal into the hands of victorious Death, and leave the dearly beloved body a captive to it.

This is the dark side of death to all good men ; and though it be not worth naming, in comparison with the dreadful consequences of death to all others, yet in itself it is terrible.

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\* *Elige ab his saxis ex quo, invictissime Cæsar, tibi tumulum me fabricare velis.*

\* Separation is not natural to the soul which was created with an inclination to the body; it is natural indeed to clasp and embrace, to love and cherish its own body; but to be divided from it, is grievous and preternatural.

The agonies of death are expressed in scripture, by a † word which signifies “the travailing pains of a woman,” yea, by the sharpest and most acute pains they at that time feel, Acts ii. 24.

And yet all are not handled alike roughly by the hands of death; some are favoured with a desirable *ευθανασία*, gentle and easy death.

It is the privilege of some Christians to have their souls fetched out of their bodies, as it were by a kiss from the mouth of God, as the Jewish Rabbins use to express the manner of Moses' death. Mr. Bolton felt no pain at his death, but the cold hand of his friend, who asked him what pain he felt. Yea, holy Bayneham in the midst of the flames, professed it was to him as a bed of roses.

Every believer is equally freed from the sting and curse of death; but every one is not equally favoured in the agonies and pains of death.

2. Separation from the body is to be considered *in facto esse*, i. e. in the result and issue of all those bitter pangs and agonies, which end in the actual dissolution of soul and body. “† Death, “or actual separation, is nothing else but the dissolving of the tie “or loosing of the bond of union betwixt the soul and body.” “§ Some call it the privation of the second act of the soul, that is, “its act of informing or enlivening the body.” Others, according to the scripture-phrase, the departing of the soul from the body. So Peter stiles it, 2 Pet. i. 15. *μετα την εμην εξοδον*, after my departure, i. e. after my death. Augustine || calls it the laying down of a heavy burden, provided there be not another burden for the soul to bear afterwards, which will sink it into hell.

In respect of the body, which the soul now forsakes, it is called “the putting off this tabernacle,” 2 Pet. i. 14. and, “the dissolving the earthly house or tabernacle,” 2 Cor. v. 1.

In respect of the *terminus a quo*, the place from which the soul removes at death, it is called our departure hence, Phil. i. 23. or

\* Seeing the separation made by death is not natural, nor even violent, it follows, from the approved opinion of philosophers, that it may be called preternatural. *Conimb.*

† *Τας ωδινας της θανατης, mortis dolorem.*

‡ *Θανατος εστι ψυχης και σωματος διαλυσις, vel anima a corpore discessus. Vives.*

§ *Privatio actus secundi ejusdem anime, id est, informationis seu unionis erga corpus Conimb.*

|| *Relictio corporis depositio sarcinae gravis, modo alia sarcina non patietur, qua homo precipietur in gehennam. August.*

our weighing anchor, and loosing from this coast or shore, to sail to another.

In respect of the *terminus ad quem*, the place to which the spirits of the just go at death, it is called our going to, or being with the Lord, Phil. i. 23. To conclude, in respect of that which doth most lively resemble and shadow it forth, it is called our falling asleep, Acts vii. 60. our sleeping in Jesus, 1 Thes. iv. 14. This metaphor of sleep must be stretched no farther than the Spirit of God designed in the choice of it, which was not to favour and countenance the fancy of a sleeping soul after death, but to represent its state of placid rest in Jesus' bosom, if it refer at all to the soul; for I think it most properly respects the body; and thence the sepulchres, where the bodies of the saints were laid, got the name of κοιμητήρια, dormitories, or sleeping places\*.

This is its last farewell to this world, never more to return to a low animal life more. Job vii. 9, 10. "For as the cloud is consumed and vanished away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more: he shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more." The soul is no more bound to a body, nor a retainer to the sun, moon, or stars, to meat, drink, and sleep, but is become a free, single, abstracted being, a separate and pure spirit, which the Latins call *lemures*, *manes*, ghosts or souls of the dead, and my text, *Spirits made perfect*; a being much like unto the angels, who are, *δυναμεις ασωματες*, bodiless beings. An angel, as one speaks, is a perfect soul, a soul is an imperfect angel: I do not say, that upon their separation, they become angels, for they will still remain a distinct species of spirits. Angels have no inclination to bodies, nor were ever fettered with clogs of flesh, as souls were †. And by this you see what a vast difference there is betwixt these two considerations of death: how ghastly and affrighting is it in its previous pangs! how lovely and desirable in the issue and result of them! which is but the change of earth for heaven, men for God, sin and misery, for perfection and glory.

*Prop. 3. The separation of the soul and body, makes a great and wonderful change upon both, but especially upon the soul.*

There is a twofold change made upon man by death, one upon his body, another upon his soul. The change upon the body is great and visible to every eye. A living body is changed into a dead carcase: a beautiful and comely body into a loathsome spectacle: that which was lately the object of delight and love, is

\* *Locus sepulturæ consecretus, κοιμητήριον, hoc est, dormitorium appellatur.*

† *Semper a corporis compedibus et nexibus liberi, i. e. Always free from the clogs and fetters of the body.*

hereby make an abhorrence to all flesh ; “ Bury my dead out of my sight,” Gen. xxiii. 4.

What the sun is to the greater, that the soul is to the lesser world. When the sun shines comfortably, how vegete and cheerful do all things look ! how well do they thrive and prosper ! the birds sing merrily, the beasts play wantonly, the whole creation enjoyeth a day of light and joy : but when it departs, what a night of horror followeth ! how are all things wrapt up in the sable mantle of darkness ! or if it but abate its heat, as in winter, the creatures are, as it were, buried in the winding-sheet of winter’s frost and snow : just so is it with the body, when the soul shineth pleasantly upon it, or departs from it.

That body which was fed so assiduously, cared for so anxiously, loved so passionately, is now tumbled into a pit, and left to the mercy of crawling worms. The change which judgment made upon that great and flourishing city Nineveh, is a fit emblem to shadow forth that change which death makes upon human bodies : that great and renowned city was once full of people, which thronged the streets thereof ; there you might have seen children playing upon the thresholds, beauties shewing themselves through the windows, melody sounding in its palaces : but what an alteration was made upon it, the prophet Zephaniah describes, chap. ii. 14. “ Flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations ; both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it : their voice shall sing in the windows ; desolation shall be in the thresholds, for he shall uncover the cedar-work.”

Thus it is with the body when death hath dislodged the soul : worms nestle in the holes where the beautiful eyes were once placed ; corruption and desolation is upon all parts of that stately structure. But this being a vulgar theme, I shall leave the body to the dust from whence it came, and follow the soul, which is my proper subject, pointing at the changes which are made on it.

The essence of the soul is not destroyed or changed by the body’s ruin ; it is substantially the self-same soul it was when in the body. The supposition of an essential change would disorder the whole frame and model of God’s eternal design for the redemption and glorification of it, Rom. viii. 29, 30. But yet, though it undergo no substantial change at death, yet divers great and remarkable alterations are made upon it, by sundering it from the body.

As,

1. It is not where it was : it was in a body, immersed in matter, married unto flesh and blood ; but now it is out of the body, unclothed and stript naked out of its garments of flesh, like pure gold melted out of the ore with which it was commixed ; or as a bird let

out of her cage into the open fields and woods. This makes a great and wonderful change upon it.

2. Being free from the body, it is consequently discharged and freed from all those cares, studies, fears and sorrows to which it was here enthralled and subjected upon the body's account: it puts off all those passions and burdens with it: never spends one thought more about food and raiment, health and sickness, wives and children, riches or poverty, but lives henceforth after the manner of angels, Mat. xxii. 30. It is now unrelated to, and therefore unconcerned about all these things.

3. In the unbodied state it is perfectly freed from sin, both in the acts and habits; a mercy it never enjoyed since the first moment it dwelt in the body. The cure of this disease was indeed begun in the work of sanctification; but it is not perfected till the day of the soul's glorification. It is now, and not till now, a spirit made perfect; that is, a soul enjoying its perfect health and rectitude: No more groans, tears, or lamentations, upon the account of indwelling sin.

4. The way and manner of its converse with, and enjoyment of God is changed. There are two *mediums* by which souls converse with God in the body, viz.

(1.) One internal, *to wit*, faith.

(2.) The other external, *to wit*, ordinances.

(1.) If a man walk with God on earth, it must be in the use and exercise of faith, 2 Cor. v. 7. Nor can there be any communion carried on betwixt God and the soul without it, Heb. xi. 6.

(2.) The external *mediums* are the ordinances of God, or duties of religion, both public and private, Psal. lxxiii. 2. Betwixt these two *mediums* of communion with God, this remarkable difference is found: The soul may see and enjoy God by faith, in the want or absence of ordinances; but there is no seeing or conversing with God, in the greatest plenty and purity of ordinances, without faith, Heb. iv. 2.

But in the same moment the soul is cut off from union with the body, it is also cut off from both these ways of enjoying God, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Isa. xxxviii. 11. But yet the soul is no loser; nay, it is the greatest *gainer* by this change. The child is no loser by ceasing to derive its nourishment by the navel, when it comes to receive it by the mouth, a more noble way, whereby it gets a new pleasure in tasting the variety of all delectable food. Hezekiah be-moaned the loss of ordinances upon his supposed death-bed, saying, "I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living:" q. d. Now farewell temple and ordinances; I shall never go any more into his temple, where my soul hath been so often cheered and refreshed with the displays of his grace and goodness; I shall

never more join with the assembly of his people on earth. And suppose he had not, sure he would have lost nothing, had he then exchanged the temple at Jerusalem, for the temple in heaven; and communion with sinful imperfect saints on earth, for fellowship with angels, and “the spirits of just men made perfect.” By this change we lose no more than he loseth, who whilst he stands delightfully contemplating the image of his dearest friend in a glass, hath the glass snatched away by his friend, whom he now seeth face to face.

Upon this change of the mediums of communion, it will follow, that the communion betwixt God and the separate soul, excels all the communion it ever had with him on earth, in

- (1.) The clearness.
- (2.) The sweetness.
- (3.) The constancy of it.

(1.) Its visions of God, in the state of separation, are more clear, distinct, and direct than they were on earth; clouds and shadows are now fled away: The soul now seeth as it is seen, and knoweth as it is known; its apprehensions of God there, differ from those it had here, as the crude and confused apprehensions of a child do, from those we have in the manly state.

(2.) They are also more sweet and ravishing: As our visions are, so are our pleasures; perfect visions produce perfect pleasures: The faculties of the soul now, and never till now, lie level to that rule, Matth. xxii. 37. The visions of God command, and call forth all the heart and soul, mind, and strength, into acts of love and delight. It was not so here; if the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak; but there the clog is off from the foot of the will.

(3.) More constant, fixed, and steady. It is one of the greatest difficulties in religion to fix the thoughts and cure the wildness and roving of the fancy: the heart is not steady with God; and hence are its ups and downs, heatings and coolings; which are things unknown in the perfect state. By all which it appears, the change by dissolution is great and marvellous, both upon the body and soul, but upon the soul more especially.

Proposition 4. *The souls of the righteous, at the instant of their separation, are received by the blessed angels, and by them transferred unto the place of blessedness.*

Though angels are by nature a superior order of spirits, differing from men in dignity, as the nobles and barons in the kingdoms of this world, differ from inferior subjects; yet are they made ministering spirits, i. e. serviceable creatures in the kingdom of providence, to the meanest of the saints, Heb. i. 14. And herein the Lord puts a singular honour upon his people, in making such excellent crea-

tures as angels serviceable to them: Luther assigns to them a double office, to wit, to sing the praises of God on high, and to watch over his saints here below. Their ministry is distinguished into three branches: *Νεθετικον*, for admonition or warning; *φυλακτικον*, for protection and defence; *βοηθετικον*, for succour, help, and comfort. This last office they perform more especially at the soul's departure: Like tender nurses, they keep us whilst we live, and bring us home in their arms to our Father's house when we die.

They are about our death-beds, waiting to receive their precious charge into their arms and bosoms. When Lazarus breathed out his soul, the text saith it was "carried by angels into Abraham's bosom," Luke xvi. 23. And upon this account, Tertullian calls them *evocatores animarum*, the callers forth of souls. At the translation of Elijah, they appeared in the form of horses and chariots of fire, 2 Kings ii. 11. Horses and chariots are not only designed for conveyance, but for conveyance in state, and truly, it is no small honour to have such a noble convoy and guard to attend our souls to heaven.

*Object.* If it be demanded, *What need is there of their help or company? Cannot God by his immediate hand and power gather home the souls of his people to himself at death? He inspired them into our bodies without their help, and can receive them again when we expire them, without their aid.*

*Sol.* True, he can do so; but it hath pleased him to appoint this method of our translation, not out of mere necessity, but bounty. Souls ascend not to God in the virtue of the angels wings, or arms, but of Christ's ascension. Had he not ascended as our head and representative, all the angels in heaven could not have brought our souls thither: He ascended by his own power, and we ascend by virtue of his ascension. It is therefore rather for state and *decorum*, than any absolute necessity, that they attend us in our ascension.

God will not only have his people brought home to him safely, but honourably: They shall come to their Father's house in a becoming equipage, as the children of a king. This puts honour upon our ascension-day; that day is adorned by the attendance of such illustrious creatures upon us. It is no small honour which God herein designs for us, that creatures of greater dignity than ourselves, shall be sent from heaven to attend and wait upon us thither.

Yea, that our ascension-day, should, in this, resemble Christ's ascension, is an honour indeed. When he ascended, there were multitudes of these heavenly creatures to wait upon him, Psal. lxxviii. 17, 18. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the

“the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high,” &c. A cloud was prepared as a royal chariot, to carry up the king of glory to his princely pavilion; and then a royal guard of mighty angels to wait upon his chariot; if not for support, yet for the greater state and solemnity of their Lord’s ascension. And O what jubilations of blessed angels were heard that day in heaven! How was the whole city of God moved at his coming! The triumph is not ended to this day, no, nor ever shall.

Now, herein God greatly honours his people, that there shall be some resemblance and conformity betwixt their ascension and Christ’s: \* Angels rejoice to attend those to heaven, who must be their fellow-citizens for ever in heaven! It is convenient also, that those who had the charge of us all our life, should attend us to our Father’s house at our death: In the one they finish their ministry; in the other they begin their more intimate society.

Moreover, the angels are they whom God will employ, to gather together his elect from the four winds of heaven, at the great day, Matth. xxiv. 31. And who more fit to attend their spirits to heaven singly, than those who must collect them into one body at last, and wait upon that collective body, when they shall be brought to Christ? Psal. lxxv. 14.

Object. *But the sight and presence of angels is exceeding awful and overwhelming to human nature: It will rather astonish and terrify, than refresh and cheer us, to find ourselves, all on a sudden, surrounded, and beset with such majestic creatures. We see what effects the appearance of an angel hath had upon good men in this world: “We shall die, (saith Manoah) for we have seen God,” Judges xiii. 22. So Eliphaz, “a spirit passed before my face; “the hair of my flesh stood up,” Job iv. 15.*

*Sol.* True, whilst our souls inhabit these mortal and sinful bodies, the appearance of angels is terrible to them, and cannot be otherwise, partly upon a *natural*, and partly upon a *moral* account. The dread of angels naturally falls upon our animal spirits: They shrink and tremble at the approach of spirits; not only the spirits of men, but of beasts, quail at it. A dog, or an ass is terrified at it, as well as a man, Numb. xxii. 25. The dread of spirits strikes the animal, or natural spirits primarily; and the mind, or rational soul by consent. There is also another cause of fear in man, upon the sight or presence of angels, viz. a consciousness of guilt. Wherever there is guilt, there will be fear, especially upon any extraordinary appearance of God to us, though it be but mediately by an angel.

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\* As they, (i. e. angels) served the head, in like manner do they serve the members. They rejoice to serve them on earth, whom they shall have afterwards for companions in heaven. *Gerhard.*

But when the soul is freed, both from flesh and sin, and shall enjoy itself in a nature, like to these pure and holy spirits, the dread of angels is then vanished, and the soul will take great content and satisfaction in their company and communion: The soul then finds itself a fit companion for them; looks upon them as its fellow-servants, for so they are, Rev. xix. 10. And the angels look upon the spirits of just men, not as inferiors, or underlings, but with great respect, as spirits, in some sense, nearer to Christ than themselves: So that henceforth no dread falls upon us from the presence of these excellent creatures; but each enjoyeth singular delight in each others society. And thus we see in what honourable and pleasing company the souls of the just go hence to their Father's house, and bosom.

*Prop. 5. The soul is not so maimed and prejudiced by its separation from the body, but that it both can, and doth live, and act without it; and performs the acts of cogitation and volition, without the aid and ministry of the body.*

I know it is objected by them that assert the soul's sleeping till the resurrection, that though its essence be not destroyed by death, yet its operations are obstructed by the want and absence of the body, its tool and instrument. And thus they form their objection.

*Object. All that the soul understands, it understands by species\*; that is, the images of things which are first formed in the phantasy: As when we would conceive the nature of a house, a ship, a man, or a beast: we first form the image, or species thereof in our fancy, and then exercise our thoughts about it: But this depending upon bodily organs, and instruments, the separated soul can form no such images: It hath no such innate species of its own, but comes into the world an abroasta tabula, white paper; and being deprived by separation of the help of senses and phantasms, it consequently understands nothing.*

Thus the soul, in its state of separation, is represented to us as wounded in its powers and operations, to that degree, which seems to extinguish the very nature of it. But,

*Sol. 1.* We deny that the soul knows nothing now but by phantasms†, and images; for it knows itself, its own nature and powers, of which it cannot possibly feign, or form any image, or represen-

\* There are three conditions requisite for the acts of the understanding. 1. The object, a being that is real and intelligible. 2. The phantasm, or sensible image lurking in the phantasy. 3. The intelligible image, which is a spiritual accident, representing to the understanding, in an ideal way, the material object that exists without the understanding.

† The understanding contemplates objects incorporeal and immaterial, such as God and intelligible beings. But these by no means affect the phantasy, for they are beyond the reach of corporeal powers. *Conimb. on the soul.* l. 5. c. 8. q. 8.

tation. What form, shape, or figure, can the fancy of a man cast his own soul into, to help him to understand its nature?

And what shall we say of its understanding during an ecstasy, or rapture? Doth the soul know nothing at such a time? Doth a dull torpor seize and benumb its intellectual powers? No; the understanding is never more bright, clear, apprehensive, and perfect, than when the body, in an ecstasy is laid aside, as to any use or assistance of the mind: The soul for that space uses not the body's assistance, as the very words *ecstasy* and *rapture* convince us.

2. \* To understand by *species*, doth not agree to the soul naturally and necessarily, but by accident, as it is now in union with the body: Were it but once loosed from the body, it would understand better without them, than ever it did in the body by them. A man that is on horseback, must move according to the motion of the horse he rides; but if he were on foot, he then uses his own proper motion as he pleaseth; so here. But though we grant the soul doth in many cases now make use of phantasms, and that the agitation of the spirits, which are in the brain and heart, are conjunct with its acts of cogitation and intellection: Yet, as a searching † scholar well observes, the spirits are rather subjects than instruments of those actions; and the whole essence of those acts is antecedent to the motion of the spirits: As when we use a pen in writing, or a knife in cutting, there is an operation of the soul upon them, before there can be any operation by them: They act as they are first acted, and so do these bodily spirits. So that to speak properly, the body is bettered by the use the soul makes of it in these its noble actions; but the soul is not advantaged by being tied to such a body; it can do its own work without it; its operations follow its essence, not the body to which it is for a time united.

Upon the whole; it is much more absonous and difficult to conceive a stupified, benumbed, and unactive soul, whose very nature is to be active, lively, and always in motion, than it is to conceive a soul freed from the shackles and clogs of the body, acting freely according to its own nature. I wish the favourers of this opinion may take heed, lest it carry them farther than they intend, even to a denial of its existence and immortality, and turn them into downright *Somatists* or *Atheists*.

Proposition 6. *That the separated souls of the just having finished all their work of obedience on earth, and the Spirit having finished*

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\* For if this belongs not to the nature of the soul, but by accident agrees to it, namely from this, that it is tied to the body, as the Platonists affirm, then the question is easily solved. For the soul being loosed from the body, will return to its own nature. *Aquin. p. 1. Q. 8. Art. 1.*

† Howe's *Blessedness*, p. 174, 175.

*all his work of sanctification upon them, they ascend to God, with all the habits of grace inherent in them; and all the comfortable improvements of their graces accompanying and following them.*

This proposition is to be opened and confirmed in these four branches.

(1.) When a gracious soul is separated from the body, all its work of obedience in this world is finished. Therefore death is called the "finishing of our course," Acts xx. 24. "The night when man works no more," John ix. 4. "There is no working in the grave," Eccl. ix. 10. for death dissolves the *compositum*, and removes the soul immediately to another world, where it can act for itself only, but not for others, as it was wont to do on earth. "I shall see man no more (saith Hezekiah) with the inhabitants of the world," Isa. xxxviii. 11. That which was said of David's death, is as true of every Christian, that "having served his generation according to the will of God, he fell asleep," Acts xiii. 36.

I do not say this lower world receives no benefit at all by them after their death; for though they can speak no more, write no more, pray for, and instruct the inhabitants of this world no more, nor exhibit to them the beauty of religion in any new acts or examples of theirs (which is what I mean by saying *they have finished all their work of obedience on earth*); yet the benefit of what they did whilst in the body, still remains after they are gone: As the apostle speaks of Abel, Heb. xi. 4. "Who being dead, yet speaketh." This way indeed abundance of service will be done for the souls of men upon earth, long after they are gone to heaven. And this should greatly quicken us to leave as much as we can behind us, for the good of posterity, that *after our decease* (as the apostle speaks, 2 Pet. i. 15.) they may have our words and examples in remembrance. But for any service to be done *de novo*, after death, it is not to be expected: We have accomplished, as a hireling, our day, and have not a stroke more to do.

(2.) As all our work of obedience is then finished by us, so at death all the work of God is finished by his Spirit upon us. The last hand is then put to all the preparatory work for glory, not a stroke more to be done upon it afterwards; which appears as well by the immediate succession of the life of glory, (whereof I shall speak in another proposition) as by the cessation of all sanctifying means and instruments, which are totally laid aside as things of no more use after this stroke is given; *Adepto fine, cessant media*, means are useless when the end is attained. *There is no work* (saith Solomon) *in the grave*. How short soever the soul's stay and abode in the body were, though it were regenerated one day, and separated the next, yet all is wrought upon it, which God ever in-

tended should be wrought in this world, and there is no preparation-work in the other world.

(3.) But though the soul leave all the means of grace behind it, yet it carries away with it to heaven all those habits of grace which were planted and improved in it in this world, by the blessing of the Spirit upon those means: Though it leave the ordinances, it loseth not the effects and fruits of them; though they cease, their effects still live. "The truth dwelleth in us, and shall be in us for ever," 1 John ii. 17. "The seed of God remaineth in us," 1 John iii. 9.

Common gifts fail at death; but saving grace sticks fast in the soul, and ascends with it into glory. Gracious habits are inseparable; glory doth not destroy, but perfect them: They are the soul's meetness for heaven, Col. i. 12. and therefore it shall not come into his presence, leaving its meetness behind it. In vain is all the work of the Spirit upon us in this world, if we carry it not along with us into that world, seeing all his works upon us in this life have a respect and relation to the life to come.

Look, therefore, as the same natural faculties and powers which the soul had (though it could not use them) in its imperfect body in the womb, came with it into this world, where they freely exerted themselves in the most noble actions of natural life; so the habits of grace, which, by regeneration, are here implanted in a weak and imperfect soul, go with it to glory, where they exert themselves in a more high and perfect way of acting than ever they did here below. The languishing spark of love is there a vehement flame; the faint, remiss and infrequent delight in God is there at a constant, ravishing and transporting height.

(4.) To conclude, As all implanted habits of grace ascend with the sanctified soul to heaven; (for the soul ascends not thither as a natural, but as a new creature) so all the effects, results, and sweet improvements of those graces which we gathered as the pleasant fruits of them on earth, these accompany and follow the soul into the other world also; "Their works follow them," Rev. xiv. 13. They go not before in the notion of merits, to make way for them, but they follow or accompany them as evidences and comfortable experiences. I doubt not, but the very remembrance of what passed betwixt God and the soul here, betwixt the day of its espousals to Christ, and its divorce from the body, will be one sweet ingredient in their blessedness and joy, when they shall be singing in the upper region the song of Moses and of the Lamb. They were never given to be lost, or left behind us. And thus you see with what a rich cargo the soul sails to the other world, though if it had no other, it would never drop anchor there.

*Prop. 7. The souls of the just when separated from their bodies, do not wander up and down in this world, nor hover about the sepulchres where their bodies lie; nor are they detained in any purgatory, in order to their more perfect purification; nor do they fall asleep in a benumbed stupid state: but do forthwith pass into glory, and are immediately with the Lord.*

When once the mind of man leaves the scripture guidance and direction, which is it to what the compass or pole-star is to a ship in the wide ocean, whither will it not wander? In what uncertainties will it not fluctuate? and upon what rocks and quick-sands must it inevitably be cast? Many have been the foolish and groundless conceits and fancies of men about the receptacles of departed souls.

1. Some have assigned them a restless, wandering life, now here, now there, without any certain dwelling-place any where. The only grounds for this fancy, is the frequent apparitions of the ghost or spirits of the dead, whereof many instances are given; and who is there that is a stranger to such stories? Now, if departed souls were fixed any where, this world would be quiet and free from such disturbances.

I make no doubt, but very many of these stories, have been the industrious fictions and devices of wicked and superstitious votaries, to gain reputation to their way, speaking lies in hypocrisy, to draw disciples after them. And many others have been the tricks and impostures of Satan himself, to shake the credit of the saints' rest in heaven, and the imprisonment of ungodly souls in hell, as will more fully appear when I come to speak to that question more particularly.

2. Others think, when they are loosed from the body at death, they hover about the graves and solitary places where their bodies lie, as willing, seeing they can dwell no longer in them, to abide as near them as they can; just as the surviving turtle keeps near the place where his mate died, and may be heard mourning for a long time about that part of the wood. This opinion seeks countenance and protection from that law, Deut. xviii. 10, 11. which prohibits men to consult with the dead; of which restraint there had been no need or use, if it had not been practised; and such practices had never been continued, if departed souls had not frequented those places, and given answers to their questions. But what I said before of Satan's impostures, is enough for the present to return to this also.

3. The Papists send them immediately to purgatory, in order to their more thorough purification. This purgatory \* Bellarmine

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\* *Bellarmin. lib. 2. de Purg. cap. 6.*

thus describes: "It is a certain place wherein, as in a prison, souls are purged after this life, that were not fully purged here, to the intent they may enter pure into heaven; and though the church (saith he) hath not defined the place, yet the schoolmen say, it is in the bowels of the earth, and upon the borders of hell." And, to countenance this profitable fable, divers scriptures are by them abused and misapplied, as 1 Cor. iii. 15. Matth. v. 25, 26. 1 Pet. iii. 19. All which have been fully rescued out of their hands, and abundantly vindicated by our divines, who have proved, God never kindled that fire to purify souls; but the *Pope* to warm his own *kitchen*.

4. Another sort there are, who affirm, they neither wander about this world, nor go into purgatory, but are cast by death into a swoon or sleep; remaining in a kind of benumbed condition, till the resurrection of the body. This was the error of Beryllus; and Irenæus seems to border too near upon it, when he saith, \* "The souls of disciples shall go to an invisible place appointed for them of God, and shall there tarry till the resurrection, waiting for that time: and then receiving their bodies, and perfectly, i. e. corporeally, rising again, as Christ did, they shall come to the sight of God."

All these mistakes will fall together by one stroke; for if it evidently appear (as I hope it will) that the spirits of the just are immediately taken to God, and do converse with, and enjoy him in heaven; then all these fancies vanish, without any more labour about them particularly. Now there are four considerations which to me put the immediate glorification of the departed souls of believers beyond all rational doubt.

1. Heaven is as ready and fit to receive them as ever it shall be.

2. They are as ready and fit for heaven as ever they will be.

3. The scripture is plainly for it. And,

4. There is nothing in reason against it.

1. Heaven is as fit and ready to receive them when they die, as ever it shall be. Heaven is prepared for believers, (1.) By the purpose and decree of God, and so far it was prepared from the foundation of the world, Matth. xxv. 34. (2.) By the death of Christ, whose blood made the purchase of it for believers, and so meritoriously opened the gates thereof, which our sins had barred up against us, Heb. x. 19, 20. (3.) By the ascension of Christ into that holy place, as our representative and fore-runner, John xiv.

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\* *Discipulorum animæ abibunt in invisibilem locum, definitum eis a Deo; et ibi usque ad resurrectionem comorabuntur, sustinentes resurrectionem; post, recipientes corpora, et perfecte resurgentes, i. e. corporaliter, quemadmodum et Dominus resurrexit, sic venient ad conspectum Dei.* Iren. lib. 5.

2. This is all that is necessary to be done for the preparation of heaven; and all this is done, as much as ever God designed should be done to it, in order to its preparation for our souls; so that no delay can be upon that account.

2. The departed souls of believers are as ready for heaven as ever they will be: for there is no preparation-work to be done by them, or upon them after death, John ix. 3. Eccl. ix. 10. Their justification was complete before death, and now their sanctification is so too; sin which came in by the union, going out at the separation of their souls and bodies. They are *spirits made perfect*.

3. The scripture is plain and full for their immediate glorification; Luke xxiii. 43. "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke xvi. 22. "The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Phil. i. 21. "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, which is far better." The scripture speaks but of two ways by which souls see and enjoy God, viz. faith and sight; the one imperfect, suited to this life; the other perfect, fitted for the life to come; and this immediately succeeding that, for the imperfect is done away, by the coming of that which is perfect, as the twilight is done away, by the advancing of the perfect day.

4. To conclude; there is nothing in reason lying in bar to it. It hath been proved before, that the soul in its unembodied state is capable to enjoy blessedness, and can perform its acts of intellection, volition, &c. not only as well, but much better than it did, when embodied. I conclude therefore, that seeing heaven is already as much prepared for believers as it need be, or can be; and they as much prepared from the time of their dissolution, as ever they shall be; the scriptures also being so plain for it, and no bar in reason against it; all the forementioned opinions are but the dreams and fancies of men, who have forsaken their scripture-guide; and this remains an unshaken truth, that the spirits of the just go immediately to glory from the time of their separation.

*Prop. 8. At the time of a gracious soul's separation from the body, it is instantly and perfectly freed from sin, which, till that time, dwelt in it from its beginning; but thenceforth shall do so no more.*

Immediately upon their separation from the body, they are *spirits made perfect*, as my text stiles them; and that epithet \**perfect* could never suit them, if there were any remaining root or habit of corruption in them.

The time, yea, the set time is now come, to put an end to all the

\* Therefore he calls them consecrated or perfect, because they are no more subject to the infirmities of the flesh, the flesh itself being laid aside. *Marlorate on the place.*

dolorous groans of gracious souls, upon the account of indwelling sin. What the angel said to Joshua, Zech. iii. 3, 4. the same doth God say of every upright soul, at the time of its separation. "Take away the filthy garments from him, and clothe him with change of raiment, and set a fair mitre upon his head." Thus the garments spotted with the flesh, are taken away with the body of flesh, and the pure unchangeable robes of perfect holiness, clothed upon the soul, in which it appears without fault before the throne of God, Rev. xiv. 5.

There is a threefold burdensome evil in sin under which all regenerated souls groan in this life; *viz.* (1.) The guilt; (2.) The filth; (3.) The inherence of it in their nature. And there is a threefold remedy or cure of these evils: the guilt of sin is remedied by justification; the filth of sin is inchoatively healed by sanctification: the inherence of sin is totally eradicated by glorification; For as it entered into our persons by the union of our souls and bodies, so it is perfectly cast out by their disunion or separation at death: the last stroke is then given to the work of sanctification, and the last is evermore the perfecting stroke: sin languished under imperfect sanctification in the time of life, but it gives up the ghost under perfected sanctification, from and after death: sanctification gave it its deadly wound, but glorification its final abolition. For it is with our sins, after regeneration, as it was with that beast mentioned, Dan. vii. 12. which, though it was "wounded with a deadly wound, yet its life was prolonged for a season." And this is the appointed season for its expiration. For if at their dissolution they are immediately received into glory (as it hath been proved they are, in our seventh proposition) they must necessarily be freed from sin, immediately upon their dissolution; because, nothing that is unclean can enter into that pure and holy place; they must be, as the text truly represents them, "the spirits of just men made perfect."

For, if so great holiness and purity be required in all that draw nigh to God upon earth, as you read, Psal. xciii. 5. certainly those who are admitted immediately to his throne, must be without fault, according to Rev. vii. 14, 15, 16, 17.

When a compounded being comes to be dissolved, each part returns to its own principle; so it is here: the spirit of man, and all the grace that is in it, came from God; and to him they return at death, and are perfected in him and by him: the flesh returns to earth, whence it came, and all that body of sin is destroyed with it; neither the one or the other shall be a snare or clog to the soul any more. A Christian in this world, is but gold in the ore; at death, the pure gold is melted out and separated, and the dross cast away and consumed.

Hence three consecratories offer themselves to us.

*Consecratory 1.* That a believer's life and warfare end together. We lay not down our weapons of war, till we lie down in the dust, 2 Tim. iv. 7. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course." The course and conflict you see are finished together: though they commence from different terms, yet they always terminate together. Grace and sin have each acted its part upon the stage of time, and the victory hovered doubtfully, sometimes over sin, and sometimes over grace; but now the war is ended, and the quarrel decided, grace keeps its ground, and sin is finally vanquished. Now, and never before, the gracious soul stands triumphing like that noble *Argive*,

*In vocuo solus sessor, plausorque theatra.*

not an enemy left to renew the combat; the war is ended, and with it all the fears and sorrows of the saints.

*Consecratory 2.* Separated souls become impeccable, or free from all the hazard of sin, from the time of their separation: for, there being no root of sin now inherent in them, consequently no temptation to sin can fasten upon them; all temptations have their handles in the corruptions of our natures: did not Satan find matter prepared within us, dry tinder fitted to his hand, he might strike in temptations long enough, before one of his hellish sparks could catch or fasten upon us. Temptations are grievous exercises to believers; they are darts, Eph. vi. 16. they are thorns, 2 Cor. xii. 7. But the separate soul is out of gunshot; it were as good discharge an arrow at the body of the sun, as a temptation at a translated soul.

*Consecratory 3.* Separated souls are more lovely companions, and their converses more sweet and delightful than ever they were in this world. It was their corruption which spoiled their communion on earth; and it is their spotless holiness which makes it incomparably pleasant in heaven. The best and loveliest saints have something in them which is distasteful; even sweet briars and holy thistles have their offensive prickles: but when that which was so lovely on earth is made perfect in heaven, and nothing of that remains in heaven, which was so offensive in them on earth; O what blessed, delightful companions will they be! O blessed society! O most desirable companions! let my soul for ever be united to their assembly. I love them under their corruptions; but how shall my soul be knit to them, when it seeth them shining in their perfections?

*Proposition 9.* *The pleasure and delights of the separate spirits of the just, are incomparably greater and sweeter than those they did, or at any time could experience in their bodily state.*

With what a pleasant face would death smile upon believers!

what roses would it raise in its pale cheeks, if this proposition were but well settled in our hearts by faith! And if we will not be wanting to ourselves, it may be firmly settled there, by these four considerations, which demonstrate it.

Consideration 1. *Whatsoever pleasure any man receives in this world, he receives it by means of his soul.* Even all corporeal and sensitive delights have no other relish and sweetness, but what the soul gives them, which is demonstrable by this; that if a man be placed amidst all the pleasing objects and circumstances in the world, if he were in that centre, where he might have the confluence of all the delights of this world; yet if the spirit be wounded, there is no more relish or savour in them, than in the white of an egg. What pleasure had Spira in his liberty, estate, wife and children; these things were indeed proposed and urged, again and again, to relieve him? but instead of pleasure they became his horror: let but the mind be wounded, and all the mirth is marred: one touch from God upon the spirit, destroys all the joy of this world. Nay,

Let but the intention of the mind be strongly carried another way, and for that time, (though there be no guilt or wound upon the soul) the most pleasant enjoyments lose their pleasure. What delight, think you, would bags of gold, sumptuous feasts, or exquisite melody have afforded to Archimedes, when he was wholly intent upon his mathematical lines? By this then it is evident, that the rise of all pleasure is in the mind, and the most agreeable and pleasing objects and enjoyments signify nothing without it: the mind must be found in itself, and at leisure to attend them, or we can have no pleasure from them.

*Consid. 2. Of all natural pleasures in the world, intellectual pleasures are found to be most agreeable, and connatural to the soul of man.*

The more refined and remote from sense any pleasure is, the more grateful is it to the soul; those are certainly the sweetest delights that spring out of the mind. A drop of intellectual pleasure is valued by a generous and well-tempered soul, above the whole ocean of impure joys, which come to it sophisticated and tinged through the muddy channels of sense.

No sensualists in the world can extract such pleasure out of gold, silver, meat and drink; as a searching and contemplating mind finds in the discovery of truth. \* Heinsius, that learned library-keeper of Leyden, professed, "That when he had shut up himself among so many illustrious souls, he seemed to sit down there, as in the very lap of eternity, and heartily pitied the rich and covetous worldlings, that were strangers to his delights."

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\* *In qua simulac pedem posui, foribus pessulum obdo, et in ipso æternitatis gremio, inter tot illustres animas sedem mihi sumo, cum ingenti quidem animo: ut subinde magnatum misereor, qui hanc felicitatem ignorant.* Epist. prin.

And when \* Cardan tells us, “That to know the secrets of nature, and the order of the universe, hath greater pleasure and sweetness in it, than the thought of man can fathom, or any mortal hope for.” “Yea, such beauties, saith † Plutarch, there are in the study of the *mathematics*, that it were unworthy to compare such baubles and bubbles, as riches with it.” “Yea, saith another, it were a sweet thing to be extinguished in those studies ‡.”

Julius Scaliger was so delighted with poetry, that he protested he had rather be the author of twelve verses in Lucan, than emperor of Germany. And to say truth, “there is a kind of enchanting sweetness in those intellectual pleasures and feasts of the mind; such a delight as hardly suffers the mind to be pulled away from them §.” These pleasures have a finer edge, a higher gust, a more agreeable savour to the mind than sensitive ones; as approaching much nearer to the nature of the soul, which is spiritual.

*Consid. 3.* And as intellectual pleasures do as far exceed all sensitive pleasures, as those which are proper to a man, do those which we have in common with beasts: *So divine pleasures do again much more surmount intellectual ones.* For what compare is there betwixt those joys which surprize a scholar in the discovery of the secrets of nature, and those that overwhelm and swallow up the Christian in the discovery of the glorious mysteries of redemption by Christ, and his own personal interest therein.

To solve the *phænomena* of nature is pleasant, but to solve all the difficulties about our title to Christ and his covenant, that is ravishing. Archimedes’ *εὐρηκα*, “I have found it,” was but the frisk, or skip of a boy, to that rapturous voice of the spouse, “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” These are entertainments for angels, 1 Pet. i. 11. a short salvation for the season it is felt and tasted, 1 Pet. i. 8. after these delights, all others are insipid and dry. And yet one step higher.

*Consid. 4.* *All that divine pleasure, which ever the holiest and devoutest soul enjoyed in the body, is but a sip or prelibation, compared with those full draughts it hath in the unembodied state.*

Whilst it is embodied, it rejoiceth in the earnest and pledges of joy; but when it is unembodied, it receives the full sum; Psal. xvi.

\* *Arcana caeli, naturæ secreta, ordinem universi scire; majoris felicitatis et dulcedinis est, quam cogitatione quis assequi potest, aut mortalis sperare.*

† *Talis est mathematicum pulchritudo, ut his indignum sit divitiarum phaleras istas et bullas et puerilia spectacula comparari.*

‡ *Dulce est extinguere mathematicarum artium studio.* Leon. Digg.

§ *Talis suavitas, ut cum quis ea degustaverit, quasi Circeis poculis captus, non potest unquam ab illis divelli.* Cardan.

11. "In thy presence is fulness of joy." This fulness of joy is not to be expected, because not to be supported in this world. The joy of heaven would quickly make the hoops of nature fly. When a good man had but a little more than ordinary joy of the Lord poured into his soul, he was heard to cry, Hold, Lord, hold! thy poor creature is but a clay vessel, and can hold no more! These pleasures the soul hath in the body, are of the same kind indeed with those in heaven, but are exceeding short of them in divers other respects.

1. The spiritual pleasures the soul hath in the body, are but by reflection; but those it enjoys out of the body, are by immediate *intuition*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. now in a glass, then face to face.

The pleasures it now hath, though they be of a divine nature, yet they are relished by the vitiated appetite of a sick and distempered soul; the embodied soul is diseased and sickly, it hath many distempers hanging about it. Now we know the most pleasant things lose much of their pleasure to a sick man; the separate soul is made perfect, thoroughly cured of all diseases, restored to its perfect health; and consequently, divine pleasures must needs have a higher gust and relish in heaven, than ever they had on earth.

3. The pleasures of a gracious soul on earth are but rare and seldom, meeting with many and long interruptions. And many of them occasioned by the body, which often calls down the soul to attend its necessities, and converse with things of a far different nature; but from these, and all other ungrateful and prejudicial avocations, the separated soul is discharged, and set free; so that its whole eternity is spent in the highest delights.

4. The highest pleasures of a gracious soul in the body, are but the pleasures of an uncentered soul, which is still gravitating and striving forward, and consequently can be but low and very imperfect, in comparison with those it enjoys, when it is centered and fixed in its everlasting rest. They differ as the shadow of the labourer, for an hour in the day, from his rest in his bed, when his work is ended.

To conclude; the pleasures it hath here, are but the pleasures of hope and expectation, which cannot bear any proportion to those of sight and full fruition. O see the advantages of an unbodied state!

*Prop. 10. That gracious souls, separate from the body, do attain to the perfection of knowledge, with more ease than they attained any small degree of knowledge whilst they dwelt in the body.*

Great are the inconveniences, and prejudices, under which souls labour, in their pursuits after knowledge in this life, *Veritatis in puteo*, Truth lies deep. And it is hard, even with much labour,

pains, and study, to pump up one clear notion; for the soul cannot now act as it would, but is fain to act as it can, according to the limitations and permissions of the body, to which it is confined. By heedful observations, and painful researches it is forced to deduce one thing from another, and is too often deceived and imposed upon by such tedious and manifold connections.

Beside, truth is now forced, in compliance with our weakness, and distance from the fountain, to descend from heaven under veils\*, shadows, and umbrages, thereby to contract some kind of affinity with our fancies and exterior senses first, that so it may with more advantage transmit itself to our understanding. It must come under some veil or other to us, whilst we are veiled with mortality, because the soul cannot behold it with its native lustre, nor converse otherwise with it.

And hence it was that Augustine made his rational conjecture, Why men used to be so much delighted with metaphors, because they are so much proportioned to our senses, with which our reason in this embodied state, hath contracted such an intimacy and familiarity: But when the soul lays aside its veil of flesh, truth also puts off her veil, and shews the soul her naked, beautiful, and ravishing face; it henceforth beholds all truth in God, the fountain of truth. There are five ways by which men attain the knowledge of God, say the schools, four of which the soul makes use of in this world; but the fifth, which is the most perfect, is reserved for the separate state. Men discern God here,

(1.) *In vestigio*, By his footsteps in the works of creation. God hath imprest the marks of his wisdom and power upon the creatures, by which impressions we discern that God hath been there. Thus the very Heathens arrive to some knowledge of a God, Rom. i. 20. Acts xvii. 24, 27.

(2.) *In umbra*, By his shadow: If you see the shadow of a man you guess at his stature and dimensions thereby. Thus Christ made some discovery of himself to the world, in the *Mosaical* ceremonies, and ancient types and umbrages, Heb. x. 1.

(3.) *In speculo*, In a glass: This gives us a much clearer representation of a person, than either his *footsteps* or *shadow* could: this is an imperfect or darker vision of his face, by way of reflection. And thus God is seen in his word and ordinances, wherein, "as in a glass, we behold the glory of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18.

(4.) *In Filio*, in his own Son, who is the living image and express character of his Father. Thus we sometimes see a child so

\* The light from above never descends without a veil: for it is impossible that divine light could otherwise shine to us, unless it be covered with a variety of sacred shadowings. *Dionys. Arcop. de celest. Hier. c. 1.*

lively representing his father in speech, gait, gesture, and every lineament of his face, that we may say,

—*Sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat* ;—

“Just so his father spake, so he went, and just such a one he was.”

Thus we know God in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. who is the express image of his Father, Heb. i. 3. and John xiv. 9. This is the highest way of attaining the knowledge of God in this life. But then, in the unbodied state, we see him,

(5.) *Face to face*, with a direct vision. This is to *see him as he is*. The believer is a candidate for this degree now, but cannot be invested with it, till he be divested from this body of flesh. Yet the soul, when unbodied, and made perfect, attaineth not to a comprehensive knowledge of God, for it will still remain a finite being, and so cannot comprehend that which is infinite. That question, Job xi. 7. “Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” may be put to the highest graduate in heaven. And yet,

1. To see God face to face, and know him as he is, will be a knowledge of the divine essence itself. To see the divine essence, is to see God as he is; i. e. to see him so perfectly and fully, that the understanding can proceed no farther in point of knowledge, concerning that great question, *What is God?* Thus no man hath seen or can see God in this world. Even Moses himself could not see God, Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19, 20. But the spirits of the just made perfect, have satisfying apprehensions, though not perfect comprehensions of the Divine essence.

2. In this light they clearly discern those deep mysteries which they here racked their thoughts upon, but could not penetrate in this life. There they will know what is to be known of the union of the two natures in the wonderful person of our Emmanuel; and the manner of the subsistence of each person, in the most glorious and undivided Godhead, John xiv. 20. The several attributes of God will then be unfolded to our understandings; for his essence and attributes are not two things, Rev. iv. 8, 9, 10, 11. Oh! what a ravishing sight will this be!

The mysteries of the scriptures and providences of God will be no mysteries then: Curiosity itself will be there satisfied.

3. This immediate knowledge and sight of God face to face, will be infinitely more sweet, and ravishingly pleasant than any, or all the views we had of him here by faith ever were, or possibly could be. There is a joy unspeakable in the visions of faith, 1 Pet. i. 8. but it comes far short of the facial vision. Who can tell the full importance of that one text, Rev. xxii. 4. “The throne of the Lamb shall be in it, and they shall see his face?” Oh! for such a heaven (said one) as to get one glimpse of that lovely face! Earth cannot bear such sights. This light overwhelms, and confounds

the inadequate faculties of imperfect and embodied souls. But there is *lumen confortans*, a cheering, strengthening, pleasant light, as the light of *the morning star*, Rev. ii. 28.

4. This sight of God will be appropriative and applicative. We there see him as our own God and portion. Without a clear interest in him, the sight of him could never be beatifical and satisfying. Sight without interest is like the light of a glow-worm, light without heat. All doubts and objections are solved and answered in the first sight of this blessed face.

5. To conclude: This perfect, and most comfortable knowledge, is attained without labour by the separate soul. Here every degree of knowledge was with the price of much pains. How many weary hours and aching heads did the acquisition of a little knowledge stand us in! But then it flows in upon the soul easily. It was the saying of a great usurer, *I once took much pains to get a little*, (meaning the first stock) *but now I get much without any pains at all*. Oh lovely state of separation! That body which interposed, clogged, and clouded the willing and capable spirit, being drawn aside (as a curtain) by death, the light of glory now shines upon it, and round about it, without any interception, or let.

*Prop. 11. The separated souls of the just do live in a more high and excellent way of communion with God, in his temple-worship in heaven, than ever they did in the sweetest gospel-ordinances, and most spiritual duties, in which they conversed with him here on earth.*

That saints on earth have real communion with God, and that this communion is the joy of their hearts, the life of their life, and their relief under all pressures and troubles in this life, is a truth so firmly sealed upon their hearts by experience, as well as clearly revealed in the word, that there can remain no doubt about it, among those that have any saving acquaintance with the life and power of religion.

This communion with God is of that precious value with believers, that it unspeakably endears all those duties and ordinances to them, which, as means and instruments are useful to maintain it.

At death, the people of God part with all those precious ordinances and duties, they being only designed for, and fitted to the present state of imperfection, Eph. iv. 12, 13. but not at all to their loss, no more than it is to his that loses the light of his candle by the rising of the sun. A candle, a star is comfortable in the night; but useless when the sun is up, and in its meridian glory. Christian, pray much, hear much, and be as much as thou canst among the ordinances of God, and duties of religion: For, the time is at hand that you shall serve, and wait on God no more this way.

But yet think not your souls shall be discharged from all worship and service of God when you die: No, you will find heaven to be a temple built for worship, and the worship there to be much transcendent to all that in which you were here employed. The sanctuary was a pattern of heaven in this very respect, Heb. ix. 23. And, on this very account, it is called *Sion* in my text, and the *heavenly Jerusalem*; as denoting a church state, and the spiritual worship there performed by the spirits of just men made perfect.

Some help we may have to understand the nature thereof, by comparing it with that worship and service which we perform to God here in this state of imperfection, and by considering the agreements and disagreements betwixt them. In this they agree, that the worship above and below are both addressed and directed to one and the same object, Father, Son, and Spirit; all centers and terminates in God. They also agree in the general quality and common nature; they are both spiritual worship. But there are divers remarkable differences betwixt the one and the other, as will be manifest in the following collation.

1. All our worship on earth is performed and transacted by faith, as the instrument and means thereof, Heb. xi. 6. "He that cometh to God must believe," &c. In heaven, faith ceaseth, and sight takes place of it, 1 Cor. v. 7. There we see what here we only believe. There are now before us ordinances, scriptures, ministers, and the assemblies of saints in the places of worship: But if we have any communion with God, by, or among these, we must set ourselves to believe those things we see not. By realizing and applying invisible things, we here get sometimes, and with no small pains, a taste of heaven, and a transient glance of that glory. In this service our faith is put hard to it, it must work and fight at once; resolutely act whilst sense and reason stand by, contradicting and quarrelling with it. And if, with much ado, we get but one sensible touch of heaven upon our spirits, if we get a little spiritual warmth and melting of our affections towards God, we call that day a good day, and it is so indeed.

But in heaven all things are carried at a high rate, the joy of the Lord overflows us without any labour, or pain of ours to procure it.

We may say of it there, as the prophet speaks of the dew and showers upon the grass, "which tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men," Micah v. 7.

2. No grace is, or can be acted here, without the clog of a contrary corruption, Rom. vii. 21. "When I would do good, evil is present with me." Every beam of faith is presently darkened by a cloud of unbelief, Mark ix. 24. "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief." "We often read in the book of experience (saith

“ \* one) what an inconsistent fickle thing the heart is in duties : “ Now it is with us, by and by it is fled away and gone ; we know “ not where to find it : It is constant only in its inconstancy and “ lubricity.” There is iniquity in our most holy things, which needs pardon, Exod. xxviii. 38. Our best duties have enough in them to damn us, as well as our worst sins : But in that perfect state above, grace flows purely out of the soul, as beams do from the sun, or crystal streams from the purest fountain. No impure or imperfect acts proceed from spirits made perfect.

3. Here the graces of the saints are never, or very rarely acted in their highest and most intense degree. When they love God most fervently, there is some coldness in their love. Who comes up to the height of that rule, Mat. xxii. 37. “ Thou shalt love the Lord “ thy God, with all thy heart, and all thy mind, and all thy “ strength?” When we meditate on God, it is not in the depth of our thoughts, without some wanderings and extravagancies ; it is very hard, if not impossible, for the soul to stand long in its full bent to God.

But in heaven it doth so, and will do so for ever, without any relaxation or remission of its fervour. Christ, among the saints and angels in heaven, is as a mighty load-stone cast in among many needles, which leap to him, and fix themselves inseparably upon him. They all act in glory as the fire doth here, to the utmost of their power and ability. There is no note lower than “ Glory to God in the highest.”

(4.) The most spiritual souls on earth, who live most with God, have, and must have their daily and frequent intermissions. The necessities of the body, as well as the defectiveness of their graces, require, and necessitate it to be so. Our hands with Moses will hang down and grow weary. Our affections will cool and fall, do what we can.

But as the spirits of just men made perfect know no remissions in the degree, so neither any intermissions in the acting of their grace : “ They shall serve him day and night in his temple,” Rev. vii. 15. You that would purchase the continuance of your spiritual comforts but for a day, with all that you have in this world, will there enjoy them at full, without any intermitting, through eternity.

5. If the best hearts on earth be at any time more than ordinarily enlarged in spiritual comforts, they need presently some humbling providence to hide pride from their eyes. Even Paul

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\* *Sæpe in libro experientiæ legimus quomodo a corde nostro relinquimur : Nunc est nobiscum, nunc alibi ; nunc evolat, nunc recurrit : in sola lubricitate manet.* Bern.

himself must have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. Bernard could never perform any duty with comfortable enlargement, but he seemed to hear his own heart whisper thus, *Bene fecisti, Bernarde, O well done, Bernard.*

But, in heaven the highest comforts are enjoyed in the deepest humility; and the entire glory is ascribed to God, without any unworthy defalcations. Rev. iv. 10. They put not the crown upon their own heads, but Christ's: They cast down their own crowns, and fall down at the feet of him that sitteth upon the throne.

6. All assemblies for worship in this world are mixed; they consist of regenerate and unregenerate, living and dead souls: This spoils the harmony, and allays the comfort of mutual communion. In a congregation consisting of a thousand persons, Ah! how few comparatively are there that are heartily concerned in the duty? But it is not so above. There are ten thousand times ten thousand, even thousands of thousands before the throne, loving, adoring, praising, and triumphing together, and not a jarring string in all their harps.

7. Here the worship of God is impure, mixed, and adulterated by the sinful additions and inventions of men. This gracious souls groan under as a heavy burden, sighing and praying for reformation; as knowing they can expect no more of God's presence, than there is of his order and institution in worship. But, above, all the worship is pure, the least pin in the heavenly *tabernacle* is according to the perfect pattern of the divine will.

8. We have here duties of divers kinds and natures to perform. All our time is not to be spent in loving, praising, and delighting in God; but we must turn ourselves also to searching, watching, and soul-humbling work. Sometimes we are called to get up our hearts to the highest praise, and then to humble them to the dust for sin and judgments; one while to sing his praises, and another while to sigh even to the breaking of our loins; But the spirits of just men made perfect, have but one kind of employment, *viz.* praising, loving, and delighting in God. There is no groaning, sighing, searching, or watching-work, in that state.

9. The most illuminated believers on earth have but dark and crude apprehensions of Christ's intercession-work in heaven, or of the way and manner in which it is there performed by him. We know indeed that our High-priest is for us entered within the veil, Heb. vi. 20. That he appears in that most holy place for us, Heb. ix. 24. That he there represents his sufferings for us to God, standing before him as a lamb that had been slain, Rev. v. 6. That he offers up our prayers with his incense to God, Rev. viii. 3.

But the immediate intuition of the whole performance, by the person of Christ in heaven, the beholding of him in his work there, with the smiles and honours, the delight and satisfaction of the Father in his person and work. Certainly, this must be a far different thing, and what must make more deep and suitable impressions upon our hearts than ever the most affecting view of them by faith at this distance, could do.

10. *In such ravishing sights and joyful ascriptions of glory to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for evermore, all the separated spirits of the just are employed and wholly taken up in heaven, as they come in their several times thither; and will be so employed in that temple-service unto the end of the world, when Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to his Father, and thenceforth God shall be all in all.*

The illustration and confirmation of this assertion we have in these two or three particulars.

(1.) That all the spirits of just men, from the beginning of the world, until Christ's ascension into heaven, did enter into heaven, as a place of rest, as a city prepared for them of God, Heb. xi. 16. and did enjoy blessedness and glory there. But yet there seems to be an alteration even in heaven itself, since the ascension of Christ into it, and such an alteration as advanceth the glory thereof both to angels and saints. "Heaven itself (saith one \* who is now there) ' was not what it is, before the entrance of Christ into the sanctuary for the administration of his office. Neither the saints departed, nor the angels themselves, were participant of that glory ' which now they are. Neither yet doth this argue any defect in ' heaven, or the state thereof in its primitive constitution; For ' the perfection of any state hath respect unto that order of things ' which it is originally suited unto. Take all things in the order ' of the first creation, and in respect thereunto, heaven was perfect in glory from the beginning, &c.

' Whatever was their rest, refreshment, and blessedness; whatever were their enjoyments of the presence of God, yet was there ' no throne of grace erected in heaven, no high-priest appearing ' before it, no lamb as it had been slain, no joint ascription of ' glory unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb ' for ever; † *God having ordained some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect*, Heb. xi. 40.

Now both the angels and saints in heaven, do behold Christ in his priestly office within that sanctuary; a sight never seen in heaven before.

\* Dr. Owen's *Christologia*, p. 158—355.

† *Priusquam ad nostra tempora preventum est.* Camero.

(2.) This frame of heavenly worship will continue as it is unto the end of the world, and then another alteration will be made in the manner of his dispensatory kingdom; "For then he must deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; and then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all," as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28. So that as the present state of heaven is not, in all respects, what it was before Christ's ascension thither; so after the consummation of the mediatorial kingdom, and the gathering of all the elect into glory, it will not in all respects be what now it is.

Christ will never cease to be the immediate head of the whole glorified creation. God having gathered all the elect, both angels and men, unto a head in him, and he being the knot and centre of that collective body, the whole frame of the glorified church would be dissolved, should he lose his relation of a head to it. Yea, I doubt not but he will for ever continue to be the medium of communion betwixt God and his glorified church: God will still communicate himself to us through Christ, and our adherence, love, and delight, will still be through Christ; In a word, whatever change shall be made, the person of Christ shall still continue to be the eternal object of divine glory, praise, and worship, Rev. xxii. 4.

But when he shall have gathered home all his elect to glory, he will resign his present dispensatory \* kingdom, and become subject (*as man, and as head of that body which he purchased*) to his Father himself, "that God may be all in all," as it is 1 Cor. xv. 28.

(1.) *All in all*, that is, all the saints shall be filled, and abundantly satisfied, in and from God alone; there shall be no emptiness, no want, no complaint: For, as there is water enough in one sea to fill all rivers, light enough in one sun to illuminate all the world; so all souls shall be eternally filled, satisfied and blessed in one God. Surely, there is enough in God for millions of souls. For if there be enough in God for all the angels, Mat. xviii. 10. yea, enough in God for Jesus Christ, Col. i. 19. there must be enough for all our souls. The capacity of angels is larger than ours; the capacity of Christ is larger than that of angels: He that fills them, can, and will therefore fill us, or be all in all to us.

(2.) *All in all*, that is, complete satisfaction to all the saints, in the absence of all other things, out of which they were wont to

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\* For if this dispensatory kingdom (of Christ) had never been delivered up, then he (viz. God) would never receive the full use of his natural kingdom. Junius.

suck some comfort and delight in this world. He will now be instead of all; eminently all without them. We shall suck no more sweetness out of food, sleep, relations, ordinances, &c. there will be no more need or use of them, than there is of candles in the sun-shine, Rev. xxii. 5.

(3.) *All in all*, that is, God only shall be loved, praised, and admired by all the saints; they shall love no creature out of God, but all in God, or rather God in them all. This is that blessed state to which all things tend, for which the angels and glorified souls in heaven long. Hence it is that there is joy in heaven upon the conversion of any poor sinner on earth; because thereby the body of Christ mystically advanceth towards its fulness and completeness, Luke xv. 10. No sooner is a poor soul struck by the word to the heart, and sent home crying, O sick! sick! sick of sin, and sick for Christ! but the news of it is quickly in heaven, and is matter of great joy there, because they wait as well as Christ for the time of consummation. To conclude, those that went first to heaven before Christ's ascension, were fully at rest in God, and blessed in his enjoyment, and yet upon Christ's ascension thither, their happiness was advanced: It is a new heaven, as it were, to feed their eyes upon the *man Christ Jesus* there. Those that now stand before the throne, ravished with the face of Christ, and ascribing glory to him for ever, are also in a most blessed state, and are filled with the joy of the Lord. And yet, two things still remain to be farther done, before they arrive at their consummation, viz. the restitution of their bodies, which yet lie in the dust, and the delivering up of the dispensatory kingdom, upon the coming in of the fullness of all their fellow saints; and after that no more alteration for ever, but they shall be both in soul and body for ever with the Lord. What tongue of man or angel can give us the complete emphasis of that word, *ever with the Lord?* or that, of God's being *all in all?* O what hath God prepared for them that love him!

*Prop. 12. It pleaseth God at some times, even in this life, to give some men the foresight and foretaste of that blessedness, which holy separated souls do now enjoy, and themselves shall shortly enjoy with God in glory.*

Specimens and earnestings of heaven are no unknown things upon earth. As the grapes of Eshcol, so the joy of heaven may be tasted before we come thither, and these foresights and prelibations of heaven are either,

1. Extraordinary, or
2. Ordinary.

1. Extraordinary, for the way and manner; when the soul is either, (1.) Caught from the body for a short time in an ecstasy,

when in a visional way heavenly things are presented to it; or, (2.) When the bodily eye is elevated and strengthened above its natural vigour and ability, to behold the astonishing objects of the other world.

(1.) Of the first sort and rank was that famous rapture of Paul, mentioned 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3. "I knew a man in Christ fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth) such an one caught up to the third heaven," &c. \* It is questionable indeed, whether the soul of the apostle was really separated from his body, whilst he suffered that ecstasy, or whether his senses were only laid, as it were, asleep for that time; he himself could not determine the question, much less can any other. But whether so or no, this seems evident, that his senses were for that time utterly useless to him. If his body was not dead, it was all one as if it had been so, for any use his soul then made of it.

† In ecstasies, all the senses and powers are idle, except the "understanding." His soul, for that time, seemed to be disjointed from the body, much as a flame of fire, which you shall sometimes see to play and hover at a distance from the wood, and then catching the fuel again. Probably, this was that trance he fell into, in the temple, when he was praying, mentioned in Acts xxi. 17.

In this rapture his soul ascended above this world, it was caught up into paradise, into the third heaven, the place in which Christ's soul was after his death; and there he heard those *αἰνεῖται ῥηματα*, unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter; For, alas! poor mortals cannot pronounce the *Shibboleth* of heaven. The heavenly inhabitants talk in no other dialect; but the language of heaven is not properly spoken by any but the inhabitants of heaven. Now Paul was not admitted into their society at that time, as he was at his death, but was only a spectator, a stander-by, as the angels are in the assemblies of the saints here on earth. But, O what a day was that day to his soul! It was as one of the days of heaven; no words could signify to another man what he felt, what he tasted in that hour. Such favours will not be indulged to many: he was a chosen vessel, and appointed to extraordinary sufferings for Christ, and it was necessary his supports and encouragements should be answerable.

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\* It does not appear with certainty, whether the soul of Paul was then separated from the body; seeing he himself owns his ignorance as to that matter: Hence we cannot determine what befel him as to abstraction from the senses, namely, whether the senses were extinct, his body being dead, through the separation of the soul: Or only sopited, the body not being dead. *Colleg. Conimbr. lib. 3. Art. 3. p. 512.*

† *In extasie feriari omnes potentias præter intellectum.* Abulen.

It was no less an extraordinary and wonderful vision, which Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and John had \*; such representations of God as overwhelmed them, and made nature faint under them; and no wonder, for if the eyes of creatures are so weak that they cannot directly behold such a glorious creature as the sun, how much less can they bear the glorious excellency and majesty of God?

(2.) And sometimes, without an ecstasy, representations of Christ, and the glory of heaven, have been made, and the very bodily eye fortified and elevated above its natural vigour and ability to behold him. Thus it was with Stephen at his martyrdom. Acts vii. 55, 56. "Who being full of the Holy Ghost, looked stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right-hand of God." This was not a sight of faith, but an extraordinary sight by the bodily eye, is evident, from its effect upon his outward man; it made his face to shine as the face of an angel.

2. There are also, beside this, ordinary, and more common foretastes of heaven, and the glory to come, with which many believers are favoured in this world; and such are those which come into the heart, upon the steady and more fixed views of the world to come, by faith, and the more raised spiritual actings of grace in duty. "Believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. *χαρὰ δὲ δόξα σμενῆ*, with a glorified joy, or a joy of the same kind and nature with the joy of glorified spirits, though in an inferior and allayed degree.

And yet, with the allowance of its allay and rebatement, it is like new wine put into old and crazy bottles, which is ready to make them fly, and would do so, should they be of any long continuance, "Stay me (saith the spouse) with flaggons, comfort me with apples, I am sick of love," Cant. ii. 5. The sickness was not the sickness of desire or of grief; of that she had complained before; but the sickness of love, i. e. she was ready to faint under the unsupportable weight of Christ's manifested and sealed love, not able to bear what she felt, pained with the love of Christ; and the desired cure speaks this to be her case, "Stay me with flaggons, comfort me with apples." As if she had said, Lord, support, and under-prop my soul, for it reels, staggers, and fails under the pressure and weight of thy love. Much like the case of a holy man, who cried out under the overwhelming sense of the love of Christ, shed abroad into his heart in prayer, Hold, Lord, hold, thy poor creature is a clay vessel, and can hold no more. Though these joys bring not the soul into a perfect *ecstasy*, they certainly

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\* Isa. vi. 1, 2. Ezek. i. 1. Dan. x. 8, 9. Rev. i. 17.

bring it as near as may be to it. Mr. \* Fox tells us of one Giles of Bruxels, a godly martyr, who in prison spent most of his time apart from the rest, in secret prayer; in which his soul was so ardent and intent, that he often forgot himself, and the time; and when he was called to meat, he neither saw nor heard those that stood by him, till he was lifted up by the arms: and then he would gladly speak to them, as one newly awaked out of a sweet sleep. These foretastes of heaven may, from the manner of their conveyance, be distinguished into,

1. Mediate. And

2. Immediate.

1. *Mediate*, in, and by the previous use and exercise of faith, heart-examination, &c. The Spirit of God concurring with, and blessing such duties as these, helps the soul by them to a sight of its interest in Christ, and the glory to come; which being gained, joy is no more under the soul's command. I have, with good assurance, this account of a minister, ' Who being alone in a journey, and willing to make the best improvement he could of that day's solitude, set himself to a close examination of the state of his soul, and then of the life to come, and the manner of its being, and living in heaven, in the views of all those things which are now pure objects of faith and hope. After a while, he perceived his thoughts begin to fix, and come closer to these great and astonishing things than was usual; and as his mind settled upon them, his affections began to rise with answerable liveliness and vigour.

' He therefore (whilst he was yet master of his own thoughts) lifted up his heart to God in a short ejaculation that God would so order it in his providence, that he might meet with no interruption from company, or any other accident in that journey; which was granted him: For, in all that day's journey, he neither met, overtook, or was overtaken by any. Thus going on his way, his thoughts began to swell, and rise higher and higher, like the waters in Ezekiel's vision, till at last they became an overflowing flood. Such was the intention of his mind, such the ravishing tastes of heavenly joys, and such the full assurance of his interest therein, that he utterly lost a sight and sense of this world, and all the concerns thereof; and, for some hours, knew no more where he was, than if he had been in a deep sleep upon his bed. At last he began to perceive himself very faint, and almost choaked with blood, which running in abundance from his nose, had coloured his clothes and his horse from the shoulder to the hoof. He found himself almost spent, and nature to faint under the pres-

\* Acts and Mon. p. 811.

‘ sure of joy unspeakable and insupportable; and at last, perceiv-  
 ‘ ing a spring of water in his way, he, with some difficulty, alight-  
 ‘ ed to cleanse and cool his face and hands, which were drenched  
 ‘ in blood, tears, and sweat.

‘ By that spring he sat down and washed, earnestly desiring, if  
 ‘ it were the pleasure of God, that it might be his parting place  
 ‘ from this world: He said, death had the most amiable face in his  
 ‘ eye, that ever he beheld, except the face of Jesus Christ, which  
 ‘ made it so; and that he could not remember (though he believed  
 ‘ he should die there) that he had one thought of his dear wife, or  
 ‘ children, or any other earthly concernment.

‘ But having drank of that spring, his spirits revived, the blood  
 ‘ stanch'd, and he mounted his horse again; and on he went in the  
 ‘ same frame of spirit, till he had finished a journey of near thirty  
 ‘ miles, and came at night to his inn, where, being come, he greatly  
 ‘ admired how he came thither, that his horse, without his direc-  
 ‘ tion had brought him thither, and that he fell not all that day,  
 ‘ which passed not without several trances, of considerable conti-  
 ‘ nuance.

‘ Being alighted, the innkeeper came to him, with some astonish-  
 ‘ ment, (being acquainted with him formerly) O Sir, said he, what  
 ‘ is the matter with you? You look like a dead man. Friend, re-  
 ‘ plied he, I was never better in my life. Shew me my chamber,  
 ‘ cause my cloak to be cleansed, burn me a little wine, and that is  
 ‘ all I desire of you for the present. Accordingly it was done, and  
 ‘ a supper sent up, which he could not touch; but requested of the  
 ‘ people that they would not trouble or disturb him for that night.  
 ‘ All this night passed without one wink of sleep, though he never  
 ‘ had a sweeter night’s rest in all his life. Still, still the joy of the  
 ‘ Lord overflowed him, and he seem'd to be an inhabitant of the  
 ‘ other world. The next morning being come, he was early on  
 ‘ horseback again, fearing the divertisement in the inn might be-  
 ‘ reave him of his joy; for he said it was now with him, as with a  
 ‘ man that carries a rich treasure about him, who suspects every  
 ‘ *passenger* to be a *thief*: But within a few hours he was sensible  
 ‘ of the ebbing of the tide, and before night, though there was a  
 ‘ heavenly serenity and sweet peace upon his spirit, which continued  
 ‘ long with him, yet the transports of joy were over, and the fine  
 ‘ edge of his delight blunted. He many years after called that day  
 ‘ one of the days of heaven, and profess'd he understood more of  
 ‘ the light of heaven by it, than by all the books he ever read, or  
 ‘ discourses he ever had entertained about it.’ This was indeed,  
 an extraordinary fore-taste of heaven for degree, but it came in the  
 ordinary way and method of faith and meditation.

There are also immediate illapses of heavenly joy in the hearts of believers at some times; of which we may say as the prophet doth of the dew and rain, "that it tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men;" a surprising light and joy, like that, Cant. vi. 12. "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of "Aminadab."

There is a witness of the Spirit, distinct from that of water and blood, 1 John v. 8. that is, a witness, or sealing, which comes not in an argumentative way, by reasoning from either justification or sanctification, but seems to come immediately from the Spirit. I know both sorts of testimonies, how clear and sweet soever they are for the present, are liable afterwards to be called into question; but certainly, during the abode of them upon the soul, they are no less than *a short salvation*, a real participation of the joy of the Lord. And that which makes them so ravishing and transporting is,

(1.) The infinite weight with which the concerns of eternity lie upon the hearts and thoughts of the people of God; nothing lies so near to their spirits in all the world, as the matters of salvation do, and have still done ever since God thoroughly awakened them in their first effectual conviction. It is said of Luther, "\* There "was such a strong impression of God upon his spirit, in his first "conviction, that there was neither heat, nor blood, nor sense, "nor speech discernible in him." Though it rise to that height but in a few, yet it settles into a deep, serious, and most solemn sense and solicitude in all. This heightens the joy.

(2.) The restlessness of the soul, whilst matters of salvation hang in a dubious suspense, must needs proportionably overflow it with joy, when God shall clear it. It was the saying of one, and is the sense of many more, "I have borne (said she) seven children, and they have all cost me dear; yet could I be well content to bear them all over again, for one glimpse of the love of God to my soul." This heightens the joy above expression.

And now, having explained the substance of the doctrine in these twelve *propositions*, it remains, that, as a *mantissa*, or cast upon the whole, I farther clear what belongs to this subject, in the solution of several *queries* about the soul, in its unbodied and separated state; and though the nature of some of these *queries* may seem too curious, yet I shall labour to speak according to the rules of sobriety, and contain myself within the line of modesty, in what I shall speak about them. And the first is this;

Query 1. *Whether any notion or conception can be formed of a*

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\* *Nec calor, nec sanguis, nec sensus, nec vox superesset.* Ep. ad. Melanct.

*separate soul; And if so, how we may be assisted duly to form it, and conceive of it?*

*Sol. 1.* It must be acknowledged not only very difficult, but an impossible task, for a soul immersed in matter, and so unacquainted with its own nature and powers, as it is in its embodied state, to gain a perfect, clear, and adequate conception of what it shall be in the world to come. Expect not then a perfect image, much less any magnificent draught of this excellent creature; this would be the same thing, as to go about to paint the sun in its glory, motions, and influences with a pencil. I shall think I have done enough, if I can but give you any umbrage, or faint representation of this sublime and spiritual being, and the manner of its subsisting and acting out of the body. For, seeing it is by nature invisible, and in most of its actions (whilst it is in the state of composition) it makes the same use of the body and natural spirits, that a scribe doth of his pen and ink, without which he cannot decypher the characters which are formed in his fancy; it must needs be difficult to conceive how it subsists and acts in a separate state.

*Sol. 2.* But though we acknowledge it to be a great difficulty to trace it beyond the limits of this world, though we perceive nothing to depart from the body at the instant of its expiration, but a puff of breath which vanishes like smoke into the air: and though atheistical\* wits daringly pronounce an immaterial substance to be a mere jargon, a contradiction in *terminis*; which, being joined together, destroy one another: yet all this doth not make the notion of a separate soul impossible, much less undermine its existence in its unbodied and lonely state; the scriptures having so abundantly obviated all these atheistical suggestions by so many plain discoveries of the happiness of some, and misery of others after this life; yea, my text answers us, that death is so far from destroying or annihilating, that it perfects the spirits of the just.

*Sol. 3.* There can be no more difficulty in conceiving of a separate soul, than there is in conceiving of an angel. For it is certain, that a separated soul, and an angel, are the liveliest and clearest representations of each other in the whole number of created beings †. Some make the difference betwixt them little more than of a sword in the scabbard, from one that is naked. A soul is but a *genius* in the body, and a *genius* (or angel) is a soul out of the body. An angel (saith another, is a complete and perfect soul, a soul an imperfect and incomplete angel.

The separate soul doth not become an angel by putting off the

\* Hobb's Leviathan, chap. xxxvi.

† Dr. More's immortality of the soul, l. 2. c. 17. § 4, et 8. *Bell. de Ascen. mentis:*

body; they are, and still will be divers species: but in this they agree, that in their common nature they are both spirits, that is, immaterial substances, endued with understanding, will, and active powers. And I know not why the one should not be as intelligible as the other; or if there be any advantage, the soul certainly must have it, seeing our acquaintance with souls is much more intimate than with angels. Angels indeed have larger capacities, and have no natural inclination to be embodied as souls have; but their common nature, as they are spirits are the same: and if we can conceive of one we may also of the other.

*Sol. 4.* But the difficulty seems to lie in this, how the soul can subsist alone without a body; and how the habits of grace, which were infused into it in this life by sanctification, do inhere in it, or can be reduced into act by it, when it hath no bodily organs to work by.

As to the first, there is no difficulty at all, if we once rightly apprehend what is meant, when we call it a spiritual substance; that is, a being by itself, independent upon any other creature as to its existence, as was opened before: the soul depends not for its life upon the body, but the body upon the soul. It is the same sword when it is drawn, as it was when sheathed in its scabbard; the soul is as much itself, when separated from the body, as it was when united with it; its being is independent on it, it can live and act in a body, and it can do so without it; for it is a distinct being from its body; a substantial being itself. And,

*Sol. 5.* As for the habits of grace which accompany it to heaven, it would much facilitate our apprehensions of it, if we but compare acquired and infused habits with each other. It is true, they are of different natures and originals, but the soul is the subject of them both, and their inhesion and improvement is much after the same manner.

Take we then an acquired habit into consideration, which is nothing else but a permanent quality rendering the subject of it prompt and ready to perform a work with ease: suppose that of music or writing, and we shall find these habits to be safely lodged in the soul, as well when the body is laid into the deepest sleep, which is the image of death, as when it is awake and most active; for they are both artists when asleep, and need learn no new rules to play or write when you awake them; which shews the habits to be permanently rooted in their minds.

Infused habits of grace are as deeply rooted in the soul, yea, deeper than any acquired habits can be: for when knowledge and tongues shall be done away, love abideth, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. viz. after death, when the body is asleep in the grave.

*Sol.* 6. Add hereto, that these habits of grace are inseparably rooted or lodged in a subject, which is by nature a *spirit*, that is to say, an intelligent, active being, able to use its faculties of understanding \*, will, and affections, and consequently, in their use, to reduce these habits of grace inherent in them, into act, without the help of the body: for to suppose otherwise, were to despirit it, and destroy the very nature of it.

Moreover, let the spirit, thus furnished with gracious habits, be now considered in separation from the body, in which state it enjoyeth and rejoiceth in a double privilege it never had before, viz. perfection both of itself, and of its graces, and the nearest access to God it is capable of, 2 Cor. v. 6. "Absent from the body, and present with the Lord." It hath now no body to clog or cloud it, nor can it complain of distance from God as it did in this world. Oh! at what rate must we conceive the love and delight of a soul under these great advantages, to cast out their very spirits, as I may say, in their glorious activities and exercises! Well then, here you find 'a spirit naturally endued with understanding, will, and affections: in these faculties and affections, the habits of grace are permanently rooted, which therefore accompany it in its ascension to glory: an ability to use and exercise these faculties and graces, and that in a more excellent degree and manner, than it did or could in this world, the subject and habits inherent being now both made perfect: the clog of flesh knocked off, and all distance from God removed, by its coming home to him, even as near as the capacity of the soul can admit. Conceive such a spirit so qualified, now ranked in its proper order among innumerable other holy and blessed spirits, which surround the throne of God, beholding his face with infinite delectation, and acting all its powers and grace to the highest, in worshipping, praising, loving, and admiring him that sitteth on the throne, and the Lamb for evermore.' And then you have a true, though imperfect idea or notion of the spirit of a *just man made perfect*.

I will not here make use of the other glass to represent a damned soul, separate for a time from its body, and for ever from the Lord: that will be shewn you in its proper place.

*Query 2. Whether there be any difference in the separation of gracious souls from their bodies? And if so, in what particulars doth the difference appear?*

*Sol.* For the clear stating and satisfying this question, I will lay

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\* The understanding and will are the primary faculties of the soul, and therefore are called *inorganical*, because not fixed to any member of the body, as the sensitive appetite and loco-motive powers are to their proper organs. The soul therefore hath the free use and exercise of them in its separate state.

down some things negatively, and some things positively about it. On the negative part, I desire two things may be noted.

1. That there is no difference betwixt the separation of one gracious soul and another, in point of safety. Every regenerate soul is fully secured, in and by Jesus Christ, from the danger of perishing, and is out of hazard of the wrath to come.

This must needs be so, because all that are in Christ are equally justified by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, without difference, to them all; Rom. iii. 22. "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference:" by virtue whereof, they are all equally secured from wrath to come, one as well as another. As all that sailed with Paul, so all that die in Christ come safe to the shore of glory, and not one of them is lost. The sting of death smites none that are in Christ.

2. There is no difference betwixt the departing souls of just men, in respect of the supporting presence of God with them in that their hour of distress; that promise belongs to them all, Psal. xci. 15. "I will be with him in trouble," and so doth that, Heb. xiii. 5. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Their God is certainly with them all, to order the circumstances of their death, and all the occurrences of that day, to his glory, and their good. *Supports* I have, (said a good man in such an hour) though *suavities* I want; and so they have also who meet with the hardest conflict at death.

But notwithstanding their equality in these privileges, there is a great difference betwixt the departing souls of just men. And this difference is manifest both in the

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| 1. External | } circumstances of their death. |
| 2. Internal |                                 |

1. In the external circumstances of their death, all have not one and the same passage to heaven in all respects; for,

(1.) Some go thither by the ordinary road of a natural death from their beds, and the arms of lamenting friends, to the arms and bosom of Jesus Christ, but others swim through the Red-sea to Canaan: from a scaffold to the throne; from a gibbet or stake to their Father's house; from insulting enemies to their triumphant brethren, the palm-bearing multitude. This is a rough, but honourable way to glory.

(2.) Some lie long under the hand of death, before it dispatch them; it approaches them by slow and lingering paces, they feel every step of death distinctly as it comes on towards them; but others are favoured with a quick dispatch, a short passage from hence to glory. Hezekiah feared a pining sickness, Isa. xxviii. 10, 12. what he feared, many feel. O how many days, yea, weeks

and months, have many gracious souls dwelt upon the brink of the pit, crying, How long, Lord, how long?

The pains and agonies of death are more acute and sharp to some of God's people than to others: death is bitter in the most mild and gentle form of it. Two such dear and intimate friends as the soul and body are, cannot part without some tears, groans, or sighs; and those more deep and emphatical than the groans and sighs of the living use to be: but yet, comparatively speaking, the death of one, may be stiled sweet and easy to another's. Latimer and Ridley found it so, though burnt in the same flame.

In this respect all things come alike to all, and the same difference is found in the worst, as well as in the best men; some like sheep are laid in the grave, Psal. xlix. 14. others die in the bitterness of their soul, Job xxi. 25. and by this no man knows either love or hatred.

2. There are besides these, some remarkable internal differences in the dissolution of good men: the sum whereof is this.

1st. That some gracious souls have a very hard, strait, difficult entrance into heaven: just as it is with ships that sail by a very bare wind; all their art, care, and pains, will but just weather some head-land or cape: they steer fast by some dangerous rock or sand, and with a thousand fears and dangers, win their port at last. Saved they are, but yet to use the apostle's phrase, scarcely saved, or saved as by fire. And this difficulty ariseth to them from one, or all these causes.

(1.) It ordinarily ariseth from the weakness of their faith, which is in many souls, without either the light of evidence, or strength of reliance; neither able to dissolve their doubts nor steadily repose their hearts: and thus they die, much at the rate they lived, poor doubting, and cloudy, though gracious souls. They can neither speak much of the comfort of past experiences, nor of the present foretastes of heaven.

(2.) The violent assaults and batteries of temptations make the passage exceeding difficult to some. O the sharp conflicts and dreadful combats many poor souls endure upon a death-bed! O the charges of hypocrisy, fortified by neglects of duty, formality and by-ends in duty, falls into sin after conviction and humiliation, &c. all which the soul is apt to yield to, and admit the dreadful conclusion.

These are the last, and therefore oft-times the most violent conflicts. The malice of Satan will send them halting to heaven, if he cannot bar them out of it.

(3.) To conclude: The hiding of God's face, puts terror into the face of death, and makes a dying day, a dark and gloomy day.

All darkness disposes to fear, but none like inward darkness. They must like a ship in distress, venture into the harbour in the dark, though they see not their land-marks.

*2dly*, But others have the privilege of an *ευθανασία*, easy death, a comfortable and sweet passage into glory, through the broad gate of assurance, 2 Pet. i. 11. even an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom. What a difference doth God make, not only betwixt those that have grace, and those that have none, but betwixt gracious souls themselves in this matter: the things which usually make an easy passage to heaven are,

1. A pardon cleared, Isa. xxxiii. 24. The sense of pardon swallows up the sense of pain.

2. A heart weaned from this world, Heb. xi. 9, 13, 16. A heart loosed from the world, is a foot out of the snare. Mortified limbs are cut off from the body with little pain.

3. Fervent love to Christ, and longings to be with him, Phil. i. 23. He that loves Christ fervently, must needs loathe absence from Christ proportionably.

4. Purity and peace of conscience make a death-bed soft and easy. The strains and wounds of conscience, in the time of life, are so many thorns in our bed, or pillow, in the time of death, 1 John iii. 21. But integrity gives boldness.

5. The work of obedience faithfully finished, or a steady course of holiness throughout our life, is that which usually yields much peace and joy in death, Acts xx. 24.

6. But above all, the preference of the Comforter with us in that cloudy and dark day, turns it into one of the days of heaven, 1 Pet. iv. 14. And thus ye see, though all dying Christians be equally safe, and all supported, and carried through by the power of God; yet their farewells to the body are not alike cheerful. There are many external and internal circumstantial differences in the death of good men, as well as a substantial and essential difference betwixt all their deaths, and the death of a wicked man.

*Query 3. Whether any souls have notices and forewarnings given them by signs or predictions, in an extraordinary way of their approaching separation?*

The terms of this question need a little explanation. Let us therefore briefly consider what is meant by signs, what by predictions, and what by extraordinary signs and predictions.

“A sign \* is that which represents something else to us than “that which is seen or heard.” And a sign of death is that which gives notice to our minds that our departure is at hand.

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\* *Signum est quod aliud representat quam quod cernitur.*

“ A prediction \* is a forewarning of a person more plainly and expressly of any thing which is afterwards to fall out or come to pass;” and a prediction of death is an express notice or message, informing us of our own, or of another’s death, to the end the mind may be actually disposed to an expectation thereof.

Of signs, some are ordinary and natural, some extraordinary and supernatural, or at least preternatural.

There are natural symptoms and prognostics of death which are common to most dying persons, and by which physicians inform themselves and others of the state of the sick. These are out of this question, we have nothing to do with them here; but I am enquiring after extraordinary signs and predictions by words or things forewarning us immediately, or by others, of our approaching death. The question is, Whether such intimations of death be at any time truly given unto men? or, Whether we are to take them for fabulous reports, and superstitious fancies?

*For the negative, the following grounds are laid.*

*Reason 1.* The sufficient ordinary provision God hath made in this case, renders all such extraordinary notices and intimations of our death needless: and be sure the most wise God doth nothing in vain. We have three standing, ordinary, and sufficient means to premonish us of our departure hence, viz. the scriptures, reason, and daily examples of mortality before our eyes. The scriptures tell us, our life is but “ a vapour, which appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away, James iv. 14. That our “ days are but as an hand-breadth,” and that “ every man in his “ best estate is vanity,” Psal. xxxix. 5.

Reason tells us, so feeble a tie as our breath is can never secure our lives long. “ The living know that they must die,” Eccl. ix. 5. The radical moisture, which is daily consuming by the flame of life, must needs be spent ere long.

And all the graves we see opened so frequently, are sufficient warnings, that we ourselves must shortly follow. Therefore, as there was no need of manna, when bread might be had in an ordinary way, so neither is there need of extraordinary signs, when God hath abundantly furnished us with standing and ordinary means for this purpose.

*Reason 2.* And as the scriptures render such signs needless, so they seem to be directly against them. Christ commands us to “ watch, because we know not in what hour the Lord cometh.” Yea, even Isaac himself, an extraordinary person, and endowed with a spirit of prophecy, whereby he foretold the condition of his

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† *Prædicere est aliquem de re aliqua eventura præmonere.*

sons after him, yet it is said, Gen. xxvii. 2. "That he knew not the day of his death." And it is not reasonable to think that common persons should know that, which extraordinary and prophetic persons knew not.

*Reason 3.* All mankind belong either to God or the devil. To such as belong to God, such extraordinary warnings are needless, for they have a watchful principle within them which continually prompts them to mind their change; and besides death cannot endanger those that are in Christ, how suddenly or unexpectedly soever it should befall them.

And for wicked men, it cannot be thought God should favour and privilege them in this matter above his own children: and as for Satan he knows not the time of their death himself: and if he did, it would thwart his design and interest to discover it to them, Luke xi. 21. So that upon the whole, it should seem such signs and predictions are of no use, and the relations and reports of them fabulous.

But though these reasons make the common and daily use of such signs and predictions needless, yet they destroy not the credibility of them in some cases and at some times. For,

1. There are recorded instances in scripture of premonitions and predictions of the death of persons. Thus the death of Abijah was foretold to his mother by the prophet, and the precise hour thereof which fell out answerably, 1 Kings xiv. 6, 12. And thus the death of the king of Assyria was foretold exactly both as to kind and place, Isa. xxxvii. 7,—37, 38.

2. These predictions serve to other ends and uses sometimes, than the preparation of the persons warned, even to display the fore-knowledge, power, and justice of God, in marking out his enemies for ruin. And, thus, "the Lord is known by the judgments that he executeth," Psalm ix. 16.

Thus Mr. Knox predicted the very place and manner of the death of the laird of Grange\*. "You have sometimes seen the courage and constancy of the laird of Grange in the cause of God, and now that unhappy man is casting himself away. I pray you, go to him from me, (said Mr. Knox) and tell him, that unless he forsake that wicked course he is in, the rock wherein he confideth shall not defend him, nor the carnal wisdom of that man, (meaning the young Leshington) whom he counteth half a God, shall help him: but he shall be shamefully pulled out of that nest, and his carcase hung before the sun." And even so it fell out in the following year, when the castle was taken, and his body hanged out

\* Clark's Lives, p. 277.

before the sun. Thus God exactly fulfilled the prediction of his death.

The same Mr. Knox, in the year 1566, being in the pulpit at Edinburgh, upon the Lord's day, a paper was given up to him, among many others, wherein these words were scoffingly written concerning the earl of Murray, who was slain the day before,—“Take up the man whom ye accounted another God.” At the end of the sermon, Mr. Knox bewailed the loss that the church and state had by the death of that virtuous man; and then added, “There is one in this company that makes this horrible murder the subject of his mirth, for which all good men should be sorry; but I tell him, he shall die where there shall be none to lament him.” The man that wrote this paper was one Thomas Metellan, a young gentleman, who shortly after, in his travels, died in Italy, having none to assist or lament him.

3. And others have had premonitions and signs of their own deaths, which accordingly fell out. And these premonitions have been given them, sometimes by strong irresistible impressions upon their minds, sometimes in dreams, and sometimes by unusual elevations of their spirits in duties of communion with God.

(1.) Some have had strong and irresistible impressions of their approaching change, made upon their minds. So had Sir Anthony Wingfield, who was slain at Brest, anno 1594\*. At his undertaking of that expedition, he was strongly persuaded it would be his death; and therefore so settled and disposed of his estate, as one that never reckoned to return again. And the day before he died, he took order for the payment of his debts, as one that strongly presaged the time was now at hand; which accordingly fell out the next day.

Much of the same nature was that of the late earl of Marlborough, who fell in the Holland war. He not only presaged his own fall in that encounter, (which was exactly answered in the event) but left behind him that memorable and excellent letter, which evidenced to all the world what deep and fixed apprehensions of eternity it had left upon his spirits. Many examples of this nature might be produced, of such as have in their perfect health, foretold their own death; and others who have dropt such passages as were afterwards better understood by their sorrowful friends, than when they first dropt from their lips.

(2.) Others have been premonished of their death by dreams, sometimes their own, and sometimes others. The learned and judicious Amyraldus † gives us this well attested relation of Lewis of

\* Sir John Norris's expedition, p. 46.

† Amyraldus, of divine dreams, p. 122, 125.

Bourbon, That a little before his journey from Dreux, he dreamed that he had fought three successful battles, wherein his three great enemies were slain, but that at last he himself was mortally wounded; and that after they were laid one upon another, he also was laid upon the dead bodies. The event was remarkable; for the Mareschal of St. Andree was killed at Dreux, the duke of Guise at Orleans, the constable of Montmorency at St. Denis: and this was the triumvirate, which had sworn the ruin of those of the reformed religion, and the destruction of that prince. At last he himself was slain at Balsac, as if there had been a continuation of deaths and funerals.

Suetonius in the life of Julius Cæsar, tells us, that the night before he was slain, he had divers premonitions thereof, for that night all the doors and windows of his chamber flew open; his wife also dreamed that Cæsar was slain, and that she had him in her arms. The next day he was slain in Pompey's court, having received 23 wounds in his body.

Pamelius \* in the life of Cyprian, tells us for a most certain and well attested truth, that upon his first entrance into Garubis (the place of his banishment) it was revealed to him in a dream, or vision, that upon that very day twelve-month he should be consummate: which accordingly fell out; for a little before the time prefixed, there came suddenly two apparitors to bring him before the new proconsul Galeius, by whom he was condemned, as having been a standard-bearer of his sect, and an enemy of the gods. Whereupon he was condemned to be beheaded, a multitude of Christians following him, crying, Let us die together with him.

And as remarkable is that recorded by the learned and ingenious Dr. Sterne † of Mr. Usher of Ireland, a man, saith he, of great integrity, dear to others by his merits, and my kinsman in blood, who upon the 8th day of July, 1657, went from this to a better world. About four of the clock the day before he died, a matron who died a little before, and whilst living was dear to Mr. Usher, appeared to him in his sleep, and invited him to sup with her the next night: he at first denied her, but she more vehemently pressing her request on him, at last he consented, and that very night he died.

I have also the fullest assurance that can be of the truth of this following narrative. A person yet living was greatly concerned about the welfare of his dear father and mother, who were both shut up in London, in the time of the great contagion in 1665. Many let-

\* *Pamelius in vita Cypriani.*

† Dr. Sterne's *dissertatio de morte*, p. 165.

fers he sent to them, and many hearty prayers to heaven for them. But about a fortnight before they were infected, he fell about break of day into this dream, That he was in a great inn which was full of company, and being very desirous to find a private room, where he might seek God for his parents life, he went from room to room, but found company in them all; at last, casting his eye into a little chamber which was empty, he went into it, locked the door, kneeled down by the out-side of the bed, fixing his eyes upon the plastered wall, within side the bed: and whilst he was vehemently begging of God the life of his friends, there appeared upon the plaster of the wall before him, the sun and moon shining in their full strength. The sight at first amazed and discomposed him so far, that he could not continue his prayer, but kept his eye fixed upon the body of the sun; at last a small line or ring of black, no bigger than that of a text pen, circled the sun, which increasing sensibly, eclipsed in a little time the whole body of it, and turned it into a blackish colour; which done, the figure of the sun was immediately changed into a perfect death's head, and after a little while vanished quite away. The moon still continued shining as before; but while he intently beheld it, it also darkened in like manner, and turned also into another death's head, and vanished. This made so great an impression upon the beholder's mind, that he immediately awaked in confusion and perplexity of thoughts about his dream; and awaking his wife, related the particulars to her with much emotion and concernment; but how to apply it, he could not presently tell, only he was satisfied that the dream was of an extraordinary nature: at last Joseph's dream came to his thoughts with the like emblems, and their interpretation; which fully satisfied him that God had warned and prepared him thereby for a sudden parting with his dear relations; which answerably fell out in the same order, his father dying that day fortnight following, and his mother just a month afterwards.

I know there is much vanity in dreams; and yet I am fully satisfied, some are weighty, significant and declarative of the purposes of God.

(3.) *Lastly*, An unusual and extraordinary elevation of the soul to God, and enlargement in communion with him, hath been a signifying forerunner of the death of some good men; for as the body hath its *levamen anterferale*, lightning before death, and more vegete and brisk a little before its dissolution, so it is sometimes with the soul also. I have known some persons to arrive on a sudden to such heights of love to God, and vehement longings to be dissolved, that they might be with Christ, that I could not but look upon it, as Christ did upon the box of ointment, as

done against their death: and so indeed it hath proved in the event.

Thus it was with that renowned saint, Mr. Brewen of Stapleford; as he excelled others in the holiness of his life, so much he excelled himself towards his death, his motions towards heaven being then most vigorous and quick. The day before his last sickness, he had such extraordinary enlargements of heart in his closet-duty, that he seemed to forget all the concernments of his body, and this lower world; and when his wife told him, Sir, I fear you have done yourself hurt with rising so early; he answered, "If you had seen such glorious things as I saw this morning in private prayer with God, you would not have said so; for they were so wonderful and unspeakable, that whether I was in the body, or out of the body, with Paul, I cannot tell."

And so it was with the learned and holy Mr. Rivet, who seemed as a man in heaven, just before he went thither; and so it hath been with thousands besides these. I confess it is not the lot of every gracious soul (as was shewed you in the last question) nor doth it make any difference as to the safety of the soul, whatever it makes as to comfort. Let all therefore labour to make sure their union with Christ, and live in the daily exercises of grace, in the duties of religion; and then, though God should give them no such extraordinary warning one way or other, they shall never be surprised by death to their loss, let it come never so unexpectedly upon them.

*Quest.* It may be also queried, whether Satan, by his instruments, may not foretel the death of some men? How else did the witch of Endor foretel the death of Saul? and the soothsayers the death of Cæsar upon the *Ides*, i. e. the fifteenth day of March, which was the fatal day to him?

*Sol.* Foreknowledge of things to come, which appear not in their next causes, is certainly the Lord's prerogative, Isa. xli. 23. Whatever, therefore, Satan doth in this matter, must be done either by conjecture or commission. As to the case of Saul, it is not to be questioned but that he, knowing the kingdom was made to David by promise, and that the Lord was departed from Saul, and seeing how near the armies were to a battle, might strongly conjecture and conclude, and accordingly tell him, "To-morrow thou shalt be with me," 1 Sam. xxviii. 19.

And so for the death of Cæsar, the devil knew the conspiracy was strong against him, and the plot laid for that day; and so it was both easy for him to reveal it to the soothsayers, and his interest to do it, thereby to bring that cursed art into reputation.

As for other signs and forewarnings of death, by the unusual resort of doleful creatures, as *owls* and *ravens*, vulgarly accounted

ominous; *Wall-watches*, upon this account called *death-watches*; and the eating of wearing apparel by rats; I look upon them generally as superstitious fancies, not worthy to be regarded among Christians. God may, but I know not what ground we have to believe, that he doth commission such creatures to bring us the message of death from him. To conclude, therefore,

Let no man expect or depend upon such extraordinary premonitions and warnings of his change, and neglect his daily work and duty of preparation for it. We have warnings in the word, in the examples of mortality frequently before us, in all the diseases and decays we often feel in our own bodies; and by the signs of the times, which threatens death and desolation. Be ye therefore always ready, for ye know not in what watch of the night your Lord cometh.

Query 4. *Whether separated souls have any knowledge of, or commerce or intercourse with men in this life; and if not, what is to be thought of the apparitions of the dead?*

1. *By separated souls*, understand the departed souls, both of godly and ungodly, indifferently and not as it is restrained to one sort only in the text; for of both it is pretended there are frequent apparitions after death.

2. By the knowledge such souls are supposed to have after death both of persons and things in this lower world, we understand not a general knowledge, which one sort of them have of the state and condition of the church militant on earth; for this, we think, cannot be denied to the spirits of the just made perfect, seeing they are still fellow-members with us of the same mystical body of Christ; do behold our High-priest appearing before God, offering up our prayers for us; and long for the consummation of the body of Christ, as well as cry for vengeance against the persecutors thereof, Rev. vi. 10. Nor do I think these words, Isa. lxiii. 16. repugnant hereunto: "Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledgeth us not;" for I look upon the import of those words only as an humble acknowledgment of their defection, which rendered them unworthy that their forefathers should own, or acknowledge them any more for their children; and not as implying their utter ignorance, or total oblivion of the church's state on earth.

But I here understand such a particular knowledge of our personal states and conditions, as they once had when they dwelt among us in the body; and this seems to be denied them by those scriptures alleged against it in the margin below\*.

3. By commerce and intercourse; understand not their intercession with God for us, which the Papists affirm; but their con-

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\* Job xiv. 21. Eccles. ix. 5, 6. John xix. 25.

cernments about our natural, or civil interest in this world, so as to be useful to our persons, by warning us of death, or dangers; or to our estates, by disquieting such as wrong us, in not fulfilling the wills and testaments they once made; or by giving us notice, by words or signs, of the death of our friends, who died at a distance from us, or come to some violent and untimely end.

The sense of the terms being thus determined, and the question so stated, I will, for the resolution of it, give you,

I. The strength of what I find offered for the affirmative.

II. The general concessions, or what may be granted.

III. My own judgment about it, with the grounds thereof.

I. Some there are, even among the learned and judicious, who are for the affirmative part of the question, and do with much confidence assert, that departed souls both know our particular concerns in this world, and intermeddle with them: confirming their assertion both by reasons to convince us that it may be so, and a variety of instances that it is so. I will produce both the one and the other, and give them a due consideration and censure.

The substance of what is pleaded for the affirmative, I find thus collected and improved by \* Dr. Sterne, a learned physician in Ireland, in his book entitled, *A Dissertation concerning Death*; where he offers us these four arguments, to convince that it is possible for departed souls thus to appear, and perform such offices for their friends on earth.

“*Arg.* 1. † Angels by command from God, are useful and helpful to men; they are the saints’ guardians, and it is probable that each Christian hath his peculiar angel: whence it will follow, that separated souls do mingle themselves with human affairs, and that because they are angels, at least equal unto angels, Luke xx. 36. Besides, they being spirits that were once embodied, must needs be more fit for this employment, than those who never had any tie at all to a body;” unless we can imagine them to have lost the remembrance of all that ever they did, and suffered in the body; as also that they put off, and buried all their affections to us with their bodies, which is hard to think. Even as Christ our High-priest is qualified for that office, above all others in heaven, because he once dwelt, and suffered in a body, like ours, here upon earth; so separated souls are

\* *Dissertatio de morte, a p. 208. ad p. 214.*

† (1.) *Angeli jussu Dei hominibus opitulantur, haudquaquam ambiguntur; unde animas a corpore solutas sese rebus humanis miscere comprobari videtur. Sequelæ fundamentum duplex est, prius, quod animæ separatae angeli sunt, saltem angelis æquales: posterius, quod magis idonei sunt quibus officium generi humano succurrendi demandetur, quam spiritus inter quos et corpus nullus unquam intercessit nexus, &c.*

qualified above all other spirits, who are unrelated to bodies of flesh.

“*Arg.* 2. \* The church triumphant and militant are but one body; and how much better the triumphant are than the militant, by so much the more propense they are to succour and help the other that stand in need of it.” This being the case, we cannot but imagine but they are inclined to perform all good offices for us; for else they should do less for us now, being in a state of the highest perfection in heaven, than they did, or were willing to do, in their imperfect state on earth.

“*Arg.* 3. † A will, or testament (as Ulpian defines it) is the just sentence, or declaration of our minds, concerning that which we would have done after our decease. These testaments have always, and among all nations, been religiously observed, as the apostle witnesseth, Gal. iii. 15. The reasons of this so religious observance are a presumption, that those who made them when alive, continue in the same mind and will after death; that they take care for the fulfilling of them; and revenge the non-performance upon the unjust executors.” For otherwise there can be no reason why so great a stress should be laid upon the will of the dead, if they care not whether their wills be performed or no. Why should we be solicitous and studious about it, and pay so great a reverence to it, but upon this account?

“*Arg.* 4. † The scriptures forbid consultations with the dead, Deut. xviii. 10, 11. This prohibition supposeth some did consult them, and received answers from them; which must needs imply some commerce betwixt the living, and the souls that are departed:” And, considering he had before forbidden their consultation with the devil, it appears that here we must needs understand the very souls of the dead, and not the devil personating them only.

These are the arguments of this learned author for the affirmative, which he closes with two necessary cautions: *First*, That this

\* (2.) *Ecclesia est corpus unum, cujus membra quo meliora, eo magis ad aliis ejusdem corporis membris opitulandum sunt propensa: hujus autem corporis pars altera est triumphans in cælis, altera militans in terris: Illa melior, hæc opis magis indiga, &c.*

† (5.) *Testamentum (Ulpiano definiente) est voluntatis nostræ justa sententia de eo quod post mortem nostram fieri volumus. Testamentum autem tanquam res sacra ab omnibus gentibus religiose observatur, Gal. iii. 15. Ratio autem tam religiosæ tanque universalis observantiæ est, quoniam animas eorum qui Testamenta condiderant, etiam suam post mortem, in eadem voluntate perseverare, ejus complementa curare, ac deinceps ejus vel executrices, vel non præstitæ vindices esse præsumitur.*

‡ (4.) *In sacris scripturis consulere mortuos passim prohibetur, ut Deut. xviii. 10, 11. Sed si homines a mortuis non suscitentur, legibus haud opus est; et si mortui rogati non aliquando responderent, ab hominibus haudquam consulerentur. Stern. de Morte, ubi sup.*

lays no foundation for religious worship, or invocation of departed souls: those that are helpful to us, are not therefore to be worshipped. *Secondly*, That we must acknowledge ourselves to be under much darkness, as to the way and manner of the converse of spirits with us.

The most acute and learned \* Dr. More, I find of the same opinion. He affirms, that departed souls are capable of a vital union with an airy vehicle (or body) in which they can easily move from place to place, and appear to the living; and act in their affairs, as in detecting murders, rebuking injurious executors, visiting and counselling their wives and children, forewarning them of such and such courses, &c. To which we may add, the profession of the spirit thus appearing, of being the soul of such a one; as also, the similitude of the person: And all this a-do is in things very just and serious, unfit for a devil, with that care and kindness to promote; and as unfit for a good genius; it being below so noble a creature to tell a lie. All these things put together and rightly weighed, the violence of prejudice not pulling down the balance, I dare appeal (saith he) to any, whether it will not be certainly carried for the present cause? And whether any indifferent judge ought not to conclude, if these stories, which are so frequent every where, and in all ages, concerning the ghosts of men appearing, be but true, that it is true also, that they are their ghosts, &c.

These are the strongest arguments I meet with, for the affirmative, that the matter is possible, it may be so; and then adding the credible instances that it is so, the matter seems to be determined.

To this purpose Dr. Sterne alleges several instances out of scripture; as that appearance of Samuel unto Saul, and the conference betwixt them: as also, the letters that were sent to Jehoram by Elijah, and that Elijah was translated to heaven; as appears by comparing 2 Chron. xxi. 12. with 2 Kings iii. 11. in which it appears, that in Jehoshaphat's time, who preceded this Jehoram, Elijah was dead; and yet, in Jehoram's time, who succeeded him, he is said to receive letters from Elijah. The appearance and conference also betwixt Christ, and Moses, and Elias, upon the mount, in the presence of some of the disciples, confirm it, Mat. xvii. 3.

These are the principal scripture-instances; others are almost innumerable. From among that vast heap, I will select some few, that are most material, and of clearest credit.

“It is a thing (saith \* my author) both known and frequent,

\* Dr. More's *Immortality of the Soul*, b. 2. c. 16.

† *Insularum Scoticarum incolæ ad ægros, cum pro deploratis habentur, accedunt, et*

“ that the inhabitants of the Scottish isles, when their friends are dying, come to them, and request them, that, upon such or such a day, after their death, and in such a place, they would meet them; which the dead accordingly do, at the time and place agreed upon, and have sometimes discourse with them.”

Infinite examples of murders (saith Dr. More) have been discovered by dreams, the souls of the persons murdered seeming to appear to some or other asleep, and to make their complaints to them; giving us a notable example out of Baronius, of Marcilius Ficinius, who having made a solemn vow with Michael Mercatus, (after they had been pretty warmly disputing of the immortality of the soul, out of the principles of their master Plato) that whether of them two died first, he should appear to his friend, and give him certain information of that truth. It was Ficinius' fate to die first, and that not long after this mutual resolution: He was mindful of his promise, when he had left the body; for Mercatus being very intent at his studies, betimes in a morning, heard a horse riding by with all speed, and observed that he stopt at his window, and therewith heard the voice of his friend Ficinius, crying out, aloud, *O Michael, Michael, vera, vera, sunt illa; that is, O Michael, Michael, those things are true, they are true,* Whereupon he suddenly opened his window, and espying Marcilius upon a *white steed*, called after him, but he vanished out of his sight. He sent therefore presently to Florence, to know how Marcilius did, and understood that he died about that hour he called at his window.

Much to the same purpose is that so famous and well attested story of the apparition of major George Sydenham, to captain William Dyke, both of Somersetshire, attested by the worthy and learned Dr. Thomas Dyke, a near kinsman of the captain's; and by Mr. Douch, to whom the major and captain were intimately known\*. The sum is this: The major and captain had many disputes about the being of a God, and the immortality of the soul, in which points they could never be resolved, though they much sought for, and desired it: and therefore it was at last fully agreed betwixt them, that he that died first, should, the third night after his funeral, come betwixt the hours of twelve and one, to the little house in the garden adjoining to major Sydenham's house, at Dulverton, in Somersetshire. The major died first, and the captain happened to lie that very night which was appointed, in the same chamber and bed with Dr. Dyke; he acquainted

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*rogant ut certo a morto die, loquere certo ipsos convenient; quod et mortui tempore et præstitit præstant.* Sterne. *ibid.*

\* *Sad. Trium. part 2. p. 185.*

the doctor with the appointment, and his resolution to attend the place, and hour that night, for which purpose he had got the key of that garden. The doctor could by no means divert his purpose, but, when the hour came, he was upon the place, where he waited two hours and a half, neither seeing nor hearing any thing more than usual. About six weeks after, the captain and doctor went to Eaton, and lay both in the same inn, but not both in the same chamber, as they had done before at Dulverton.

The morning before they went thence, the captain stayed longer than was usual in his chamber, and at length came into the doctor's chamber, but in visage and form much different from himself, with his hair and eyes staring, and his whole body shaking and trembling: Whereat the doctor wondering, demanded, What is the matter, cousin captain? the captain replied, I have seen my major. At which the doctor seeming to smile, the captain said, If ever I saw him in my life, I saw him but now; adding as follows: This morning (said he) after it was light, some one came to my bed-side, and suddenly drawing back the curtains, calls *Cap. cap.* (which was the term of familiarity that the major used to call the captain by) to whom I replied, What, my *major*? To which he returns, I could not come at the time appointed, but I am now come to tell you, *That there is a God, and a very just and terrible one; and if you do not turn over a new leaf, you will find it so.* This stuck so close to him, little meat would go down with him at dinner, though a handsome treat was provided. These words were sounding in his ears frequently, during the remainder of his life; he was never shy or scrupulous to relate it to any that asked him concerning it, or ever mentioned it, but with horror and trepidation. They were both men of a brisk humour and jolly conversation, of very quick and keen parts, having been both University and Inns-of-court gentlemen.

The apparition of the ghost of Sir George Villiers, father of the duke of Buckingham, giving three solemn warnings, by three several apparitions to his servant, Mr. Parker, is a known and credible story. But I will wade no farther into particulars, they are almost innumerable: let this suffice for a taste.

II. In the next place, therefore, I will lay down some concessions about this matter: and the

First concession is this: *That the separate souls, or spirits of men, are capable of performing and executing any ministry or service of God, (if he should please to commission them so to do) as well as angels are, whom we know he frequently employs about the persons and affairs of his people on earth.*

Though souls become not angels by their separation, as Maxi-

mus Tyrius calls them, but remain spirits specifically distinct from them; yet are they spiritual substances, as the angels are: This their nature capacitates them either to live, and act out of the body, or to assume (as angels do) an *ærial body*, for the time of their ministry: Nor do I know any thing in scripture or philosophy repugnant hereunto.

Conces. 2. *It cannot be doubted, but upon special and extraordinary reasons and occasions, some departed souls have returned to, and appeared in this world, by order and commission from God.*

This is too manifest to be doubted by any that understand and believe the instances recorded in scripture. Moses and Elias, long after their departure, appeared to, and talked with Christ upon the holy mount in the presence of some of his apostles, Mat. xvii. 3. nor is there any reason to question the reality of their apparition, or to think it to be no more than a *phantasm*, or imaginary resemblance of these persons, but very Moses and Elias themselves: For they came to be witnesses to Christ's prophetic office, "And it was not \* fit so great a point should be attested by imaginary witnesses," or that they should be called Moses and Elias, if they were not the very same persons.

"It is therefore most likely they both appeared in their own bodies †;" for Moses' body, we know, was hidden by the Lord, and Elias' body was immediately translated, with his soul to heaven: When therefore the Lord would send them upon this solemn errand, the soul of Moses probably reassumed that body, which was never found by man, and Elias was already embodied, and fit immediately for this expedition.

In like manner we read, Mat. xxvii. 52, 53. that, at the resurrection of our Lord, "many bodies of the saints arose, and appeared unto many:" These were no *phantasms*, but the very souls of the departed saints returned (having reassumed their own bodies) unto this world, not only to confirm the truth of Christ's resurrection, and adorn that great day, but as a specimen, or handsel of the resurrection of all the saints, in the virtue of his resurrection at the great day.

Nor will I deny, but, upon some lesser (though never without weighty and solemn) occasions and reasons, God may sometimes send the souls of the dead back again into this world, as in cases before recited, to evidence against the *atheism* of men, &c. † Augustine relates a memorable example, which fell out at Milan, where a certain citizen being dead, there came a creditor, to whom he

\* Non enim conveniebat ut veritas mendacio, vel imaginariis testibus probaretur. Mal. don. Carpellus in loc.

† Credibilis est vere corporibus suis apparuisse. Pareus in loc.

‡ Aug. in lib. de cura pro mortuis agenda.

had been indebted, and unjustly demanded the money of his son: The son knew the debt was satisfied by his father, but having no acquittance to shew, his father appeared to him in his sleep, and shewed him where the acquittance lay. Whether it were the very soul of his *father*, or rather, an *angel*, as Augustine thinks, is not certain, though the one, as well as the other, is possible. But though rarely, and upon some weighty and solemn occasions, some souls have returned and appeared; yet I judge this is not frequently done upon slight and ordinary errands; and therefore to give you my own thoughts, I judge,

Conces. 3. *That those apparitions which seem to be, and are generally reputed and taken for the souls of the dead, are not indeed so, but other spirits, putting on the shapes, and resemblances of the dead, and (for the most part) tricks of the devil, to delude or disquiet men.*

In this I think the learned \* Dr. Brown delivered his judgment more solidly and orthodoxly, than in some other points; where he saith, “ I believe that the whole frame of a beast doth perish and “ is left in the same state after death, as before it was materialled “ into life; that the souls of men know neither contrary nor cor- “ ruption; that they subsist beyond the body, and continue, by “ the privilege of their proper nature, and without a miracle; that “ the souls of the faithful, as they leave earth, take possession of “ heaven; that those apparitions and ghosts of departed persons, “ are not the wandering souls of *men*, but the unquiet walks of “ *devils*, promoting and suggesting us into *mischief*, *blood*, and “ *villany*.” And with this opinion I concur, as to the ordinary and common apparitions of the dead. And my reasons are,

(1.) Because the scriptures every where describe the state of departed souls as a fixed state, either in heaven or in hell; and assign the good or evil done in this world by spirits, not to the departed spirits of men, but to angels or devils: And it is our duty to regulate our conceits by scripture, and not according to the vain philosophy of the heathens, or the superstitious traditions and opinions of men.

As for the souls of the godly, they are at rest with Christ, Rev. xiv. 13. Isa. lvii. 2. and fixed as pillars in the house of God, Rev. iii. 12.

As for the wicked, their spirits are confined, and secured in hell, as in a prison, 1 Pet. iii. 19. there is a fixed gulph betwixt them and the living, Luke xvi. 27, to 32.

What good offices are to be done by spirits for us, the angels are God's commission-officers to do them, Heb. i. 14. “ They are all “ ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be

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\* *Religio Med. Sect. 37. p. 32.*

“heirs of salvation:” These are the spirits sent forth to walk to and fro through the earth, Zech. i. 10. Their ministry was *emblematically* represented in Jacob’s vision, where they were seen ascending and descending as upon a ladder, betwixt heaven and earth, Gen. xxviii. 12. Yea, their very name *angel*, is a name of office, signifying a messenger, or one sent.

And for the mischief done by spirits in this world, the scriptures ascribe that to the devils; those unquiet spirits have their walks in this world, they compass the whole earth, and walk up and down in it, Job i. 7. and 1 Pet. v. 8. they can assume any shape; yea, I doubt not but he can act their bodies when dead, as well as he did their souls and bodies when alive: How great his power is this way, appears in what is so often done by him in the bodies of *witches*. They are not ordinarily, therefore, the spirits of men, but other spirits that appear to us.

(2.) If God should ordinarily permit the spirits of men inhabiting the other world, a liberty so frequently to visit this, what a gap would it open for Satan to beguile and deceive the living! What might he not by this means impose upon weak and credulous mortals? \* There hath been a great deal of superstition and idolatry already introduced under this pretence: he hath often personated saints departed, and pretended himself to be the ghost of some venerable person, whose love to the souls of the people, and care for their salvation, drew him from heaven to reveal some special secret to them. Swarms of errors and superstitious and idolatrous opinions and practices, are this way conveyed by the tricks and artifices of Satan, among the Papists, which I will not blot my paper withal; only I desire it may be considered, that if this were a thing so frequently permitted by God, as is pretended, upon what dangerous terms had he left his church in this world, seeing he hath left no certain marks by which we may distinguish one spirit from another, or a true messenger from heaven, from a counterfeit and pretended one.

But God hath tied us to the sure and standing rule of his word; forbidding us to give heed to any other voice or spirit leading us another way, Isa. viii. 19. 2 Thess. ii. 1, 2. Gal. i. 8. It was therefore a discreet reply which one of the antients made when in a prayer, a vision of Christ appeared to him, and told him, thy prayers are heard, for thou art worthy: the good man immediately clapt his hands upon his eyes, and said, *Nolo hic videre Christum, &c.* i. e. *I will not see Christ here, it is enough for me that I shall behold him in heaven.*

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\* For what hath more propagated idolatry among Heathens and Christians? Hence did flow many peregrinations, monasteries, temples, festival days, and such like. *Dav. on Job.*

*To conclude.*—My opinion upon the whole is this, that although it cannot be denied, but in some grand, extraordinary cases, as at the transfiguration and resurrection of Christ, God did, and perhaps sometimes, though rarely, may order or permit departed souls to return into this world; yet, for the most part, I judge those apparitions are not the souls of the dead, but other spirits, and, for the most part, evil ones.

Of this judgment was \* St. Augustine, who when he had at full related the story above of the father's ghost directing his son to the acquittance; yet will not allow it to be the very soul of his father, but an angel: where he farther adds, If (saith he) the souls of the dead may be present in our affairs, they would not forsake us in this sort; especially my mother Monica, who, in her life, could never be without me, surely she would not thus leave me being dead.

Obj. 1. *But it was pleaded before, that we allow the apparition of angels; and departed souls, if they be not angels, at least are equal unto angels, and in respect of their late relation to us, are more propense to help us, than spirits of another sort can be supposed to be.*

Sol. It seems too bold and imposing upon sovereign Wisdom to tell him what messengers are fittest for him to send and employ in his service; who hath taught him, or been his counsellor?

Obj. 2. *But these offices seem to pertain properly to them, as they are not only fellow-members, but the most excellent members of the mystical body, to whom it belongs to assist the meaner and weaker.*

Sol. If there be any force of reason in this plea, it carries rather for the angels than for departed souls: for angels are gathered under the same common head with saints; the text tells us, *we are come to an innumerable company of angels*: they and the saints are fellow-citizens, and we know they are a more noble order of spirits; and as for their love to the elect, it is exceeding great, as great to be sure as the departed souls of our dearest relatives can be. For after death they sustain no more civil relation to us: all that they do sustain is as fellow-members of the same body, or fellow-citizens, which the angels also are as well as they.

Obj. 3. *But, saith the doctor, the reason why all nations pay so great honour and religious care to the will of the dead, is a supposition that they still continue in the same mind after death, and will avenge the falsifications of trusts upon injurious executors, else no reason can be given why so great a stress should be laid upon the will of the dead.*

Sol. This is *gratis dictum*, to say no worse, a cheap and unwary expression: Can no reason be given for the religious observance of the testaments of the dead, but this supposition? I deny it: for though they that made them be dead, yet God, who is witness to

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\* *Lib. de cura mortuis.*

all such acts and trusts, liveth: and though they cannot avenge frauds, and injustice of men, he both can and will do it, 1 Thess. iv. 6. which, I think, is a weightier ground and reason to enforce duty upon men than the fear of ghosts. Besides, this is a case wherein all the living are concerned, all that die must commit a trust to them that survive; and if frauds should be committed with impunity, who could safely repose confidence in another; *Quod tanget omnes, tangi debet ab omnibus*: that which is of general concernment, and becomes every man's interest, infers a general obligation upon all.

As for the letters of Elijah, it is a vanity to think they came post from heaven; no, no, they were doubtless left behind him, out of due care to the government, and produced on that fit occasion.

Obj. 4. *But what need of a law to prohibit necromancy or consultation with the dead, if it were not practicable?*

Sol. I do not think the wicked art there prohibited enabled them to recal departed souls; but it was a conversing with the devil who personated the dead, and therein a kind of homage was paid him to the dishonour of God; or he might possibly raise the bodies of wicked men, and appear in them: but I think the spirits of the dead return not, except as was before limited.

Obj. 5. *But the matters they discover are found to be true, and the causes in which they concern themselves are just; real murders are detected by them, and real frauds and injuries corrected and rectified: but the devil being himself a liar, and deceiver, would never do it; it is not his interest to discover or discourage such things.*

Sol. Though it be not his interest merely to discover it, yet it is certainly his interest to precipitate wicked men, and hasten their ruin by the hand of Justice; and he will speak the truth, and seem to own a righteous cause, to bring about his great design of ruining the souls and bodies of men. I will shut up with three cautions.

*Caution 1.* Strain not conscience to enrich posterity: be true to the trusts committed to you by the dead, or by the living, remembering, that though they be dead, and cannot avenge the wrong, yet the Lord lives, and will surely do it in a severer manner than they could, should they appear in the most terrible and frightful forms to you: Besides, your own consciences will haunt you worse than a ghost. Be just and true therefore in all your promises and trusts, for God is the avenger.

*Caution 2.* Finish your work for eternity before you die; for as "the cloud is consumed, and vanished away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more; he shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more," Job vii. 9, 10. Your souls will be fixed in eternity

soon after they are loosed from your bodies: when death comes, away you must go, willing or unwilling, ready or unready; but no returning hither, how willing soever.

*Caution 3.* Keep yourselves from that heathenish and accursed practice of consulting the devil about your absent or dead relations; a practice too common in sea-port towns, and of deep and heinous guilt before God: Isa. viii. 19. "And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?"

You need not call the devil twice; that subtle and officious spirit draws the living into his net by such a bait as this: You meet your mortal enemy under the disguise of your dead friend.

*Query 5.* *Whether the separated souls of the just in heaven have any converse or communication with each other? and how that can be, seeing all the organs and instruments of speech and hearing are laid aside with their bodies;*

It seems impossible that separated or unbodied spirits should converse together, seeing the instruments by which the thoughts are communicated from one to another, are perished in the grave. Suppose the tongue of a man to be cut out, his eyes and hands perished or made useless, whilst the soul remains in the body; it may enjoy its own thoughts within itself, but it is impossible to signify them to another by words or signs.

Or suppose a man in a deep sleep (wherein the senses are only bound for a little time) he may indeed exercise his own fancy in a pleasant dream, but another cannot understand how it is entertained; but in death the senses are not bound, but extinguished.

Beside, we must not think the felicity of the departed holy souls to consist in mutual converses one with another, but in the ineffable visions of God, and communion with him. To him who is omniscient, and understands their most inward thoughts, they can freely communicate them, and receive his, as well as pour forth their own love; but to do it to their fellow-creatures, who see not as God doth, seems impossible.

Indeed it was never doubted, but after the resurrection they shall both know and talk with one another in a more excellent and perfect manner than now they do; but till that time, the reasons above seem to persuade us, that all the converses above, are only betwixt God and them, which indeed is enough to make them happy; and indeed, if this ability be allowed to separated souls, it seems to render the resurrection of their bodies needless; for they are well enough without them. But certainly the spirits of just men are not mutes; such an angust assembly of holy and excellent spirits, do not live together in their Father's house with-

out mutual converse and fellowship with each other, as well as with God.

That acute and judicious divine, Mr. Joseph Symonds, in his epistle to his book, intituled, *Sight and Faith*, expresseth himself about this matter thus: ‘ I often think (saith he) of the communion of the spirits of men, which is certainly more than many are acquainted with; though we act one upon another in our present state, by the help of sense; yet we are wrought and designed to a more excellent way. Angels, and the spirits of men made perfect, converse and trade in a mutual communication, not without sense, but without such sense as ours. This, as eternal life, begins here, and is found in some degrees in this mortal state, though not in so visible appearances as to lie open to much observation.

‘ Angels, good and bad, do act upon our spirits, and our spirits hold converse with them, and with the Father of spirits, which may be discerned in secret parlies and discourses betwixt them and us; much of this appears in David’s psalms; and there passeth not only an inward speech, but there are invisible approaches, entertainments, and touches, which Paul found when bound in the Spirit, and under the working of God, which wrought in him mightily, Col. i. 29. It is also most certain, that our souls are not mute, and shut out from all mutual traffic with each other, except what they have by the mediation of senses.

‘ Instances are found, that (as they say of two needles touched with the loadstone) the spirit of one at a distance, hath found itself affected with the motion and state of another. And this we are all sensible of, that there is a strong desire in us to communion of spirits; and that, because the way most ready and convenient to our bodily state is by sense, we are carried with much inclination to maintain intercourse of our minds and spirits by sense; but, as being made to a better way, our souls are not satisfied with this present way, as being both painful and short. We cannot give an exact copy of our apprehensions, desires, designs, delights, and other affections, by these two great mediators of communion, the eye and the ear: but, because we are in so great a measure confined to this course, our souls, as it were, stand in these two gates, to send and receive mutual embassies from each other. Which way, as it is short in itself, so it is much shortened by distances, disaffections, impotencies, and disparities.’

I cannot imagine, that men, in a state of imperfection, should have so many ways to communicate their minds, as by speaking, writing, &c. yea, that the very birds and beasts, are, by nature, enabled to signify to each other their inclinations; and that the spi-

rits of just men (which are the best of all human spirits, and that when made perfect too, which is the best and highest state attainable by them) should have none, but live at a greater disadvantage in this respect than they did, or the very birds and beasts in this world do. The sum of my thoughts about this matter, I will lay down in the following sections.

*Section 1.* The state of heaven, (as was at large opened in our eleventh proposition) being an association of angels and blessed souls, for the glorifying and praising of God in his temple there, and this worship being carried on by joint consent, as appears by their joint ascriptions of glory to God, Rev. vii. 9, 10, 11, 12. they must of necessity, for the orderly carrying on of this heavenly worship understand each other's minds, and communicate their thoughts: for without this it is not imaginable how a joint or common service, in which thousands of thousands are employed, can be decorously and orderly managed, except we conceive of them as so many *machines*, or wind-instruments that are managed by an intelligent agent, though themselves be senseless and merely passive: certainly their consent is a different thing from that of the keys of a *harpsichord*, or strings of a *lute*, they are intelligent beings, who understand their own and each other's mind: and besides, without this ability, that society in heaven would be less comfortable, as to mutual refreshing fellowship, than the society of saints is here. So that it is not to be doubted, but these noble and excellent spirits can, and do communicate their thoughts to each other, and that in a most excellent way.

*Sect. 2.* But yet we cannot imagine these communications betwixt them to be by words, formed by such instruments and organs of speech as we now use, for they are bodiless beings; words, and articulate sounds, are fitted to the use and service of embodied spirits. It is therefore probable, that they convey and communicate their minds to one another, as the blessed angels do, not with tongues of flesh, (though we read of the *tongues of angels*, 1 Cor. xiii. 1.) but in a way somewhat analogous to this, though much more noble and excellent\*. For look, as the scripture stiles the most excellent food, angels food; so the most excellent speech, or most eloquent tongues, angels tongues. The purest rhetoric that ever flowed from the lips of the most charming orator, is but babbling, to the language of angels, or of spirits made perfect.

When Paul was wrapt into the third heaven, where he was admitted to the sight and hearing of this blessed assembly, it is said

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\* It is certain, angels have not tongues, but something analogous thereunto, by which they communicate their thoughts to one another. *Lightfoot.*

he heard *αγγελα γηματα*, words unspeakable, spiritual language, such as his tongue neither could, or ought to utter; such as none but heavenly inhabitants can speak. And, Dan. viii. 13. "I heard, (said Daniel) one saint speaking, and another saint said unto "that certain saint that spake," &c. He heard the enquiries of the angels, desiring to know the mystery from the mouth of Christ. A language they have, but not like ours.

*Sect. 3.* The communications of angels, and souls in heaven, is therefore conceived to be an ability in those blessed spirits, silently and without sound, to instil and insinuate their minds and thoughts to each other, by a mere act of their wills; just as we now speak to God, or ourselves\*, in our hearts, when our lips do not move, nor the least outward sign appears.

There are two ways by which the souls of men speak, one outwardly, by the instruments of speech, or sensible signs; the other inwardly, without sound, or sign. This inward, silent speech, is nothing else but an act of the will, calling forth such things into our actual thoughts and meditations, which before lay hid and quiet in the memory, or habit of knowledge. These thoughts, or actual revolvings of things in the mind, are in scripture called *דבר עם לבבך* a word or speech in the heart, Deut. xv. 9. Take heed to thyself, that there be not a wicked word in thy heart; we translate it, *a wicked thought*: thoughts are the words, and voice of the soul. And so, Mat. ix. 3. they spake within themselves, i. e. their souls spake, though their lips moved not. "All meditation is an "inward speech of the soul, and therefore *שורה* indifferently signifies both to speak, and to meditate †." The objects which we revolve in our thoughts, are so many companions with whom we converse; and thus a man, (like Heinsius) may be in the midst of abundance of excellent company, when he is all alone. And this is silent talk to ourselves, without any sound or noise.

*Object.* But you will say, *Though the spirit of a man can thus talk to, or with itself; yet this can signify nothing to others*: For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him? 1 Cor. ii. 11. *It is not therefore enough to open this internal door of the will; for except we open also the external ‡ door of the lips, no man can know our minds, or be admitted into the se-*

\* We are said to speak to ourselves in our hearts, when we actually think upon, or revolve any thing in our minds; but we think actually, at the command of the will, i. e. when we will. *Zanch.*

† *Εἰπὼν ἐν αὐτοῖς, שורה, Cum puncto sinistro, locutus est ore, aut corde cogitavit, meditata est.*

‡ There are two doors with respect to others, and unless thou open both of these, it is not possible that another man can know what passes in thy mind, or be admitted into the secrets of thy heart. On the part of the soul, the will is the one

*crets of your soul; should we never so earnestly desire that another should know our mind, except we please, to discover it by a word, or sign, he cannot know it; and therefore an act of the will is not sufficient, without some external signification superadded. And these souls being bodiless, can give no outward signification.*

*Sol.* There is, indeed, a necessity among men in this world, to unlock another door, beside that of the will, to communicate the secrets of their hearts to others; “but \* angels, and the spirits “ of men, having no bodies, consequently have but one door, to “ wit, that of the will, to open; and the opening thereof, (which “ is done by one act or desire, in a moment) is enough to discover “ so much of their minds, as they would have discovered to ano- “ ther spirit. If they keep the door of their will shut, no angel, or “ spirit, can know what is in their thoughts, without a revelation “ from God;” and if they but will, or desire others should know, no words can so fully manifest one man’s mind to another, as such an act of the will doth manifest theirs. And this, saith learned Zanchy, is the tongue of angels; and the same way the spirits of men have to make known their mind in the unembodied state. It is but the turning the key of the will, and their thoughts; or desires are presently seen and known, by others, to whom they will discover them, as a man’s face is seen in a glass, when he pleaseth to turn his face to it. Would one spirit make known his mind to another, it is but to will he should know it, and it is immediately known.

*Sect. 4.* This internal way of speaking and communication among spirits is much more noble, perfect, and excellent, than that which is in use among us, by words and signs; and that in two respects, viz.

1. Of clearness.
2. Of dispatch and speed.

1. Spiritual language is more clearly expressive of the mind and thoughts, than words, writings, or any other external signs can be. The greatest masters of language do often cloud their meaning, for want of words fit and full enough to express it: truth suffers by the poverty and ambiguity of words; many controversies are but mere strifes about words, and scufflings in the dark, by

door, for unless thou incline to reveal to others these things which lie hid in thy heart, who can know them? the other door is the body of flesh itself, and therefore, although having. as it were, opened the first and inward door, thou incline to make known unto another what is in the mind, yet he can in no way know this, unless thou also open the other door which is external. *Zanchius, on the works of God, book 3. chap. 29.*

\* *Quoniam igitur angeli iis carent crassis corporibus, idcirco nihil impedit, quo minus quæ unus angelus in sua versat mente, ea alter videat, voluntas: si enim ea nolit ab altero resciri, numquam, nisi Deo revelante, rescientur. Zanch. ubi supra.*

the mistake of each other's sense and meaning; few have the ability of putting their own meanings into apt, proper, and full expression; and, if they can, yet others to whom they speak, want an answerable ability of understanding and clearness of apprehension to receive it. If we could discern the true and natural sense of things, just as it is in the mind of the speaker, or writer, how many controversies would be thereby quickly ended?

But spirits unbodied so convey their sense and mind to one another, that there can be no mistakes, no darkenings of counsel, by words without knowledge; but one receives it just as it lies in the other's mind.

2. Spiritual language is more easy, and of quicker dispatch; some men have voluble tongues, and are more ready and presential than others; their tongues are as the pen of a ready scribe: and others, no less ready with their hands, which keep pace with, yea, out-run the tongue of the speaker, as Martial notes.

*Currant verba licet, manus est velocior illis:*

*Nondum lingua suum dextra, peregit opus\*.*

Yet all this is but bungling work, to the ready dispatch of spirits; one act of the will opens the window to discern the mind of another clearly; so that the converse of spirits must needs be more excellent, in both respects, than any we are accustomed to, or acquainted with in this world. I will shut up this question with one.

*Corollary.* Long to be associated with the spirits of just men made perfect. You that are going to join that blessed assembly, will even in this respect, gain an invaluable advantage. It is true, there is much of comfort in the present converses of embodied and imperfect saints; it is sweet to fast and pray, to sigh and groan together; it is sweeter to rejoice and praise our God together; it is sweet to talk of heaven with our faces thitherward; but alas! what is this to the converses that are among the spirits of just men made perfect! With what melting hearts have we sometimes sat, under the doctrine of the gospel! How have our ears been chained with delight to the preacher's lips, whilst he hath been discoursing of those ravishing subjects, *Christ, and heaven!* But alas! how dry and dull a thing is the best of this, to the language of heaven! Three things debase and spoil the communications of the saints on earth, viz. the darkness, dulness, and frothiness thereof.

1. The darkness and ignorance of our understandings. How crude, weak, and indigested are our highest and purest notions of spiritual things! we speak of them but as children, 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

\* *Martial, Epigr. lib. 14. ep. 176.*

for alas ! the vail is yet upon our faces. The body of sin, and the body of flesh cast a very dark shadow upon the world to come ; but the apprehensions of separated souls are most bright and clear. This darkness begets mistakes ; mistakes beget so many quarrels and janglings, that our fellowship on earth loseth, at once, both its profit and pleasure.

2. There is much dulness and deadness accompanying the communion of saints on earth, abundance of precious time is wasted among us in unprofitable silence, and when we engage in discourses of heaven, that discourse is often little better than silence ; our words freeze betwixt our lips, and we speak not with that concernedness and warmth of spirit, which suits with such subjects.

It is not so among our brethren above ; their affections are at the highest pitch, giving *glory to God in the highest*.

3. To conclude ; In the discourses of the best of men on earth, there is too much froth and vanity ; many words, like water, run away at the waste spout, but there God is the centre, in which all terminates. O therefore let us long to be among the unbodied people ! this world will never suit us with companions in all things agreeable to the desires of our hearts. The best company are got together in the upper-room ; an hour there is better than an age below. Whatever fellowship saints leave on earth, they shall be sure to find better in heaven.

Query 6. *Whether the separated souls of the just in heaven, do incline to a re-union with their own bodies ? And how that re-union is at last effected ?*

That these blessed souls have no such inclination or desire, these reasons seem to persuade.

1. That their bodies, whilst they lived in them, were no better, than so many prisons ; many were the prejudices, damages, and miseries they have sustained and suffered in them. It kept them at an uncomfortable distance from the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 6. their be-moaning cries spake their uneasy state : how often hath every gracious soul thus lamented itself, "Wo is me that I dwell in Me-  
"sheck." It inclosed their souls within its mud walls, which intercepted the light and joy of God's face. Death therefore did a most friendly office, when it set it at liberty, and brought it forth into its own pure and pleasant light and liberty \*. These blessed spirits now rejoice as prisoners do in their recovered liberty ; and can it

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\* The body obstructs and obscures the mind in its conceptions, and pollutes it by its union with the flesh ; hence the light of the mind is more defective, as it passes, in a manner, through a glass of flesh : doubtless, when, by the power of death, the soul is as it were, squeezed out of the body, to which it was so closely united, and in this manner purified, than it breaks from its confinement in the body, to a pure and unmixed light suitable to its nature. *Tertullian on the soul.*

be supposed, after all these sufferings, groans, and sighs to be dissolved, they can be willing to be embodied again? Surely there is as little reason for souls at liberty to desire to be again embodied, as there is for a bird got out of the snare or cage, to fly back again to its place of confinement and restraint. Yea, when we consider how loath some holy souls, when under the excruciating pains of sickness, and as yet in the sight of this alluring world, have been to hear of a return to it by the recovery of their health; we cannot think, but being quite out of the sight of this, and in the fruition of the other world, the thoughts of the body must needs be more loathsome to them than ever.

We read, that when a good man in the time of his sickness was told by his friends, that some hopeful signs of his recovery began now to appear, he answered, And must I then return to this body? I was as a sheep driven out of the storm almost to the fold, and then driven back into the storm again: or as a weary traveller near his home, who must go back again to fetch something he had neglected: or as an apprentice whose time was almost out, and then must begin a new term. Of some others it hath been also noted, that the greatest infirmities they discovered upon their death-bed, have been their two passionate desires to be dissolved, and their unsubmitiveness to God's will in their longer stay in the body. Now, the bodies of the saints being so cheerfully forsaken, and that only upon a fore-taste of heaven by faith; how can it be thought they should find any inclination to a re-union, when they are so abundantly satisfied with the joys of his face in heaven? Certainly the body hath been no such pleasant habitation to the soul, that it should cast an eye or thought that way when it is once delivered out of it: if it were burdensome here, a thought of it would be loathsome there.

2. We have shewed before, that the separate soul wants not the helps of the body, but lives and acts at a more free and comfortable rate than ever before. It is true, it is not now delighted with meat and drink, with smells and sounds, as it was wont to be; but then it must be considered, that it is happiness and perfection not to need them. It is now become equal to the angels in the way and manner of its living; and what it enjoyed by the ministry of the body, it eminently and more perfectly enjoys without it. What perfections can the soul receive from matter\*? What can a lump of flesh add to a spirit: And if it can add nothing to it, there is no reason why it should hanker after it, and incline to a re-union

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\* The rational soul receives no perfection from matter, which it could not receive without it; therefore, when it shall be separated from it, it is not said to have a propensity to it. *Coniimb.*

with it. It added nothing of happiness to it, but much trouble, and therefore becomes justly undesirable to it.

3. The supposition of such a propension and inclination, seems no way to suit with that state of perfect rest which the souls of the just enjoy in heaven. The scripture tells us, that at death they enter into rest, Isa. lvii. 2. Heb. iv. 9. That they rest from their labours, Rev. xiv. 13. But that which inclines and desires (especially when the desired enjoyment, as in this case, is suspended so long) must be as far from rest, as it is from satisfaction in the enjoyment of the thing desired. We know what Solomon hath observed of such a life, (and his observation is experimentally true,) that "hope deferred makes the heart sick," Prov. xiii. 12. Who finds not his own desires a very rack to him in such cases! If we be kept but a few days in earnest expectation and desire of an absent friend, and he comes not, what an uneasy life do we live! But here we must suppose some have such an unsatisfied life for hundreds, and others for thousands of years already; and how much longer they may remain so, who can tell? We use to say, Lovers hours are full of eternity. These reasons seem to carry it for the negative.

But if the matter be weighed once more, with the following reasons in the counter-scale, and prejudice do not pull down the balance; we shall find the contrary conclusion much more strong and rational. For,

*Arg. 1.* The soul and body are the two constitutive parts of man; either of these being wanting, the man is not complete and perfect. The good of the whole is the good of the parts themselves; and every thing hath a natural desire and appetite to its own good and perfection\*. It is confessed, the soul, for as much as concerns itself singly, is made perfect, and enjoys blessedness in the absence of the body; but this is only the perfection and blessedness of one part of man; the other part, *viz.* the body, lies in obscurity and corruption: and till both be blessed, and blessed together, in a state of composition and re-union, the whole man is not made perfect. For this therefore the soul must wait.

*Arg. 2.* Though death hath dissolved the union, yet it hath not destroyed the relation betwixt the soul and the body; that dust is more to it than all the dust of the whole earth. Hence it is that

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\* A separate soul has a propensity to union with the body, for it desires the actual constitution of the whole compound being, seeing it is for this, as its end, that it exists, and is found within the compass of real beings. And this is that perfection which the soul obtains by that propensity: for the good of the whole compound being is the good of the parts themselves. It must therefore be affirmed, that the separate soul naturally desires the resurrection. *Alsted. natur. theol. part 1. p. 214, 215.*

the whole person of a believer is sometimes denominated from that part of him, namely, his body, which remains captivated by death in the grave. Hence, 2 Thess. iv. 15. dead believers are called *those that sleep*, which must needs properly respect the body, for the soul sleeps not, and shews what a firm and dear relation still remains betwixt these absent friends. Now we all know the mighty power of a relation, if it be at least among entities. Surely it is one of the greatest things in the world in efficacy.

It is difficult to bear the absence of our dear relatives, especially if we be in prosperity, and they in adversity: As the case here is betwixt the spirit in heaven, and its body in the grave; this associated with angels, that preyed upon by worms. Joseph's case is the liveliest emblem that occurs to my present thoughts to illustrate the point in hand. He was advanced to be lord over all Egypt, living in the greatest pomp and splendor there; but his father, and brethren, were, at the same time, ready to perish, in the land of Canaan, Gen. xliii. 29, 30, 31. He had been many years separated from them, but neither the length of time, nor honours of the court, could alienate his affections from them. O see the mighty power of relation! no sooner doth he see his brethren, and understand their case, and the pining condition of Jacob, his father, but his bowels yearned, and his compassions rolled together for them; yea, he could not forbear, nor stifle his own affections, though he knew how injurious his brethren had been to him, and betrayed him, as the body hath the soul: Yet notwithstanding all this, he breaks forth into tears, and outcries, over them, which made the house ring again with the news that Joseph's brethren were come. Nor could he be at rest in the lap of honour, and plenty, until he had got home his dear, and ancient relations to him. Thus stands the case betwixt soul and body.

*Arg. 3.* The regret, reluctancy, and sorrows expressed by the soul at parting, do strongly argue its inclination to a re-union with it, when it is actually separated from it: For why should we surmise, that the soul, which mourned, and groaned so deeply at parting, which clasped, and embraced it so dearly, and affectionately, which fought, struggled, and disputed the passage with death, every foot, and inch of ground it got, and would not part with the body, till by plain force it was rent out of its arms; should not, when absent, desire to see, and enjoy its old and endeared friend again? Hath it lost its affection, though it continue its relation? That is very improbable: Or doth its advancement in heaven make it regardless of its body, which lies in contempt and misery? That is an effect which Christ's personal glory never produced in him towards us, nor a good man's preferment would

produce in him to his poor and miserable friends in this world, as we see in the case of Joseph, just now instanced in. It is therefore harsh, and incongruous, to suppose the soul's love to the body was extinguished in the parting hour, and that now, out of sight out of mind.

*Object.* But was it not urged before, in opposition to this assertion, that the souls of the righteous looked upon their bodies as their prisons, and sighed for deliverance by death, and greatly rejoiced in the hope, and foresight of that liberty death would restore them to? How doth this consist with such reluctancies at parting, and inclinations to re-union?

*Sol.* The objection doth not suppose any man to be totally free from all reluctancies, and unwillingness to die; the holiest souls that ever lived in bodies of flesh, will give an unwilling shrug, when it comes to the parting point, 2 Cor. v. 2. but this their willingness to be gone, arises from two other grounds, which make it consistent enough with its reluctancies at parting, and inclination to a second meeting.

(1.) This willingness to die, doth not suppose the soul's love to the body to be utterly extinguished, but mastered, and overpowered by another, and stronger love. There is in every Christian a double love, one natural to the body, and the things below, the other supernatural, to Christ, and the things above; the latter doth not extinguish, though it conquer and subdue the other. Love to the body pulls backward, love to Christ pushes forward, and finally prevails. This is so consistent with it, that it supposes natural reluctance, and unwillingness to part.

(2.) The willingness of God's people to be dissolved, must not be understood absolutely, but comparatively; in that sense the apostle will be understood, 2 Cor. v. 8. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord," i. e. rather than to live always a life of sin, sorrow, and absence from God: death is not desirable in, and for itself, but only as it is the soul's outlet from sin, and its inlet to God.

So that the very best desire is but comparative, and it is but few who find the love of this animal life sub-acted and over-powered by high-raised acts of faith and love. The generality, even of good souls, feel strong renitencies, and suffer sharp conflicts at their dissolution; all which discovers with what lothness and unwillingness the soul unclasps its arms to let go its body. Now, as divines argue the frame of Christ's heart in heaven towards his people on earth, from all those endearing passages and demonstrations of love he gave them at parting; so we here argue the continued love and inclination of the soul to its body after it is in heaven, from the

manifold demonstrations it gave of its affection to it in this world, especially in the parting hour. No considerations in all the world, less than the more full fruition of God, and freedom from sin, could possibly have prevailed with it to quit the body, though but for a time, and leave it in the dust. Which is our third argument.

*Arg. 4.* And as the dolorous parting hour evidenceth it, so doth the joy with which it receives it again at the resurrection. If it part from it so heavily, and meet it again with joy unspeakable; sure, then, it still retaineth much love for it, and desires to be re-espoused to it in the interval. Now, that its meeting in the resurrection is a day of joy to the soul, is evident, because it is called *the time of refreshment*, Acts iii. 19. and they *awake with singing out of the dust*, Isa. xxvi. 19. If the direct and immediate scope of the prophet points not (as some think it doth) at the resurrection, yet it is allowed by all to be a very lively allusion to it, which is sufficient for my purpose: And, indeed, none that understand and believe the design, and business of that day, can possibly doubt but there was reason enough to call it a time of refreshment, a singing morning; for the souls of the righteous come from heaven with Christ, and the whole host of shouting angels, not to be spectators only, but the subjects of that day's triumph: They come to re-assume, and be re-espoused to their own bodies, this being the appointed time for God to vindicate and rescue them from the tyrannical power of the grave, to endow them with spiritual qualities, at the second marriage to their souls, that in both parts they may be completely happy. O the joyful claspings, and dear embraces, betwixt them! who but themselves, can understand! And, by the way, this removes the objection before-mentioned, of the miseries and prejudices the soul suffered in this world, in, and from the body; for now it receives it a spiritual body, (i. e.) so subdued to, and fitted for the use of the spirit, as never to impede, clog, or obstruct its motions and inclinations any more, 1 Cor. xv. 44. In this hope it parted from it, and with this consolation it now receives it again.

*Arg. 5.* There are many scriptures which very much favour, if they do not positively conclude for the soul's inclination to, and desire to be re-united with its own body, even whilst it is in the state of its single glorification in heaven: Certainly our souls leave not their bodies at death, as the *ostrich* doth her egg in the sand, without any further regard to it, or concernment for it; but they are represented as crying to God to remember, avenge, and vindicate them, Rev. vi. 10, 11. "How long, Lord, how long wilt thou not avenge our blood?" *Our blood*, speaks both the continued relation, and the suitable affection they have to their absent bodies.

And to the same sense \* a judicious and learned pen expounds that place, Job xiv. 14. (which is commonly, but I know not how fitly accommodated to another purpose) "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." Which words, by a diligent comparing of the context, appears to have this for their proper scope and sense.

' Job in the former verse had expressed his confidence by way of petition, that at a set and appointed time God would remember him so as to recal him out of the grave; and now, minded to speak out more fully, puts the question to himself, If a man die, shall he live again?' and thus answers it, 'All the days of my appointed time, (that is, of the appointed time which he mentioned before, when God should revive him out of the dust) 'will I wait till my change come;' that is, that glorious change, when the corruption of a loathsome grave should be exchanged for immortal glory: Which he amplifies, and utters more expressly, ver. 15. 'Thou shalt call, and I will answer; thou shalt have a desire to the work of thy hands:' Thou wilt not always forget to restore and perfect thine own creature. And surely this waiting is not the act of his inanimate sleeping dust, but of that part which should be capable of such an action: q. d. I, in that part which shall be still alive, shall patiently wait the appointed time of reviving me in that part also, which death and the grave shall insult over in a temporary triumph in the mean time.'

Upon these grounds I think the inclination of the separated spirits of the just to their own bodies to be a justifiable opinion. As for the damned, we have no reason to think such a re-union to be desirable to them; for alas, it will be but the increase and aggravation of their torments; which consideration is sufficient to overpower and stifle the inclination of nature, and make the very thoughts of it horrid and dreadful. To what end (as the prophet speaks in another case) is it for them to desire that day? It will be a day of darkness and gloominess to them; re-union being designed to complete the happiness of the one, and the misery of the other.

But before I take off my hand, and dismiss this question, I must remember that I am a debtor to two objections.

Object. 1. *The soul can both live and act separate from the body, it needs it not; and if it do not want, why should it desire it?*

*Sol.* The life and actings of the glorified are considerable two ways, (1.) Singly and abstractedly for the life and action of one part: And so we confess the soul lives happily, and acts forth its own powers freely in the state of separation. (2.) Personally, or

\* Mr. Howe's blessedness of the righteous, p. 170, 171.

consecrately, as it is the life and action of the whole man, and so it doth both need and desire the conjunction or re-union of the body; for the body is not only a part or Christ's purchase, as well as the soul, and to have its own glory, as well as it, but it is also a constitutive part of a complete glorified person; and so considered, the saints are not perfectly happy till this re-union be effected, which is the true ground and reason of this its desire.

*Object. 2. But this hypothesis seems to thwart the account given in scripture of the rest, and placid state of separate souls: for look, as bodies which gravitate and propend do not rest, so neither do souls which incline and desire.*

*Sol.* There is a vast difference betwixt the tendencies, and propensions of souls in the way to glory, and in glory: We that are absent from the Lord, can find no rest in the way; but those that are with the Lord can rest in Jesus, and yet wait without anxiety, of self-torturing impatience for the accomplishment of the promises to their absent bodies, Rev. vi. 10, 11.

*Corollary.* Let this provoke all to get sanctified souls, to rule and use these their bodies now for God. This will abundantly sweeten their parting at death, and their meeting again at the resurrection of the just; else their parting will be doleful, and their next meeting dreadful. And so much for the doctrine of separation.

*The Uses of the Point.*

Our way is now open to the improvement and use of this excellent subject and doctrine of separation; and certainly it affords as rich an entertainment for our affections, as for our minds, in the following uses; of which the first will be for our information in six practical *inferences*.

*Inf. 1.* If this be the life and state of gracious souls after their separation from the body, *Then holy persons ought not to entertain dismal and terrifying thoughts of their own dissolution.*

The apprehensions and thoughts of death should have a peculiar pleasantness in the minds of believers. You have heard into what a blessed presence and communion death introduceth your souls; how it leads you out of a body of sin, a world of sorrows, the society of imperfect saints, to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, to that lovely mount Sion, to the heavenly sanctuary, to the blessed visions of the face of God. Oh! methinks there hath been enough said, to make all the souls, in whom the well-grounded hopes of the life of glory are found, to cry out with the apostle, "We are confident, I say, yea, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 8.

When good Musculus drew near his end, how sweet and pleasant was this meditation to his soul! Here his swan-like song:

\* *Nil superest, vitæ frigus præcordia captat ;  
Sed, tu Christe, mihi vitæ perennis ades :  
Quid trepidas anima, ad sedes abitura quietis ?  
En tibi ductor adest angelus ille tuus.  
Linque domum hanc miseram, nunc in sua fata ruentem  
Quam tibi fida Dei dextera restituet.  
Peccasti ? Scio, sed Christus credentibus in se  
Peccata expurgat sanguine cuncta suo.  
Horribilis mors est ? Fateor, sed proxima vitæ est,  
Ad quam te Christi gratia certa vocat.  
Praesto est de Satana, peccato et morte triumphans  
Christus ; ad hunc igitur læta alacrisque migra.*

Which may be thus translated.

Cold death my heart invade, my life doth fly :  
O, Christ, my everlasting life draw nigh.  
Why quiverest thou, my soul, within my breast ?  
Thine angel's come, to lead thee to thy rest.  
Quit cheerfully this drooping house of clay ;  
God will restore it in the appointed day.  
Hast sinn'd ? I know it, let not that be urg'd ;  
For Christ, thy sins, with his own blood hath purg'd.  
Is death affrighting ? True, but yet withal,  
Consider, Christ through death to life doth call.  
He triumphs over Satan, sin, and death ;  
Therefore with joy resign thy dying breath.

Much in the same cheerful frame was the heart of dying Bulfinger\*, when his mournful friends expressed their sense of the loss they should sustain by his removal. “ Why, said he, if God will “ make any farther use of my labours in the ministry, he will re- “ new my strength, and I will gladly serve him : But if he please “ (as I desire he would) to call me hence, I am ready to obey his “ will ; and nothing more pleasant can befall me, than to leave this “ sinful and miserable world to go to my Saviour Christ.” O that all, who are out of the danger of death, were thus got out of the dread of death too.

Let them only tremble and be convulsed at the thoughts and sight of death, whose souls must fall into the hands of a sin-revenging God by the stroke of death ; who are to breathe out their last hope with their last breath. Death is yours, saith the apostle,

\* Melchior Adams, in *vita Masculi*, p. 535.

† *Si Deo visum fuerit, mea opera ulterius in ecclesiæ ministerio uti ; ipse vires sufficiet, et libens illi parebo ; sin me voluerit (quod opto) ex hac vitæ evocare, paratus sum illius voluntati obsequi ; ac nihil est quod mihi jucundius possit contingere, quam ex hoc misero et corruptissimo seculo ad Christum servatorem meum migrandum sit.* Idem. p. 505.

1 Cor. iii. 22. your friend, your privilege, your passage to heaven ; it is your ignorance of it, which breeds your fears about it.

*Inf. 2. Gather from hence, the absolute, indispensable necessity of your union with Christ, before your dissolution by death.*

Woe to that soul which shall be separated from its body before it be united with Christ. None but the spirits of just men are made perfect at death. Righteous souls are the only qualified subjects of blessedness.

It is true, every soul hath a natural capacity of happiness, but gracious souls only have an actual meetness for glory. The scriptures tell us in the plainest words, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord, Heb. xii. 14. that "except we be regenerate, and born again, we cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. You make the greatest adventure that ever was made by man ; indeed, an adventure infinitely too great for any man to make, when you shoot the gulph of vast eternity upon terms of hazard and uncertainty.

What thinkest thou, reader? Darest thou adventure thy soul and eternal happiness upon it, that the work of regeneration and sanctification, that very same work of grace, on which the Spirit of God has placed all thy hopes of heaven in these scriptures, is truly wrought by him in thy soul? Consider it well, pause upon it again and again before thou go forth. Should a mistake be committed here, (and nothing is more easy or common, all the world over, than such mistakes) thou art irrecoverably gone. This venture can be made but once, and the miscarriage is never to be retrieved afterwards ; thou hast not another soul to adventure, nor a second adventure to make of this. Well might the apostle Peter call for all diligence to make our calling and our election sure: That can never be made too sure, which is so invaluable in its worth, and to be but once adventured.

*Inf. 3. How prejudicial is it to dying men to be then incumbered, diverted, and distracted about earthly concerns, when the time of their departure is at hand.*

The business and employment of dying persons is of so vast importance and weight, that every moment of their time needs to be carefully saved and applied to this their present and most important concern. How well soever you have improved the time of life, believe it, you will find work enough upon your hand at death: dying hours will be found to be busy and laborious hours, even to the most painful, serious, and industrious souls, whose life hath been mostly spent in preparations for death. Leave not the proper business of other days to that day ; for that day will have business enough of its own. Sufficient for that day are the labours thereof.

Let a few considerations be pondered, to clear and confirm this inference.

*Consid.* 1. The business and employment of dying persons, is of the most serious, awful, and solemn nature and importance; it is their last preparatory work on earth, to their immediate appearance before God their judge, Heb. ix. 27. it is their shooting the gulph into eternity, and leaving this world, and all their acquaintance and interests therein for ever, Isa. xxviii. 11. It is therefore a work by itself to die, a work requiring the most intense, deep, and undisturbed exercises of all the abilities and graces of the inner man; and all little enough.

*Consid.* 2. Time is exceeding precious with dying men; the last sand is ready to fall, and therefore not to be wasted, as it was wont to be. When we had a fair prospect of many years before us, we made little account of an hour or a day; but now one of those hours, which we so carelessly lavished away, is of more value than all this world to us, especially if the whole weight of eternity should hang upon it, (as oftentimes it doth) then the loss of that portion of time, is the loss of soul, body, and hope for evermore.

*Consid.* 3. Much of that little precious time of departing souls will be unavoidably taken up, and employed about the inexcusable, pressing calls and necessities of distressed nature; all that you can do for your souls must then be done only by fits and snatches, in the midst of many disturbances, and frequent interruptions: So that it is rarely found, that a dying man can pursue a serious meditation with calm and fixed thoughts: for besides the pains and faintings of the body, the abilities of the mind usually fail. Here also they fall into a sad *dilemma*; if they do not with the utmost intention of mind fix their hearts and thoughts on Christ, they lose their comfort, if godly, and their souls, if ungodly; and if they do, *friends* and *physicians* assure them they will destroy their bodies. These are the straits of men bordering close upon eternity; they must hastily catch a few moments in the intervals of pain, and then are put by all again.

*Consid.* 4. There is no man living but hath something to do for his own soul in a dying hour, and something for others also.

Suppose the best that can be supposed, that the soul be in real union with Christ, and that union be also clear: yet it is seldom found but there are some assaults of Satan: Or if not, yet how many relations and friends need our experiences and counsels at such a time? How many things shall we have to do after our great and main work is done? And others have a great deal more to do, though as safe as the former. O the knots and objections that are then to be dissolved and answered! The usual onsets and assaults

of Satan that are then to be resisted! And yet most dying persons have much more upon their hands than either of the former. The whole work of repentance and faith is to do, when time is even done.

*Consid. 5.* Few, yea, very few, are found furnished with wisdom, experience, and faithfulness, to give dying persons any considerable assistance in soul-affairs. It may be there may be found among the visitants of the sick, now and then, a person who hath a word of wisdom in his heart; but then either he wants opportunity or courage and faithfulness to do the part of a true spiritual friend. Elihu describes the person so qualified as he ought for this work, Job xxx. 23, 24. and calls him, *One among a thousand*, Some are too close and reserved, others too trifling and impertinent; some are willing, but want ability; others are able, but want faithfulness; some cut too deep by uncharitable censoriousness; others skin over the wound too slightly, speaking peace where God and conscience speak none: So that little help is to be expected.

*Consid. 6.* How much therefore doth it deserve to be lamented, that where there is so much to do, so little time to do it, and so few to help in the best improvement of it, all should be lost as to their souls by earthly incumbrances and worldly affairs, which might have been done sooner and better in a more proper season! O, therefore, let me persuade all men to take heed of bringing the proper business of healthful days to their sick-bed.

*Inf. 4.* *What an excellent creature is the soul of man, which is capable, not only of such preparations for God, whilst it is in the body, but of such sights and enjoyments of God, when it lives without a body.*

Here the Spirit of God works upon it, in the way of grace and sanctification, Eph. ii. 10. The scope and design of this his workmanship, is to qualify and make us meet for the life of heaven, 2 Cor. vi. 5. For this self-same thing, or purpose, our souls are wrought, or moulded by grace, into quite another frame and temper, than that which nature gave them; and when he hath wrought out and finished all that he intends to be wrought in the way of sanctification, then shall it be called up to the highest enjoyments and employments for ever, that a creature is susceptible of.

Herein the dignity of the soul appears, that no other creature in this world, beside it, hath a natural capacity, either to be sanctified inherently in this world, or glorified everlastingly in the world to come; to be transformed into the image, and filled with the joy of the Lord. There are *myriads* of other souls in this world, beside ours, but to none of them is the Spirit of sanctification sent,

but only to ours: The souls of *animals* serve only to move the dull and sluggish matter, and take in for a few days the sensitive pleasures of the creation, and so expire, having no natural capacity of, or designation for any higher employment or enjoyment.

And it deserves a most serious animadversion, that this vast capacity of the soul for eternal blessedness, must of necessity make it capable of so much the more misery and self-torment, if at last it fail of that blessedness: For it is apparent they do not perish because they are *incapable*, but because they are *unwilling*; not because their souls wanted any natural faculty that others have, but because they would not open those they have, to receive Christ in the way of faith and obedience, as others did.

Think upon this you that live only to eat, and drink, and sleep, and play, as the birds and beasts in the field do; What need was there of a reasonable soul for such sensual employments? Do not your noble faculties speak your designation for higher uses? And will not you wish to exchange souls with the most vile and despicable *animal* in this world, if it were possible to be done? Certainly it were better for you to have no capacity of eternal blessedness (as they have not) if you do not enjoy it; and no capacity of torment beyond this life) as they have not) if you must certainly endure it.

*Inf. 5. If our souls and bodies must be separate shortly, how patiently should we bear all lesser separations, that may and will be made, betwixt us and any other enjoyments in this world?*

No union is so intimate, strict and dear, as that betwixt our souls and bodies. All your relations and enjoyments in this world, hang looser from your souls than your bodies do: and if it be your duty, patiently and submissively, to suffer a painful parting pull from your bodies; it is doubtless your duty to suffer meekly and patiently a separation from other things, which are but a prelude to it, and a mere shadow of it. It is good to put such cases to ourselves in the midst of our pleasant enjoyments.

I have now many comfortable relatives in the world; wife, children, kindred, and friends; God hath made them pleasant to me, but he may bereave me of all these. Doth not providence ring such changes all the world over? Are not all kingdoms, cities, and towns, full of the sighs and lamentations of widows, orphans, and friends bereaved of their pleasant and useful relations? But if God will have it so, it is our duty to bound our sorrows, remembering the time *is short*, 1 Cor. vii. 29. In a few days we must be stript much nearer, even out of our own bodies by death.

God may also separate betwixt me and my health by sickness, so that the pleasure of this world shall be cut off from me; but sickness is not death, though it be a prelude and step towards it; I

may well bear this with patience, who must submissively bear sharper pains than these ere long. Yea, and well may I bear this submissively, considering that by such imbittering and weaning providences, God is preparing me for a much easier dissolution, than if I should live at ease in the body all my days till death comes to make so great and sudden a change upon me.

God may also separate betwixt me and my liberty by restraint. It hath been the lot of the best men that ever were in the world; and if it should be ours also, we should not be much startled at it, considering these bodies of ours must be shortly pent up in a straiter, darker, and more loathsome place of confinement, than any prison in this world can be. The grave is a darker, place, Job xvii. 13. and your abode there will be longer, Eccl. xi. 8.

These, and all our other outward enjoyments, are separable things, and it is good thus to alleviate our loss of them.

*Inf. 6. How heavenly should the tempers and frames of those souls be who are candidates for heaven, and must be so shortly numbered with the spirits of just men made perfect.*

It is reasonable that we all begin to be that which we expect to be for ever; to learn that way of living and conversing, which we believe must be our everlasting life and business in the world to come. Let them that hope to live with angels in heaven, learn to live like angels on earth, in holiness, activity, and ready obedience.

There is the greatest reason that our minds be there, where our souls are to be for ever. A spiritual mind will be found possible, congruous, sweet, and evidential of an interest in that glory, to all those holy souls, who are preparing and designed for it.

1. It is possible, notwithstanding the clogs and entanglements of the body to be heavenly-minded. Others have attained it, Phil. iii. 20. Two things make a heavenly conversation possible to men, viz.

(1.) The natural abilities of the mind.

(2.) The gracious principles of the mind.

(1.) The natural abilities of the mind, which can, in a minute's time, dispatch a nimble messenger to heaven, and mount its thoughts from this to that world in a moment. The power of cogitation is a rich endowment of the soul, such as no other creature on earth is participant of. Though spiritual thoughts be not the natural growth of the soul, yet thoughts capable of being spiritualized are. And without this ability of projecting thoughts, all intercourse must have been cut off.

(2.) The gracious principles implanted in the soul, do actually incline the mind, and mount its thoughts heaven-ward. Yea, this will prove more than a possibility of a conversation in heaven;

whilst saints tabernacle on earth, in bodies of flesh, it will almost prove an impossibility that it should be otherwise, for these spiritual principles setting the bent and tendency of the heart heavenward, we must act against the very law of our new nature, when we place our affections elsewhere.

2. A mind in heaven is most congruous, decorous, and comely for those that are the enrolled inhabitants of that heavenly city. Where should a Christian's love be, but where his Lord is! Our hearts and our homes do not use to be long asunder. It becomes you so to think, and so to speak now, as those who make account to be shortly singing *hallelujahs* before the throne.

3. It is most sweet and delightful: no pleasure in this world is comparable to this pleasure; Rom. viii. 6. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." It is a young heaven born in the soul in its way thither.

4. To conclude: It is evidential of your interest in it: an agreeable frame is the surest title, Col. iii. 1, 2. Mat. vi. 21. If heaven attract your minds now, it will centre them for ever.

*Use 2.* This doctrine of the separation of the spirits of the just from their bodies, as it lies before you in this discourse affords a singular help to all the people of God, to entertain lovely and pleasant thoughts of that day; to make death not only an unregretted, but a most pleasant and desirable thing to their souls.

I know there is a pure, simple, natural fear of death, from which you must not expect to be perfectly freed, by all the arguments in the world. And there is a reverential, awful fear of death, which it would be your prejudice and loss to have destroyed. You will have a natural, and ought to have a reverential fear of death: the one flows from your sensitive, the other from your sanctified nature.

But it is a third sort of fear which doth you all the mischief: a fear springing in gracious souls out of the weakness of the graces, and the strength of their unmortified affections: a fear arising partly out of the darkness of our minds, and partly out of the sensuality and earthliness of our hearts; this fear is that which so convulseth our souls when death is near, and imbittereth our lives, even whilst it is at a distance. He that hath been over-heated in his affections to this world, and over-cooled by diversions and temptations, neglects and intermissions, to that world, cannot chuse but give an unwilling shrug, if not a frightful screech at the appearance of death.

And this being the sad case of too many, good and upright souls for the main; and there being so few, even among serious Christians, that have attained to that courage and complacence in the thoughts of death, which the apostle speaks of, 2 Cor. v. 8. to be

both confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord; I will, from this discourse, furnish them with some special assistance therein. But withal, I must tell you upon what great disadvantages I am here to dispute with your fears; so strong is the current of natural and vicious fear, that except a special hand of God enforce, and set home the arguments that shall be urged, they will be as easily swept away before it, as so many straws by a rapid torrent; nor will it be to any more purpose to oppose my breath to them, than to the tides and waves of the sea.

Moreover, I am fully convinced, by long and often experience, how unsteady and inconstant the frames and tempers of the best hearts are; and that if it be not altogether, yet it is next to an impossibility to fix them in such a temper as this I aim at is. Where is that man to be found, who after the revolutions of many years, and in those years various dispensations of providence without him, altering his condition, and greater variety of temptations within, can yet say, notwithstanding all these various aspects and positions, his heart hath still held one steady and invariable tenour and course?

Alas, there be very few (if any) of such a sound and settled temper of mind, whose pulse beats with an even stroke, through all inequalities of condition, alike free and willing at one time as another, to be unclothed of the body, and to be with Christ. This height of faith, and depth of mortification; this strength of love to Christ, and ardour of holy desire, are degrees of grace to which very few attain.

The case standing thus, it is no more than needs, to urge all sorts of arguments upon our timorous and unsteady hearts; and it is like to prove a hard and difficult task to bring the heart but to a quiet and unregretting submission to the appointment of God herein, though submission be one of the lowest steps of duty in this case.

If it be hard to fix our thoughts but an hour, on such an unpleasant subject as death, how hard must it be to bring over the consent of the will? If we cannot endure it at a distance, in our thoughts, how shall we embrace and hug it in our bosoms? if our thoughts fly back with distaste and impatience, no wonder if our will be obstinate and refractory: we must first prevail with our thoughts to fix themselves, and think close to such a subject, before it can be expected we cheerfully resign ourselves into the hands of death. We cannot be willing to go along with death, till we have some acquaintance with it; and acquainted with it we cannot be till we accustom ourselves to think assiduously and calmly of it. They that have dwelt many years at death's door, both in

respect of the condition of their bodies, and the disposition of their minds, yet find reluctancy enough when it comes to the point.

*Object.* But if separation from the body be (as it is) an enemy to nature, and there be no possibility to extinguish natural aversation; to what purpose is it to argue and persuade where there is no expectation of success?

*Sol.* Death is to be considered two ways by the people of God:

1. As an enemy to nature.
2. As a *medium* to glory.

If we consider it simply in itself as an enemy to nature, there is nothing in it for which we should desire it: but if we consider it as a *medium*, or pasage into glory, yea, the only ordinary way through which all the saints must pass out of this into a better state; so it will appear not only tolerable, but desirable to prepared souls. Were there not a shore of glory on the other side of these black waters of death, for my own part, I should rather chuse to live meanly than to die easily. If both parts were to perish at death, there were no reason to persuade one to be willing to deliver up the other; it were a madness for the soul to desire to be dissolved, if it were so far from being better out of the body than in it, that it should have no being at all. But Christians, let me tell you, death is so far from being a bar, that it is a bridge in your way to glory, and you are never like to come thither, but by passing over it: except, therefore, you will look beyond it, you will never see any desirableness in it. "I desire to be dissolved (saith Paul) and to be with Christ, which is far better." To be with death is sad, but to be with Christ is sweet; to endure the pains of death is doleful, but to see the face of Christ is joyful; to part with your pleasant habitations is irksome, but to be lodged in the heavenly mansions is most delightful; a parting hour with dear relations is cutting, but a meeting hour with Jesus Christ is transporting; to be rid of your own bodies is not pleasing, but to be rid of sin, and that for ever, what can be more pleasing to a gracious soul?

You see, then, in what sense I present death as a desirable thing to the people of God: and therefore seeing nature teacheth us (as the apostle speaks) to put the more abundant comeliness upon the uncomely parts; suffer me to dress up death in its best ornaments, and present it to you in the following arguments, as a beautiful and comely object of your conditional and well-regulated desires. And,

*Arg. 1.* If upon a fair and just account, there shall appear to be more gain to believers in death, than there is in life; reason must needs vote death to be better to them that are in Christ, than life can be; and consequently, it should be desirable in their eyes.

It is a clear dictate of reason, in case of choice, to chuse that

which is best for us. Who is there that freely exercises reason and choice together, that will not do so?

What merchant will not part with an hundred pound's worth of glass beads and pendants for a tun of gold? A few tinsel toys for as many rich diamonds? *Mercatura est amittere, ut luceris*; that is true merchandise, to part with things of lesser, for things of greater value.

Now, if you will be tried and determined by God's book of rates, then the case is determined quickly, and the advantage appears exceedingly upon death's side. Phil. i. 21. "To me to live, is Christ; and to die, is gain."

Object. *True, it might be so to Paul, who was eminent in grace, and ripe for glory; but it may be loss to others, who have not attained the height of his holiness or assurance.*

Sol. The true and plain sense of the objection is this, whether heaven and Christ, be as much gain to him that enjoys them, though behind others both in grace and obedience, as it is to them who are more eminent in grace, and have done and suffered more for their sake? And let it be determined by yourselves. But if your meaning be, that Paul was ready for death, and so are not you; his work and course was almost comfortably finished, and so is not yours; his death, therefore, must needs be gain to him, but it may be loss to you, even the loss of all that you are worth for ever.

To this I say, the wisdom of God orders the time of his people's death, as well as all other circumstances about it: And in this, your hearts may be at perfect rest, that being in Christ you can never die to your loss, die when you will. I know you will reply, That if your union with Christ were clear, the controversy were ended; but then you must also consider, they are as safe who die by an act of recumbency upon Christ, as those that die in the fullest assurance of their interest in him.

And beside, your reluctancies and aversations to death, are none of your way to assurance; that such a strong aversation to sin, and such a vehement desire after, and love to Christ, as can make you willing to quit all that is dear and desirable to you in this world for his sake, is the very next door or step to assurance; and if the Lord bring your hearts to this frame, and fix them there, it is not likely you will be long without it.

But to return: Paul had here valued life, with a full allowance of all the benefits and advantages of it; "To me to live, is Christ;" that is, if I live, I shall live in communion with Christ, and service for Christ, and in the midst of all those comforts which usually result from both. Here is life, with the most weighty and desirable benefits of it, laid in one scale, and he lays death, and proba-

bly, a violent death too, (for of that he speaks to them afterwards chap. ii. 17.) in the other scale. Thus he fills the scale, and the balance breaks on death's side; yea, it comes down with a *πολλω μαλγον κρεισσον*, a far, far better.

But here falls in (as an excellent person \* observes) a rub in the way: there are in this case two judges, the flesh and the spirit, and they cannot agree upon the values, but contradict each other. Nature saith, It is far better to live than to die, and will not be beaten off from it. What then? I hope you will not put blind and partial nature in competition with God also, as you do life with death. But seeing nature can plead so powerfully, as well as grace, let us hear what those strong reasons are that are urged by the flesh on life's side, and what the soul hath to reply and plead on death's side, (for the soul can plead, and that charmingly too, though not by words and sounds) and then determine the matter, as we shall see cause: but be sure prejudice pull not down the balance.

And here the doleful voice of nature laments, pleads, and be-moans itself to the willing soul.

‘ O my soul, what dost thou mean by these desires to be dissolved?  
 ‘ Art thou in earnest, when thou sayest thou art willing to leave  
 ‘ thine own body, and be gone? Consider, and think again, ere  
 ‘ thou bid me farewell, what thou art to me, and what I have been,  
 ‘ and am to thee; thou art my soul, that is, my prop, my beauty,  
 ‘ my honour, my life, and indeed all that is comfortable to me. If  
 ‘ thou depart, what am I but a spectacle of pity, an abhorred car-  
 ‘ case in a few moments? a prey to the worms, a captive to death?  
 ‘ If thou depart, my candle is put out, and I am left in the horrors  
 ‘ of darkness.

‘ I am thy house, thy delightful habitation, the house in which  
 ‘ thou hast dwelt from the first moment of thy creation, and never  
 ‘ lodgest one night in any other: every room in me hath one  
 ‘ way or other, been a banqueting-room for thy entertainment, a  
 ‘ room of pleasure; all my senses have been purveyors for thy de-  
 ‘ light, my members have all of them been thine instruments and  
 ‘ servants to execute thy commands and pleasure. If thou and I  
 ‘ part, it must be in a shower: thou shalt feel such pains, such  
 ‘ travailing throes, such deep, emphatical groans, such sweets, such  
 ‘ agonies as thou never felt before: for death hath somewhat of  
 ‘ anguish peculiar to itself, and which is unknown, though guessed  
 ‘ at by the living. Besides, whenever thou leavest me, thou leavest  
 ‘ all that is, and hath been comfortable to thee in this world: thy  
 ‘ house shall know thee no more, Job vii. 10. thy lands, thy money,

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\* Mr. How, in Mrs. Margaret Baxter's funeral sermon.

‘thy trade, which have cost thee so many careful thoughts, and yielded thee so many refreshments, shall be thine no longer; death will strip thee of all these, and leave thee naked.

‘Thou hast also, since thou becamest mine, contracted manifold relations in the world, which I know are dear unto thee: I know it by costly experience: How hast thou made me to wear and waste myself, in labours, cares, and watchings for them? But if thou wilt be gone, all these must be left exposed, God knows to what wants, abuses, and miseries! for I can do nothing for them, or myself, if once thou leave me.’ Thus it charms and pleads; thus it layeth, as it were, violent hands upon the soul, and saith, ‘O my soul, thou shalt not depart.’ It hangs about it much, as the wife and children of good Galeacius Caracciolus did about him, when he was leaving Italy, to go to Geneva, (a lively emblem of the case before us). It saith to the soul, as Joab did to David, “Thou hast shamed thy face this day, in that thou lovest thine enemy, death, and hatest me thy friend.” ‘O my soul! my life! my darling! my dear and only one! let nothing but unavoidable necessity part thee and me.’ All this the flesh can plead, and a great deal more than this, and that a thousand times more powerfully and feelingly, than any words can plead the case. And all its arguments are backed by sense; sight and feeling attest what nature speaks.

Let us, in the next place, weigh the pleas and reasons, which notwithstanding all this, do over-power, and prevail with the believing soul to be gone, and quit its own body, and return no more to the elementary world.

And thus the power of faith and love enables it to reply:

‘My dear body, the companion and partner of my comforts and troubles, in the days of my pilgrimage on earth, great is my love, and strong are the bonds of my affections to thee. Thou hast been tenderly, yea, excessively beloved by me; my cares and fears for thee have been inexpressible, and nothing but the love of Jesus Christ is strong enough to gain my consent to part with thee; thy interest in my affection is great, but as great as it is, and as much as I prize thee, I can shake thee off, and thrust thee aside, to go to Christ.

‘Nor may this seem absurd, or unreasonable, considering that God never designed thee for a mansion, but only a temporary tabernacle to me: it is true, I have had some comfort during my abode in thee; but I enjoyed these comforts only in thee, not from thee; and many more I might have enjoyed, hadst thou not been a snare and a clog to me.

‘It is thou that hast eaten up my time, and distracted my thoughts, ensnared my affections, and drawn me under much sin and sor-

row : however, though we may weep over each other, as accessories to the sins and miseries we have drawn upon ourselves ; yet in this is our joint relief, that the blood of Christ hath cleansed us both from all sin.

‘ And therefore I can part the more easily and comfortably from thee, because I part in hope to receive and enjoy thee in a far better condition than I leave thee. It is for both our interests to part for a time ; for mine, because I shall thereby be freed and delivered from sin and sorrow, and immediately obtain rest with God, and the satisfaction of all my desires in his presence and enjoyment, which there is no other way to obtain, but by separation from thee : and why should I live a groaning, burdened, restless life always, to gratify thy fond and irrational desires ? If thou lovest me, thou wouldst rejoice, not repine at my happiness. Parents willingly part with their children at the greatest distance, for their preferment, how dearly soever they love them ; and dost thou envy, or repine at mine ? I have lived many months a suffocating, obscure life, with thee in the womb, and neither you nor I had ever tasted or experienced the comforts of this world, and the various delights of sense, if we had not struggled hard for an entrance into this world. And now we are here alas ! though thou art contented to abide ; I live in thee, but as we both lived in the womb, an obscure, uneasy, and unsuitable life ; thou canst feed upon material bread, and delight thyself amidst the variety of sensitive objects thou findest here ; but what are all these things to me ? I cannot subsist by them ; that which is food to thee, is but chaff, wind, vanity to me : if I stay with thee, I shall be still sinning, and still groaning ; when I leave thee, I shall be immediately freed from both, and arrive at the sum and perfection of all the hopes, desires, and whatsoever I have aimed at, and laboured for, in all the duties of my life. Let us therefore be content to part.

‘ Shrink not at the horror of a grave ; it is indeed a dark and solitary house, and the days of darkness may be many ; but to thee, my dear companion, it shall be a bed of rest, yea, a perfumed bed, where thy Lord Jesus lay before thee : and let the time of thy abode there be never so long, thou shalt not measure it, nor find the least tediousness in it ; a thousand years there shall seem no more in the morning of the resurrection, than the sweetest nap of an hour seemed to be when I was wont to lay thee upon the bed to rest.

‘ The worms in the grave shall be nothing to thee, nor give thee the thousandth part of that trouble that a flea was wont to do ; and though I leave thee, Jesus Christ shall watch, in the

‘ mean time over my dust, and not suffer a grain of it to be lost :  
 ‘ and I will return assuredly to thee again, at the time appointed ;  
 ‘ I take not an everlasting farewell of thee, but depart for a time,  
 ‘ that I may receive thee for ever. To conclude, there is an una-  
 ‘ voidable necessity of our parting ; whether willing or unwilling,  
 ‘ we must be separated : but the consent of my will to part with  
 ‘ thee, for the enjoyment of Jesus Christ will be highly accepta-  
 ‘ ble to God, and greatly sweeten the bitter cup of death to us  
 ‘ both.’

This, and much more the gracious soul hath to say for its separation from the body ; by which it is easy to discern where the gain and advantage of death lies to all believers, and consequently, how much must it be every way their interest to be unbodied.

*Arg. 2.* To be weary of the body upon the pure account and reason of our hatred to sin, and longing desires after Jesus Christ, argues strongly grace in truth, and grace in strength ; it is both the test of our sincerity, and measure of our attainment and maturity of grace, and upon both accounts highly desirable by all the people of God.

It is so great an evidence of the truth of grace, that the scriptures have made it the descriptive periphrasis of a Christian : so we find it in 2 Tim. iv. 8. the crown of life is there promised to all them that love the appearance of Christ, i. e. those that love to drink of it, that delight to steep their thoughts in subjects belonging to the other world, and cast many a yearning look that way : and 2 Pet. iii. 12. they are described to be such as are “ looking for, “ and hastening to the coming of the day of God.” Their earnest expectations and longings do not only put them upon making all the haste they can to be with Christ, but it makes the interposing time seem so tedious and slow, that with their most vehement wishes and desires, they do what they can to accelerate and hasten it. As Rev. xxii. “ Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” Lovers hours, saith the proverb, are full of eternity. ‘ O, said Mr. Rutherford, that Christ would make long strides ! O that he would ‘ fold up the heavens as a cloak, and shovel time and days out of the ‘ way !’ Such desires as these can spring from none but gracious and renewed souls ; for nature is wholly disaffected to a removal hence, upon such motives and considerations as these : if others wish at any time for death, it is but in a pet, a present passion, provoked by some intolerable anguish, or great distress of nature : but to look and long, and hasten to the other world, out of a weariness of sin, and a hearty willingness to be with Christ, supposes necessarily a deep-rooted hatred of sin, abhorring it more than death itself, the greatest of natural evils, and a real sight of things

invisible by the eye of faith, without which it is impossible any man's heart should be thus framed and tempered.

And as it evidenceth the truth, so also the strength and maturity of grace; for alas, how many thousands of gracious souls that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, are to be found quite below this temper of mind! O it is but here and there one among the Lord's own people, that have reached this height and eminence of faith and love. It is with the fruits of the Spirit, just as it is with the fruits of the earth; some are green and raw, others are ripe and mellow: the first stick fast on the branches, you may shake and shake again, and not one will drop; or as those fruits that grow in hedges, with their coats and integuments enwrapping them, as nuts, &c. you may try your strength upon them, and sooner break your nails, than disclose and separate them: so fast and close do their husks stick to them: but when time and the influences of heaven hath ripened and brought them to perfection, the apples drop into your hands without the least touch, and the nut falls out of its case of its own accord. So much more doth the soul part from its body, when maturated, and come to its strength and vigour.

*Arg. 3.* It may greatly prevail upon the will and resolution of a believer, to adventure boldly and cheerfully upon death, that our bodies, of which we are bereaved and deprived by death, shall be most certainly and advantageously restored to us by the resurrection. The resurrection of the dead is the encouragement and consolation of the dying; the more our faith is established in the doctrine of the resurrection, the more we shall surmount the fears of dissolution. If Paul urged it as an argument to reconcile Philemon to his servant Onesimus, ver. 15. "That he therefore departed for a season, that Philemon might receive him for ever;" the same argument may reconcile every believer to death, and take off the prejudice of the soul against it. You shall surely receive your bodies again, and enjoy them for ever.

Now the doctrine of the resurrection is as sure in itself as it is comfortable to us; the depth and strength of its foundation fully answers to the height and sweetness of its consolation. Be pleased to try the two pillars thereof, and see which of them may be doubted or shaken. Mat. xxii. 29. "You err (saith Christ to the Sadducees, who denied this doctrine) not knowing the scriptures, and the power of God." This is the ground and root of their error, not knowing the scriptures, and the power of God: q. d. did you know and believe the scriptures of God, and the power of God, you would never question this doctrine of the resurrection, which is built upon them both. The power of God convinceth all men that know and believe it, that it *may be so*, and the scriptures of

God convince all that know and believe them, that it *must be so*. As for his power, who can doubt it? At the command and fiat of God, the earth brought forth every living creature after his kind, Gen. i. 24, 25. at his command Lazarus came forth, John xi. 43. And was there not as much difficulty in either of these, as in our resurrection? By this power our souls were quickened, and raised from the death of sin and guilt to the spiritual life of Christ, Eph. i. 19. And is it not as easy to raise a dead body as a dead soul? But what stand I arguing in so plain a case, when we are assured this mighty power is able to subdue all things to itself, Phil. iii. 21.

And then, for his promise that it shall be so, what can be plainer? See 1 Thess. iv. 15, 16. "This we say unto you by the word of "the Lord," &c. i. e. in the name or authority of the Lord, and by commission and warrant from him. He first opens his commission, shews his credentials, and then publishes the comfortable doctrine of his resurrection, and the saints pre-eminence to all others therein.

Well then, what remains in death to fright and scar a believer? Is it our parting with these bodies? Why, is it not for ever that we part with them; as sure as the power and promises of God are true, firm, and sufficient to accomplish it, we shall see and enjoy them again. This comforted Job, chap. xix. 25, 26. over all his diseases, when of all his enjoyments that once he had, he could not say, my friends, my children, my estate; yet then he could say, my Redeemer. When he looked upon a poor wasted, withered, loathsome body of his own, and saw nothing but a skeleton, an image of death, yet then could he see it a glorious body, by viewing it believingly in this glass of the resurrection. So then all the damage we can receive by death, is but the absence of our bodies for a time; during which time, the covenant-relation betwixt God and them, holds good and firm, Mat. xxii. 32. He therefore will take care of them, and in due time restore them with marvellous improvements and endowments, to us again, divested of all their infirmities, and clothed with heavenly qualities and perfections, 1 Cor. xv. 43, 44. And in the mean time, the soul attains its rest, and happiness, and satisfaction in the blessed God.

*Arg. 4.* The consideration of what we part from, and what we go to, should make the medium, by which we pass from so much evil to so great good, lovely and desirable in our eyes, how unpleasing or bitter soever it be in itself.

No man desires physic for itself. There is no pleasure in bitter pills and loathsome potions, except what rises from the end, viz. the disburdening of nature, and recovery of health; and this gives it a

value with the sick and pained. Under a like consideration is death desired by sick and pained souls, who find it better to die once, than groan under burdens continually.

Death certainly is the best physician, next, and under Jesus Christ, that ever was employed about them; for it cures radically and perfectly, so that the soul never relapses more into any distemper. Other medicines are but anodynes, or at best they relieve us but in part, and for a time; but this goes through the work, and perfects the cure at once. Methinks that call of Christ which he gives his spouse in Cant. iv. 8. “(Come with me from Lebanon, (my spouse) with me from Lebanon: and look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions dens, from the mountains of the leopards)” scarce suits any time so well as the time of death. Then it is that we depart from the lions dens, and the mountains of leopards, places uncomfortable and unsafe. More particularly at death the saints depart.

1. From defiling corruptions	into	1. Perfect purity.
2. From heart-sinking sorrows		2. Fulness of joy.
3. From entangling temptations		3. Everlasting freedom.
4. From distressing persecutions		4. Full rest.
5. From pinching wants		5. Universal supplies.
6. From distracting fears		6. Highest security.
7. From deluding shadows		7. Substantial good.

1. From defiling corruptions into perfect purity. No sin hangs about the separated, though it do about the sanctified soul. They come out of the body suitable to that character and encomium, Cant. iv. 7. “Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.” It doth that for the saints, which all their graces and duties, all their mercies and afflictions, could never do. Faith is a great purifier, communion with God a great cleanser, sanctified afflictions a refiner’s fire and fuller’s soap; these have all done their parts, and been useful in their places: But none of them, nor all together, perfect this cure till death come, and then the work is done, and the cure perfected.

All weeping, all praying, all believing, all hearing, all sacraments, all the means and instruments in the world, cannot do what death will do for thee. One dying hour will do what ten thousand praying hours never did, nor could do. In this hour the design of all those hours is accomplished; as he that is dead by mortification, is at present freed from sin, in respect of imputation and dominion, Rom. vi. 7. so he that is justified and mortified, when dead naturally, is immediately freed from the very indwelling and existence of sin in him. We read of the washing of the robes of the saints, in Rev. vii. 14. The blood of the Lamb cleanseth

them from every spot; but it doth it gradually. The last spot of guilt indeed was fetched out by one act of justification; but the last spot of filth is not fetched out till the time of their dissolution; when they are come out of the agonies of death (which the scripture calls great tribulation) then, and not till then, are they perfectly cleansed. Sin brought in death, and death carries out sin.

Oh! what a pure, lovely, shining creature, is the separated spirit of a just man? how clear is its judgment, how ordinate its will, how holy, and altogether heavenly are all its affections now! and never till now it feels itself perfectly well, and as it would be.

2. From heart sinking sorrows, into fulness of joy. The life we now live is a groaning life, 2 Cor. v. 2. where is the Christian, that if his inside could be seen, and his heart laid naked, would not be found wounded from many hands? from the hand of God, of enemies, of friends, of Satan; but especially by the hands of its own corruptions? Christ our head was stiled *a man of sorrows*, from the multitude of his sorrows; and it is the lot of all his to be in a state of sorrow in the body. "In the world (saith he) you shall have trouble." When I consider how oft the candle of sorrow is held to the thread of life, I justly wonder how it is protracted to such a length. What friend, what enjoyment had we ever in this world, from which no sorrow, nay, many sorrows have not sprung up to us? And if the best comforts bring forth sorrows, what do the worst things we meet with here bring forth? I suppose there are many thousands of God's people this day in the world, that have as much reason to assume the same new name that Naomi did, and say, Call me *Marah*. Look, as day and night divide all time betwixt them; so do our comforts and our sorrows, only with this difference, that our nights of sorrow, like winter nights, are long, cold and dark; and our days of comfort short, and frequently overcast.

But when we put off these bodies, we put off our mourning garments with them, and shall never sorrow any more: Thenceforth God wipes away all tears from his people's eyes, Rev. xxi. 4. And that is not all, but they enter into their Master's joy, even fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. Groans are turned into triumphs, and sighs and tears into joyful acclamations and songs of praise. Oh that we were once made thoroughly sensible of the advantages that come by this exchange!

3. From entangling temptations into everlasting freedom. It is this body, and the interests and concerns of it, upon which Satan raises most of his batteries against our souls: It is our flesh that causeth our souls to sin; and whilst the soul dwells in the body, it is within Satan's reach to tempt, and defile, and trouble it. Oh

what grievous things do the best souls endure, and suffer on this account!

Temptations are of two sorts; ordinary and mediate, by Satan's exciting and managing our corruptions, by presenting objects to them; or extraordinary and immediate, like fiery darts shot immediately out of hell into the soul, which puts it all into a flame and combustion: Of the former you read in James i. 14. the latter, Eph. vi. 16. and upon the account of the one and the other, the people of God are weary of their lives. Think what a grief it must be to a soul that loves God, to feel in itself such things as militate against, and wound the name and honour of God, which is, and ought to be dearer to it than its life.

But by the door of death every gracious soul makes its escape from the tempting power of Satan: He can no more touch or affect the soul with any temptation, than we can better the body of the sun with snow-balls: For as Satan can have no access to that place of blessedness, where the souls of the saints are; so if he could, he can find nothing in them to fasten a temptation upon. The schoolmen give this as the reason why the saints in heaven are impeccable, because all their thoughts and affections are everlastingly fixed in, and employed about the blessed God, whose face they continually behold in glory.

4. From distressing persecutions, into full and perfect rest. As death sets us free from the power of Satan, so from the reach of all persecutors. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest," as it is in Job iii. 17. The price of one Ahab, who had sold himself to work wickedness, was a stock sufficient to purchase many years trouble to all Israel, 1 Kings xviii. 17. "Wicked men are as the unquiet, troubled sea which cannot rest," Isa. lvii. 20. They cannot rest from troubling the saints, till they cease to be wicked or to live: When God puts out the candle of their lives, they are silent in darkness, 1 Sam. ii. 9. And when God puts out the candle of our life, we are at rest, though they rage never so much in this world. Death is the saints *quietus est*, their full and final discharge from persecuting enemies. When we are dying, we may say, as Psal. ix. 6. "O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end."

God may put an end to those persecutions before death; and such a time, according to promise, is to be expected, "when our officers shall be peace, and our exactors righteousness, Isa. lx. 17. but if the accomplishment of the promise be reserved for ages to come, and we must spend our days under the oppression of the wicked; yet this is our comfort, we know when we shall be far enough out of their reach.

5. From pinching wants, to universal supplies. This is the day

in which the Lord abundantly satisfies the desires, and supplies the needs of all his people. There are two sorts of wants upon the people of God: *spiritual* and *temporal*.

Spiritual wants are the just complaints of all gracious souls. You read, 1 Thess. iii. 10. of that which is lacking in the faith of the saints: There are none but find many things lacking to the perfection of every grace: our knowledge of God wants clearness and efficacy; our love to God fervour and constancy; our faith wants strength and stability: Darkness mixes itself with our knowledge, deadness with our love, unbelief with the purest acts of faith. Go where you will, you shall find God's people every where complaining of their spiritual wants: one of a dark head, another of a dead heart, another of a treacherous memory. Thus they are loading one another with their complaints.

Temporal outward wants pinch hard also upon many of God's people: The greatest number of them consist of the poor of this world, James ii. 5. Those whose souls are discharged and acquitted by God, whose debts are paid by Jesus Christ, may yet be entangled in a brake of cares and troubles in the world, and not know which way to turn themselves in their straits and difficulties. But by death the saints pass from all their wants, inward and outward, to a state of complete satisfaction, where nothing is lacking. From that day all their spiritual wants are supplied; for they are now arrived "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, to a perfect man," Eph. iv. 13. Now "that which is perfect is come, and all that was in part is done away," 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

And for outward wants, they shall feel them no more: For putting off the body, we must needs put off all cares and concerns about it. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, God shall destroy both it and them," 1 Cor. vi. 13.

6. From distracting fears, into the highest security and rest of thoughts for evermore. The fears of God's people are either about their souls, or about their bodies; the fears they have about their souls are inexpressible. Two things especially exercise their fears about their soul. (1.) Whether they be really united to Christ. (2.) Whether they shall be able to continue and persevere in the ways of Christ to the end? they are afraid of their sincerity and of their stability: And these fears accompany many of God's people from their regeneration to their dissolution. O, what would they not give, what would they not do, yea, what would they not endure to get a full satisfaction in those things! Every working of corruption, every discovery made by temptation, puts them into a fright, and makes them question all that ever was wrought in them.

And, as their fears are great about the inward man, so also about the outward man; especially when such bloody preparations

seem to be making by the enemies that have acted such, and so many bloody tragedies already in the world.

But at death they enter into a perfect peace and security, Isa. lvii. 2. No wind of fear shall ever ruffle or disturb their souls, and put them into a storm any more.

7. From deluding shadows, into substantial good. This world is the world of shadows and delusive appearances. Here we are imposed upon, and baffled by empty and deceitful vanities: All we have here is little else but a dream; at death the soul awakes out of its dream, and finds itself in the world of realities, where it feeds upon substantial good to satisfaction, Psal. xvii. 15.

Now the advantages accruing to the soul by death, being so great and many, though the medium be harsh and ungrateful in itself, yet there is all the reason in the world we should covet it, for the benefits that come by it.

*Arg. 5.* The foretastes we have had of heaven already in the body, should make all the saints long to be unembodied for the full and perfect fruition of that joy, seeing it cannot be fully and perfectly enjoyed by the soul, till it hath put off the body by death.

That there are prelibations, first-fruits, and earnest of future glory given at certain seasons to believers in this life, is put beyond all doubting, not only by scripture testimonies, but frequent experiences of God's people. I speak not only with the scriptures, but with the clearest experience of many saints, when I say, here are to be felt and tasted, even here in the body, the earnest of our inheritance, Eph. i. 14. "The first-fruits of the Spirit," Rom. viii. 23. The sealing of the Spirit, Eph. i. 13. "The very joy of the Lord," 1 Pet. i. 8. of the same kind, though in a less degree, with that of the glorified.

That the fulness of this joy cannot be in us whilst we tabernacle in bodies of flesh, is as plain. When Moses desired a sight of that face which the spirits of just men made perfect do continually behold and adore, the answer was, "No man can see my face and live," Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19, 20, q. d. Moses, thou askest a great thing, and understandest not how unable thou art to support that which thou desirest: should I shew thee my glory in this compounded state thou now art in, it would confound thee and swallow thee up. Nature, as now constituted, cannot support such a weight of glory: A ray, a glimpse of this light overpowers man, and breaks such a clay vessel to pieces; which is the reason why the resurrection must intervene betwixt this state and that of the body's glorification.

And it is not to be doubted, but one main end and reason why these foretastes of heaven are given us in the body, is to embolden

the soul to venture through death itself for the full enjoyment of those delights and pleasures. They are like the grapes of Eshcol to the faint-hearted Israelites, or the sweet wines of Italy to the Gauls, which, once tasted, made them restless till they had conquered that good country where they grew. Rom. viii. 23. "We  
 " which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves do  
 " groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, viz. the redemp-  
 " tion of our bodies."

Well then, reflect seriously upon these sweet tastes that you have had of God and his love, in your sincere and secret addresses to him, and converses with him. What a holy forgetfulness of all things in this world hath it wrought! How insipid and tasteless hath it rendered the sweetest creature enjoyments! What willingness to be dissolved for a more full fruition of it! God this way brings heaven nigh to your souls, out of design to overcome your reluctancies at death, through which we must pass to the enjoyment of it. And after all those sights and tastes, both of the truth and goodness of that state, shall we still reluctate and hang back, as if we had never tasted how good the Lord is! O, you may justly question, whether you ever had a real taste of Jesus Christ, if that taste do not kindle coals of fire in your bosoms; I mean, ardent longings to be with him, and to be satiated with his love.

If you have been privileged with a taste of that hidden manna, with the sight of things invisible, with joys unspeakable, and full of glory, and yet are loth to be gone to the fountain whence all this flows: certainly you herein both cross the design of the Spirit in giving them, and cast a vile disgrace and reproach upon the blessed God, as thinking there is more bitterness in death, than there is sweetness in his presence. Yea, it argues the strength of that unbelief which still remains in your hearts, that after so many tastes and trials as you have had, you still remain doubtful and hesitating about the certainty and reality of things invisible.

O, what ado hath God with his froward and peevish children! If he had only revealed the future state to us in his word, as the pure object of faith, and required us to die upon the mere credit of his promise, without such pawns, pledges, and earnest as these are; were there not reason enough for it? But after such, and so many wonderful and amazing condescensions, wherein he doth, as it were, say, Soul, if yet thou doubtst, I will bring heaven to thee, thou shalt have it in thy hand, thy eyes shall see it, thy hands shall handle it, thy mouth shall taste it: How inexcusable is our reluctancy?

*Arg. 6. It should greatly fortify the people of God against the fears of dissolution, to consider that death can neither destroy the*

*being of their souls by annihilation, nor the hopes and expectations they have of blessedness, by disappointment and frustration, Prov. xiv. 32. "The righteous hath hope in his death."*

Though all earthly things fail at death (upon which account dying is expressed by failing, Luke xvi. 19.) yet neither the soul, nor its well-grounded hopes can fail. The anchor of a believer's hope is firm and sure, Heb. vi. 18. It will not come home in the greatest storm that can beat upon the soul. For (1.) God hath foreknown and chosen them to salvation before the world was, 1. Pet. i. 2. "And this foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth who are his," 2 Tim. ii. 19. His decrees are as firm as mountains of brass, Zech. vi. 1. (2.) God hath justified their persons, and therein destroyed the power of death over them, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57. "O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the law." If all the hurtful power of death lies in sin, and all the destructive power of sin rises from the law; then neither death nor sin, hath any power to destroy the believer, in whom the righteousness of the law is fulfilled, Rom. viii. 4. namely, by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to them, in respect of which they are as righteous, as if in their own persons they had perfectly obeyed all its commands, or suffered all its penalties. Thus death loseth its sting, its curse and killing power over the souls of all that are in Christ. (3.) God hath sanctified their natures, which sanctification is not only a sure evidence of their election and justification, 2 Thess. i. 5, 6. Rom. viii. 1. but a sure pledge of their glorification also, 2 Cor. v. 4, 5. Yea, (4.) He hath made a sure, and an everlasting covenant with believers; and among other gracious privileges thereby conferred upon them, death is found in the inventory, 1 Cor. xiii. 21. *Death is yours*; to die is gain to them: It destroys their enemies, and the distance that is betwixt Christ and them. (5.) He hath sealed them to his glory by the Holy Spirit, Eph. iv. 30. So that their hopes are too firmly built to be destroyed by death; and if it cannot destroy their souls, nor overthrow their hopes, they need not fear all that it can do besides.

*Arg. 7. It may greatly encourage and embolden the people of God to die, considering that though at death they take the last sight and view of all that is dear to them on earth; yet then they are admitted to the first immediate sight and blessed vision of God, which will be their happiness to all eternity.*

When Hezekiah was upon his supposed death-bed, he complained, Isa. xxxviii. 11. "I shall see man no more, with the inhabitants of the world." We shall see thenceforth these corporeal people no more. We shall see our habitations and dwelling-places

no more, Job vii. 9, 10, 11. We shall see our children and dear relations no more, Job xiv. 21. His sons come "to honour, and he knoweth it not." These things make death terrible to men; but that which cures all this trouble is, that we shall neither need, nor desire them, being thenceforth admitted to the beatifical vision of the blessed God himself.

It is the expectation and hope of this which comforteth the souls of the righteous here, Psal. xvii. 15. "When I awake, I shall behold thy face in righteousness." Those weak and dim representations made by faith, at a distance, are the very joy and rejoicing of a believer's soul now, 1 Pet. i. 7, 8. but how sweet and transporting soever these visions of faith be, they are not worthy to be named in comparison with the immediate and beatifical vision, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. This is the very sum of a believer's blessedness: And what it is we cannot comprehend in this imperfect state; only in general we may gather these conclusions about it, from the account given of it in the scriptures.

1. That it will not be such a sight of God as we now have by the mediation of faith, but a direct, immediate, and intuitive vision of God; (\* 1 John iii. 2. "We shall see him as he is." 1 Cor. xiii. 12. "Then face to face,") which far transcends the vision of faith in clearness and in comfort. This seems to import no less than the very sight of the Divine essence, that which Moses desired on earth to see, but could not, Exod. xxxiii. 20. nor can be seen by any man dwelling in a body, 1 Tim. vi. 16. nor by unbodied souls comprehensively; so God only sees himself. Our eyes see the sun which they cannot comprehend, yet truly apprehend. God will then be known in his essence, and in the glory of all his attributes. The sight of the attributes of God gives the occasion and matter of those ascriptions of praise and glory to him, which is the proper employment of glorified souls, Rev. iv. 11, 12, 13. which is the proper employment of angels, Isa. vi. 3. Oh how different is this from what we now have through faith, duties, and ordinances! See the difference betwixt knowledge by report and immediate sight, in that example of the *queen of the south*, 1 Kings x. 10. the former only excited her desires, the latter transported and overcame her very soul.

Some may think such a vision of God to exceed the abilities of nature, and capacities of any creature. But as a learned † man rightly observes, if the *Divine Nature* be capable of union with a

\* The light of glory is an actual illumination, i. e. a supernatural influx of God, elevating the understanding to a sight of the Divine Essence. *Smising Tract. 2. Dis. 6. N. 55.*

† Norton's Orthodox Evang. p. 527.

creature, as it is evident in the person of Christ, it is also capable of being the object of vision to the creature. Beside, we must know the light of glory hath the same respect to this blessed vision, that assisting grace hath to the acts of faith and obedience performed here on earth. It is a comforting, soul-strengthening light, not to dazzle and over-power, but to comfort, strengthen, and clear the eye of the creature's understanding. Rev. ii. 28. "I will give him the morning-star," *lumen confortans*; and Isa. xxxvi. 9. "In thy light we shall see light."

2. It will be a satisfying sight, Psal. xvii. 15. so perfectly quieting, and giving rest to the soul in all its powers, that they neither can proceed, nor desire to proceed any farther. The understanding can know no more, the will can will no more; the affections of joy, delight, and love are at full rest and quiet in their proper centre. For all good is in the chiefest good eminently; as all the light of the candles in the world is in the sun, and all the rivers in the world in the sea. That which makes the understanding, will, and affections move farther, as being restless and unsatisfied in all discoveries and enjoyments here, is the limited and imperfect nature of things we now converse with; as if you bring a great ship that draws much water into a narrow, and shallow river, she can neither sail nor swim, but is presently aground. But let that ship have sea-room enough, then she can turn and sail before the wind, because there is a depth of water, and room enough. So it is here; all that delighted, but could never satisfy you in the creature, is eminently in God; and what was imperfectly in them, is perfectly to be enjoyed in him, 1 Cor. xv. 28. "God shall be all in all;" the comforts you had here were but drop by drop, inflaming, not satisfying the appetite of the soul: But then "the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and lead them unto fountains of living water," Rev. vii. 17. The object fills the faculties.

3. It will be an appropriating vision of God; you shall see him as your own God, and proper portion; else it could never be a satisfying vision, Job xix. 27. "Whom I shall see for myself!" Not look on him as another's God, but as my God and portion for ever. Balaam saw Christ by a spirit of prophecy; but he had no comfort, because no interest in him, Numb. xxiv. 17. The wicked shall see him, but without joy, yea, with weeping eyes and gnashing of death, because they cannot see him as their Lord, Luke xiii. 28. It is but a poor comfort to starving beggars to stand quivering and famishing in the streets in a cold dark night, and see the lights in the bridegroom's house, the noble dishes served in, and to hear the music and mirth of the guests that feast within. Here it will be as clear that he is *our God*, as that he is *God*.

Assurance is that which many souls have desired, prayed, and panted for, but cannot attain. There may be many rubs and stumbling-blocks in the way to that sweet enjoyment; but here we find what we have been so long seeking: There be no doubt, scruples, objections, puzzling cases to exercise your own or others thoughts: but as these did arise from one of these grounds, viz. the working of corruption, the efficacy of temptations, or Divine withdrawments, and the hidings of God's face; so all these being removed perfectly and for ever in that state, the heavens must needs be clear, and not a cloud of doubt or fear to be seen for ever.

4. It will be a deeply affecting sight: your eyes will now so affect your hearts as they were never affected before. The first view of God will snatch away your hearts to him, as a greater flame doth the less. Love will not now distil from the heart, as waters from a cold still, but gush out as from a sluice or floodgate pulled up. The soul will not move after God so deadly and slowly as it doth now, but be as the chariots of Ammi-nadib, Cant. vi. 12. We may say of the frames of our hearts there, compared with what they are here, as it is said, Deut. xii. 8, 9. "You shall not love, or *delight in God*, as you do this day." If the perfection of that state would admit shame or sorrow, how should we blush and mourn in heaven, to think how cold our love, and how low our delights in God were on earth! 1 John iv. 16. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God." Look, as iron put into the fire becomes all fiery, so the soul dwelling in the God of love, becomes all love, all delight, all joy. O what transports must that soul feel, that abides under the line of love! feels the perpendicular beams of electing, creating, redeeming, preserving love, beating powerfully upon it, and melting it into love! See some of their transports, Rev. v. 13, 14.

5. It will be an *everlasting vision of God*, 1 Thess. v. 17. "So shall we be ever with the Lord," [ever with the Lord.] Who can find words to open the due sense of these few words! *Vacabimus et vidibimus, videbimus et amabimus, amabimus et laudabimus in fine sine fine*, saith blessed Austin. This is the everlasting sabbath, which hath no night, Rev. xxii. 4, 5. The eternal happiness purchased for the saints by the invaluable blood of Christ. If one hour's enjoyment of God, in the way of faith, be so sweet, and no price can be put upon it, nothing on earth taken in exchange for it; what must a whole eternity, in the immediate and full visions of that blessed face in heaven be!

Well then, if such sights as these immediately succeed the sight you have on earth, either by sense of things natural, or by reason of things intellectual, or by faith of things spiritual, who that believes

the truth, and expects the fulfilling of such promises as these, would not be willing to have his eyes closed by death as soon as God shall please? I have read of a holy man that had sweet communion with God in prayer, who in the close of his duty cried out *claudimini, oculi mei, claudimini, &c. Be shut, O mine eyes, be shut; you shall never see any thing on earth like that I have now seen.* Ah! little do the friends of dead believers think what visions of God, what ravishing sights of Christ the souls of their friends have, when they are closing their eyes with tears.

*Arg. 8. The consideration of the evil days that are to come should make the people of God willing to accept of an hiding place in the grave, as a special favour from God.*

It is accounted an act of favour by God, Isa. lvii. 1, 2. to be taken away from the *evil to come*. There are two kinds of evils to come, the evil of *sin*, and the evil of *sufferings*. Sins to come are terrible to gracious hearts, when temptations shall be at their height and strength. Oh what warping and shrinking, what dissembling, yea, down-right denying the known truths and ways of God, may you see every where! Many consciences will then be wounded and wasted: Many scandals and rocks of offence will be rolled into the way of godliness: Christ will be exposed and put to open shame. Should we only be spectators of such tragedies as these, it were enough to overwhelm a gracious and tender heart. But what upright heart is there without fears and jealousies of being brought under the guilt of these evils in itself, as well as the shame and grief for them in others? Oh! it were a thousand times better for you to die in the purity and integrity of your consciences, than to protract a miserable life without them. Oh! think what a world it is you are like to leave behind you, in respect of that to come!

And as there are many evils of sin to come, so there are many evils of sufferings coming on: "The days of visitation are coming on, the days of recompence are come, and Israel shall know it," Hos. ix. 7. All the sufferings you have yet met with, have been in books and histories: You never saw the martyrdom of the saints, but in the pictures and stories; but you will find it quite another thing to be the *subjects* of these cruelties, than to be the mere *readers* or *relaters* of them. It is one thing to see the painted lion on a sign-post, and another to meet the living lion roaring upon you. Ah! little do we imagine how the hearts of men are convulsed, what fears, what faintings invade their spirits, when they are to meet the King of terrors, in the frightful formalities of a violent death.

The consideration of these things will discover to you the reason of that strange wish of Job, chap. xiv. 13. "Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave; that thou wouldst keep me in

“secret till thy wrath be past! And it deserves a serious thought, that when the Holy Ghost had, in Rev. xiv. 9, 10, 11, 12. described the miserable plight of those poor souls, who being overcome by their own fears and the love of this world, should plunge themselves first into deep guilt, by compliance with Antichrist, and receiving his mark; then into hell upon earth, the remorse and horror of their own consciences, which gives them no rest, day nor night; he immediately subjoins, ver. 13. “Blessed are the dead “that die in the Lord; yea, from henceforth, saith the Spirit,” &c. Oh! it is a special blessing and favour to be hid out of the way of those temptations and torments, in a seasonable and quiet grave.

*Arg. 9. Your fixed aversation and unwillingness to die, will provoke God to imbitter your lives with much more afflictions than you have yet felt, or would feel, if your hearts were more mortified and weaned in this point.*

You cannot think of your own deaths with pleasure, no, nor yet with patience. Well, take heed, lest this draw down such trouble upon you, as shall make you at last to say with Job, chap. x. 1. “My soul is weary of my life;” an expression much like that, 2 Sam. i. 9. “Anguish is come upon me, because my life is whole in me.” My soul is hardened, or become cruel against my life, as the Chaldee renders it.

There is a twofold weariness of life; one from an excellency of spirit, a noble principle, the ardent love of Jesus Christ, Phil. i. 23. “I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.” Another from the mere pressures of affliction and anguish of spirit, under heavy and successive strokes from the hand of God and men. Is it not more excellent and desirable to groan for death under a pressure of love to Christ, than of affliction from Christ?

I am convinced that very many of our afflictions come upon this score and account, to make us willing to die.

Is it not sad that God is forced to bring death upon all our comfortable and desirable things in this world, before he can gain our consent to be gone? Why will you put God upon such work as this? Why cannot he have your hearts at a cheaper rate? If you could die, many of your comforts, for ought I know, might live. Had Joab come to Absalom when he sent for him the first or second time, Absalom had never set his field of barley on fire, 2 Sam. xiv. 30. And were you more obedient to the will of God in this manner, it is likely he would not consume your health, and estates, and relations with such heavy strokes as he hath done, and will yet farther do, except your wills be more compliant.

Alas! to cut off your comforts one after another, and make you live a groaning life, the Lord hath no pleasure in it; but

he had rather you should lose these things, than that he should lose your hearts on earth, or company in heaven: *Impatiens ægrutus crudelem facit medicum.*

*Arg. 10. The decree of death cannot be reversed, nor is there any other ordinary passage for the soul into glory, but through the gates of death.* Heb. ix. 27. "It is appointed for all men once to die, "but after that the judgment."

There is but one way to pass out of the obscure, suffocating life in the womb, into the more free and nobler life in the world, viz. through the agonies of birth: and there is ordinarily but one way to pass from this sinning, groaning life we live in this world, to the enjoyment of God and the glory above, viz. through the agonies of death. You must cast off this mean, this vile body, before you can be happy. Heaven cannot come down to you, you cannot see God and live, Exod. xxxiii. 20. It would certainly confound and break you to pieces, like an earthen pitcher, should God but ray forth his glory upon you in the state you now are in; and it is sure you cannot expect the extraordinary favour of such a translation as Enoch had, Heb. xi. 4. nor as those believers shall have that shall be found alive at Christ's coming, 1 Thess. iv. 17. You must go the common road that all the saints go; but though you cannot avoid, you must sweeten it. God will not reverse his decree, but you may, and ought to arm yourselves against the fears of it. Ahasuerus would not recal the proclamation he had emitted against the Jews, but he gave them full liberty to take up arms to defend themselves against their enemies. It is much so here, the sentence cannot be revoked; but yet God gives you leave, yea, he commands you to arm yourselves against death, and defy it, and trample it under the feet of faith.

*Arg. 11. When you find your hearts reluctant at the thoughts of leaving the body, and the comforts of this world, then consider how willingly and cheerfully Jesus Christ left heaven, and the bosom of his Father, to come down to this world for your sakes,* Prov. viii. 30, 31. Psal. xl. 7. *Lo, I come, &c.*

O compare the frames of your hearts with his, in this point, and shame yourselves out of so unbecoming a temper of spirit.

(1.) He left heaven and all the delights and glory of it, to come down to this world to be abased and humbled to the lowest; you leave this world of sin and misery to ascend to heaven, to be exalted to the highest. He came hither to be impoverished, you go thither to be enriched, 2 Cor. viii. 9. yet he came willingly, and we go grudgingly.

(2.) He came from heaven to earth, to be made sin for us, 2 Cor.

v. 21. we go from earth to heaven, to be fully and everlastingly delivered from sin; yet he came more willingly to bear our sins, than we go to be delivered from them.

(3.) He came to take a body of flesh, to suffer and die in it, Heb. ii. 24. you leave your bodies that you may never suffer in, or by them any more.

(4.) As his incarnation was a deep abasement, so his death was the most bitter death that ever was tasted by any from the beginning, or ever shall be to the end of the world; and yet how obediently doth he submit to both at the Father's call, Luke xii. 50. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Ah Christian, your death cannot have the ten thousandth part of that bitterness in it that Christ's had. I remember one of the martyrs being asked, why his heart was so light at death? returned this answer, because Christ's heart was so heavy at his death. O there is a vast difference betwixt the one and the other; the wrath of God, and the curse of the law were in his death, Gal. iii. 13. but there is neither wrath nor curse in their death who die in the Lord, Rom. viii. 1.

God forsook him when he hanged upon the tree in the agonies of death, Mat. xxviii. 46. "My God, my God, why hasst thou forsaken me?" But you shall not be forsaken; He will make all your bed in sickness, Phil. xli. 3. He will never leave you, nor forsake you, Heb. xiii. 5.

Yet he regretted not, but went as a sheep or lamb, Isa. liii. 7. O reason yourselves out of this reluctancy at death, by this great example and pattern of obedience.

*Arg. 12. Lastly, Let no Christian be affrighted at death, considering that the death of Christ is the death of death, and hath utterly disarmed it of all its destructive power.*

If you tremble when you look upon death, yet you cannot but triumph when you look believingly upon Christ.

For, (1.) Christ died (O believer) for thy sins, Rom. iv. 25. his death was an expiatory sacrifice for all thy guilt, Gal. iii. 13. so that thou shall not die in thy sins: The pangs of death may, and must be on thy outward man, but the guilt of sin and the condemnation of God shall not be upon thy inner man.

(2.) The death of Christ, in thy room, hath utterly destroyed the power of death, which once was in the hand of Satan, Heb. ii. 24. Col. ii. 14, 15. his power was not authoritative, but executive; not as the power of a king; but of a sheriff; which is none at all when a pardon is produced.

(3.) Christ hath assured us, that his victory over death shall be complete in our persons. It is already a complete personal victory in respect of himself, Rom. vi. 9. he dieth no more, death hath

no more dominion over him. It is an incomplete victory already as to our persons. It can dissolve the union of our souls and bodies, but the union betwixt Christ and our souls it can never dissolve, Rom. viii. 38, 39. and as for the power it still retains over our dust, that also shall be destroyed at the resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26. compared with ver. 54, 55, 56, 57. so that there is no cause for any soul in Christ to tremble at the thought of a separation from the body, but rather to embrace it as a privilege: *Death is ours.*

O that these arguments might prevail! O that they might at last win the consent of our hearts to go along with death; which is the messenger sent by God to bring us home to our Father's house.

But I doubt, when all is said, we are where we were: all this suffices not to overcome the regrets and reluctancies of nature; still the matter sticks in our minds, and we cannot conquer our disinclined wills in this matter. What is the matter? Where lies the rubs and hinderances? O that God would remove them at last!

Objection 1. *This is a common plea with many, I am not ready and fit to die; were I ready, I should be willing to be gone.*

*Solution* (1.) How long soever you live in the body, there will be somewhat still out of order, something still to do; for you must be in a state of imperfection while you remain here, and according to this plea, you will never be willing to die. (2.) Your willingness to be dissolved and to be with Christ, is one special part of your fitness for death: and till you attain it in some good measure, you are not so fit to die as you should be. (3.) If you be in Christ, you have a fundamental fitness for death, though you may want some circumstantial preparatives. And as to all that is wanting in your sanctification or obedience now, it will be completed in a moment upon your dissolution.

Object. 2. *Others plead that the desire they have to live, is in order to God's farther service by them in this world. O, say they, it was David's happiness to die, when he had served his generation according to the will of God: Acts xiii. 36. If we had done so too, we should say with Simeon, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."*

*Sol.* (1.) God needs not your hands to carry on his service in the world; he can do it by other hands when you are gone. Many of greater gifts and graces than you, are daily laid in the grave, to teach you, God needs no man's help to carry on his work.

(2.) If the service of God be so dear to you, there is higher and more excellent service for you in heaven, than any you ever were, or can be employed in here on earth. Oh! why do not you long to be amidst the company of angels and spirits made perfect in the temple-service in heaven?

Object. 3. *O, but my relations in the world lie near my heart, what will become of them when I am gone?*

*Sol.* (1.) It is pity they should lie nearer your heart than Jesus Christ: If they do, you have little reason to desire death indeed.

(2.) Who took care of you, when death snatched your dear relations from you, who possibly felt the same workings of heart that you now do? Did you not experience the truth of that word, Psal. xxvii. 10. "When father and mother forsake me, then the Lord taketh me up." And if you be in the covenant, God hath prevented this plea with his promise, Jer. xlix. 11. "Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will keep them alive; and let their widows trust in me."

Object. 4. *But I desire to live to see the felicity of Zion before I go hence, and the answer of the many prayers I have sown for it; I am loth to leave the people of God in so sad a condition.*

*Sol.* The publicness of thy spirit, and love to Zion, is doubtless pleasing to God; but it is better for you to be in heaven one day, than to live ever again all the days you have lived on earth in the best time that ever the church of God enjoyed in this world; the promises shall be accomplished, though you may not live to see their accomplishment; die you in the faith of it, as Joseph did, Gen. l. 24.

But, alas! the matter doth not stick here: this is not the main hinderance. I will tell you where I think it lies: (1.) In the hesitancy and staggering of our faith about the certainty and reality of things invisible. (2.) In some special guilt upon the conscience, which discourages us. (3.) In a negligent and careless course of life, which is not ordinarily blessed with much evidence or comfort. (4.) In the deep engagements of our hearts to earthly things: they could not be so cold to Christ, if they were not over-heated with other things. Till these distempers be cured, no arguments can prosper that are spent to this end. The Lord dissolve all those ties betwixt us and this world, which hinder our consent and willingness to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better.

And now we have had a glance and glimmering light, a faint umbrage of the state of the separated souls of the just in heaven: it remains that I shew you somewhat of the state and case of the damned souls in hell. A dreadful representation it is; but it is necessary we hear of hell, that we may not feel it.

## 1 PET. iii. 19.

*By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.*

**I**N the former discourse we have had a just view of heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect, the inhabitants of that blessed region of light and glory.

In this scripture we have the contrary glass, representing the unspeakable misery of those souls or spirits which are separated by death from their bodies for a time, and by sin from God for ever; arrested by the law, and secured in the prison of hell, unto the judgment of the great day.

A sermon of hell may keep some souls out of hell, and a sermon of heaven may be the means to help others to heaven: the desire of my heart is, that the conversations of all those who shall read these discourses of heaven and hell, might look more like a diligent flight from the one, and pursuit of the other.

The scope of the context is a persuasive to patience, upon a prospect of manifold tribulations coming upon the Christian churches, strongly enforced by Christ's example, who both in his own person, ver. 18. and by his spirit in his servants, ver. 19. exercised wonderful patience and long-suffering as a pattern to his people.

This 19th verse gives us an account of his long-suffering towards that disobedient and immorigerous generation of sinners, on whom he waited an hundred and twenty years in the ministry of Noah.

There are difficulties in the text. \* Estius reckons no less than ten expositions of it, and saith, "It is a very difficult scripture in the judgment of almost all interpreters;" but yet I must say, those difficulties are rather brought to it, than found in it. It is a text which hath been racked and tortured by popish expositors, to make it speak Christ's local descent into hell, and to confess their doctrine of *purgatory*; things which it knew not.

But if we will take its genuine sense, it only relates the sin and misery of those contumacious persons, on whom the Spirit of God waited so long in the ministry of Noah; giving an account of,

1. Their sin on earth.

2. Their punishment in hell.

1. Their sin on earth, which is both specified and aggravated. (1.) Specified; namely their disobedience. They were sometimes disobedient and unpersuadable; neither precepts nor examples could bring them to repentance. (2.) This their disobedience is

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\* *Locus hic omnium pœne interpretum iudicio difficillimus.* Estius.

aggravated by the expence of God's patience upon them for the space of an hundred and twenty years, not only forbearing them so long, but striving with them, as Moses expresseth it; or waiting on them, as the apostle here; but all to no purpose; they were obstinate, stubborn, and impersuadable to the very last.

2. Behold, therefore, in the next place, the dreadful, but most just and equal punishment of these sinners in hell; they are called *spirits in prison*, i. e. the souls now in hell\*.

At that time when Peter wrote of them, they were not entire men, but *spirits*, in the proper sense, i. e. separated souls, bodiless, and lonely souls: whilst in the body, it is properly a soul; but when separated, a spirit, according to scripture-language, and the strict notion of such a being.

These spirits, or souls in the state of separation, are said to be in a *prison*, that is, in hell, as the word elsewhere notes, Rev. xx. 7. and Jude, ver. 6. Heaven and hell are the only receptacles of departed, or separated souls.

Thus you have, in a few words, the natural and genuine sense of the place, and it is but a wasting time to repeat and refel the many false and forced interpretations of this text, which corrupt minds, and mercenary pens have perplexed and darkened it withal: That which I level at, is comprised in this plain proposition.

*Doct. That the souls or spirits of all men who die in a state of unbelief and disobedience, are immediately committed to the prison of hell, there to suffer the wrath of God due to their sins.*

Hell is shadowed forth to us in scripture by divers metaphors; "for we cannot conceive spiritual things, unless they are so clothed and shadowed out unto us\*." Augustine gives this reason for the frequent use of metaphors and allegories in scripture, because they are so much proportioned to our senses, with which our senses have contracted an intimacy and familiarity; and therefore God, to accommodate his truth to our capacities, doth as it were, this way embody it in earthly expressions, according to that celebrated observation of the Cabbalists,—*Lumen supremum nunquam descendit sine indumento*;—the pure and supreme light never descends to us without a garment or covering. In the Old Testament, the place and state of damned souls are set forth by metaphors taken from the most remarkable places and exemplary acts of vengeance upon sinners in this world; as the overthrow of the giants by the flood, those prodigious sinners that fought against heaven, and

\* Psal. xxxi. 6. Eccl. xii. 7. Acts vii. 50.

† *Spiritualia capere non possumus, nisi adumbrata.*

were swept by the flood into the place of torment. To this Solomon is conceived to allude, in Prov. xxxi. 16. "The man that wanders out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead;" in the Hebrew it is, he shall remain with the *Rephaims*, or giants. These giants were the men that more especially provoked God to bring the flood upon the world; they are also noted as the first inhabitants of hell, therefore from them the place of torment takes its name, and the damned are said to remain in the place of giants.

Sometimes hell is called Tophet, Isa. xxx. 33. This Tophet was in the valley of Hinnom, and was famous for divers things. There the children of Israel caused their children to pass through the fire to Moloch, or sacrificed to the devil, drowning their horrible shrieks and ejaculations with the noise of drums.

In this valley also was the memorable slaughter of eighteen hundred thousand of the Assyrian camp, by an angel, in one night.

There, also, the Babylonians murdered the people of Jerusalem at the taking of the city, Jer. vii. 31, 32. So that Tophet was a mere shambles, the public chopping-block, on which the limbs of both young and old were quartered out, by thousands. It was filled with dead bodies, till there was no place for burial. By all which it appears, that no spot of ground in the world was so famous for the fires kindled in it to destroy men, for the doleful cries that echoed from it, or the innumerable multitudes that perished in it; for which reason it is made the emblem of hell. Sometimes it is called a "lake of fire burning with brimstone," Rev. xix. 20. denoting the most exquisite torment, by an intense and durable flame.

And in the text, it is called a *prison*, where the spirits of ungodly men are both detained and punished. This notion of a prison gives us a lively representation of the miserable state of damned souls, and that especially in the following particulars.

*First*, Prisoners are arrested and seized by authority of law; it is the law which sends them thither, and keeps them there; the *mittimus* of a justice is but the instrument of the law, whereby they are deprived of liberty, and taken into custody. The law of God which sinners have both violated and despised, at death takes hold of them, and arrests them. It is the law which claps up their spirits in prison, and in the name and authority of the great and terrible God, commits them to hell. All that are out of Christ, are under the curse and damning sentence of the law, which now comes to be executed on them, Gal. iii. 10.

*Secondly*, Prisoners are carried, or haled to prison by force and constraint; natural force backs legal authority: the law is executed by rough and resolute bailiffs, who compel them to go, though

never so much against their will; this also is the case of the wicked at death: Satan is God's bailiff, to hurry away the law-condemned souls to the infernal prison. The devil hath the power of death, Heb. ii. 14. as the executioner hath of the body of a condemned man.

*Thirdly*, Prisoners are chained and bolted in prison, to prevent their escape; so are damned spirits secured by the power of God, and chained by their own guilty and trembling consciences in hell, unto the time of judgment, and the fulness of misery; not that they have no torment in the mean time: alas! were there no more but that fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation, spoken of by the apostle, Heb. x. 27. it were an inexpressible torment; but there is a farther degree of torment to be awarded them at the judgment of the great day, to which they are therefore kept as in chains and prisons.

*Fourthly*, Prisons are dark and noisome places, not built for pleasure, as other houses are, but for punishments; so is hell, Jude, ver. 6. "Reserved in everlasting chains under darkness," as he there describes the place of torments, yea, *outer darkness*, Matth. viii. 12. extreme or perfect darkness. Philosophers tell us of the darkness of this world, *Non dantur puræ tenebræ*, that there is no pure or perfect darkness here, without some mixture of light; but there is not a glade of light, not a spark of hope or comfort shining into that prison.

*Fifthly*, Mournful sighs and groans are heard in prisons, Psal. xcvi. 11. Let the "sighing of the prisoners come before thee," saith the psalmist. But deeper sighs and more emphatical groans are heard in hell, "There shall be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth," Matth. viii. 12. Those that would not groan under the sense of sin on earth, shall howl under anguish and desperation in hell.

*Sixthly*, There is a time when prisoners are brought out of the prison to be judged, and then return in a worse condition than before, to the place from whence they came. God also hath appointed a day for the solemn condemnation of those spirits in prison. The scriptures call it "the judgment of the great day," Jude, ver. 6. from the great business that is to be done therein, and the great and solemn assembly that shall then appear before God.

But I will insist no longer upon the display of the metaphor; my business is to give you a representation of the state and condition of damned souls in hell, and to assist your conceptions of them, and of their state.

It is a dreadful sight I am to give you this day; but how much better is it to see, than to feel that wrath? The treasures thereof

shall shortly be broken up, and poured forth upon the spirits of men.

You had in the former discourse, a faint umbrage of the spirits of just men in glory; in this you will have an imperfect representation of the spirits of wicked men in hell: and look, as the former cannot be adequate and perfect, because that happiness surpasseth our knowledge; so neither can this be so, because the misery of the damned passeth our fear.

The case and state of a damned spirit will be best opened in these following propositions.

Proposition 1. *That the guilt of all sin gathers to, and settles in the conscience of every christless sinner, and makes up a vast treasure of guilt in the course of his life in this world.*

The high and awful power of conscience belonging to the understanding faculty in the soul of man, was spoken to before, as to its general nature, and that conscience certainly accompanies it, and is inseparable from it, was there shewed; I am here to consider it as the seat or centre of guilt, in all unregenerate and lost souls. For, look, as the tides wash up, and leave the slime and filth upon the shore, even so all the corruption and sin that is in the other faculties of the soul settle upon the conscience; "Their mind and conscience (saith the apostle) is defiled," Tit. i. 15. it is as it were, the sink of a sinner's soul, into which all filth runs and guilt settles.

The conscience of every believer is purged from its filthiness by the blood of Christ, Heb. ix. 14. his blood and his spirit purify it, and pacify it, whereby it becomes the region of light and peace: but all the guilt which hath been long contracting, through the life of an unbeliever, fixes itself deep and fast in his conscience; "It is written upon the tables of their hearts, as with a pen of iron," Jer. xvii. 1. i. e. guilt is as a mark or character fashioned or engraven in the very substance of the soul, as letters are cut into glass with a diamond.

Conscience is not only the principal *engagee*, obliged unto God as a judge, but the principal director and guide of the soul, in its courses and actions, and consequently, the guilt of sin falls upon it, and rests in it. The soul is both the spring and fountain of all actions that go outward from man, and the term or receptacle of all actions inward; but in both sorts of actions, going outward, and coming inward, conscience is the chief counsellor, guide, and director in all, and so the guilt which is contracted either way, must be upon its head. It is the bridle of the soul to restrain it from sin; the eye of the soul to direct its course; and therefore is principally chargeable with all the evils of life. Bodily members are but instruments, and the will itself, as high and noble a faculty or power

as it is, moveth not until the judgment cometh to a conclusion, and the debate be ended in the mind.

Now, in the whole course and compass of a sinner's life in this world, what treasures of guilt must needs be lodged in his conscience? What a magazine of sin and filth must be laid up there? It is said of a wicked man, Job xx. 11. "His bones are full of the sins of his youth;" meaning his spirit, mind, or conscience, is as full of sin, as bones are of marrow: yea, the very sins of his youth are enough to fill them: and Rom. ii. 5. they are said "to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath," which is only done by treasuring up guilt; for wrath and guilt are treasured up together in proportion to each other. Every day of his life vast sums have been cast into this treasury, and the patience of God waiteth till it be full, before he calls the sinner to an account and reckoning, Gen. xv. 16.

Prop. 2. *All the sin and guilt, contracted upon the souls and consciences of impenitent men in this world, accompany and follow their departed souls to judgment, and there bring them under the dreadful condemnation of the great and terrible God, which cuts off all their hopes and comforts for ever.*

"If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins." John viii. 24. And Job xx. 11. "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust." No proposition lies clearer in scripture, or should lie with greater weight on the hearts of sinners: nothing but pardon can remove guilt; but without faith and repentance there never was, nor shall be a pardon, Acts x. 43. Rom. iii. 24, 25. Luke xxiv. 46, 47. Look, as the graces of believers, so the sins of unbelievers follow the soul whithersoever it goes. All their sins who die out of Christ, cry to them when they go hence, *We are thy works, and we will follow thee.* The acts of sin are transient, but the guilt and effects of it are permanent; and it is evident by this, that in the great day, their consciences, which are the books of records, wherein all their sins are registered, will be opened, and they shall be judged by them, and out of them, Rev. xx. 12.

Now, before that general judgment, every soul comes to its particular judgment, and that immediately after death: of this I apprehend the apostle to speak in Heb. ix. 27. "It is appointed for all men once to die, but after that the judgment." The soul is presently stated by this judgment in its everlasting and fixed condition. The soul of a wicked man appearing before God, in all its sin and guilt, and by him sentenced, immediately gives up all its hope, Prov. xi. 7. "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of the unjust man

“perisheth.” His strong hope \* perisheth, as some read it, i. e. his strong delusion: for, alas, he took his own shadow for a bridge over the great waters, and is unexpectedly plunged into the gulph of eternal misery, as Mat. vii. 22.

This perishing, or cutting off of hope, is that which is called in scripture *the death of the soul*, for so long the soul will live, as it hath any hope. The deferring of hope makes it sick, but the final cutting off of hope strikes it quite dead, i. e. dead as to all joy, comfort, or expectation of any for ever, which is that death which an immortal soul is capable to suffer: *The righteous hath hope in his death*; but every unregenerate man in the world breathes out his last hope in a few moments after his last breath, which strikes terror into the very centre of the soul, and is a death-wound to it.

Prop. 3. *The souls of the damned are exceedingly large and capacious subjects of wrath and torment; and in their separate state their capacity is greatly enlarged, both by laying asleep all those affections whose exercise is relieving, and thoroughly awakening all those passions which are tormenting.*

The soul of man being by nature a spirit, an intelligent spirit, and, in its substantial faculties, assimilated to God, whose image it bears; it must, for that reason, be exquisitely sensible of all the impressions and touches of the wrath of God upon it. The spirit of man is a most tender, sensible, and apprehensive creature: the eye of the body is not so sensible of a touch, a nerve of the body is not so sensible when pricked, as the spirit of man is of the least touch of God's indignation upon it. “A wounded spirit who can bear?” Prov. xviii. 14. Other external wounds upon the body inflicted either by man or God, are tolerable; but that which immediately touches the spirit of man, is insufferable: who can bear or endure it?

And as the spirit of man hath the most delicate and exquisite sense of misery; so it hath a vast capacity to receive, and let in the fulness of anguish and misery into it: it is a large vessel, called, Rom. ix. 22. “A vessel of wrath fitted to destruction.” The large capacity of the soul is seen in this, that it is not in the power of all the creatures in the world to satisfy and fill it: it can drink up, as one speaks, all the rivers of created good, and its thirst not quenched by such a draught; but after all, it cries, Give, give. Nothing but an infinite God can quiet and satisfy its appetite and raging thirst.

And as it is capable and receptive of more good than is found in all the creatures, so it is capable of more misery and anguish than

\* *Etiam spes valentissima*, i. e. Even the strongest hope.

all the creatures can inflict upon it. Let all the elements, all men on earth, yea, all the devils and damned in hell, conspire and unite in a design to torment man; yet when they have done all, his spirit is capable of a farther degree of torment; a torment as much beyond it, as a rack is beyond a hard bed, or the sword in his bowels is beyond the scratch of a pin. The devils indeed are the executioners and tormentors of the damned; but if that were all they were capable to suffer, the torment of the damned would be, comparatively, mild and gentle to what they are. Oh, the largeness of the understanding of man, what will it not take into its vast capacity!

But add to this, that the damned souls have all those affections laid in a deep and everlasting sleep, the exercises whereof would be relieving, by emptying their souls of any part of their misery; and all those passions thoroughly and everlastingly awakened, which increase their torments.

The affections of joy, delight, and hope, are benumbed in them, and laid fast asleep, never to be awakened into act any more. Their hope, in scripture, is said to *perish*, i. e. it so perisheth, that, after death, it shall never exert another act to all eternity. The activity of any of those affections would be like a cooling gale, or refreshing spring, amidst their torments; but as Adrian lamented himself, *Numquam jocos dabis*, Thou shalt never be merry more.

And as these affections are laid asleep, so their passions are roused, and thoroughly awakened to torment them; so awakened, as never to sleep any more. The souls of men are sometimes jogged and startled in this world, by the works or rods of God, but presently they sleep again, and forget all: but hereafter the eyes of their souls will be continually held waking to behold and consider their misery; their understandings will be clear and most apprehensive; their thoughts fixed and determined; their consciences active and efficacious; and, by all this, their capacity to take in the fullest of their misery, enlarged to the uttermost.

Prop. 4. *The wrath, indignation, and revenge of God poured out as the just reward of sin, upon the so capacious souls of the damned, are the principal part of their misery in hell.*

In the third proposition I shewed you, that the souls of the damned can hold more misery than all the creatures can inflict upon them. When the soul suffers from the hand of man, its sufferings are but either by way of sympathy with the body; or if immediately, yet it is but a light stroke the hand of a creature can give: But when it hath to do with a sin-revenging God, and that immediately, this stroke cuts off the spirit of man, as it is expressed, Psal. lxxxviii. 16. The body is the clothing of the soul. Most of the arrows shot at the soul in this world, do but stick in

the clothes, i. e. reach the outward man: But in hell, the spirit of man is *the white* at which God himself shoots. All his envenomed arrows strike the soul, which is, after death, laid bare and naked to be wounded by his hand. At death, the soul of every wicked man immediately falls into the hands of the living God; and "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," as the apostle speaks, Heb. x. 31. Their punishment is "from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2 Thes. i. 9. They are not put over to their fellow-creatures to be punished, but God will do it himself, and glorify his power, as well as his justice in their punishment. The wrath of God lies immediately upon their spirits, and this is the "fiery indignation which devoureth their adversaries," Heb. x. 27. A fire that licks up the very spirit of man. Who knoweth the power of his anger! Psal. xc. 11. How insupportable it is, you may a little guess by that expression of the prophet Nahum, chap. i. 5, 6. "The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence; yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."

And, as if anger and wrath were not words of a sufficient edge and sharpness, it is called fiery indignation and vengeance, words denoting the most intense degree of divine wrath. For indeed his power is to be glorified in the destruction of his enemies, and therefore now he will do it to purpose. He takes them now into his own hands. No creature can come at the soul immediately, that is God's prerogative, and now he hath to do with it himself in fury, and revenge is poured out. "Can thy hands be strong, or thy heart endure when I shall deal with thee?" Ezek. xxii. 14. Alas! the spirit quails and dies under it. This is the hell of hells.

What doleful cries and lamentings have we heard from God's dearest children, when but some few drops of his anger have been sprinkled upon their souls, here in this world! But alas! there is no comparison betwixt the anger or fatherly discipline of God over the spirits of his children, and the indignation poured out from the beginning of revenges upon his enemies.

Prop. 5. *The separate spirit of a damned man becomes a tormentor to itself by the various and efficacious actings of its own conscience, which are a special part of its torment in the other world.*

Conscience, which should have been the sinner's curb on earth, becomes the whip that must lash his soul in hell. Neither is there any faculty or power belonging to the soul of man, so fit and able to do it as his own conscience. That which was the seat and centre

of all guilt, now becomes the seat and centre of all torments. The suspension of its tormenting power in this world is a mystery and wonder to all that duly consider it. For certainly should the Lord let a sinner's conscience fly upon him with rage, in the midst of his sins and pleasures, it would put him into a hell upon earth, as we see in the doleful instances of Judas, Spira, &c. But he keeps a hand of restraint upon them, generally, in this life, and suffers them to sleep quietly by a grumbling or seared conscience, which couches by them as a sleepy lion, and lets them alone.

But no sooner is the Christless soul turned out of the body, and cast for eternity at the bar of God, but conscience is roused, and put into a rage never to be appeased any more. It now racks and tortures the miserable soul with its utmost efficacy and activity. The mere presages and forebodings of wrath by the consciences of sinners in this world have made them lie with a ghastly paleness in their faces, universal trembling in all their members, a cold sweating horror upon their panting bosoms like men already in hell: But this, all this, is but as the sweating of the stones before the great rain falls. The activities of conscience (especially in hell) are various, vigorous, and dreadful to consider, such are its *recognitions, accusations, condemnations, upbraidings, shamings, and fearful expectations.*

1. The consciences of the damned will recognize, and bring back the sins committed in this world fresh to their mind: For what is conscience, but a register, or book of records, wherein every sin is ranked in its proper place and order! This act of conscience is fundamental to all its other acts: for it cannot accuse, condemn, upbraid, or shame us for that it hath lost out of its memory, and hath no sense of. *Son, remember,* said Abraham to Dives, in the midst of his torments. This remembrance of sins past, mercies past, opportunities past, but especially of hope past and gone with them, never to be recovered any more, is like that fire not blown, (of which Zophar speaks) which consumes him, or the glittering sword coming out of his gall, Job xx. 24, &c.

2. It chargeth and accuseth the damned soul; and its charges are home, positive, and self-evident charges: A thousand legal and unexceptionable witnesses cannot confirm any point more than one witness in a man's bosom can do, Rom. ii. 15. It convicts, and stops their mouths, leaving them without any excuse or apology. Just and righteous are the judgments of God upon thee, saith conscience: In all this ocean of misery, there is not one drop of injury or wrong. The judgment of God is according to truth.

3. It condemns as well as chargeth and witnesseth, and that with a dreadful sentence; backing and approving the sentence and judgment of God, 1 John iii. 21. every self-destroyer will be a self-condemner: This is a prime part of their misery.

——— *Prima est hæc ultio, quod se  
Judice, nemo nocens absolvitur, improba quamvis  
Gratio fallacis prætoris vicerit urnam.*

Juv. Sat. 13.

4. The upbraidings of conscience in hell are terrible and insufferable things: To be continually hit in the teeth and twitted with our madness, wilfulness, and obstinacy, as the cause of all that eternal misery which we have pulled down upon our own heads, what is it but the rubbing of the wound with salt and vinegar? Of this torment holy Job was afraid, and therefore resolved what in him lay to prevent it, when he saith, Job xxvii. 6. "My heart (i. e. conscience) shall not reproach me so long as I live." O the twits and taunts of conscience are cruel cuts and lashes to the soul!

5. The shamings of conscience are insufferable torments. Shame ariseth from the turpitude of discovered actions. If some men's secret filthinesses were but published in this world, it would confound them: what then will it be, when all shall lie open, as it will, after this life, and their own consciences shall cast the shame of all upon them? They shall not only be derided by God, Prov. i. 26. but by their own consciences.

Lastly, the fearful expectations of conscience, still looking forward into more and more wrath to come, this is the very sum and complement of their misery. What makes a prison so dreadful to a malefactor but the trembling expectation he there lives under of the approaching assizes? Much after the same rate, or rather after the rate of condemned persons preparing for execution, do these spirits in prison live in the other world. But alas! no instance or similitude can reach home to their case.

Prop. 6. *That which makes the torments and terrors of the damned spirits so extreme and terrible, is, that they are unrelievable miseries, and torments for ever.*

They are not capable either of,

1. A partial relief, by any mitigation, or
2. A complete relief by a final cessation.

1. Not of a partial relief by any mitigation; could they but divert their thoughts from their misery, as they were wont to do in this world, drink and forget their sorrows; or had they but any hope of the abatement of their misery, it would be a relief to them: But both these are impossible. Their thoughts are fixed and determined: to remove them (though but for a moment) from their misery, is as impossible as to remove a mountain: Their sin and misery is ever before them. As the blessed in heaven are

*bono confirmati*, so fixed and settled in blessedness, that they are not diverted one moment from beholding the blessed face of God, for they are ever with the Lord: So the damned in hell are *malo obfirmati*, so settled and fixed in the midst of all evil, that their thoughts and miseries are inseparable for ever.

2. Much less can their undone state admit the least hope of relief by a final cessation of their misery. All hope perisheth from them, and the perishing of their hope is the plainest proof that can be given of the eternity of their misery. For were there but the remotest possibility of deliverance at last, hope would hang upon that possibility: And whilst hope lives, the soul is not quite dead; the death of hope is the death of a man's spirit: The cutting off of the soul from God, and the last act of hope to see or enjoy him for ever, is that death which an immortal soul is capable of suffering. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," is that sentence which strikes hope and soul dead for ever. In these six propositions you have the true and terrible representation of the spirits in prison, or the state of damned souls. I have not mentioned their association with devils, or the dismal place of their confinement, which, though they complete their misery, yet are not the principal parts of it, but rather accessories to it, or rivers running into the ocean of their misery. The sum of their misery lies in what was opened before, and the improvement of it is in that which followeth.

*Infer.* 1. Is this the state of ungodly souls after death? Then it follows, that *neither death nor annihilation are the worst of evils incident to man*. Aristotle calls death *the most terrible of all terribles*, and the schoolmen affirm annihilation to be a greater evil than the most miserable being: But it is neither so, nor so; the wrath of God, the worm of conscience, are much more bitter than death. The pains of death are natural and bodily pains: The wrath of God and anguish of conscience are spiritual and inward: Those are but the pains of a few hours or days, these are the unrelieved torments of eternity.

And as for annihilation, what a favour would the damned account it! Indeed, if we respect the glory of God's justice, which is exemplified and illustrated in the ruin of these miserable souls, it is better they should abide as the eternal monuments thereof, than not to be at all: but with respect to themselves we may say as Christ doth of the son of perdition, Mat. xxvi. 24. "Good had it been for them if they had never been born." For a man's soul to be of no other use than a vessel of wrath, to receive the indignation, and be filled with the fury of God; surely an untimely birth, that never was animated with a reasonable soul, is better than they: For alas! they seek for death, but it flies from them. The im-

mortality of their souls, which was their dignity and privilege above other creatures, is now their misery, and that which continually feeds and perpetuates their flame. Here is a being without the comfort of it, a being only to howl and tremble under Divine wrath, a being therefore which they would gladly exchange with the contemptiblest fly, or most loathsome toad, but it cannot be exchanged or annihilated.

*Inf. 2.* Hence it follows, *that the pleasures of sin are dear bought, and costly pleasures.* There is a greater disproportion betwixt that pleasure and this wrath, than betwixt a drop of honey and a sea of gall. Could a man distil all the imaginary pleasure of sin, and drink nothing else but the highest and most refined delights of it all his life, though his life should be protracted to the term of Methuselah's; yet one day or night under the wrath of God would make it a dear bargain. But,

1. It is certain sin hath no such pleasures to give you: They are embittered either by adverse strokes of providence from without, or painful and dreadful gripes and twinges of conscience within; Job xx. 14. "His meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him."

2. It is certain the time of a sinner is near its period when he is at the height of his pleasure in sin: For look, as high delights in God speak the maturity of a soul for heaven, and it will not be long before such be in heaven; so the heights of delight in sin, answerably speak the maturity of such a soul for hell, and it will not be long ere it be there. Sin is now a big embryo, and speedily the soul travails with death.

3. According to the measure of delights men have had in sin, will be the degrees and measures of their torments in hell, Rev. xviii. 7. so much torment and sorrow, as there was delight and pleasure in sin.

4. To conclude, "the pleasures of sin are but for a season, as you read, Heb. xi. 25. but the wrath of God in hell is for ever and ever. There is a time when the pleasures of sin cannot be called pleasures to come, but the wrath of God that will still be wrath to come. Oh! consider for what a trifle you sell your souls. When Lysimachus parted with his kingdom for a draught of water, he said when he had drank it, *For how short a pleasure have I sold a kingdom!* And Jonathan lamented, 1 Sam. xiv. 43. "I tasted but a little honey, and I must die." Satan would not charm so powerfully as he doth with the pleasures of sin, if this point were well believed, and heartily applied.

*Inf. 3.* *What a matchless madness is it to cast the soul into God's prison, to save the body out of man's prison!*

Men have their prisons, and God hath his: But because the one

is an object of sense, and the other an object of faith, that only is feared, and this slighted all over this unbelieving world, except by a very small number of men, who tremble at the word of God. Now this I say is the height of madness, and will appear to be so in a just collation of both in a few particulars. (1.) Man's prison restrains the body only, God's prison soul and body, Mat. x. 28. The spirits of men (as my text speaks) are the prisoners there. Oh! what a vast odds doth this single difference make! A thousand times more than the captivating and binding of the greatest king or emperor differs from the imprisonment of a poor mechanic or vagrant beggar. (2.) In man's prison there are many comforts and unspeakable refreshments from heaven, but in God's prison none, but the direct contrary. You read of the apostles, Acts xvi. 25. how they sang in the prison: The Spirit of God made them a banquet of heavenly joys, and they could not but sing at it: Though their feet were in the stocks, their spirits were never more at liberty. Algerius dated his letters *from the delectable orchard of the Leonine prison; where, saith he, flows the sweetest nectar.* Another tells us, Christ was always kind to him: but since he became a prisoner for him, he even overcame himself in kindness. *I verily think (saith he) the chains of my Lord are all overlaid with pure gold, and his cross perfumed.* But the worst terrors of the prisoners in hell come from the presence of the Lord, 2 Thes. i. 9. "God is a terror to them." (3.) The cause for which a man is cast into prison by men, may be his duty, and so his conscience must be at last quiet, if not joyful in such sufferings. So was it with Paul, Acts xxviii. 20. "For the hope of Israel am I bound with this chain:" This diffuses joy and peace through the conscience into the whole man. But the cause for which men are cast into God's prison, is their sin and guilt, which arm their own consciences against them, and make them, as you heard before, self-tormentors, terrors to themselves. What odds is here! (4.) In man's prison the most excellent company and sweet society may be found. Paul and Silas were fellow-prisoners. In queen Mary's days the most excellent company to be found in England was in the prisons: Prisons were turned into churches. But in God's prison no better society is to be found than that of devils and damned reprobates, Mat. xxv. 41. (5.) In man's prison there is hope of a comfortable deliverance, but in God's prison none: Mat. v. 26. "Thou shalt not come out thence till thou hast paid the last mite." It is an everlasting prison.

Compare these few obvious particulars, and judge then what is to be thought of that man, who stands readier to cast himself into any guilt, than into the least suffering. What is it but as if a man should offer his neck to the sword, to save his hand? The Lord

convince us what trifles our estates, liberties, and lives are to our souls, or to the peace and purity of our consciences.

*Inf. 4. What an invaluable mercy is the pardon of sin, which sets the soul out of all danger of going into this prison!* When the debt is satisfied, a man may walk as boldly before the prison door as he doth before his own: They that owe nothing fear no bailiffs. It is the law (as I said before) that commits men to prison, a mittimus is but an instrument of law; but the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them that believe, Rom. viii. 4. Yea, they are made *the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. There can be no process of law against them. For who shall condemn when it is God that justifieth? Rom. viii. 33, 34. And that Divine Justice might be no bar to our faith and comfort, he adds, *It is Christ that died*; and yet farther, to assure us that his death had made plenary satisfaction to God for all our sins and debts, it is added, *yea, rather, that is risen again*: q. d. If the debts of believers to God were not fully paid and satisfied for by the blood of Christ, how comes it to pass that our Surety is discharged, as by his resurrection he appears to be! Oh believer! thy bonds are cancelled, the handwriting that was against thee is nailed to the cross, the blood of Christ hath done that for thee that all the gold and silver in the world could not do, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. "It is a \* counterprice fully answering to thy debts," Mat. xx. 28. And hence, to the eternal joy of thy heart, result three properties of thy pardon, which are able to make thine eyes gush out with tears of joy whilst thou art reading of it.

1. It is a free pardon to thy soul; though it cost Christ dear, it costs thee nothing. We have redemption, even "the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace," Eph. i. 7. The project of it was God's, not thine; the price for it was Christ's blood, not thine; the glory and riches of free grace are illustriously displayed in thy forgiveness.

2. It is as full as it is free; a complete and perfect cause produceth a complete and perfect effect, Acts xiii. 39. "Justified from all things." Whatever thy sins be for nature, number, or circumstances of aggravations, they cannot exceed the value of the meritorious cause of remission. The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

3. It must be as firm as it is free and full, even an irrevocable pardon for evermore. Christ did not shed his blood at a hazard; the way of justification by faith, makes the promise sure, Rom. iv. 16. The justified shall never come again under condemnation.

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\* *Αντιδωρον est pretium ex adverso respondens.*

Oh the unspeakable joy that flows from this spring! Oh the triumphs of faith upon this foundation!

Is it not ravishing, melting, overwhelming, and amazing, to think thus with thyself! Here sit I with a joyful plenary free pardon of sin in my hand, whilst many, who never sinned to that height and degree I have, lie groaning, howling, sweating, and trembling under the indignation of God, poured out like fire upon their souls in hell. A greater sinner saved, and lesser damned. Oh how unspeakably sweet is that rest into which my terrified and disquieted soul is come by faith! Rom. v. 1. Heb. iv. 3. "We which have believed, do enter into rest." Oh blessed calm after a dreadful tempest! This poor breast of mine was lately panting, sweating, trembling under the horrors of wrath to come, terrified with the visions of hell. No other sound was in mine ears, but that of fiery indignation to devour the adversaries. Oh what price can be put upon my *quietus est*! What value upon a pardon, delivered as it were at the ladder's foot! Oh precious hand of faith that receives it! But oh the most precious blood of Christ which purchased it! If Satan now come with his accusations, the law with its comminations, death with its dreadful summons, I have in a readiness to answer them all.

Here is the law, the wrath of God, and everlasting burnings, the just demerit of sin upon one side, and a poor sinful creature on the other: But the covenant of grace hath solved all. An act of *oblivion* is past in heaven, "I will forgive their iniquities, and their sins and transgressions will I remember no more." In this act of grace my soul is included; I am in Christ, and there is no condemnation. Die I must, but damned I shall not be: My debts are paid, my bonds are cancelled, my conscience is quieted: let death do its worst, it shall do me no harm; that blood which satisfied God, may well satisfy me.

*Infer. 5. How amazingly sad and deplorable is the security and stillness of the consciences of sinners, under all their own guilt, and the immediate danger of God's everlasting wrath!*

Philosophers observe that before an earth-quake the wind lies, and the weather is exceeding calm and still, not a breath of wind going. So it is in the consciences of many, just before the tempest and storm of God's wrath pours down upon them. What a golden morning opened upon Sodom, and began that fatal day! Little did they imagine showers of fire had been ready to fall from so pleasant and serene a sky as they saw over their heads. How secure, still, and unconcerned are those to-day, who it may be shall rage, roar, and tremble in hell to-morrow! Cæsar hearing of a citizen of Rome who was deep in debt, and yet slept soundly,

would needs have his pillow, as supposing there was some strange, charming virtue in it.

It is wonderful to consider what shifts men make to keep their consciences in that stillness and quiet they do, under such loads of guilt, and threatenings of wrath, ready to be executed upon them. It must be strong *opium* that so stupifies and benumbs their consciences; and upon inquiry into the matter we shall find it to be the effect of,

1. A strong delusion of Satan.

2. A spiritual judicial stroke of God.

1. This stillness of conscience, upon the brink of damnation, proceeds from the strong delusions of Satan, blinding their eyes, and feeding their false hopes: He removes the evil day at many years imaginary distance from them, and interposeth many a fair day betwixt them and it, and in that interposed season, time enough to prepare for it; without such an artifice as this, his house would be in an uproar, but this keeps all in peace, Luke xi. 21. "By presuming he feeds their hopes, and by their hopes destroys their souls \*." Some he diverts from all serious thoughts of this day, by the pleasures, and others by the cares of this life; and so that day cometh upon them unawares, Luke xxi. 34.

2. This stillness of conscience, in so miserable and dangerous a state, is the effect of a spiritual, judicial stroke of God upon the children of wrath. That is a dreadful word, Isa. vi. 10. "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes:" The eye and ear are the two principal doors or inlets to the heart; when these are shut, the heart must needs be insensible, as the † fat of the body is. There is a spirit of a deep sleep poured out judicially upon some men, Isa. xxix. 10. such as that upon Adam when God took a rib from his side, and he felt it not: But this is upon the soul, and is the same as to give up a man to a reprobate sense.

Infer. 6. *The case of distressed consciences upon earth is exceeding sad, and calls upon all for the tenderest pity, and utmost help from men.*

You see the labourings of conscience, under the sense of guilt and wrath, is a special part of the torments of hell, of which there is not a livelier emblem or picture, than the distresses of conscience in this world.

It must be thankfully confessed there are two great differences betwixt the terrors of conscience here, and there: One, in the

\* *Præsumendo sperant, et sperando percutunt.*

† Naturalists agree that fat not only makes animals unruly, but also, is void of sensation. *Glass.*

degrees of anguish, the other, in the reliefs of that anguish. The ordinary distresses of conscience here, compared with those of the damned, are as the flame of a candle to a fiery oven, a mild and gentle fire; or as the sparks that fly out of the top of a chimney, to the dreadful eruption of Vesuvius, or mount Etna. Besides, these are capable of relief, but those are unrelievable: Their hearts die, because their hope is perished from the Lord.

But yet of all the miseries and distresses incident to men in this world, none like those of distressed consciences; the terrors of God set themselves in array, or are drawn up in battalia against the soul, Job vi. 4. "Whilst I suffer thy terrors (saith Heman) I am "distracted," Psal. lxxxviii. 15. Yea, they not only distract, but cut off the spirit, as he adds, ver. 16. They lick up the very spirit of a man, and none can bear them, Prov. xviii. 14. for now a man hath to do immediately with God; yea, with the wrath of the great and dreadful God: And this wrath, which is the most acute and sharp of all torments, falls upon the most tender and sensible part, the spirit and mind which now lies open and naked before him to be wounded by it. No creature can administer the least relief, by the application of any temporal comfort or refreshment to it. Gold and silver, wife and children, meat and melody, signify no more than the drawing on of a silk stocking to cure the *paroxysms* of the *gout*.

All that can be done for their relief, is by seasonable, judicious, and tender applications of spiritual remedies: And what can be done, ought to be done for them. What heart can hear a voice like that of Job, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye "my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me;" and not melt into compassion over them? Is there a word of wisdom in thy heart, let thy tongue apply it to the relief of thy distressed brother. Whilst his heart meditates *terror*, let thine meditate his *succour*. It is not impossible but thou, who lendest a friendly hand to another, mayest, ere long, need one thyself; and he that hath ever felt the terrors of the Almighty upon his soul, hath motive enough to draw forth the bowels of his pity to another in the like case.

Alas for poor distressed souls, who have either none about them that understand, and are able and willing to speak a word in season to their weary souls, or too many about them to exasperate their sorrows, and persecute them whom God hath smitten. You that have both ability and opportunity for it, are under the strongest engagements in the world to endeavour their relief with all faithfulness, seriousness, compassion, and constancy. Did Christ shed his blood for the saving of souls, and wilt not thou spend thy breath for them? Shall any man that has found mercy from God, shew none to his brother? God forbid. A soul in hell is out of

your reach; but these that are in the suburbs of hell are not: The candle of intense sorrow is put to the thread of their miserable life; and should they be suffered to drop into hell, whilst you stand by as unconcerned spectators of such a tragedy, you will have little peace. Your unmercifulness to their souls will be a wound to your own.

*Inf. 7. Be hence informed of the evil that is in sin; be convinced of the evil that is in it, by the eternal misery that followeth it.*

If hell be out of measure dreadful, then sin must be out of measure sinful: the torments of hell do not exceed the demerit of sin, though they exceed the understandings of men to conceive them. God will lay upon no man more than is right. Sin is the founder of hell; all the miseries and torments there, are but the treasures of wrath which sinners, in all ages, have been treasuring up; and how dreadful soever it be, it is but the *οψωνια*, the recompense which is meet, Rom. vi. 23. \* "The wages of sin is "death."

We have slight thoughts of sin; *Fools make a mock of sin*: But if the Lord by the convictions of men's consciences did but lead them through the chambers of death, and give them a sight of the wrath to come; could we but see the piles that are made in hell (as the prophet calls them, Isa. xxx. 53.) to maintain the flames of vengeance to eternity; could we but understand in what dialect the damned speak of sin, who see the treasures of wrath broken up to avenge it, surely it would alter our apprehensions of sin, and strike cold to the very hearts of sinners.

Cannot the extremity and eternity of hell-torments exceed the evil that is in sin? What words then can express the evil of it? Hell-flames have the nature of a punishment, but not of an atonement.

O think on this, you that look upon sin as the veriest trifle, that will sin for the value of a penny, that look upon all the humiliations, broken-hearted confessions, and bitter moans of the saints under sin, as frenzy, or melancholy, slighting them as a company of half-witted hypochondriac persons! Thou that never hadst one sick night, or sad day in all thy life upon the account of sin, let me tell thee that breast of thine must be the seat of sorrow; that frothy, airy spirit of thine must be acquainted with emphatical sobs and groans. God grant it may be on this side hell, by effectual repentance; else it must be there, in the extremity and eternity of sorrows.

*Inf. 8. What enemies are they to the souls of men, who are Satan's instruments, to draw them into sin, or who suffer sin to lie upon them!*

When there were but two persons in the world, one drew the other into sin; and among the millions of men and women now in

the world, where are there two to be found that have in no case been snares to draw some into sin? Some tempt designedly, taking the devil's work out of his hands; others virtually and consequentially, by examples, which have a compelling power to draw others with them into sin. The first sort are among the worst of sinners, Prov. i. 10. the latter are among the best of saints; see Gal. ii. 14. whose conversation is so much in heaven, that nothing falls out in the course thereof, which may not further some or other in their way to hell.

Among wicked men, there are five sorts eminently accessory to the guilt and ruin of other men's souls. (1.) Loose professors, whose lives give their lips the lie; whose conversations make their professions blush. (2.) Scandalous apostates, whose fall is more prejudicial than their profession was ever beneficial to others. (3.) Cruel persecutors, who make the lives, liberties, and estates of men the occasion of the ruin of their consciences. (4.) Ignorant and unfaithful ministers, who strengthen the hands of the wicked, that they should not return from their wickedness. (5.) Wicked relations, who quench and damp every hopeful beginning of conviction and affection in their friends. Of all which I shall distinctly speak in the next discourse, to which, therefore, I remit it at present.

And many there are who suffer sin to lie upon others, without a wise and seasonable reproof to recover them.

O what cruelty to souls is here! The day is coming when they will curse the time that ever they knew you: It is possible you may repent, but then, it may be, those, whose souls you have helped to ruin, are gone, and quite out of your reach. The Lord make you sensible what you have done in season, lest your repentance come too late for yourselves and them also.

*Inf. 2. How poor a comfort is it to him that carries all his sins out of this world with him, to leave much earthly treasure (especially if gotten by sin) behind him?*

It is a poor consolation to be praised where thou art not, and tormented where thou art\*; to purchase a life of pleasure to others on earth, at the price of thy own everlasting misery in hell. All the consolation, sensual, voluptuous, and oppressing worldlings have, is but this, that they were *coached to hell* in pomp and state, and have left the same *chariot* to bring their graceless children after them, in the same equipage, to the place of torments. There be five considerations provoking pity to them that are thus cast into a miserable eternity, and caution to all that are following after, in the same path

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\* *Quid prodest esse, quod esse non prodest. Tertul.*

*First*, That fatal mistake in the practical understanding and judgment of men deserves a compassionate lamentation, as the cause and reason of their eternal miscarriage and ruin. They looked upon trifles as things of greatest necessity, and the most necessary things as mere trifles; putting the greatest weight and value upon that which little concerned them, and none at all upon their greatest concernment in the whole world, Luke xii. 21.

*Secondly*, The perpetual diversions that the trifles of this world gave them from the main use and end of their time. O what a hurry and thick succession of earthly business and encumbrances filled up their days! So that they could find no time to go alone, and think of the awful and weighty concernments of the world to come, James v. 5.

*Thirdly*, The total waste and expence of the only season of salvation, about these vanishing, impertinent trifles, which is never more to be recovered, Eccles. ix. 10.

*Fourthly*, That these deluding shadows, the pleasures of a moment are all they had in exchange for their souls, a goodly price it was valued at, Mat. xvi. 26.

*Fifthly*, That by such a life they have not only ruined their own souls, but put their posterity, by their education of them in the same course of life, into the same path of destruction, in which they went to hell before them. Psal. xlix. 13. "Their posterity approve their saying."

*Inf. 10.* *How rational and commendable is the courage and resolution of those Christians who chuse to bear all the sufferings in this world from the hands of men, rather than to defile and wound their consciences with sin, and thereby expose their souls to the wrath of God for ever!*

That which men now call pride, humour, fancy, and stubbornness, will, one day, appear to be their great wisdom, and the excellency of their spirits. It is the tenderness of their consciences, not the pride and stoutness of their stomachs, which makes them inflexible to sin; they know the terrors of a wounded conscience, and had rather endure any other trouble from the hands of men, than fall by known sin into the hands of an angry God. Try them in other matters wherein the glory of God, and the peace or purity of their consciences are not concerned, and see if you can charge them with stubbornness and singularity, it was the excellency of the spirits of the primitive Christians, that they durst tell the emperor to his face, when he threatened them with torments; "Pardon us, O emperor, thou threatenest us with a prison, but

“God with hell\*.” Do we call that ingenuity and good nature which makes the mind soft and tractable to temptations, and will rather venture upon guilt than be esteemed singular?

† Salvian tells us of some in his time, who were compelled to “be evil, lest they should be accounted vile.” And was that their excellency? May I not fitly apply the words of Salvian here: “O in what honour and repute is Christ among Christians, when religion shall make them base and ignoble!” He that understands what the punishment of sin will be in hell, should endure all things rather than yield to sin on earth. Indeed, if you that threaten and tempt others to violate their consciences, could bear the wrath of God for them in hell, it were somewhat; but we know there is no suffering by a *proxy* there; they tremble at the word of God, and have felt the burden of guilt, and dare not yield to sin, though they yield their estates and bodies to prevent it.

*Inf. 11. How patiently should we endure the afflictions of this life, by which sin is prevented and purged?*

The discipline of our spirits belongs to God the Father of spirits; he corrects us here that we may not be punished hereafter, 1 Cor. xi. 32. “We are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” It is better for us to groan under afflictions on earth, than to roar under revenging wrath in hell. Parents who are wise, as well as tender, had rather hear their children sob and cry under the rod, than stand with halters upon their necks on the ladder, bewailing the destructive indulgence of their parents.

Your chastisements, when sanctified, are preventive of all the misery opened before. It is therefore as unreasonable to murmur against God, because you smart under his rod, as it would be to accuse your dearest friend of cruelty, because he strained your arm to snatch you from the fall of a house or wall, which he saw ready to crush and overwhelm you in its ruins.

If we had less affliction, we should have more guilt. We see how apt we are to break over the hedge, and to go astray from God, with all the clogs of affliction designed for our restraint; what should we do if we had no clog at all? It is better for you to be whipped to heaven with all the rods of affliction, than coached to hell with all the pleasures of the world.

Christian, thy God sees, if thou do not, that all these troubles are few enough to save thee from sin and hell. Thy corruptions require all these, and all little enough. “If need be, ye are in heaviness,” 1 Pet. i. 6. If there be need for it, thy dearest

\* *Ignosce imperator, tu carcerem minaris, Deus gehennam.*

† *Mali esse coguntur, ne viles habeantur.*

comforts on earth shall die, that thy soul may live; but if thy mortification to them render thy removal needless, thou and they shall live together. It is better to be preserved in brine, than to rot in honey. Sanctified afflictions working under the efficacy of the blood of Christ, are the safest way to our souls.

*Inf. 12. How doleful a change doth the death of wicked men make upon them! from palaces on earth to the prison of hell.*

No sooner has the soul of a wicked man stepped out of his own door at death, but the serjeants of hell are immediately upon it, serving the dreadful summons on the law-condemned wretch. This arrest terrifies it more than the hand-writing upon the plaster of the wall did him, Dan. v. 5. How are all a man's apprehensions changed in a moment! Out of what a deep sleep are most, and out of what a pleasant dream of heaven are some awaked and startled at death, by the dreadful arrest and summons of God to condemnation.

How quickly would all a sinner's mirth be damped, and turned into howlings in this world, if conscience were but thoroughly awakened! It is but for God to change our apprehensions now, and it would be done in a moment: but the eyes of most men's souls are not opened till death hath shut their bodily eyes; and then how sudden, and how sad a change is made in one day!

O think what it is to pass from all the pleasures and delights of this world into the torments and miseries of that world; from a pleasant habitation into an infernal prison; from the depth of security to the extremity of desperation; from the arms and bosoms of dearest friends and relations, to the society of damned spirits! Lord, what a change is here; had a gracious change been made upon their hearts by grace, no such doleful change could have been made upon their state by death: little do their surviving friends think what they feel, or what is their estate in the other world whilst they are honouring their bodies with splendid and pompous funerals. None on earth have so much reason to fear death, to make much of life, and use all means to continue it, as those who will, and must be so great losers by the exchange.

*Inf. 13. See here the certainty, and inevitableness of the judgment of the great day.*

This prison which is continually filling with the spirits of wicked men is an undeniable evidence of it: for why is hell called a prison, and why are the spirits of men confined and chained there but with respect to the judgment of the great day? As there is a necessary connexion betwixt sin and punishment, so betwixt punishing and trying the offender; there are millions of souls in custody, a world of spirits in prison; these must be brought forth to their trial, for God will lay upon no man more than is right;

the legality of their *mittimus* to hell will be evidenced in their solemn day of trial. God hath therefore "appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained," Acts xvii. 31.

Here sinners run in arrears, and contract vast debts; in hell they are seized and committed, at judgment tried and cast for the same. This will be a dreadful day, those that have spent so prodigally upon the patience of God, must now come to a severe account for all; they have past their particular judgment immediately after death, Eccl. xii. 7. Heb. ix. 27. By this they know how they shall speed in the general judgment, and how it shall be with them for ever, but though this private judgment secures their damnation sufficiently, yet it clears not the justice of God before angels and men sufficiently, and therefore they must appear once more before his bar, 2 Cor. v. 10. In the fearful expectation of this day, those trembling spirits now lie in prison, and that fearful expectation is a principal part of their present misery and torment. You that refuse to come to the throne of grace, see if you can refuse to make your appearance at the bar of justice; you that braved and brow-beat your ministers that warned you of it, see if you can out-brave your Judge too as you did them. Nothing more sure or awful than such a day as this.

*Inf. 14. How much are ministers, parents, and all to whom the charge of souls is committed, bound to do all that in them lies to prevent their everlasting misery in the world to come!*

The great apostle of the Gentiles found the consideration of the terror of the Lord as a spur urging and enforcing him to a ministerial faithfulness and diligence; 2 Cor. v. 11. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." And the same he presseth upon Timothy, 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. "I charge thee therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." O that those to whom so great a trust as the souls of men is committed, would labour to acquit themselves with all faithfulness therein, as Paul did, warning every one night and day with tears, that if we cannot prevent their ruin, which is most desirable; yet at least we may be able to take God to witness, as he did, that we are pure from the blood of all men.

Oh! consider, my brethren, if your faithful plainness and unwearied diligence to save men's souls produce no other fruit but the hatred of you now; yet it is much easier for you to bear that, than that they and you too should bear the wrath of God for ever.

We have all of us personal guilt enough upon us, let us not add other men's guilt to our account: to be guilty of the blood of the meanest man upon earth, is a sin which will cry in your consciences; but to be guilty of the blood of souls, Lord, who can bear it! Christ thought them worthy his heart-blood, and are they not worth the expence of our breath? Did he sweat blood to save them, and will not we move our lips to save them? It is certainly a sore judgment to the souls of men, when such ministers are set over them as never understood the value of their people's souls, or were never heartily concerned about the salvation of their own souls.



## MATTH. xvi. 26.

*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

**D**IFFICULT duties need to be enforced with powerful arguments. In the 24th verse of this chapter, our Lord presseth upon his disciples the deepest and hardest duties of self-denial, acquaints them upon what terms they must be admitted into his service: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

This hard and difficult duty he enforceth upon them by a double argument, viz. From,

1. The vanity of all sinful shifts from it, ver. 25.

2. The value of their souls, which is imported in it, ver. 26.

They may shift off their duty to the loss of their souls, or save their souls by the loss of such trifles. If they esteem their souls above the world, and can be content to put all other things to the hazard for their salvation, making account to save nothing but them by Christianity; then they come up to Christ's terms, and may warrantably and boldly call him their Lord and Master; and to sweeten this choice to them, he doth, in my text, balance the soul and all the world, weighing them one against the other, and shews them the infinite odds and disproportion betwixt them: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

*What is a man profited?*] There is a plain meiosis in the phrase; and the meaning is, how inestimably and irreparably is a man damnified! what a soul-ruining bargain would a man make!

*If he should gain the whole world.*] There is a plain hyperbole

in this phrase; for it never was, nor ever will be the lot of any man to be the sole owner and possessor of the whole world \*. But suppose all the power, pleasure, wealth, and honour of the whole world were bid and offered in exchange for a man's soul; what a dear purchase would it be at such a rate! "What were this, says "one †, but to win Venice, and then be hanged at the gate of "it?" As that man acts like a mad man, that goes about to purchase a treasure of gold with the loss of his life; for life being lost, what is all the gold in the world to him? he can have no enjoyment of it, or comfort in it: so here, what is all the world, or as many worlds as there are creatures in it, when the soul is lost, if he gain this?

*And lose his own soul.*] The comparison lies here betwixt one single soul and the whole world. The whole world is no price for the poorest, meanest, and most despised soul that lives in it.

By losing the soul, we are not to understand the destruction of its being, but of its happiness and comfort, the cutting it off from God, and all the hopes of his favour and enjoyment for ever. This is the loss here intended, a loss never to be repaired. The whole world can be no recompence for the loss to the soul, if it be but the loss of its purity or peace for a time; much less can it recompence the loss of the soul, in the loss of all its happiness for ever. When a man's chief happiness is finally lost, then is his soul lost: for what benefit can it be, nay, how great a misery must it be, to have a being perpetuated in torments for ever? ‡ This is the *fine* or *mult* which is set upon sin, as some render the word. What shall a man gain by such pleasures, for which God will *mult*, or *fine* him at the rate or price of his own soul? That is, of all the happiness, joy and comfort of it to all eternity.

*Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* || The question aggravates the sense, and amplifies the loss and damage of the man that sells his soul for the whole world. There is no recompence in all the world for the hazard or danger of the soul one hour; nor would a man that understands what a soul and eternity are, put them into danger for ten thousand worlds, much less for one penny, yea, for nothing, as many do: but to barter or exchange it for the world, to take any thing in lieu of it; this is the height of madness. "The way of buying in former times was not by

\* By this hypothetical hyperbole is denoted the great atrociousness of losing eternal salvation. *Glassius.*

† *Non magis juvabitur, quam qui acquirat Venetias, ipse vero suspendatur ad portam.* Paræus in loc.

‡ *Anima vero sua mulctetur, i. e.* If one is punished with the loss of his own soul. *Bez. Maldon.*

|| *Interrogatio exaggerans.*

“money, but by the exchange of one commodity for another;” and to this custom \* Brugensis thinks this phrase is allusive. Now, what commodity is found in all the world; or who, that is not blinded by the god of this world, can think that the whole world itself, if all the rocks in it were rocks of diamonds, and the seas and rivers were liquid gold, is a commodity of equivalent worth to his own soul? Hence two notes arise naturally.

Doct. 1. *That one soul is of more value than the whole world.*

Doct. 2. *How precious and invaluable soever the soul of man is, it may be lost and cast away for ever.*

I begin with the first.

Doct. 1. *That one soul is of more value than the whole world.*

I need not spend much time in the proof of it, when you have considered, that he who bought them, hath here weighed and valued them; and that the point before us is the result and conclusion of one that hath the best reason to know the true worth of them. That which I have to do is to gather out of the scriptures the particulars; which, put together, make up the full demonstration of the point, And,

1. The invaluable worth of souls appears from the manner of their creation. They were created immediately by God, as hath been proved, and that not without the deliberation of the whole Trinity; Gen. i. 26. “Let us make man.” For the production of other creatures, it was enough to give out the word of his command. “Let there be light, let the earth and the waters bring forth;” but when he comes to man, then you have no FIAT, *let there be*, but he puts his own hand immediately to it, as to the master-piece of the whole creation: yea, a council is called about it; *Let us*, implying the just consultation and deliberation of all the persons in the Godhead about it, that our hearts might be raised to the expectation of some extraordinary work to follow; great counsels and wise debates being both the forerunners and foundations of great actions and events to ensue thereupon. Thus Elihu in Job xxxv. 10. “None saith, Where is God my Makers?” And David, in Psal. cxlix. 2. “Let Israel rejoice in his Makers:” in both places the word is plural. The consultation here is only amongst the divine Persons, no angels are called to this council-table, the whole matter was to be conducted by the wisdom, and

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\* *Ανταλλαγμα* vocat id quo dato, redimitur aliquid; juxta prisorum commercia, quæ non moneta, sed rerum permutatione constabant. Brugens.

effected by the power of God; and therefore there was no need to consult with any but himself, the wisdom of angels being from him: but this great council shews what an excellent creature was now to be produced, and the excellency of that creature man was principally in his soul; for the bodies of other creatures, which were made by the word of his command, are as beautiful, elegant, and neat as the body of man; yea, and in some respects more excellent. The soul then was that rare piece which God in so condescending an expression tells us was created with the deliberation of the God-head; those great and excellent Persons laid their heads, as it were, together to project its being.

And by the way, this may smartly check the pride and arrogance of souls, who dare take it upon them to teach God, as murmurs at his disposals of us. Shall that soul which is the product of his wisdom and counsel, dare to instruct or counsel its maker? But that by the by. You see there is a transcendent dignity and worth in the soul of man above all other beings in the world, by the peculiar way of its production into the number of created beings: no wise man deliberates long, or calls a council about ordinary matters, much less the All-wise God.

2. The soul hath in itself an intrinsic worth and excellency, worthy of that divine Original whence it sprang: view it in its noble faculties, and admirable powers, and it will appear to be a creature upon which God hath laid out the riches of his wisdom and power.

There you shall find a mind susceptible of all light, both natural and spiritual, shining as the candle of God in the inner man, closing with truth, as the iron doth with the attractive loadstone; a shop in which all arts and sciences are laboured and formed: what are all the famous libraries and monuments of learning, but so many systems of thoughts, laboured and perfected in the active inquisitive minds of men? Truth is its natural and delectable object; it pursues eagerly after it, and even spends itself and the body too in the chase and prosecution of truth; when it lies deep, as a subterranean treasure\*, the mind sends out innumerable thoughts, reinforcing each other in thick successions, to dig for, and compass that invaluable treasure; if it be disguised by misrepresentations and vulgar prejudice, and trampled in the dirt under that disguise, there is an ability in the mind to discern it by some lines and features, which are all well known to it, and both own, honour, and vindicate it under all that dirt and obloquy, with more respect than a man will take up a piece of gold, or a sparkling diamond out of the mire: it searches after it by many painful deductions of reason,

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\* *Veritas in puteo.* i. e. Truth must be drawn from first principles.

and \* triumphs more in the discovery of it, than in all earthly treasures; no gratification of sense like that of the mind, when it grasps its prey for which it hunted.

The mind passes through all the works of creation, it views the several creatures on earth, considers the fabric, use, and beauty of animals, the signatures of plants, penetrating thereby into their nature and virtues: it views the vast ocean, and the large train of causes laid together in all these things for the good of man, by God, whose name it reads in the most diminutive creature it beholds on earth.

It can, in a moment, mount itself from earth to heaven, view the face thereof, describe the motions of the sun in the ecliptic, calculate tables for the motions of the planets and fixed stars, invent convenient cycles for the computation of time, foretel, at a great distance, the dismal eclipses of the sun and moon to the very digit, and the portentous conjunctions of the planets, to the very minute of their ingress. These are the pleasant employments of the understanding.

But there is a higher game at which this eagle plays; it reckons itself all this while employed as much beneath its capacity, as Domitian in catching flies; though these be lawful and pleasant exercises, when it hath leisure for them, yet it is fitted for a much nobler exercise, even to penetrate the glorious mysteries of redemption, to trace redeeming love through all the astonishing methods, and manifold discoveries of it; and yet higher than all this, it is capable of an immediate sight, or facial vision of the blessed God; short of which it receives no pleasure that is fully agreeable to its noble power and infinite appetite.

View its will, and you shall find it like a queen upon the throne of the soul, swaying the sceptre of liberty in her hand, (as † one expresses it) with all the affections waiting and attending upon her. No tyrant can force it, no torment can wrest the golden sceptre of liberty out of its hand; the keys of all the chambers of the soul hang at its girdle, these it delivers to Christ in the day of his power; victorious grace sweetly determines it by gaining its consent, but commits no violence upon it. God accepts its offering, though full of imperfections; but no service is accepted without it, how excellent soever be the matter of it.

View the conscience and thoughts with their self-reflective abilities, wherein the soul retires into itself, and sits concealed from all

\* Archimedes, when he made a valuable discovery of a new truth, leapt out of the bath for joy, crying, I have found it, I have found it.

† Culverwell.

eyes but his that made it, judging its own actions, and censuring its estate; viewing its face in its own glass, and correcting the indecencies it discovers there: things of greatest moment and importance are silently transacted in its council-chamber betwixt the soul and God; so remote from the knowledge of all creatures, that neither angels, devils, nor men, can know what is doing there, but by uncertain guess, or revelation from God\*: here it impleads, condemns †, and acquits itself as at a privy session, with respect to the judgment of the great day: here it meets with the best of comforts, and with the worst of terrors.

Take a survey of its passions and affections, and you will find them admirable: see how they are placed by divine Wisdom in the soul, some for defence and safety, others for delight and pleasure. Anger actuates the spirits, and rouseth its courage, enabling it to break through difficulties: Fear keeps centinel, watching upon all dangers that approach us: Hope forestalls the good, and anticipates the joys of the next life, and thereby supports and strengthens the soul under all the discouragements and pressures of the present life: Love unites us to the chiefest good: "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him:" Zeal is the dagger which love draws in God's cause and quarrel, to secure itself from sin, and testify its resentments of God's dishonour.

O what a divine spark is the soul of man! well might Christ prefer it in dignity to the whole world.

3. The worth of a soul may be gathered and discerned from its subjective capacity and hability both of grace and glory. It is capable of all the graces of the Spirit, of being filled with the fulness of God, Eph. iii. 19. to live to God here, and with God for ever. What excellent graces do adorn some souls? How are all the rooms richly hanged with divine and costly hangings, that God may dwell in them! This makes it like the carved works of the temple, overlaid with pure gold; here is glory upon glory, a new creation upon the old; in the innermost parts of some souls is a spiritual altar erected with this inscription. *Holiness to the Lord*: here the soul offers up itself to God in the sacred flames of love; and here it sacrifices its vile affections, devoting them to destruction, to the glory of its God: here God walks with delight, even a delight beyond what he takes in all the stately structures and magnificently adorned temples in the whole world, Isa. lxvi. 1, 2.

No other soul besides man's is marriageable to Christ, or capable of espousals to the King of glory: they were not designed, and therefore not endued with a capacity for such an honour as this: but

\* 1 Cor. ii. 11.

† Rom. ii. 15. 2 Cor. i. 12.

such a capacity hath every soul, even the meanest on earth, and such honour have all his saints: others may be, but they are betrothed to Christ in this world, 2 Cor. xi. 2. and shall be presented without spot before him in the world to come, Eph. v. 27.

It is now a lovely and excellent creature in its naked, natural state; much more beautiful and excellent in its sanctified and gracious state: but what shall we say, or how shall we conceive of it, when all spots of sin are perfectly washed off its beautiful face in heaven, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon it! when its filthy garments are taken away, and the pure robes of perfect holiness, as well as righteousness, superinduced upon this excellent creature! If the imperfect beauty of it, begun in sanctification, enamoured its Saviour, and made him say, "Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one of the chains of thy neck;" what will its beauty, and his delight in it be in the state of perfect glorification! As we imagine the circles in the heavens to be vastly greater than those we view upon the globe, so must we imagine in the case before us.

4. The preparations God makes for souls in heaven, speak their great worth and value. When you lift up your eyes to heaven, and behold that spangled azure canopy beset and inlaid with so many golden studs and sparkling gems, you see but the floor or pavement of that place which God hath prepared for some souls. He furnished this world for us before he put us into it; but, as delightful and beautiful as it is, it is no more to be compared with the Father's house in heaven, than the smallest ruined chapel your eyes ever beheld, is to be compared with Solomon's temple, when it stood in all its shining glory.

When you see a stately and magnificent structure built, richest hangings and furniture prepared to adorn it, you conclude some great persons are to come thither: such preparations speak the quality of the guests.

Now heaven, yea, the heaven of heavens, the palace of the great King, the presence-chamber of the Godhead, is prepared, not only by God's decree and Christ's death; but by his ascension thither in our names, and as our forerunner, for all renewed and redeemed souls. John xiv. 2. "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you."

And, where is the place prepared for them, but in his Father's house? The same place, the very same house where the Father, Son, and Spirit themselves do dwell: such is the love of Christ to souls, that he will not dwell in one house, and they in another; but, as he speaks, John xii. 26. "Where I am, there shall my servant also be." There is room enough in the Father's house

for Christ and all the souls he redeemed to live and dwell together for evermore. His ascension thither was in the capacity of a common or public person, to take livery and seisin of those many mansions for them, which are to be filled with their inhabitants, as they come thither in their respective times and orders.

5. The great price with which they were redeemed and purchased, speaks their dignity and value. No wise man will purchase a trifle at a great price, much less the most wise God. Now the redemption of every soul stood in no less than the most precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. "You know" (saith the apostle there) that we were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold,—but with the precious blood "of Christ, as a lamb without blemish or spot." All the gold and silver in the world was no ransom for one soul; nay, all the blood of the creatures, had it been shed as a sacrifice to the glory of justice, or even the blood which is most dear to us, as being derived from our own; I mean, the blood of our dear children, even of our first-born, the beginning of our strength, which usually has the strength of affection: I say, none of these could purchase a pardon for the smallest sin that ever any soul committed, much less was it able to purchase the soul itself, Mic. vi. 6, 7. "Thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil," or our *first-born*, are no ransom to God *for the sin of the soul*. It is only the precious blood of Christ that is a just ransom or counter-price, as it is called, Matth. xx. 28.

Now, who can compute the value of that blood? Such was the worth of the blood of Christ, which, by the communication of properties, is truly stiled the blood of God, that one drop of it is above the estimations of men and angels; and yet, before the soul of the meanest man or woman in the world could be redeemed, every drop of his blood must be shed; for no less than his death could be a price for our souls. Hence then we evidently discern an invaluable worth in souls: A whole kingdom is taxed, when a king is to be ransomed; the delight and darling of God's soul must die, when our souls are to be redeemed. O the worth of souls!

6. This evidences the transcendent dignity and worth of souls, that *eternity is stampt upon their actions*, and theirs only, of all the beings in this world. The acts of souls are immortal as their nature is; whereas the actions of other animals, having neither moral goodness nor moral evil in them, pass away as their beings do.

The apostle therefore, in Gal. vi. 7. compares the actions of men in this world to seed sown, and tells us of everlasting fruits we shall reap from them in the next life; they have the same respect to a future account that seed hath to the harvest; "He that soweth

“ iniquity shall reap vanity,” *i. e.* everlasting disappointment and misery, Prov. xxii. 8. and “ they that now sow in tears, shall then “ reap in joy,” Prov. xxvi. 5. Every gracious action is the seed of joy, and every sinful action the seed of sorrow; and this makes the great difference betwixt the actions of a rational soul, and those done by beasts: and if it were not so, man would then be wholly swayed by sense and present things, as the beasts are, and all religion would vanish with this distinction of actions.

Our actions are considerable two ways, physically and morally; in the first sense they are transient, in the last permanent; a word is past as soon as spoken, but yet it must and will be recalled and brought into the judgment of the great day, Mat. xii. 36. Whatever therefore a man shall speak, think, or do, once spoken, thought, or done, it becomes eternal, and abides for ever. Now, what is it that puts so great a difference betwixt human and brutal actions, but the excellent nature of the reasonable soul? It is this which stamps immortality upon human actions, and is at once a clear proof both of the immortality and dignity of the soul of man above all other creatures in this world.

7. The contentions of both worlds, the strife of heaven and hell about the soul of man, speaks it a most precious and invaluable treasure.

The soul of man is the prize about which heaven and hell contend: the great design of heaven is to save it, and all the plots of hell to ruin it. Man is a borderer betwixt both kingdoms, he lives here upon the confines of the spiritual and material world; and therefore Scaliger fitly calls him *Utriusque mundi nexus*, one in whom both worlds meet: his body is of the earth, earthly; his soul the offspring of the Deity, heavenly. It is then no wonder to find such tugging and pulling this way and that way, upward and downward, such sallies from heaven to rescue and save it, such excursions from hell to captivate and ruin it.

The infinite wisdom of God hath laid the plot and design for its salvation by Christ in so great depth of counsel, that the angels of heaven are astonished at it, and desire to pry into it. Christ in pursuance of this eternal project, came from heaven professedly to seek and to save lost souls, Luke xix. 10. He compares himself to a good shepherd, who leaveth the ninety and nine to seek one lost sheep, and having found it, brings it home upon his shoulders, rejoicing that he hath found it, Luke xv. 7.

Hell employs all its skill and policy, sets a-work all wiles and stratagems to destroy and ruin it; 1 Pet. v. 8. “ Your adversary “ the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” The strong man armed gets the first possession of the soul, and with all his forces and policies labours to secure it as his

property, Luke xi. 21. Christ raises all the spiritual militia, the very *posse cæli*, the powers of heaven, to rescue it, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. And do heaven and earth thus contend, think you, *de lana caprina*, for a thing of nought? No, no, if there were not some singular and peculiar excellency and worth in man's soul, both worlds would never tug and pull at this rate which should win that prize. It was a great argument of the worth and excellency of Homer, that incomparable poet, that seven cities contended for the honour of his nativity.

Ἐπὶ αὖ πόλεις δειριζέσσι περιριζαν Ὀμηρεν,  
Σμυρνα, Ρόδου, Κολοφών, Σαλαμίν, Χίος, Ἀργός, Ἀθῆναι.

Smyrna, Rhodes, Colophon, Salamis, Chius, Argos, and Athens, were all at strife about one poor man, who should crown themselves with the honour of his birth: but when heaven and hell shall contend about a soul, certainly it much more speaks the dignity of it, than the contention of several cities for one Homer.

What are all the wooings, expostulations, and passionate beseechings of Christ's ministers? What are all the convictions of conscience, and the strong impressions made upon the affections? What are all the strokes from heaven upon men in the way of sin? I say, what are all these but the efforts of heaven to draw souls out of the snares of hell?

And what are the hellish temptations that men feel in their hearts, the alluring objects presented to their eyes, the ensnaring examples that are set round about them, but the attempts of Satan, if possible, to draw the souls of men into the same condemnation and misery with himself?

Would heaven and hell be up in arms, as it were, and strive at this rate for nothing? Thy soul, O man, how vilely soever thou depreciatest and slightest it, is of high esteem, a rich purchase, a creature of nobler rank than thou art aware of. The wise merchant knows the value of gold and diamonds, though ignorant Indians would part with them for glass beads and tinsel toys. And this leads us to

8. The eighth evidence of the invaluable worth of souls, which is the joy in heaven, and the rage in hell, for the gain and loss of the soul of man.

Christ, who came from heaven, and well knew the frame and disposition of the inhabitants of that city, tells us, that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," Luke xv. 7, 10. \* No sooner is the heart of a sin-

\* As often as we do good, so often the angels are glad, and the devils are sad?

ner darted with conviction, broken with sorrow for sin, and begins to cry, "men and brethren, what shall I do?" but the news is quickly in heaven, and sets all the city of God a rejoicing at it, as is in the chief city of a kingdom when a young prince is born.

We never read that Christ laughed in all his time on earth; but we read that he once rejoiced in spirit, Luke x. 21. And what was the occasion of that his joy, but the success of the gospel in the salvation of the souls of men? Now, certainly it must be some great good that so affects Christ, and all his angels in heaven at the sight of it; the degree of a wise man's joy is according to the value of the object thereof: No man that is wise will rejoice and feel his heart leap within him for gladness at a small or common thing.

And as there is joy in heaven for the saving, so certainly there is grief and rage in hell for the loss of a soul. No sooner had God, by Paul's ministry, converted one poor Lydia, at Philippi, whither he was called by an immediate express from heaven for that service, but the devil put all the city into an uproar, as if an enemy had landed on their coast; and raised a violent persecution, which quickly drave him thence, Acts xvi. 9, 14, 22.

And indeed what are all the fierce and cruel persecutions of God's faithful ministers, but so many efforts of the rage and malice of hell against them, for plucking souls as so many captives and preys out of his paws? for this he owes them a spight, and will be sure to pay them, if ever he get them at an advantage. But all this joy and grief demonstrates the high and great value of the prize which is won by heaven and lost by hell.

9. The institution of gospel-ordinances, and the appointment of so many gospel-officers purposely for the saving of souls, is no small evidence of their value and esteem.

No man would light and maintain a lamp fed with golden oil, and keep it burning from age to age, if the work to be done by the light of it were not of a very precious and important nature: what else are the dispensations of the gospel, but lamps burning with golden oil to light souls to heaven? Zech. iv. 2, 3, 4, and 12. compared: A magnificent vision is there represented to the prophet, viz. a candlestick of gold with a bowl or cistern upon the top of it, and seven shafts with seven lamps at the ends thereof, all lighted: And that these lamps might have a constant supply of oil, without any accessory human help, there are represented (as growing by the candlestick) two fresh and green olive trees on each side thereof, ver. 3. which do empty out of themselves golden oil, ver. 12. na-

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and as often as we depart from good, so often the devils rejoice, and the angels are defrauded of their joy. *Aug.*

turally dropping and distilling it into that bowl, and the two pipes thereof to feed the lamps continually. Under this stately emblem you have a lively representation of the spiritual gifts and graces distilled by the Spirit into the ministers of the gospel for the use and benefit of the church, as you find not only by the angel's exposition of it here, but by the Spirit's allusion to it, and accommodation of it in Rev. xi. 3, 4. See herein what price God puts upon the salvation of souls: Gospel-lamps are maintained for their sakes, not with the sweat of ministers brows, or the expence and waste of their spirits, but by the precious gifts and graces of God's Spirit continually dropping into them for the use and service of souls. These ministerial gifts and graces are Christ's ascension-gifts, Eph. iv. 8. "When he ascended up on high, he gave gifts unto men;" and what are the royal gifts of that triumphant day? Why, he "gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, "and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, "for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of "Christ." It is an allusion to the Roman triumphs, wherein the conqueror did *spargere missilia*, scatter abroad his treasures among the people. It is reported of the palm-tree, saith one, that when it was first planted in Italy, they watered its roots with wine, to make it take the better with the soil: But God waters our souls with what is infinitely more costly than wine, he waters them with the heart-blood of Christ, and the precious gifts and graces of the Spirit; which certainly he would never do if they were not of great worth in his eyes. O how many excellent ministers, who were, as it is said of John, burning and shining lights in their places and generations, have spent themselves, and how many are there who are willing to spend, and be spent, as Paul was for the salvation of souls! God is at great expence for them, and therefore puts a very high value upon them.

Now all this respects the soul of man; that is the object of all ministerial labours. The soul is the *terminus actionum ad intra*, the subject on which God works, and upon which he spends all those invaluable treasures. It is the soul which he aims at, and principally designs and levels all to, and reckons it not too dear a rate to save it at.

No man will dig for common stones with golden mattocks, the instruments that would be worn out being of far greater value than the thing. This may convince us of what worth our souls are, and at what rates they are set in God's book, that such instruments are sent abroad into the world, and such precious gifts and graces, like golden oil, spent continually for their salvation; "Whether Paul, "or Apollos, or Cephas, all are yours," 1 Cor. iii. 22. i. e. all set apart for the service and salvation of your souls.

10. The great encouragements and rewards God propounds and promiseth to them that win souls, speak their worth, and God's great esteem of them.

There cannot be a more acceptable service done to God, than for a man to set himself heartily and diligently to the conversion of souls; so many souls as a man instrumentally saves, so many diadems will God crown him withal in the great day. St. Paul calls his converted Philippians *his joy and his crown*, Phil. iv. 1. and tells the converted Thessalonians, they were his "crown of rejoicing in the presence of Jesus Christ at his coming," 1 Thess. ii. 19. There is a full reward assured by promise to those that labour in this great service, Dan. xii. 3. "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." The wisdom here spoken of, I conceive not to be only that whereby a man is made wise to the salvation of his own soul, but whereby he is also furnished with skill for the saving of other men's souls according to that, Prov. xi. 30. "He that winneth souls is wise." And so the latter phrase is exegetical of it, meaning one and the same thing with being wise and turning many unto righteousness: And, to put men upon the study of this wisdom, he puts a very honourable title upon them, calling them מצדיקי הרבים the *justifiers of many*, as in 1 Tim. iv. 16. they are said to save others. Here is singular honour put upon the very instruments employed in this honourable service, and that is not all, but their reward is great hereafter, as well as their honour great at present, they "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and the stars for ever and ever." The firmament shines like a sapphire in itself, and the stars and planets more gloriously again; but those that faithfully labour in this work of saving souls shall shine in glory for ever and ever, when the firmament shall be parched up as a scroll. O what rewards and honours are here to provoke men to the study of saving souls! God will richly recompense all our pains in this work: If we did but only sow the seed in our days, and another enter into our labours, and water what we sowed; so that neither the first hath the comfort of finishing the work, nor the last the honour of beginning it; but one did somewhat towards it in the work of conviction, and the other carried it on to greater maturity and perfection; and so neither the one nor the other began and finished the work singly, yet both shall rejoice in heaven together, John iv. 36.

You see what honour God puts upon the very instruments employed in this work, even the honour to be saviours, under God, of men's souls, James v. 20. and what a full reward of glory, joy, and comfort, they shall have in heaven; all which speaks the great

value of the soul with God. Such encouragements, and such rewards would never have been propounded and promised if God had not a singular estimation of them.

And the more to quicken his instruments to all diligence, in this great work, he works upon their fears as well as hopes; threatens them with hell, as well as encourages them with the hopes of heaven; tells them he will require the blood of all those souls that perish by their negligence: "Their blood (saith he) will I require at the watchman's hands," Ezek. xxxiii. 6. which are rather thunderbolts than words, saith Chrysostome. By all which, you see, what a weight God lays upon the saving or losing of souls: Such severe charges, great encouragements, and terrible threats had never been proposed in scripture, if the souls of men had not been invaluablely precious.

11. It is no small evidence of the precious and invaluable worth of souls, that God manifests so great and tender care over them, and is so much concerned about the evil that befalls them.

Among many others there are two things in which the tender care of God, for the good of souls, is manifested.

(1.) In his tenderness over them in times of distress and danger; as a tender father will not leave his sick child in other hands, but sits up and watches by himself, and administers the cordials with his own hands; even so the great God expresseth his care and tenderness. Isa. lvii. 15. "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Behold the condescending tenderness of the highest majesty! Is a soul ready to faint and fail, O how soon is God with it, with a reviving cordial in his hand! lest "the spirit should fail before him, and the soul which he hath made?" as it is, ver. 16. Yea, he put it into Christ's commission, "to preach good tidings to the meek, and to bind up the broken-hearted," Isa. lxi. 1. and not only inserts it in Christ's commission, but gives the same in solemn charge to all his inferior messengers, whom he employs about them. Isa. xxxv. 3. "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not."

(2.) His special regard to souls is evidenced in his severe prohibitions to all others to do any thing that may be an occasion of ruin to them. He charges it upon all, "That no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in his brother's way," Rom. xiv. 13. that by the abuse of our own liberty, "we destroy not him for whom Christ died," Rom. xiv. 15. And what doth all this signify but the precious and invaluable worth of souls?

12. *Lastly*, It is not the least evidence of the dignity of men's

souls, that God hath appointed the whole host of angels to be their guardians and attendants.

“Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Heb. i. 14.

*Are they not?*] It is not a doubtful question, but the strongest way of affirmation; nothing is surer than that they are.

*All.*] Not one of that heavenly company excepted. The highest angel thinks it no disparagement to serve a soul for whom Christ died; well may they all stoop to serve them when they see Christ their Lord hath stooped, even to death, to save them. They are all of them.

*Ministering spirits.*] Δειτεργινα πνευματα, public officers, to whom their tutelage is committed: To them it belongs to attend, serve, protect and relieve them. The greatest barons and peers in the kingdom think it not below them to wait upon the heir apparent to the crown, in his minority; and no less dignity is here stamped by God upon the souls of men whom he calls.

*Heirs of salvation.*] And in some respect nearer to Christ than themselves are; on this account it is, that the angels delight to serve them. Christ's little ones upon earth have their angels, which always behold the face of God in heaven, Mat. xviii. 10. and therefore saith our Lord there, “Take heed you despise not one of those little ones;” they are greater persons than you are aware of. Nor is it enough that one angel is appointed to wait upon all, or many of them, but many angels, even a whole host of them, are sometimes sent to attend upon one of them. As Jacob was going on his way, the angels of God met him; and when he saw them he said, “This is God's host,” Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.

The same two offices which belong to a nurse, to whom the father commits his child, belong also to the angels in heaven, with respect to the children of God, viz. to keep them tenderly whilst they are abroad, and bring them home to their Father's house at last. And how clearly doth all this evince and demonstrate the great dignity and value of souls? Was it an argument of the grandeur and magnificence of king Solomon, that he had two hundred men with targets, and three hundred men with shields of beaten gold for his ordinary guard every day? And is it not a mark of far greater dignity than ever Solomon had in all his glory, to have hosts of angels attending us? In comparison with one of this guard, Solomon himself was but a worm in all his magnificence.

And now lay all these arguments together, and see what they will amount to. You have before you no ordinary creature: For (1.) It was not produced, as other creatures were by a mere word of command; but by the deliberation of the great council of heaven. And (2.) Such are the high and noble faculties and powers found

in it as render it agreeable to, and becoming such a Divine original. Yea, (3.) By reason of these its admirable powers, it becomes a capable subject both of grace here and glory hereafter. (4.) Nor is this its capacity in vain; for God hath made glorious preparations for some of them in heaven. (5.) And purchased them for heaven, and heaven for them, at an invaluable price, even the precious blood of Christ. (6.) And stamp't immortality upon their actions, as well as natures. (7.) Both worlds contend and strive for the soul, as a prize of greatest value. (8.) Their conversion to Christ is the triumph of heaven, and rage of hell. (9.) The lamps of gospel-ordinances are maintained over all the reformed Christian world, to light them in their passage to heaven. (10.) Great rewards are propounded to all that shall heartily endeavour the salvation of them. (11.) The care of heaven is exceeding great and tender over them. And (12.) The heavenly hosts of angels have the charge of them, and reckon it their honour to serve them. These things, duly weigh'd, bring home the conclusion with demonstrative clearness, to every man's understanding, *That one soul is of more value than the whole world*; which was the thing to be proved. What remains, is the improvement of this excellent subject, in these following inferences.

*Inf.* 1. The soul of man, appearing to be a creature of such transcendent dignity and excellency, this truth appears of equal clearness with it; *That it was not made for the body, but the body for it; and therefore it is a vile abuse of the noble and high-born soul, to subject it to the lusts, and enslave it to the drudgery of the inferior and more ignoble part.*

The very law of nature assigns the most honourable places and employments, to the most noble and excellent creatures, and the baser and inferior, to things of the lowest rank and quality. The sun, moon and stars are placed by this law in the heavens; but the *ignis fatuus*, and the glow-worm in the fens and ditches. Princes are set upon thrones of glory, the beggars lodged in barns and stables: and if at any time this order of nature is inverted, and the baser suppress and perk over the noble and honourable beings, it is looked upon as a kind of prodigy, in the civil world. And so Solomon represents it, Eccl. x. 7. "I have seen servants "upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth;" i. e. I have seen men that are worthy of no better employments than to rub horses heels, in the saddle with their trappings; and men who deserves to bear rule, and to govern kingdoms; men, who for their great ability and integrity, deserved to sit at the helm, and moderate the affairs of kingdoms; these have I seen walking as servants upon the earth; and this he calls an evil

under the sun, that is, an *ataxy*, confusion, or disorder in the course of nature.

Now there can never be that difference and vast odds betwixt one man and another, as there is betwixt the soul and body of every man. A king upon the throne is not so much above a beggar that cries at our door for a crust, as the soul is above the body; for the soul of a beggar is of the same species, original, and capacity of happiness, with the soul of the most illustrious prince; and sometimes greater excellencies of mind are found in the lowest rank and order of men. "Better is a poor and wise child, than an old, and foolish king," Eccl. iv. 13. but the soul of the meanest person in the world is better than all the bodies in it; and therefore, to make the noble, and the high-born soul a slave, a mere drudge to the vile body, as the apostle calls it, Phil. iii. 21. "The body of this vileness;" what is it but to set the beggar on horseback, and make the king lacquey after him on foot!

It was a generous resentment that a \* Heathen had of the dignity of his own soul, and a very just abhorrence of so vile an abuse of it, when he said, *I am greater, and born to greater things, than that I should be a slave to my body.*

I know there is a debt of duty the soul owes to its own body, and few souls are to be found too careless, or dilatory in the discharge thereof; where one soul needs the spur in this case, thousands need the curb. Most souls are over-heated with zeal for the concerns of the flesh, worn out and spent in its constant drudgery; their whole life is but a *servimg of divers lusts and pleasures*, as the apostle speaks, Tit. iii. 3. Imperious lusts are cruel task-masters, they give the soul no rest; the more provision the soul brings in to satisfy them, the more they rage, like fire, by the addition of more fuel. What a sad sight is it to see a noble, immortal soul *enslaved*, as the apostle's word is †, Tit. i. 7. *to wine? to filthy lucre*, to a thousand sorts of vassalage; like a *tapster* in a common *inn*, now running up stairs, and then down, at every one's knock and call.

O what a perpetual hurry and noise do thousands of souls live in! so that they have no time to retire into themselves, and think for what end and use they were created and sent into this world. All their thoughts, all their cares, all their studies and labours, are taken up about the perishing, clogging, ensnaring body, which must so shortly fall a prey to the worms. How many millions of poor creatures are there that labour and toil all their life long, for a poor, bare maintenance of their bodies, and never think they have any other business to do in this world!

\* *Major sum, et ad majora natus, quam ut corporis mei sim mancipium.* Sen.

† *Μη σινω πολλω δεδωλωμενας.*

And how many, of an higher rank, are charmed by a thick succession of fleshly delights and pleasures, into a deep oblivion of their eternal concerns! So that their whole life is but one entire diversion from the great business and proper end of it. James v. 5. "Ye have lived in pleasures on earth," living in them, as the fish doth in the water, its proper element, or the eel in the mud. Sometimes it falls out, at the very close of a vain voluptuous life, when you see all their delights shrinking away at the approaches and appearance of death, that they begin to be a little startled at the change, which is about to be made upon them; and to cry, O what shall we do now! Ah poor souls! is that a time to think what you shall do, when you are just stepping into the awful state of eternity? O that this had been thought on in season! but you could find no leisure for one such thought. Now you begin to wish time had been rescued out of the hands of the cares and pleasures of this life, for better purposes; but it is gone, and never more to be recalled.

*Inf. 2. Is the soul so invaluablely precious? Then the salvation of the soul is to be the great care, and business of every man in this life.*

Where one thought is spent about this question, *What shall I eat, drink, and put on?* a thousand should be spent about that question, "What shall I do to be saved!" If a treasure of ten, or twenty thousand pounds were committed to your trust and charge, and for which (in case of loss) you must be responsible: would not your thoughts, cares, and fears, be working night and day about it, till you are satisfied it is safe and out of danger? And then your mind would be at rest, but not before. Thy soul, O man, is more worth than the crowns and treasures of all the princes in the world! If all their exchequers were drained, and all their crown-jewels sold to their full value, they could never make up a half ransom for the soul of the poorest and meanest man. This invaluable treasure is committed to your charge; if it be lost, you are lost for ever. That which St. Matthew calls the losing of the soul in my text, St. Luke calls *losing himself*; if the soul be lost, the man is lost. The body is but as a boat fastened to the stern of a stately ship, if the ship sink, the boat follows it.

O, therefore, what thoughts, what fears, what cares should exercise the minds of men, day and night, till their precious souls are out of all danger: Methinks the sound of this text should ring a perpetual alarm in the ears of careless sinners, and make them hasten to the insurance-office, as merchants do, who have great adventures in danger at sea. It was counsel given once to a king, and worthy to be pressed upon all, from the king to the beggar, to ruminate these words of Christ one quarter of an hour every

day; "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Certainly it would make men slacken their pace and cool themselves in their hot and earnest pursuit of the trifles of this world, and convince them, that they have somewhat else to do of far greater importance.

It was not without great and weighty reason, therefore, that the apostle Peter exhorts to all diligence to make our calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i. 10. There are two words in this text of extraordinary weight, *Σπουδασατε*, *Give all diligence*; the word is *study*; the utmost intention of the mind, pondering and comparing things in the thoughts, valuing reasons for, and objections against the point before us, this is study; and such as calls for all diligence where the subject-matter is (as to be sure here it is) of the greatest importance: And what is the subject-matter of all this study and diligence? Why, it is the most solemn of all works that ever came under the hand of man, to make our calling and election *sure*, firm, stable, or fixed, as a building raised upon a square and strong foundation; or as a conclusion is sure, when regularly drawn from certain and indubitable premises: There can never be too much care, too much study or pains about that which can never be too well secured.

Many souls never spent one solemn hour in a close and serious debate about this matter; others have taken a great deal of pains about it; they have broken many nights sleep, poured out many prayers, made many a deep search into their own hearts, walked with much conscientious watchfulness and tenderness, proposed many a serious case of conscience to the most judicious and skilful ministers and Christians; and after all, the security is not such as fully satisfies: And probably one reason of it may be the great weight wherewith the matters of their salvation lie upon their spirits. O that these soul-concerns did bear upon all, as they do upon some! It requires more time, more thoughts, more prayers to make these things sure, than most are aware of.

*Inf. 3. If the soul be so precious, then certainly it is the special care of heaven, that which God looks more particularly after, than any other creature on earth.*

There is an active, vigilant providence that superintends every creature upon earth; there is not the most despicable, diminutive creature that lives in the world, left without the line of providence: God is therefore said to give them all their meat in due season, and for that end they all wait upon him, Psal. civ. 27. who, as a great and provident house-keeper orders daily, convenient provisions for all his family, even to the least and lowest among them: The smallest insects and gnats which swarm so thick in the air, and of the usefulness of whose being it is hard to give an account; yet as the

incomparably learned \* Dr. More well observes, these all find nourishment in the world, which would be lost if they did not, and are again convenient nourishment themselves to others that prey upon them.

But man is the peculiar, special care of God; and the soul of man much more than the body. Hence Christ fortifies the faith of Christians against all distrusts of Divine Providence, even from their excellency above other creatures.

Mat. x. 31. "Ye are of more value than many sparrows;" and Mat. vi. 26. your heavenly Father feeds the fowls of the air, and "are ye not much better than they?" and ver. 30. he clothes the grass of the field, "and shall he not much more clothe you?" and so the apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 9. "Doth God take care for oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written." In all which places we have the dignity of man above all animals and vegetables in respect of the natural excellency of his reasonable soul, but especially the gracious endowments of it, which endear it far more to its Maker; this is the very hinge of the argument, and a firm ground for the believer's faith of God's tender care over both parts, but especially the soul. The body of a believer is God's creature, as well as his soul; but that being of less value, hath not such a degree of care and tenderness expressed towards it, as the soul hath: the father's care is not so much for the child's clothes, as it is for the child himself. Besides, the immediate wants and troubles of the soul, which are *idiopathetical*, are far more sharp and pinching than those it suffers upon the body's account, which are but *sympathetical*; and therefore, whenever such an excellent creature as a sanctified soul which is in Christ, or a soul designed to be sanctified, which is moving towards Christ, falls under those heavy pressures and distresses, (as it often does) and is ready to fail; let it be assured, its merciful Creator will not fail to relieve, support, revive, and deliver it, as often as it shall fall into those deep distresses.

Hear how his compassionate tenderness is expressed towards distressed souls. Isa. xlix. 15. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee."

Sooner shall a *woman*, the more tender sex, forget, (not the nurse-child, that only sucks her breast, but) the child, yea, the son of her womb, and that not when grown and placed abroad, but whilst it hangs upon her breast, and draws love from her heart, as well as milk from her breast, than God will forget a soul that fears him. Let gracious souls fortify their faith, therefore, in the

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\* Antidote, §c. p. 82.

Divine care, by considering with what a peculiar eye of estimation and care God looks upon them above all other creatures in the world: only beware you so eye not the natural or spiritual excellencies of your souls, as to expect mercy for the sake thereof, as if your souls were worthy for whose sake God should do this: no, sin nonsuited that plea; all is of free grace, not of debt: but he minds us to what reputation the new creation brings the soul with its God.

*Inf. 4. If the soul of man be so precious, how precious and dear to all believers should the Redeemer and Saviour of their precious souls be?*

“Unto you therefore that believe, he is precious,” saith the apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 7. Though he be yet out of our sight, he should never be one whole hour together out of our hearts and thoughts. 1 Pet. i. 8. “Whom having not seen ye love; whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.” “The very name of Christ,” saith \* Bernard, “is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, and a very jubilee in the heart.” The blessed martyr, Mr. Lambert, made this his motto, None but Christ, none but Christ. Molinus was seldom observed to mention his name without dropping eyes. Julius Palmer, in the midst of the flames, moved his scorched lips, and was heard to say, Sweet Jesus, and fell asleep. Paul fastens upon his name as a bee upon a sweet flower, and mentions it no less than ten times in the compass of ten verses, 1 Cor. i. as if he knew not how to leave it.

There is a twofold preciousness of Christ, one in respect of his essential excellency and glory; in this respect he is glorious, as the only begotten Son of God, the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image or character of his person, Heb. i. the other in respect of his relative usefulness and suitableness to all the needs and wants of poor sinners, as he is *the Lord our righteousness*, made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. None discern this preciousness of Christ but those that have been convinced of sin, and have apprehended the wrath to come, the just demerit of sin, and fled for refuge to the hope set before them; and to them he is precious indeed. Consider him as a Saviour from wrath to come, and he will appear the most lovely and desirable in all the world to your souls: he that understands the value of his own soul, the dreadful nature of the wrath of God, the near approaches of this wrath to his own soul, and the astonishing

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\* *Mel in ore, melos in aure, jubulum in corde.* Bern.

love of Christ in delivering him from it by bearing that wrath in his place and room, in his own person; cannot choose but estimate Christ above ten thousand worlds.

*Inf. 5. How great a trust and charge lieth upon them to whom the care of souls is committed, and from whom an account for other men's, as well as their own souls shall certainly be required?*

Ministers are appointed of God to watch for the souls of their people, and that as men that must give an account, Heb. xiii. 17. The word here translated *watch\**, signifies such watchfulness as that of shepherds who keep their flocks by night in places infested by wolves, and watch whole nights together for their safety. If a man were a keeper only of sheep and swine, it were no great matter if the wolf now and then carried away one whilst he slept; but ministers have charge of souls, one of which, as Christ assures us in the text, *is more worth than the whole world*. Hear what one speaks upon this point.

‘ † God purchased the church with his own blood: O what an argument is here to quicken the negligent! and what an argument to condemn those that will not be quickened up to their duty by it! O, saith one of the ancient doctors, if Christ had but committed to my keeping one spoonful of his blood in a frigid glass, how curiously should I preserve it, and how tender should I be of that glass! If then he have committed to me the purchase of that blood, should I not carefully look to my charge?’

‘ What, sirs, shall we despise the blood of Christ? shall we think it was shed for them that are not worthy our care? O then let us hear those arguments of Christ, whenever we feel ourselves grow dull and careless. Did I die for them, and wilt thou not look after them? were they worth my blood, and are they not worth thy labour? Did I come down from heaven to earth, to seek and to save that which is lost, and wilt not thou go to the next door, or street, or village, to seek them? How small is thy labour or condescension to mine? I debased myself to this, but it is thy honour to be so employed.’

Let not that man think to be saved by the blood of Christ himself that makes light of precious souls, who are the purchase of that blood.

And no less charge lieth upon parents, to whom God hath committed the care of their children's souls; and masters that have the guardianship of the souls as well as the bodies of their families; the command is laid express upon you, that they sanctify God's sabbaths, Exod. xx. 10. to command your household in the way of the Lord, Gen. xviii. 19.

\* *Αγρυπνεῖν est noctes insomnes agere, quod solent viri βεβληφοροί, pernox solitudine.*

† Gildas Salvian, p. 260.

O parents, consider with yourselves what strong engagements lie upon you to do all you are capable of doing for the salvation of the precious souls of your dear children. Remember, their souls are of infinitely more value than their bodies; that they came into the world under sin and condemnation; that you were the instruments of propagating that sin to them, and bringing them into that misery; that you know their dispositions, and how to suit them better than others can; that the bonds of nature give you singular advantages to prevail and be successful in your exhortations, beyond what any others have; that you are always with them, and can chuse opportunities which others cannot; that you and they must shortly part, and never meet again till you meet at the judgment-seat of Christ; that it will be an inconceivably dreadful day to see them stand at Christ's left hand among the cursed and condemned, there cursing the day that ever they were born of such ignorant and negligent, such careless and cruel parents, as took no care to instruct, reprove, or exhort them. O who can think without horror of the cries and curses of his own child in hell, cast away by the very instrument of his being!

Is this the love you bear them, to betray them to eternal misery? Was there no other provision to be made but for their bodies? Did you think you had fully acquitted your duty when you had got an estate for them? O that God would effectually touch your hearts with a becoming sense of the value and danger of their souls and your own too in the neglect of that great and solemn trust committed to you with respect to them! And you, masters, consider, though God hath set you above, and your servants below, yet are their souls equally precious with your own: they have another Master that expects service from them as well as you. Do not only allow them time, but give them your exhortations and commands not to neglect their own souls, whilst they attend your business: think not your business will prosper the less because it is in the hand of a praying servant: their souls are of greater concernment than any business of yours can be.

*Inf. 6. Are souls so precious? Then certainly the means and instruments of their salvation must be exceeding precious too, and the removal of them a sore judgment.*

The dignity of the subject gives value to the instruments employed about it. It is no ordinary mercy for souls to come into such a part of the world, and in such a time as furnisheth them with the best helps for salvation. Ordinances and ministers receive their value not from their Author, but from their Object: they have a dignity stamped upon them by their usefulness to the souls of men, Acts xx. 32. the word is the *seed of life*, 1 Pet. i. 23. the regenerating instrument. It is the *bread of life*, and Job xxiii. 12. more than

our necessary food. The word is a *light*, shining in the dark world to direct your souls through all the snares laid for them unto glory. It is the soul's cordial in all fainting fits, Psal. cxix. 50. What shall I say of the word and ordinances of God? The sun that shines in heaven to give us light, the fountains, springs, and rivers that stream for our refreshment, the corn and cattle on the earth, yea, the very air we breathe in is not so useful, so necessary, so precious to our bodies, as the word is to our souls.

It cannot therefore but be a sore judgment, and a dreadful token of God's indignation and wrath, to have a restraint or scarcity of the means of salvation among us; but should there be (which God in mercy prevent) a removal and total loss of those things, wrath would then come upon us to the uttermost. What will the condition of precious souls be when the means of salvation are cut off from them? when that famine, worse than of bread and water, is come upon them? Amos viii. 11. When the ark of God (the symbol of his presence) was taken, it is said, 1 Sam. iv. 18. "That all the city cried out." When Paul took his leave of Antioch, and told them they should see his face no more, how did the poor Christians lament and mourn, as cut at the heart by that killing word? Acts xx. 37, 38. It made Christ's bowels to yern, and move within him when he saw the multitude scattered as sheep having no shepherd, Matth. ix. 36.

Matthew Paris tells us, in the year 1072, when preaching was suppressed at Rome, letters were framed as coming from hell, wherein the devil gave them thanks for the multitude of souls sent to him that year. But we need no letters from hell, we have a sad account from heaven, in what a sad state those souls are left, from whom the means of salvation are cut off: "Where no vision is, the people perish," Prov. xxix. 18. and Hos. iv. 6. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

It is sad when those stars that guide souls to Christ, (as that which the wise men saw did) are set, and wandering stars shall shine in their places. O if God remove the golden candlestick out of its place, what but the desolation and ruin of millions of souls must follow?

We account it insufferable cruelty for a man to undertake the piloting of a ship full of passengers who never learnt his compass; or an ignorant *Empiric* to get his living by killing men's bodies; but much more lamentable will the state of souls be if ever they fall, (which God in mercy prevent) into the hands of Popish guides, or *blind leaders of the blind*.

*Inf. 7. If the soul be of so precious a nature, it can never live upon such base and vile food as earthly things are.*

The apostle, Phil. iii. 8, 9. calls the things of this world

\* *dogs meat*; and judge if that be proper food for such noble and high-born creatures as our souls are. An immaterial being can never live upon material things; they are no bread for souls, as the prophet speaks, Isa. lv. 2. "Why do ye spend money, (i. e. Time "and pains, thought and cares) "for that which is not bread?" Your souls can no more live upon carnal, than your bodies on spiritual things. Earthly things have a double defect in them, by reason whereof they are called things of nought, Amos vi. 13. of no worth or value; they are neither suitable nor durable, and therefore, in the soul's eye, not valuable.

1. They are not suitable. What are corn and wine, gold and silver, pleasures and honours, to the soul? The body, and bodily senses, can find somewhat of refreshment in them; but not the spirit: That which is bread to the body, affords no more nourishment to the soul than wind or ashes, Isa. xlv. 20. "He feedeth "of ashes." "† Ashes are that light and dry matter, into which "fuel is reduced by the fire;" the fuel, before it was burnt, had nothing in it fit for nourishment; or if the sap or juice that was in it, might in any respect be useful that way, yet all that is devoured and licked up by the fire, and not the least nutriment left in the ashes: And such are all earthly things to the soul of man. "I am the bread of life," saith Christ, a soul can feed and feast itself upon Christ and the promises; these are things full of marrow and fatness, substantial, and proper soul-nutrimment.

2. As earthly things are no way suitable to the soul, so neither are they durable. The apostle reduceth all earthly things to three heads, "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride "of life," 2 John ii. 16. he calls them all by the name of that which gives the lustre and beauty to them, and pronounceth them all fading, transitory vanities, they all pass away; as time, so these things that are measured by time, are *in fluxu continuo*, always going, and at last will be all gone. Now the soul being of an immortal nature, and these things of a perishing nature; it must necessarily and unavoidably follow, that the soul must overlive them all; and if it will do so, what a dismal case are those souls in, for whom no other provision is made, but that on which it cannot subsist, whilst it hath them, no more than the body can upon ashes or wind? and if it could, yet they will shortly fail it, and pass away for ever. So then it is beyond debate, that there lies a plain necessity upon every man to make provision in time, of things more suitable and

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\* The Greek word *Σκυλαλον*, for *Κυσιλαλον*, signifies that which being rejected by us is thrown to dogs.

† *Cinis est crassior illa materia in quam combustum redigitur*,

durable than earthly treasures are, or the soul must perish, as to its comfort, to all eternity.

Hence is that weighty counsel of him that came to save them, Luke xii. 23. "Provide yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in heaven that faileth not," i. e. a happiness which will last as long as your souls last. Certainly, the moth-eaten things of this world are no provision for immortal spirits, and yet multitudes think of no other provision for them, but live as if they had nothing to do in this world but to get an estate.

Alas! what are all these things to the soul? They signify somewhat, indeed, to the body, and that but for a little time: for after the resurrection, the bodies of the saints become spiritual in qualities, and no more need these material things than the angels do: It is madness therefore, to be so intent upon cares for the body, as to neglect the soul; but to ruin the soul, and drown it in perdition, for the sake of these provisions for the flesh, is the height of madness.

*Inf. 8. If the soul be so invaluablely precious, then it is a rational and well advised resolution and practice, to expose all other things to hazard, yea, to certain loss, for the preservation of the more precious soul.*

It is better our bodies and all their comforts should perish, than that our souls should perish for their sakes. Nature teaches us to offer a hand or arm to the stroke of a sword, to save a blow from the head, or put by a thrust at the heart. It is recorded, to the praise of those three worthies, Dan. iii. 28. "That they yielded their bodies, that they might not serve, nor worship any God, except their own God." By this rule, all the martyrs of Christ governed themselves, still slighting and exposing to destruction, their bodies and estates, to preserve their souls, reckoning to save nothing, by religion, but their souls, and that they had lost nothing, if they could save them; "They loved not their lives unto the death," Rev. xii. 11.

Then do we live like Christians, when the care of our bodies is swallowed up, and subdued by that of our souls, and all creature-loves by the love of Christ. Those blessed souls hated their own bodies, and counted them their enemies, when they would draw them from Christ and his truths, and plunge their souls into guilt and danger. This was the result of all their debates with the flesh in the hour of temptation; cannot we live but to the dishonour of Christ, and the ruin of our own souls, by sinful compliance against our consciences? then welcome the worst of deaths, rather than such a life!

Look into the stories of the martyrs, and you shall find this was the rule they still governed themselves by; a dungeon, a stake, a

gibbet, any thing, rather than guilt upon the inner-man: death was welcome, even in its most dreadful form, to escape ruin to their precious and immortal souls. One kissed the apparitor, that brought him the tidings of death. Another being advised, when he came to the critical point, on which his life depended, to have a care of himself: So I will, said he, I will be as careful as I can of my best self, my soul. These men understood the value and precious worth of their own souls; certainly, we shall never prove courageous and constant in sufferings, till we understand the worth of our souls as they did. Consider and compare these sufferings in a few obvious particulars, and then determine the matter in thine own breast.

(1.) How much easier it is to endure the torments of men in our bodies, than to feel the terrors of God in our consciences. Can the creature strike with an arm like God? Oh! think what it is for the wrath of God to come into a man's bowels like water, and like oil into his bones, as the expression is, Psal. cix. 18. Sure there is no comparison betwixt the strokes of God and men.

(2.) The sufferings of the body are but for a moment. When the proconsul told Polycarp that he would tame him with fire, he replied, Your fire shall burn but for the space of an hour, and then it shall be extinguished; but the fire that shall devour the wicked will never be quenched. The sufferings of a moment are nothing to eternal sufferings.

(3.) Sufferings for Christ are usually sweetened and made easy by the consolations of the Spirit; but hell-torments have no relief, they admit of no ease.

(4.) The life that you shall live in that body, for whose sake you have damned your souls, will not be worth the having; it will be a life without comfort, light, or joy; and what is there in life, separate from the joy and comfort of life?

(5.) In a word, if you sacrifice your bodies for God and your souls, freely offer them up in love to Christ and his truth, your souls will joyfully receive and meet them again at the resurrection of the just; but if your poor souls be now ensnared and destroyed by your fond indulgence to your bodies, you will leave them at death despairing, and meet them at the resurrection howling.

*Inf. 9.* To conclude, *If the soul be so invaluablely precious, how great and irreparable a loss must the loss of a soul to all eternity be!*

There is a double loss of the soul of man, the one in Adam, which loss is recoverable by Christ; the other by final impenitence and unbelief, cutting it off from Christ; and this is irreparable and irrecoverable. Souls lost by Adam's sin, are within the reach of the arms of Christ; but in the shipwreck of personal infidelity, there is no plank to save the soul so cast away; of all losses, this is

the most lamentable, yet what more common: O what a shriek doth the unregenerate soul make, when it sees whither it must go, and that there is no remedy! Three cries are dreadful to hear on earth, yet all three are drowned, by a more terrible cry in the other world; the cry of a condemned prisoner at the bar, the cry of drowned seamen and passengers in a ship-wreck, the cries of soldiers conquered in the field; all these are fearful cries, yet nothing to that of a soul cast away to all eternity, and lost in the depth of hell.

If a man, as Chrysostom well observes, lose an eye, an arm, a hand, or leg, it is a great loss; but yet if one be lost, there is another to help him: for *omnia Deus dedit duplicia*, God hath given us all those members double; *Animam vero unam*, but we have but one soul, and if that be damned, there is not another to be saved.

And it is no small aggravation to this loss, that it was a wilful loss; we had the offers, and means of salvation plentifully afforded us; we were warned of this danger, over and over; we were intreated, and beseeched, upon the knee of importunity, not to throw away our souls, by an obstinate rejection of Christ, and grace; we saw the diligence and care of others for the salvation of their souls, some rejoicing in the comfortable assurance of it, and others giving all diligence to make their *calling and election sure*: we knew that our souls were as capable of blessedness, as any of those that are enjoying God in heaven, or panting after that enjoyment on earth; yea, some souls that are now irrecoverably gone, and many others who are going after them, once were, and now are not far from the kingdom of God; they had convictions of sin, a sense of their loss, and miserable state; they began to treat with Christ in prayer, to converse with his ministers and people, about their condition, and after all this, even when they seemed to have clean escaped the snares of Satan, to be again entangled, and overcome; when even come to the harbour's mouth, to be driven back again, and cast away upon the rocks. O what a loss will this be!

O thou that createdst souls with a capacity to know, love, and enjoy thee for ever; who out of thine unsearchable grace sentest thine own Son out of thy bosom to seek and save that which was lost, pity those poor souls that cannot pity themselves: let mercy yet interpose itself betwixt them and eternal ruin; awaken them out of their pleasant slumber, though it be at the brink of damnation, lest they perish, and there be none to deliver them.

Doct. 2. *How precious and invaluable soever the soul of man is, it may be lost, and cast away for ever.*

This proposition is supposed, and implied in our Saviour's words in the text, and plainly expressed in Mat. vii. 13. "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." The way to hell is thronged with passengers; it is a beaten road; one draws another along with him, and scoffs at those that are afraid to follow, 1 Pet. iv. 4. *Facilis descensus averni*; it is pleasant sailing with wind and tide. Some derive the word *hell* from a verb which signifies to carry, or thrust in; millions go in, but none return thence: millions are gone down already, and millions more are coming after, as fast as Satan and their own lusts can hurry them onward. You read not only of single persons, but whole nations drowned in this gulph. Psal. ix. 17. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all nations that forget God." How rare is the conversion of a soul in the dark places of the earth, where the sound of the gospel is not heard? The devil drives them in droves to destruction, scarce a man reluctant or drawing back\*.

And though some nations enjoy the inestimable privilege of the gospel of salvation, yet multitudes of precious souls perish, notwithstanding, sinking into hell daily, as it were, betwixt the merciful arms of a Saviour stretched out to save them. The light of salvation is risen upon us, but Satan draws the thick curtains of ignorance, and prejudice about the multitude, that not a beam of saving light can shine into their hearts. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

*If our gospel.*] Ours, not by way of institution, as the authors, but by way of dispensation, as the ministers and preachers of it; and certainly, it was never preached with that clearness, authority, and efficacy by any mere man, as it was by Paul and the rest of the apostles; and yet the gospel so powerfully preached, is by him here supposed to

*Be hid.*] If not as to the general light and superficial knowledge of it, yet as to its saving influence and converting efficacy upon their hearts: this never reacheth home to the souls and spirits of multitudes that hear it, but it is never finally so hidden, except

*To them that are lost.*] So that all those to whom the converting and saving power of the gospel never comes, whatever names, and

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\* The Latin word, *Infernus*, i. e. Hell, is derived from a verb signifying to thrust in, because the wicked are so hurried and cast headlong into it, that they can never ascend out of it.

reputations they may have among men, yet this text looks upon them all as a lost generation: They may have as many amiable, homiletical virtues, as sweet and lovely natures, as clear and piercing eyes, in all other things, as any others; but they are such, however,

*Whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded.*] Satan is here called the god of this world, not properly, but by a mimesis; because he challenges to himself the honour of a god, and hath a world of subjects that obey him; and, to secure their obedience, he blinds them, that they may never see a better way or state, than that he hath drawn them into. Therefore he is called the ruler of the darkness of this world, who rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience. The eye of the soul is the mind, that thinking, considering, and reasoning power of the soul; this is, as the philosophers truly call it, the *το ηγεμονικον*, the leading faculty to all the rest, the guide to all the other faculties, which, in the order of nature, follow this their leader: If this be blinded, the will, which is *cæca potentia*, a blind power in itself, and all affections blindly following the blind, all must needs fall into the ditch. And this is the case of the far greater part of even the professing world. Let us suppose a number of blind men upon an island, where there are many smooth paths, all leading to the top of a perpendicular cliff, and these blind men going on continually, some in one path, and some in another, but all in some one of those many paths which lead to the brink of their ruin, which they see not; it must needs follow, if they all move forward, the whole number will in a short time be cast away, the island cleared, and its inhabitants dead, and lost in the bottom of the sea. This is the case of the unregenerate world; they are now upon this habitable spot of earth, environed with the vast ocean of eternity; there are multitudes of paths leading to eternal misery; one man takes this way, and another that, as it is Isa. liii. 6. "We have "turned every one to his own way;" one to the way of pride, another to the way of covetousness, a third to the way of persecution, a fourth to the way of civility and mortality; and so on they go, not once making a stand, or questioning to what end it will bring them, till at last over they go, at death, and we hear no more of them in this world: And thus one generation of sinners follows another, and they that come after approve, and applaud those miserable wretches that went before them, Psal. xlix. 13. and so hell fills, and the world empties its inhabitants daily into it. Now I will make it my work, out of a dear regard to the precious souls of men, and in hope to prevent (which the Lord in mercy grant) the loss, and ruin of some, under whose eyes this discourse shall fall, to note some of the principal ways in which

precious souls are lost, and to put such bars into them, as I am capable to put; and, among many more, I will set a mark upon these following twelve paths, wherein millions of souls have been lost, and millions more are confidently, and securely following after, among which, it is likely, some are within one step, one day, or hour, to their eternal downfall and destruction. There is but one way in all the world, to save, and preserve the precious souls of men, but there are many ways to lose and destroy them: It is here, as it is in our natural birth, and death, but one way into the world, but a multitude out of it. And first,

*The first way to hell discovered.*

1. And to begin where, indeed, the ruin of very many doth begin, it will be found, that *ill education is the high-way to destruction*; vice need not be planted; if the gardener neglect to dress, sow, and manure his garden, he need not give the weeds a greater advantage; but if he also scatter the seeds of hemlock, docks, and nettles into it, he spoils it, and makes it fit for nothing. Many parents, and those godly too, are guilty of too many neglects, through carelessness, worldly incumbrances, or fond indulgence; and whilst they neglect the season of sowing better seed, the devil takes hold of it; if they will not improve it, he will: If they teach him not to pray, he will teach them to curse, swear, and lye; if they put not the bible, or catechism in their hands, he will put obscene ballads into them: and thus the offspring of many godly parents turn into degenerate plants, and prove a generation that know not the God of their fathers. This debauched age can furnish us with too many sad instances hereof. Thus they are spoiled in the bud; simple ignorance in youth, becomes affected and wilful ignorance in age; blushing sins in children become impudent in age; and all this for want of a timely, and prudent preventing care. Others there are of the rude and ignorant multitude, who are bred themselves much like the beasts they daily converse withal; and so they are fitly described, Job xxx. 6, 7. Go into their houses, and you may sooner find in the window, or upon the shelf, a pack of cards, than a bible or a catechism; their beds and tables differ little, or not at all, from the stalls and cribs where beasts lie down and feed, in respect of any worship of God among them; or if, for fashion-sake, a few words be huddled over in the evening, when their bodies are tired, the man saith something, he scarce knows what, the wife is asleep in one corner, the children in another, and the servants in a third. This is the education multitudes of parents give their children all the week, and when the sabbath comes, the most they learn to know at church, is, where their own

seat stands, and that it is necessary to speak with such a neighbour after prayers about such or such a bargain, or business for the next week.

And others there are, who breed their children as profanely, as these do sottishly; teaching them, by their examples, the newest oaths that were last minted in hell, and to revile and scoff all serious godliness, and the sincere professors of it, smiling to hear with what an emphasis they can talk in the dialect of devils, and how wittily they can droll upon godly ministers and Christians.

Such families are nurseries for hell; and though God, by an extraordinary hand of providence, now and then snatches a soul by conversion from among them, as a brand out of the fire; yet generally, they die as they live, going "to the generation of their fathers, where they shall never see light," Psal. xlix. 19. I know education and regeneration are two things; but I also know one is frequently made the "instrument of working the other, and that "the \*favour of what first seasons our youth (generally) abides "to old age," Prov. xxii. 6. We may observe, all the world over, how tenacious men are of that which is *αποπαροδοτον*, delivered to them by their parents. O what a cut must it be to the heart of that father whose son's life shall tell his conscience what a profane son's lips once told his father to his face! "If I have done evil, I have learnt it of you †." Had they felt more of your prudent correction, it might have prevented their destruction. Prov. xxiii. 14. "Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver "his soul from hell." That this is a common beaten path to hell, is beyond all question; but how to bar it up, and stop the multitudes that are engaged in it to their own ruin, this is the labour, this is the work. I cannot be large, but I will offer a few weighty considerations.

### *The first way to hell barred.*

1. Let all parents consider, what a fearful thing it is to be the instruments of ruining for ever, those that received their beings instrumentally from them, and to seek whose good they stand obliged, by all the laws of God and nature.

In vain are all your cares and studies for their bodies, whilst their souls perish for want of knowledge. You rejoiced at their birth, but they will have cause to curse the day they were born of you, and say, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the "night in which I was conceived." You were solicitous for their

\* *Quo semel est imbuta recens, &c.*

† *Si male feci, a te didici.*

bodies, but careless of their souls; earnest to see them rich, but indifferent whether they were gracious; you neglected to teach them the way of salvation, but the devil did not neglect to teach them the way of sin. You will one day wish you had never been parents, when the doleful cries of your damned children shall ring such notes as these in your ears: ‘O cursed father! O cruel, ‘merciless mother! whose examples have drawn me after you, ‘into all this misery. You had time enough, and motives ‘enough to have warned me of this place and misery whilst my ‘heart was tender, and my affections pliable: Had it not been as ‘easy to have put a Bible as a play-book before me? To have chas- ‘tised me when I provoked God by sin, as when I provoked you ‘about a trifle? One word spoken in season might have saved my ‘soul; one reproof wisely given and set on by your example, might ‘have preserved me. Had it not been the same pains to have ask- ‘ed me, child, what wilt thou do to be saved? As, what wilt ‘thou do to live in this world? Or, had I but observed any serious ‘religion in you, had I but found or heard my father or mother ‘upon their knees in prayer, it might have awakened me to a con- ‘sideration of my condition. In my youth I was shame-faced, ‘fearful, credulous, and apt to imitate; had you but had wisdom ‘as other parents have, to have taken hold of any of these handles ‘in time, you had rescued my soul from hell. Nay, so cruel have ‘you been to your own child, that you allowed me no time (if I ‘had had a disposition) for any exercise of religion; yea, you have ‘quenched and stifled the sparks of convictions and better incli- ‘nations that sometimes were in my heart. O happy had it been ‘if I had never been born of you, or seen your faces.’ This must be the result and issue of your negligence, except God, by some other hand (which is no thanks to you) rescue them from their impending ruin.

2. Let all children, whose unhappy lot it is to be born of, and educated by, carnal and irreligious parents, consider, God hath endued them with reason, and a conscience of their own, to enable them to make a better choice than their parents did, and that there is no taking sanctuary from the wrath of God in their parents’ examples. We read, in 1 Kings xiv. 13. of a good Abijah, “in whom was found some good thing towards the Lord “God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam.” Here was a child that would not follow his wicked father to hell, though he had both the authority of a father, and of a king over him. “You must “honour your parents; but still you must prefer your God before “them †.” God will never lay it to your account as your sin,

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† *Amandus genitor, sed præponendus Creator.*

but place it to the account of your duty, and comfort, that you refused to follow them in the paths of sin and destruction. No law of God, no tie of nature binds you to obey their commands, or tread in their steps, farther than they command in God's authority and name, and walk in his ways. Your temptations, indeed, are strong, and disadvantages great; but the greater will the mercy of your deliverance be: It will be no plea for you, at the judgment-seat, to say, Lord, my father or mother did so and so, before me, and I thought I might safely follow them; or thus, and thus, they commanded me, and I thought I was bound, by thy command, to obey them. Therefore look to your own souls, if they are so desperate as to cast away their own. If some children had not minded their own salvation more than their parents minded it, they had never been saved.

3. Let this consideration work upon the hearts, and bowels of all serious Christians, to pity, and help those that are like to perish under this temptation; and if their parents be so ignorant, that they cannot, or so negligent, that they do not instruct and warn their own children; you that at any time have an opportunity to help them, have compassion on them, and do it. It is true, they are none of your children by nature; but would it not be a singular honour, and comfort to you, if God should make them so by grace? Thousands of children (and, it may be some of you) are more indebted to mere strangers, upon this account, than to their nearest relations; you know not how much good an occasional word may do them: All have not ability to be so publicly useful this way, as a late worthy minister of our own nation hath been, who, in compassion to the dark and barbarous corners in Wales, where ignorance and poverty shut up the way of salvation to them, at a vast expence procured the translation, and printing of the bible in their own tongue, and freely sent it among them. O you that have the bowels of Christians in you, pity, and help them! What is it, for the saving of a precious soul, to drop a serious exhortation, as you have opportunity, unto them, to bestow a bible, or suitable book upon them? Believe it, these little sums of shillings, and pence, so bestowed, will stand for more, in the *audit-day*, than all the hundreds, and thousands, other ways expended.

*The second way to hell discovered.*

II. A second way to hell, in which multitudes are found hastening to their own damnation, is the way of affected ignorance, The generality of people, even in a land enlightened with the gospel, are found grossly ignorant of Christ, the true and only way to

heaven, and of repentance and faith, the only way to Christ; and thus the people perish for want of knowledge, Hos. iv. 6. If the tree of knowledge had been hedged in from the common people, as it is in Popish countries; and it had been criminal to find a bible in our houses, there might have been some cloak and pretence for our ignorance: But to be stupidly ignorant of the most obvious, plain and necessary truths, and yet bred up among bibles and ministers! O how ominous a darkness is this, foreboding the blackness of darkness for ever! For if the hiding of the gospel from the hearts of men be a token to them that they are lost souls, how much notional light soever they may have; much more must they be lost to all intents, from whose hearts and heads too it is judicially hidden. They that know not God are in the catalogue of the damned, 2 Thess. i. 8. and if this be life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent; then this must be death eternal to be grossly and affectedly ignorant both of God, the end, and Christ the way, by the rule of true opposition, John xvii. 3.

Look over the several countries in the professing world; go into the families of country farmers, day labourers, and poor people, and except here and there a family, or person, into whose heart God hath graciously shined; what barbarous, brutish ignorance overspreads them: They converse from morning to night with beasts, though they have souls which are fit companions for angels, and capable of sweet converse with God. The earth hath opened her mouth, and swallowed up all their time, strength, thoughts, and souls, as it did the bodies of Corah and his company. They know the value of a horse or cow, but know not the worth of Christ, pardon, or their own souls: They mind daily what work they have to do with their hands, but forget all they have to do upon their knees; their whole care is to pay their fine or rent to their landlord, but not a thought who shall pay their debts to God. They are so far from putting unnecessary business aside to make way for the service of God, that God's service is put aside as an unnecessary business, to make way for the world: The world holds them fast till they are asleep, and will be sure to visit them as soon as their eyes are open, that there may be no vacancy or door of opportunity left open for a thought of their souls, or another life, to slip in: Or, if at any time they think, or speak of these matters, then the world, like Pharaoh, when Israel spake of sacrificing, is sure to speak of more work.

And thus they live and die without knowledge; there is no key of knowledge (as it is fitly called, Luke xi. 52.) to open the door of the soul to Christ; he and his ministers, therefore, must stand without; pity they may, but help they cannot, till knowledge open

the door: Satan is ruler of the darkness of this world, Eph. vi. 12. that is, of all blind and ignorant souls. Ignorance is the chain with which he binds them fast to himself, and till that chain be knocked off by Divine illumination, they cannot be emancipated, and made free of Christ's kingdom; Acts xxvi. 18. "To turn them from "darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." Ignorance, indeed, incapacitates a man to commit the unpardonable sin; but what is he the nearer whilst it disposes him to all other sins which damn as well as that? By ignorance it is, that all the essays of the gospel for men's salvation are frustrated; that naked assent is put in the place of saving faith, morality mistaken for regeneration, a few dead duties laid in the room of Christ and his righteousness. Indeed it would fill a greater book than this is, to shew the mischievous effects of ignorance, and how many ways it destroys the precious souls of men: but seeing I can speak but little in this place to it, let me bar up this way to hell, if it be possible, by a few serious considerations.

*The second way to hell shut up.*

1. Let the ignorant consider, God hath created their souls with a capacity of knowing him and enjoying him as well as others that are famed in the world for knowledge and wisdom. *There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.* The faculty is in man, but the wisdom and knowledge that enlightens it from God; as the dial shews the hour of the day when the sun-beams fall upon it. If, therefore, God be sought unto in the use of such helps and means as you have, even the weakest and dullest soul hath a capacity of being made wise unto salvation. Psal. xix. 7. "The testimony of the Lord is sure, "making wise the simple."

Augustine tells us of a man so weak and simple, that he was commonly reputed a fool in all the neighbourhood; and yet saith, I believe the grace and fear of God was in him; for when he heard any swear, or take the name of God in vain, he would throw stones at them, and shew his indignation against sin by all the signs he could make.

2. You that are so grossly ignorant in the matter of your salvation, are many of you very knowing, prudent, and subtle persons in the affairs of the world. Luke xvi. 8. "The children of this "world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Had those parts which you have, been improved and heightened by study and observation about spirituals, as they have been about earthly things, you had never been so ignorant or dead-hearted as you are: You might have been as well versed in your bibles, as you

are in the almanacks you yearly buy and study. You might have understood the proper seasons of salvation as well as of husbandry. The great and necessary points on which your salvation depends, are not so many or so abstruse and intricate, but your plain and in-artificial heads might have understood them, and that with less pains than you have been at for your bodies: What though you cannot comprehend the subtilties of schoolmen, you may apprehend the essentials of Christianity. If you cannot strictly and scholastically define faith, what hinders, if your hearts were set upon Christ and salvation, but you may feel it? Which is more than many learned men do that can define and dispute about it. You cannot put an argument in mood and figure; no matter, if you can by comparing your bibles and hearts together, draw savingly and experimentally this conclusion; I am in Christ, and my sins are pardoned. You cannot determine whether faith goes before repentance, or repentance before faith; but for all that you might feel both the one and the other upon your own souls, which is infinitely better. It is not, therefore, your incapacity, but negligence and worldliness that is your ruin.

3. How many are there of your own rank, order, and education, all whose external advantages and helps you have, and all your incumbrances and discouragements they had, who yet have attained to an excellent degree of saving knowledge and heavenly wisdom? How often have I heard such spiritual, savoury, experimental truths, in conference and prayer from plain rustics, such spiritual reasonings about the great concerns of salvation, such judicious and satisfying resolutions of cases depending upon the sensible and experimental part of religion, as have humbled, convinced, and shamed me, and made me say *surgunt indocti*, &c. these are the men that will take heaven from the proud and scornful *ingeniosi* of the world; not many wise, not many learned and acute. Many knowing and learned heads are in hell, and many illiterate and weak ones gone to heaven; and others in the way thither who never had better education, stronger parts, or more leisure than yourselves: So that you are without excuse.

To conclude, Would you heartily seek it of God, and would the Spirit (which he hath promised to give them that ask him) become your teacher, how soon would the light of the saving knowledge of God in the face of Christ shine into your hearts! No matter how ignorant, dull, and weak the scholar be, if God once become the teacher. You are not able to purchase, or want time to read many books; but if once you were sanctified persons, the anointing you would receive from the Father would teach you all things, 1 John ii. 27. your own hearts would serve you for a commentary upon a

great part of the bible; it would make you of a quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: One drop of your knowledge would be more worth than all learned arts and sciences in the world to you. And is God so far from you, and his illuminating Spirit at such a distance, that there is no hope for you to find him? Is there never a private corner about your houses or barns, or in the fields, where you can turn aside, if it be but a quarter of an hour at a time, to pour out your souls to God, and beg the Spirit of him? Miserable wretch! Is thy whole life such a cumber and clutter of cares and puzzles about the world, that thou hast no leisure to mind God, soul, or eternity? O doleful state! the Lord in much mercy pity and awaken thee. Wilt thou not once strive and struggle to save thy soul? What, perish, as it were, by consent! How great then is that blindness!

*The third way to hell discovered.*

III. A vast multitude of precious souls are lost for ever by following the examples, and being carried away with the course of this world: It is indeed a poor excuse, a silly argument, That the multitude do as we do; yet, as \* Junius rightly observes, men's consciences take sanctuary here, and they think themselves safe in it: For thus they reason, *If I do as the generality do, I shall speed no worse than they speed: and certainly God is more merciful than to suffer the greatest part of mankind to perish.* They resolve to follow the beaten road †, let it lead whither it will.

Thus the Ephesians, in their unregenerate state, “walked according to the course of this world,” Eph. ii. 2. and the “Corinthians were carried away unto dumb idols, even as they were “led,” 1 Cor. xii. 2. just as a drop of water is carried and moved according to the course and current of the tide: For look as every drop of water in the sea is of one and the same common nature, so are all carnal and unsanctified persons; and as these waters being collected into one vast body in the ocean, unite their strength, and make a strong current, this way or that; so doth the whole collective body of the unregenerate world, all the particular drops move as the tide moveth. Hence they are said “to have received the “spirit of this world,” 1 Cor. ii. 12. one common spirit or principle acts and rules them all; and therefore they must needs be carried away in the same course. And there are two special considerations that seem to determine them by a kind of necessity to do

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\* What a poor mean defence have they who think themselves safe from the example of their superiors. *Jud. Paral. b. 2.*

† The example of the multitude is a very poor argument.

as the multitude do; the one is, that they find it the easiest and most commodious way to the flesh; here they meet with quietness and safety: hereby they are exempt from reproaches, losses, persecutions and distresses for conscience sake: Rest is sweet, and here only they think to find it. The other is, the prejudice of singularity, and manifold tribulations they see that little handful that walk counter to the course of the world involved in; this startles them from their company, and fixes them where they are. Against such sensible arguments, it is to no more purpose to oppose spiritual considerations, motives drawn from the safety of the soul, or importance of eternity, than it is for a man to turn the tide or course of a river with his weak breath.

Add to this, That as one sinner confirms and fixes another, wedging in each other, as men in a crowd \*, who must move as it moves; so they make it their business to render all that differ from them odious and ridiculous: So the apostle notes their practice and Satan's policy in it, 1 Pet. iv. 4. wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you, *ξενίζονται*; they gaze strangely at them. And that is not all; they not only gaze at them as a strange generation, making them signs and wonders in Israel, as the prophet speaks, but they defame, revile, and speak evil of them, representing them as a pack of hypocrites, as turbulent, factious, seditious persons, the very pests of the times and places they live in; and all this, not for doing any evil against them, but only for not doing evil with them, because *they run not with them into the same excess of riot*. Thus the world smiles upon its own, and derides those that are afraid to follow them to hell, by which it sweeps away the multitude with it in the same course.

*The third way to hell shut up.*

But O! if the Spirit of God would please to set on, and follow home the following considerations to your hearts, you would certainly resolve to take a persecuted path to heaven, though few accompany you therein, rather than swim like dead fishes with the stream into the dead sea of eternal misery.

1. Though you go with the consent and current of the world, yet you go against the express law and prohibition of God: He hath laid his command upon you, "not to be conformed to the world," Rom. xii. 2. "That you live not the rest of your time to the lusts of men, but to the will of God," 1 Pet. iv. 2.

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\* No man errs to his own hurt only, but spreads madness among his neighbours.  
*Seneca.*

“That you follow not a multitude to do evil,” Exod. xxiii. 2.  
 “That you go not in the way of evil men.” Prov. iv. 14. “That  
 “you have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.”  
 All these, and many more, are commands flowing from the highest  
 sovereign authority, obliging your consciences to obedience under  
 the greatest penalties; by them your state must be cast to all eter-  
 nity in the day of judgment: you may make a jest of the precept,  
 but see if you can do so of the penalty.

2. Other men, in all ages of the world, that were as much con-  
 cerned in the world as you, and valued their lives, libertiss, and es-  
 tates as well as you, have yet got out of the croud, disengaged  
 themselves from the way of the multitude, and taken a more soli-  
 tary and suffering path out of a due regard to the safety of their  
 souls: And why should not you love them as well, and care for  
 them as much as ever any that went before you did? Noah walked  
 with God all alone, when all flesh had corrupted their ways;  
 Elijah was zealous for the Lord, when he knew of none to stand by  
 him, but thought he had been left alone; Job was upright with  
 God in the land of Uz; Lot stood by himself, a godly non-confor-  
 mist, in a vile, debauched Sodom; David was a wonder to many;  
 so was Jeremiah, and those few with him, for signs and wonders  
 in Israel; I demand of your consciences what discouragements have  
 you that these men had not? Or what encouragements had they  
 that you have not? Why should not the salvation of your souls be  
 as precious in your eyes as theirs was in theirs? Shall you be im-  
 poverished and persecuted if you embrace the way of holiness? So  
 were they. Shall you be reproached, scorned, and reviled: So  
 were they. All your discouragements were theirs, and all their  
 motives and encouragements are yours.

3. Is not the way which you have chosen marked out by Christ  
 as the way to destruction? And that which you dare not chuse and  
 embrace as the way to life? See the marks he has given you of  
 both in that one text, Mat. vii. 13, 14. “Enter ye in at the strait  
 “gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to  
 “destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because  
 “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto  
 “life, and few there be that find it.” And where now is your  
 encouragement and hope that God will be more merciful than to  
 damn so great a part of the world? If you will do as the many do,  
 dream not of speeding as well as that little flock, separated by sanc-  
 tification from the multitude, shall speed. You have your choice,  
 to be damned with many, or saved with few; to take the broad,  
 smooth-beaten road to hell, or the difficult, suffering, self-denying  
 path to heaven. O then make a seasonable, necessary stand, and  
 pause a while; consider your ways, and turn your feet to God’s

testimonies: It is a great and special part of your salvation to save yourselves from this untoward generation.

*The fourth way of losing the soul opened.*

IV. Multitudes of souls are daily lost by rooted *habits*, and long-continued *custom* in sin. When men have been long settled in an evil way, they are difficultly reclaimed: *Physicians* find it hard to cure a *cachexy*, or ill habit of body; but it is far more difficult to cure an ill custom and habit in sin. Jer. xiii. 23. "Can the leopard change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil. The spots of a *leopard*, and the hue of an *Ethiopian*, are not by way of external, accidental adhesion; if so, washing would fetch them off: But they are innate and contempered, belonging to the constitution, and not to be altered; so are sinful habits and customs in the minds of sinners: By this means it becomes a second nature as it were, and strongly determines the mind to sin. *A teneris assuescere multum est*, It is a great matter to be accustomed to this way, or that, said Seneca; yea, *Caput rei est, hoc vel illo modo, hominem assuefieri*,—It is the very head or root of the matter to be so or so accustomed, saith Aristotle. Very much of the strength of sin rises from customary sinning. A brand that hath been once in the fire easily catches the second time. Every repeated act of sin lesseneth fear and strengtheneth inclination. A horse that took an ill stroke at first breaking, and hath continued many years in it, is very difficultly, if ever, to be brought to a better way. What men have been accustomed to from their childhood, they are tenacious of in their old age. Hence it is that so few are converted to Christ in their old age. It was recorded for a wonder, in the primitive times, that Marcus Caius Victorious became a Christian in his old age. Time and usage fix the roots of sin deep in the soul. Old trees will not bow as tender plants do. Hence all essays and attempts to draw men from the course in which they have walked from their youth, are frustraneous and unsuccessful. The drunkard, the adulterer, yea, the self-righteous moralist, are by long continued usage so fixed in their course, and all this while conscience so stupified by often repeated acts of sin, that it is naturally as impossible to remove a mountain, as a sinners will thus confirmed in his wickedness. However, let the trial be made, and the success left to him to whom no length of time nor difficulty must be objected or opposed.

*The fourth way to hell shut up by two considerations.*

1. Let it be considered, the longer any man hath been engaged

in, and accustomed to the way of sin, the more reason and need that man hath speedily and without delay to repent and reform his course; there is yet a possibility of mercy, a season of salvation left: How far soever a soul is gone on towards hell, none can say it is yet too late. When Mr. Bilney the martyr heard a minister preaching thus, *O thou old sinner thou hast gone on in a course of sin these fifty or sixty years; dost thou think that Christ will accept thee now, or take the devil's leavings?* Good God! said he, what preaching of Christ is here! Had such doctrine been preached to me in my troubles, it had been enough utterly to have discouraged me from repentance and faith. No, no, sinner, it is not yet too late, if at last thy heart be touched with a real sense of thy sin and danger. The word is plain, Isa. lv. 7. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

An abundant pardon thou needest; thy sins, by long-continued custom and frequent repetitions, have been abundantly aggravated; and an abundant pardon is with God for poor sinners: he will abundantly pardon, but then thou must come up to his terms: thou must not expect pardon or mercy when thy sins have forsaken thee, but upon thy forsaking them; yea, such a forsaking as includes a resolution or decree in thy will to return to them no more, Hos. iv. 8. There must be a change of thy way, and that not from profaneness to civility only, which is but to change one false way to heaven for another, or the dirty road to hell for a cleanlier path on the other side of the hedge; but a total and final forsaking of every way of sin, as to the love and habitual practice of it; yea, and thy thoughts too, as well as thy ways. There must be an internal, as well as an external change upon thee; yea, a positive, as well as a negative change; a turning to the Lord, as well as a turning from sin; and then how long soever thou hast walked in the road towards hell, there will be time enough, and mercy enough to secure thy returning soul safe to heaven.

2. Canst thou not forbear thy customary sin, upon lesser motives than the salvation of thy soul? And if thou canst, wilt thou not much more do it for the saving of thy precious, immortal soul? Suppose there were but a pecuniary mulct, of an hundred pounds, to be certainly levied upon thy estate, for every oath thou swearest, or every time thou art drunk, wouldst thou not rather choose reformation than beggary? And is not the loss of thy soul a penalty infinitely heavier than a little money? But, as the wise Heathen\*

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\* These things seem cheap to us, which cost very dear, and which we could not purchase, though we should give our house for them. *Sen. Ep. 42.*

observed, *Ea sola emi putamus, pro quibus pecuniam solvinus; ea gratuita vocamus pro quibus nos ipsos impendimus*: We reckon those things only to be bought, which we part with money for; and that we have those things gratis, for which we pay ourselves. Is nothing cheap in our eyes but ourselves, our souls! do we call that *gratis*, that will cost us so dear? Darius threw away his massy crown when he fled before Alexander, that it might not hinder him in his flight. Sure your souls are more worth than your money, and all the enjoyments you have in this world. It had been an ancient custom among the citizens of Antioch, to wash themselves in the baths; but the king forbidding it, they all presently forbore, for fear of his displeasure: whereupon Chrysostom convinced them of the vanity of that plea for customary sinning. “You see, (saith he), how soon fear can break off an old custom; and shall not the fear of God be as powerful to over-master it in us, as the fear of man \*?” O friends, believe it, it “is better for you to cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye, than having two hands, or eyes to be cast into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

*The fifth way of losing the soul opened.*

V. The fifth way, by which an innumerable multitude of souls are eternally lost, is by the baits of sensual, sinful pleasures.

Some customary sins have little, or no pleasure in them; as swearing, malice, &c. but others allure, and entice the soul by the sensual delight that is in them: this is the bait with which multitudes are enticed, ensnared, and ruined to all eternity. It is a true and grave observation of the philosopher †, “That we are impelled, as it were, to that which is evil, by the alluring blandishments of pleasure.” This was the first bait by which Satan caught the souls of our first parents in innocency, Gen. iii. 6. “The tree was pleasant to the eye.” Pleasure quickens the principles of sin in us, and enflames the desires of the heart after it. Every pleasant sin hath a world of customers, and, cost what it will, they resolve to have it. I have read of a certain fruit, which the Spaniards found in the Indies, which was exceeding pleasant to the taste; but nature had so fenced it, and double-guarded it with sharp and dangerous thorns, that it was very difficult to come at it: they tore their clothes, yea, their flesh, to get it; and therefore called the fruit, *Comfits in hell*. Such are all

\* Οὐαὶ οὐτι ἐν δα φοβος ευκολως λυεται συνηθεια, &c. Hom. 14.

† *Voluptatum blanditiis delinunt, ad ea gerenda omnia quæ prava sunt impellimur.* Arist. lib. 2. Eth. c. 5.

the pleasures of sin, *consists in hell*; damnation is the price of them, and yet the sensitive appetite is so outrageous and mad after them, that at the price of their souls, they will have them. Thus the wicked are described, Job xxi. 13. "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave:" That is, their whole stock of time is spent in cares and labours to get wealth, and when they have gotten it, the rest of their life is spent in those sensual pleasures that wealth brings in, or in making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it. The rich man, in the parable, fared deliciously every day, Luke xvi. where his voluptuous life is described, and in that description, the occasion of his damnation is insinuated. In a pampered and indulged body, is usually found a neglected and starved soul. But how shall the ruin of souls this way be prevented?

*The fifth way to hell shut up, by three considerations.*

1. Consider how the morality of Heathens had bridled their sensual lusts and appetites, and caused them with a generous disdain to reel those brutish pleasures, as things below a man. "What more foolish, what more base," saith Seneca \*, "than to patch up the good of a reasonable soul out of things unreasonable?" "That is the pleasure worthy of a man, not to glut his body, nor to irritate those lusts in whose quietness is our safety †." This is the constant doctrine of all the Stoicks.

O what a shame is it to hear Heathenism out-brave Christianity! and principles of mere morality enable men to live more soberly, temperately and abstemiously, than those who enjoy the greatest pattern and highest motives in the Christian religion are found to do? 'Thou embracest pleasure, saith the Heathen, but I bridle it; thou enjoyest it, I only use it; thou thinkest it thy chief good; I esteem it not so much as good; thou dost all for pleasure's sake, but I nothing at all on that account.' These therefore shall be your judges.

2. Always remember sensual pleasures are but the baits with which Satan angles for the precious soul: there is a fatal hook under them. O if men were but aware of this, they would never purchase pleasure at so dear a rate. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant; but he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depth of hell,"

\* *Quid stultius turpiusve quam bonum rationalis animi, ex irrationalibus neclere?* Sen. Ep. 92.

† *Illā est voluptas, et homine et viro digna, non implere corpus, et sagiuarē, nec cupiditas irritare, quarum tutissima est quies.* De Benef. lib. 7. c. 11.

PROV. ix. 17, 18. Pliny tells us that the mermaids have most enchanting, charming voices, and frequent pleasant, green meadows, but heaps of dead men's bones are always found where they haunt. That which tickles the fancy stabs the soul. If the pain, (as Anacreon well observes) were before the pleasure, no man would be tempted by it; but the pleasure being first, and sensible, and the torment coming after, and, as yet invisible, this allures so many to destruction. "At last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder," Prov. xxiii. 32. If sin did sting and bite at first, none would touch it; but it tickles at first, and wounds afterward. O what man that is in his wits would purchase eternal torments for the sensual, brutish pleasures of a moment! \* The pleasures of sin bewitch the affections, blind the judgment, stupify the heart, so that sober and impartial judgment finds no place. The heart is enticed, the lusts are enraged; cost what it will, sinners will gratify their lusts.

3. If you are for pleasure, certainly you are out of the way to it, who seek it in the fulfilling of your lusts. If your hearts were once sanctified and brought under the government of the Spirit, you would quickly find a far more excellent pleasure in the crucifying of your lusts, than now you seek in the gratification and fulfilling of them. Rom. viii. 13. "If ye, through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;" i. e. ye shall live the most joyful, peaceful, and comfortable life of all persons in the world, a life of highest delight and true pleasure; for so far as your lusts are mortified, the vigorous, healthful frame, and due temper of your soul is restored, and your evidences for heaven cleared; both which are the springs of all spiritual delight and pleasure. Can any creature-enjoyment, or any beastly lust afford a pleasure like this? Do not you find the life you live in sinful pleasures quite beneath the dignity of a man? and are they not followed with bitter after-reckonings, gripes and flashes of conscience: *Even in the midst of laughter the heart is sad, and the end of that mirth is heaviness*: O ponder seriously what a trifle it is you sell your precious souls for! Is it not a goodly price you value them at? the fugitive, empty, beastly pleasures of a moment, for the torments of eternity.

*The sixth way of losing the soul opened.*

VI. There are also innumerable souls lost for ever by the dis-

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\* *Breve est quod delectat, æternum quod cruciat*; i. The pleasure is short-lived, but the torment is perpetual.

tracting cares of this world which eat up" all their time, thoughts, and studies; so that there is no room for Christ, or one serious hour about salvation. It is too true an observation which Sir Walter Raleigh makes upon the common mechanics and poor labourers, their bodies are the anvils of pain, and their souls the hives of unnumbered cares and sorrows, whilst the voluptuous and rich spend their time and studies in purveying for new pleasures, and filling their heads with projects of that nature. The poorer sort have their heads and hearts filled day and night with anxious thoughts and cares how to get bread, pay their rents or debts, and struggle through the miserable necessities that pinch them on every side; many children, it may be, to provide for, and little or nothing out of which to make it: here is brick that must be made, and no straw to make it of; he borrows here to pay there: debts increase, and abilities decrease; he toils his body all the day, and when his tired carcass calls for rest to enable him for new work to-morrow; the cares of the world invade him on his bed, and keep him sighing or musing there, when, poor man! he had load enough before for one.

And now, what room is there left for salvation work? or how can any spiritual seed that is cast into such a brake of thorns prosper? "The cares of this life, (saith Christ) spring up, and choak "it," Mark iv. 19. Tell not them of heaven and Christ, they must have bread; talk not to them of the necessity or comfort of a pardon, they must pay their debts to men. O the confused buz and clutter that these thoughts and cares make in their heads! So that no other voice can be heard. And thus multitudes spend their whole lives in a miserable servitude in this world, and by that are cast upon a more miserable and restless state for ever in the world to come; one hell here, and another hereafter. And what shall be done for them? Is there no way for their deliverance? O that God would direct, and bless the following considerations to them, if it may be expected they may at any time get through the brake in which they are involved, and find them at leisure to bethink themselves!

*The sixth way to hell shut up, by five considerations.*

1. Bethink thyself, poor soul! as much as thou art involved and plunged in the necessities and distracting cares of this life; others, many others, as poor and necessitous, and every way as much embroiled in the cares of the world as you are, have minded their souls, and taken all care and pains for their salvation, notwithstanding: yea, though millions of your rank and order are destroyed by the snares of the devil, yet God hath a very great number, indeed the greatest of any rank of men among those that are

low, poor, and necessitous in the world. The church is called the "congregation of the poor," Psal. lxxiv. 20. because it consisteth mostly of men and women of the lowest and most despicable condition in this world; they are all poor in spirit, and most of them poor in purse. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, (saith James) hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?" James ii. 5.

Now, if others, many others, as much entangled in the necessities, cares, and troubles of the world as you, have yet struggled through all those difficulties and discouragements to heaven; why should you not strive for Christ and salvation as well as they? your souls are as valuable as theirs, and their discouragements and hinderances as great and as many as yours.

2. Consider your poor and necessitous condition in the world, hath something in it of motive and advantage to excite and quicken you to a greater diligence for salvation than is found in a more full, easy, and prosperous state; for God hath hereby imbittered this world to you, and made you drink deeper of the troubles of it than other men: they have the honey, and you the gall; they have the flower, and you the bran; but then, as you have not the pleasures, so you have not the snares of a prosperous condition; and your daily troubles, cares, and labours in it do even prompt you to seek rest in heaven, which you cannot find on earth. Can you think you were made for a worse condition than the beasts? What, to have two hells, one here, and another hereafter? Surely, as low, miserable, and despicable as you are, you are capable of as much happiness as any of the nobles of the world; and, in your low and afflicted condition, stand nearer to the door of hope than they do. Ah! methinks these thoughts do even put themselves upon you, when your spirits are overloaded with the cares, and your bodies tired with the labours of this life. Is this the life of troubles I must expect on earth? Hath God denied me the pleasures of this world? O then let it be my care, my study, my business to make sure of Christ, to win heaven, that I may not be miserable in both worlds. How can you avoid such thoughts, or put by such meditations which your very station and condition even forceth upon you?

3. Consider how all the troubles in this world would be sweetened, and all your burdens lightened, if once your souls were in Christ, and in covenant with God. O what heart's ease would faith give you! what sweet relief would you find in prayer! These things, like the opening of a vein, or tumour when ripe, would suddenly cool, relieve, and ease your spirits; could you but go to God as a Father, and pour out your hearts before him, and cast all your cares and burdens, wants and sorrows upon him; you

would find a speedy out-let to your troubles, and an inlet to all peace, all comforts, and all refreshments; such as all the riches, honours, and fulness of this world cannot give: you would then find Providence engage itself for your supply, and issue all your troubles to your advantage; you would suck the breasts of those promises in the margin \*, and say, all the dainties in the world cannot make you such another feast; you would then see your bread, your clothes, and all provisions for you and yours, in God's promises, when you are brought to an exigence, and would certainly find performances as well as promises, all along the course of your life.

4. Say not you have no time to mind another world: God hath not put any of you under such an unhappy necessity; you have one whole day every week, allowed you by God and man, for your souls; you have some spare time every day, which you know you spend worse than in heavenly thoughts and exercises; yea, most callings are such as will admit of spiritual exercises of thoughts, even when your hands are exercised in the affairs of this life: besides, there are none of you but have, and must have daily some relaxations and rest from business; and if your hearts were spiritual, and set upon heaven, you would find more time than you think on, without prejudice to your callings, yea, to the great furtherance of them, to spend with God. I can tell you when and where I have found poor servants hard at work for salvation, labouring for Christ, some in the fields, others in barns and stables, where they could find any privacy to pour out their souls to God in prayer. As lovers will make hard shifts to converse together, so will the soul that is devoted to God, and in earnest for heaven; and though your opportunities be not so large, they may be as sweet, as successful, and to be sure sincere, as those whose condition affords them more time, and greater external conveniencies than you enjoy: more business is sometimes dispatched in a quarter of an hour in prayer, yea, let me say in a few hearty ejaculations of soul to God, in a few minutes, than in many long and elaborate duties. If thou cast in thy two mites of time into the treasury of prayer, having no more, thou mayest, as Christ said of the poor widow, *give more than those that cast in of their great abundance of time and talents.*

5. Lastly, Consider, Jesus Christ is no respecter of persons, the poorest and vilest on earth, are as welcome to him as the greatest. He chose a poor and mean condition in this world himself, conversed mostly among the poor, never refused any because of his poverty: "God accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regard-

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\* Heb. xiii. 5. Isa. xli. 17. Psal. xxxiv. 9, 10. Psal. xci. 15. Rom. viii. 28.

“eth the rich more than the poor: for they are all the work of “his hands,” Job xxxiv. 19. and that both in respect of their natural constitution, as men, and their civil conditions, as rich or poor men. Riches and poverty make a great difference in the respects of men, but none at all with God. If thou be one of God’s poor, he will accept, love, and honour thee above the greatest (if graceless) person in the world. Poverty is no bar to Christ or heaven, though it be to the respects of men, and the pleasures of this life. Away, then, with all vain pretences against a life of godliness, from the meanness of your outward condition; heaven was not made for the rich, and hell only for the poor: No; how hard soever you find the way thither, I am sure Christ saith, *It is hard for a rich man to enter into that kingdom.*

*The seventh way of losing the soul discovered.*

VII. The seventh beaten path to destruction, is by groundless presumption; *præsумendo sperant, et sperando pereunt*, by presumption they have hope, and by that hope they perish.

There are divers objects of presumption, amongst which, these three are most usual and most fatal, viz. that they have,

1. That grace which they have not.
2. That mercy in God they will not find.
3. That time before them which will fail them.

1. Many presume they have that grace in them, which God knoweth they have not: So did Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. “Thou sayest, I am rich, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, poor, blind, and naked.” Here is a dangerous conspiracy betwixt a cunning devil, and an ignorant, proud heart, to ruin the soul for ever; they stamp their common grace for special; they put the old creature, by a general profession, into the new creature’s habit, and lay a confident claim to all the privileges of the children of God.

2. They presume upon such mercy in God, as they will never find; they expect pardoning and saving mercy, out of Christ, in an unregenerate state, when there is not one drop of mercy dispensed in any other way. The whole œconomy of grace is managed by the Mediator, Jude, ver. 21. all saving mercies come through him, upon all that are in him, and upon no others. God is, indeed, a merciful God, and yet presumptuous sinners will find judgment without mercy, because they are not found in the proper way and method of mercy. Thousands, and ten thousands carve out and dispose of the mercy of God at their own pleasure, write their own pardons, in what terms they think fit, and

if they had God's seal to confirm and ratify them, it were all well ; but, alas ! it is but a night-vision, a dream of their own brain.

3. But especially, men presume upon time enough for repentance hereafter : they question not but there are as fit, and as fair opportunities of salvation to come, as are already past ; and in this snare of the devil, thousands are taken in the very prime and vigour of their youth : that age is voluptuous, and loves not to be interrupted with severe and serious thoughts and courses ; and here is a salvo fitted exactly to suit their inclination, and quiet them in their way, that they may pursue their lusts without interruption.

I cannot follow the sin of presumption at present, in all these its courses and ways ; and therefore will apply myself to the case last mentioned, which is so common to the world.

*The seventh way to destruction shut up by five weighty considerations.*

1. I would beg all those young, voluptuous sinners, whose feet are fast held in the snare of this temptation, seriously to bethink themselves, whether they are not old enough to be damned, whilst they judge themselves too young to be seriously godly. There are multitudes in hell of your age and size ; you may find graves in the church-yard, of your own length, and skulls of your own size : men will not spare a nest of young snakes because they are little. If you die christless and unregenerate, it is the same thing, whether you be old or young ; there is abundance of young spray, as well as old logs, burning in the flames of hell.

2. If you knew the weight and difficulty of salvation work, you would never think you could begin too soon. Religion is a business which will take up all your time ; many have repented they began so late, none that they began so soon \*. Say not, *the penitent thief found mercy at the last hour*, for his conversion was extraordinary, and we must not hope for miracles : besides, he could never encourage himself in sin, with the hope and expectation of such a miraculous conversion ; he was the only example of a sinner that was ever so recovered, in scripture, and this was recorded, not to nourish presumption, but to prevent despair. If ten thousand persons died of the plague, and one only of the whole number infected with it escaped, it is no great encouragement that you shall make the second. O think, and think again, how many thousands now on earth, have been labouring and striving, forty or fifty years together, *to make their calling and election sure* : and yet, to this day, it is not so sure as they would have it : they are afraid,

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\* I repent, O Lord, that I loved thee too late. *Aug.*

after all, time will fail them for finishing, and you think it is too early for beginning so great a work.

3. Others have begun sooner than you, and finished the great and main work, before you have done any thing. Abijah was very young, scarce out of his childhood, "when the grace of God was found in him," 1 Kings xiv. 13. The fear of God was in Obadiah, when but a youth, 1 Kings xviii. 12. Timothy was not only "a Christian, but a preacher of the gospel, "in the morning of his life," 2 Tim. iii. 15. What have you to plead for yourselves, which they had not? Or what arguments and motives to godliness had they which you have not? You shall be judged *per pares*, by those of your own age and size; their seriousness shall condemn your vanity.

4. The morning of your life is the flower of your time, the freshest and fittest of all your life for your great work; now your hearts are tender and impressive, your affections flowing and tractable, your heads clear of distracting cares and hurries of business, which come on afterwards in thick successions: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, whilst the evil days come not," Eccl. xii. 1, 2. If a man has an important business to do, he will take the morning for it, knowing if that be slipped, a croud and hurry of business will come on afterwards, to distract and hinder him. I presume, if all the converts in the world were examined in this point, it would be found, that at least ten to one were wrought upon in their youth; that is the moulding age.

5. And if this proper, hopeful season be elapsed, it is very unlikely that ever you be wrought upon afterwards: how thin and rare, in the world, are the instances and examples of conversion in old age! Long-continued customs in sin harden the heart, fix the will, and root the habits of vice so deep in the soul, that there is no altering of them; your ears then are so accustomed to the sounds of the world, that *Christ* and *sin*, *heaven* and *hell*, *soul* and *eternity*, have lost their awful sound and efficacy with you. But it is a question only to be decided by the event, Whether ever you shall attain to the years of your fathers? It is not the sprightly vigour of your youth that can secure you from death. What a madness, then, is it, to put your souls and eternal happiness, upon such a blind adventure? What if your presumption, of so many fair and proper opportunities hereafter, fail you, as it hath failed millions, who had as rational and hopeful a prospect of them as you can have: where are you then? And if you should have more time and means, than you do presume upon, are you sure your hearts will be as flexible and impressive as they now are? O beware of this sin of vain presumption, to which the generality of the damned owe their everlasting ruin!

*The eighth way of losing the soul opened.*

VIII. The eighth way of ruining the precious soul, is, by drinking in the principles of Atheism, and living without God in the world.

Atheism stabs the soul to death at one stroke, and puts it quite out of the way of salvation; other sinners are worse than beasts, but Atheists are worse than devils, for they believe, and tremble; these banish God out of their thoughts, and, what they can, out of the world, living as *without God in the world*, Eph. ii. 12. It is a sin that quencheth all religion in the soul. He that knows not his landlord cannot pay his rent: he that assents not to the being of a God, destroys the foundation of all religious worship; he cannot fear, love, or obey him, whose being he believes not: this sin strikes at the life of God, and destroys the life of the soul.

Some are Atheists in opinion, but multitudes are so in practice; "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," Psal. xiv. 1. though he hath engraven his name upon every creature, and written it upon the table of their own hearts; yet they will not read it: or if they have a slight, fluctuating notion, or a secret suspicion of a Deity, yet they neither acknowledge his presence, nor his providence. *Fingunt Deum talem qui nec videt, nec punit*, i. e. They make such a God, who neither sees nor punishes. They say, "How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark clouds? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not," Job xxii. 14.

Others profess to believe his being, but their lives daily give their lips the lie; for they give no evidence in practice, of their fear, love or dependence on him: If they believe his being, they plainly shew they value not his favour, delight not in his presence, love not his ways, or people; but lie down and rise, eat and drink, live and die without the worship, or acknowledgment of him, except so much as the law of the country, or custom of the place extorts from them. These dregs of time produce abundance of Atheists, of both sorts; many ridicule and hiss religion out of all companies into which they come, and others live down all sense of religion; they customarily attend, indeed, on the external duties of it, hear the word; but when the greatest, and most important duties are urged upon them, their inward thought is, This is the preacher's calling, and the man must say something to fill up his hour, and get his living. If they dare not put their thoughts into words, and call the gospel *Fabula Christi*, the fable of Christ, as a wicked Pope once did; or say of hell, and the dreadful sufferings of the damned, as Galderinus the Jesuit did, *Tunc credam cum illuc venero*; I will believe it when I see it: yet their hearts and

lives, are of the same complexion with these men's words : they do not heartily assent to the truth of the gospel which they hear, and though bare assent would not save them, yet their assent, or non-assent, will certainly damn them, except the Lord heal their understandings and hearts, by the light and life of religion. To this last sort I shall offer a few things.

*The eighth way to hell shut up by six weighty considerations.*

1. You that attend upon the ordinances, but believe them no more than so many devised fables, nor heartily assent to the truth of what you hear ; know assuredly, that the word shall never do your souls good, it can never come to your hearts and affections in its regenerating and sanctifying efficacy, whilst it is stopt and obstructed in your understandings in the acts of assent. And thus you may sit down under the best ordinances all your lives, and be no more the better for them, than the rocks are for the showers of rain that fall upon them ; Heb. iv. 2. " The word preached " did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that " heard it." This is Satan's chief strength and fatness, wherein he trusteth ; he fears no argument, whilst he can maintain his post : the devil hath no surer prisoner than the Atheist ; there is no escaping out of his possession and power, whilst this bolt of unbelief is shut home in the mind or understanding. An unbelieved truth never converted or saved one soul from the beginning of the world, nor never shall to the end of it. Those bodies that have the *Boulema*, or dog-appetite, whatever they eat, it affords them no nourishment or satisfaction, they thrive not with the best fare : just so it is with your souls, no duties, no ordinances can possibly do them good ; as in argumentation, no conclusion, be it never so regularly drawn, and strongly inferred, is of any force to him that denies principles.

2. If you assent not to the truth of the gospel, you not only make God speak to your souls in vain, which is fatal to them : but you also make God a liar, which is the greatest affront a creature can put upon his Maker ; 1 John v. 10. " He that believeth not " God, hath made him a liar." Vile dust, darest thou rise up against the God that made thee, and give him the lie ? An affront which thy fellow creature cannot put up, or bear at thy hands. Darest thou at once stab his honour, and thy own soul ? Are not the things that thou lookest on as *romances* and golden dreams, mere artifice, neatly contrived to cheat and awe the world ? Are they not all built upon the veracity of God, which is the firmest foundation and greatest security in the world ? Hath he not intermingled,

for our satisfaction, not only frequent assertions, but his asseverations and oath to put all beyond doubt? and yet dare any of you lift up your ignorant, blind understandings against all this, and give him the lie? Surely the wrath of God shall smoke against every soul of man that doth so, and his own bitter, lamentable, doleful experience shall be his conviction shortly, except he repent.

3. Dare any of you give the thoughts of your hearts as certain conclusions under your hands, and stand by them to the last, and venture all upon them.

Wretched Atheist! bethink thyself, pause a while, examine thine own breast; whatever thy vile atheistical thoughts sometimes are, is there not at other times a fear of the contrary? A jealousy that all these things which thou deridest and sportedst thy wicked fancy with, may, and will prove true at last? When thou readest or hearest that text, John iii. 18. "He that believeth not is condemned already;" his mittimus is already made for hell: doth not thy conscience give thee a secret gird, like a stitch in thy side? Dare you venture all upon this issue, that if those things you find in the word be true, you will stand to the hazard of them? If that be a truth, Mark xvi. 16. "He that believeth not shall be damned," you will be content to be damned? Or if, Rom. viii. 13. be a truth, That "they who live after the flesh shall die," you will run the hazard, and bear the penalty of eternal death? If Heb. xii. 14. prove true, That "without holiness no man shall see God," you will be content to be banished from his presence for evermore? Speak your hearts in this matter, and tell us, do not you live betwixt atheistical surmises, that all these are but cunning artifices, and fears, that at last they will prove the greatest verities.

4. Hath not God given you all the satisfaction you can reasonably desire of the undoubted truth and certainty of his word? What would you have which you have not already? Would you have a voice from heaven? the scriptures you read or hear are a more sure word than such a voice would be, 1 Pet. i. 19. Or would you have a messenger from hell? He that believeth not the written word, neither would believe "if one should rise from the dead," Luke xvi. 31. View the innate characters of the scripture, is it not altogether pure and holy, full of Divine wisdom and awful majesty, and in every respect such as evidenceth its author to be the wise, holy, and just God, who searcheth the hearts and reins? Look upon the seals and confirmations of it: hath not God confirmed it by divers miracles from heaven, a seal which neither men nor devils could counterfeit? And do not you see the blessing and power of God accompanying it in the conversion and wonderful change of men's hearts and lives, which can be done by no

other hand than God's? Say not, the miracles, which confirm the gospel, are but uncertain traditions, and except you yourselves see them wrought, you cannot believe them. There are a thousand things which you do believe, though you never saw them; and what you require for your satisfaction, every man may require the same for his; and so Christ must live again in all parts of this world, and repeat his miracles over and over in all ages to satisfy the unreasonable incredulity of those that question their truth, after the fullest confirmation and seal hath been given, that is capable to be given, or the heart of man can desire should be given; and if all this should be done, you might be as far from believing as now you are; for many of those that saw and heard the things wrought by Christ contradicted and blasphemed, and so might you.

5. Satan, who undermines your assent to these things, is forced to give his own: he that tempts you to look on them as fables, himself knows and is convinced that they are realities; "The devils also believe and tremble," James ii. 19. they know and feel the truth of these things, though it be their great design and interest to shake your assent to them: they know Christ is the Son of God, and that there will be a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and that there are torments prepared for themselves, and all whom they seduce from God, Matth. viii. 29. If you ungod God, you must unman yourselves: yea, not only make yourselves less than men, but worse than devils.

6. In a word, let thy own heart, O Atheist, be judge, whether these be real doubts still sticking in your minds, after you have done all that becomes men to do for satisfaction in such important cases. Or whether they be not such principles as you willingly foment and nourish in your hearts as a protection to your sensual lusts, whose pleasures you would fain have without interruptions and overawings by the fears of a judgment to come, and a righteous retribution from a just and terrible God! Examine your hearts in that point, and you will soon find the cheat to be in that I here point you to: you have not studied the word impartially, nor brought your doubts and scruples with an humble, unbiassed, teachable spirit to those that are wise and able to resolve them, much less prayed for the Spirit of illumination; but willingly entertained whatever atheistical wits invent, or the devil suggests, as a defensive against the checks of conscience and fears of hell in the way of sin. You are loth those things should be true which the scriptures speak, and are glad of any colourable argument or pretence to still your own consciences. Is not this the case? The Lord stop your desperate course; your paths lead to hell.

*The ninth way of losing the precious soul opened.*

IX. Precious souls are daily plunged into the gulf of perdition by *profaneness* and *debauchery*. How many every where lie wallowing in the puddle? glorying in their shame, and running into all excess of riot? The hypocrite steals to hell in a private, close way of concealed sin; but the profane gallop along the public road at noon day; "They declare their sin as Sodom, and hide it not;" Isa. iii. 9. "The shew of their countenance testifieth against them." The hypocrite hath devotion in his countenance, and heaven in his mouth; you know not by his words and countenance whither he is going; but the profane hide it not, they are past shame, and above blushing at the most horrid impieties. Look, as God hath some servants more eminent, forward, and courageous in the ways of godliness than others, men that will not hide their principles, or be ashamed of the ways of godliness in the face of danger; so the devil hath some servants as eminent for wickedness who scorn to sneak to hell by concealment of their wickedness, but avow and own it, without fear or shame, in the open sight of heaven and earth. Wherever they come, they defile the air they breathe in with horrid blasphemies and obscene discourses not to be named, and leave a strong scent of hell behind them.

This age hath brought forth multitudes of these monsters, the reproach and shame of the nation that bred them. I have little hope to stop any of them in their career and full speed to hell. They have lost the *sense of sin*, the restraints of *shame* and *fear*; and then what is left to check them in their course? I cannot hope that such a discourse as this shall ever come into their hands, except it be to sacrifice it to the flames; yet not knowing the ways of providence, which are unsearchable, and what use God may make upon one occasion or another of these following considerations, I will adventure to drop a few words upon these forlorn sinners, as far as they seem to be gone beyond recovery; beseeching the Lord to make way for these things to their hands and hearts, and make them the instruments of pulling some of them as brands out of the burning.

*The ninth way to hell, by profaneness, stopt.*

1. And first, let it be laid to heart, that though the case and state of many thousand souls be doubtful and uncertain, so that neither themselves nor any other know what they are, or to whom they belong! yet thy condition, O profane sinner, is without controversy, miserable and forlorn; all men know whose you are, and

whither you are going. The apostle appeals, in this case, to the bar of every man's reason and conscience, as a thing allowed and yielded by all, Eph. v. 5. "For this ye know, (saith he) that no whoremonger, or unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." This is a clear case, there is no controversy about it. Many there be in a doubtful case, but no doubt of these, they are fast and sure in the power of Satan: and as sure as God is a God of truth, they that die in this condition shall never see his face. And to the same purpose again, 1 Cor. vi. 9. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." *Know ye not?* saith he, q. d. "Sure you cannot be so ignorant and blind to think that there is any room in heaven for such wretches as these. If the righteous be scarcely saved, where shall the sinner and ungodly appear? If all strictness, holiness, self-denial, diligence, be all little enough to win heaven, what hope can there be of those that not only cast off all duties of religion, but also cast themselves into all the opposite ways and courses which directly lead to damnation?" He that refuseth his food endangers his life; but he that drinks poison, certainly and speedily destroys it.

2. As far as you are gone in a course of profaneness, you are not yet gone beyond the reach of mercy and all hopes of salvation, if now at last, after all your debaucheries and profaneness, the Lord touch your hearts with the sense of your sinful and miserable state, and turn your feet to his testimonies. When the apostle, in 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. had told us the doom of such men, upon the supposition of their perseverance in that course, yet presently adds, as a motive to their repentance, an example of mercy upon such wretches as these, "And such were some of you, but ye are washed," ver. 11. The golden sceptre of free grace hath been held forth to many, as profane and notorious sinners as you, to blaspheming Saul, to a Mary Magdalen, to a Manasseh. It is not the greatness of the sin, but the impenitence and infidelity of the sinner that ruins him. Well, then, there is a certainty of damnation if you go on, and yet a possibility of forgiveness and mercy before you; a mercy invaluable.

3. Nay, this is not all; but in some respect there is more probability and hope of your return and repentance, than there is of many others who have led a more sober, smooth, and civil life than you have done. Your profaneness hath more dishonoured

God, but the morality and civility of some men secure them faster in the snare of the devil: They have many things in themselves to build up their presumptuous hopes upon, but you have nothing. It is hard for conviction to reach that man's conscience that hath righteousness of his own to trust in; but methinks it should have an easier access to yours, whose notorious courses lay your consciences naked and bare before the word to be wounded by it. Christ's ministry had little success among the Pharisees, who were righteous in their own eyes, but it wrought effectually upon *Publicans* and *Sinners*. Hence Christ told them, Matth. xxi. 31. that "Publicans and Harlots go into the kingdom of God before them." Publicans were esteemed the worst of men, and Harlots the worst of women; yet the one, and the other, as vile as they were, stood fairer for conviction, and consequently for salvation, than those that thought they needed *no repentance*. All this is matter of hope, and runs into a powerful motive and loud call to repentance. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear."

*The tenth way leading to destruction marked.*

X. Deep and fixed prejudices against godliness, and the sincere professors thereof, precipitate thousands of souls into their own ruin and damnation.

It was not without a weighty reason, that Christ denounced that wo upon the world, Matth. xviii. 7. "Wo unto the world, because of offences." The poor world will be ruined by scandals and prejudices; they will take such offences at the ways of godliness, that they will never have good thoughts of them any more. "This sect is every where spoken against," Acts xxviii. 22. and so Christians are condemned, *δια την φημην*, because of the common reproach, as Justin Martyr complained. All the scandals which fall out in the church, are so many swords and daggers put into the hands of the wicked world to murder their own souls withal. Some have sucked in such opinions of the ways of godliness as make them irreconcilable enemies to them, and fierce opposers of them. And from hence are most of the persecutions that befall the people of God. When you see showers of slanders and reproaches going before, expect storms of persecutions coming after. Slanders beget prejudices, and these prepare for persecutions. O how keen and fierce are the minds of many against the upright and innocent servants of God, whom they have first represented to themselves in such an odious dress and character, as the devil hath drawn them in, upon their fancies and imaginations! So the primitive Christians were represented to the Heathens as monsters, and their conventions in the night, occasioned by the fury of persecutors,

were reported to be for lascivious and barbarous ends, to deflower virgins, and murder innocent children: And by this artifice the Heathens were secured against conversion to Christ. This hath been the policy of hell from the beginning, and it hath prospered so much in the world, that Satan hath no reason to change his hand. But how may this plot of hell be defeated, and the ruin of souls prevented?

*The tenth way of destroying souls shut up by two counsels.*

1. It will be impossible to prevent the ruin of a great part of the world by prejudices against the ways of godliness, except those who profess them, walk more holily and conformably to the rule and pattern of Christ, whose name is called upon by them. I shall therefore first address my discourse to the professors of religion, beseeching them, in the bowels of Christ, to take pity upon the multitude of souls which are daily ruined and destroyed by their scandals and miscarriages. Did you live according to the rules you profess, "your well-doing would put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," 1 Pet. ii. 15. and consequently the ruin of many might be prevented. I remember \* Bernard, speaking of the lewd and loose life of the priests of his time, sighs out this just and bitter complaint to God about it; *Misera eorum conversatio plebis tue miserabilis subversio est*: O Lord! said he, their miserable conversation is the miserable subversion of thy people. O! of how many, who glory in the title of the sons of the church, may Christ say as Jacob did of his two lewd sons, Simon and Levi, "You have troubled me, to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land," Gen. xxxiv. 30.

And how many professors, who pretend to more than ordinary reformation and holiness, do shed soul-blood by their scandalous conversations. † Salvian brings in the wicked of his age upbraiding the looseness of Christians, in this manner; "Behold, those men who boast themselves redeemed from the tyranny of Satan, and profess themselves dead to the world, yet are conquered by the lusts of it." And ‡ Cyprian, long before his day, brings in the Heathens thus insulting over looser Christians: "Where is that catholic law which they believe? Where are the examples of piety and chastity, which they should learn? They read the gospel, yet are immodest; they hear the apostles, yet are

\* Bern. in *Convers. Pauli*, Ser. 1.

† *Ecce qui jactant se redemptos a tyrannide Satanæ, qui prædicant se mortuos mundo, nihilominus a cupiditatibus suis vincuntur.* Salvian.

‡ *Ubi est catholica lex quam credunt? Ubi pietatis et castitatis exempla quæ discunt? Evangelia legunt, et impudici sunt; Apostolos audiunt, et inebriantur.* Cyp.

“drunk.” O professors! where are your bowels to the poor souls of sinners? If your neighbour’s ox or ass fall into the pit, you are bound to deliver him, if you can; and will you not do as much for a precious soul, as you would do for a beast? Nay, you dig pits, by your scandalous lives, to destroy them. If you sin, there are instruments enough to spread it, and multitudes of souls ready prepared to take the infection. Say not, if they do, the fault is theirs; for though they are principals in the murder of their own souls, by taking the scandal, yet you are accessories in giving it: He is a mad man that will kill himself with a sword, and he no better that will put it into his hand.

O, therefore, if you have any regard to the precious souls of men, live up to the rules of your profession! O, be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a perverse and froward generation! let the heavenliness of your conversation stop those mouths that accuse you as men of a worldly spirit; let them see, by your moderation in seeking it, your patience in losing it, your readiness in distributing it, that it is a groundless calumny under which your names suffer. Let them see, by your apparel, company, and discourses, you are not such proud, lofty spirits, as you are represented to be. Convince them, by your flexibleness to all things that are lawful and expedient, by manifesting, as much as in you lieth, that it is the pure bond and tie of conscience, which keeps you from compliance in all other things, and by your meekness in suffering, for such non-compliance, that you are not such turbulent, factious incendiaries, as the wicked world slanderously reports you to be. Convince the world by your exact righteousness in all your civil dealings, and by the lip of truth in all your promises and engagements, that you have the fear of God in your hearts, as well as the livery of Christianity upon your backs. In a word, so live, that none may have just ground to believe the impudent slanders the devil raises in the world against you. Let your light so shine before men, that you may glorify your Father which is in heaven. Without your care and circumspection, the shedding of a world of precious soul-blood can never be prevented.

2. Let me advise and beseech all men to be so just to others, and merciful to their own souls, as not to cast them away for ever, by receiving prejudices against godliness, from the miscarriages of some, who make more than a common profession of it. To prevent this fatal effect of scandal and prejudice at religion, I desire a few particulars may be impartially weighed.

*First*, Very many of those scandals, bandied up and down the world against the professors of godliness, are devised and forged in hell, as so many traps and snares to catch and destroy men’s souls, to beget an irreconcilable aversion and enmity in men to the ways

of God. "They devise deceitful matters (saith the Psalmist) against them that are quiet in the land," Psal. xxxv. 20. So Jer. xviii. 18. "Come, say they, let us devise devices against Jeremiah, and smite him with the tongue." And there is as little equity in the credulous receiver, as there is honesty in the wicked forger of these slanders: with one arrow of censure you wound no less than three, viz. the honour of God, your innocent brother, and your own souls: As to the two former wounds, they will in due time be healed; God will vindicate his own name fully, and the reputation of his innocent servants shall be cleared, and repaired abundantly; but, in the mean time, your souls may perish by the wounds prejudices have given, so that you may never be reconciled to godliness and its professors whilst you live, but turn scoffers and persecutors of them.

*Secondly*, Examine whether the matters that are charged upon them as their crimes, be not their duties. Sometimes it falls out to be so; and if so, you fight more immediately and directly against God, than men. This was David's case, Psal. lxxix. 10. "When I wept, and chastened my soul, that was to my reproach;" my piety was turned to reproach. They called his tears crocodile's tears, and his fastings, hypocritical shadows of devotion and humility. Thus the very matter of his duty was turned into scorn and reproach. And so it was with the primitive Christians, their very owning of themselves to be Christians was crime enough to condemn them.

*Thirdly*, If professors of religion do in some things act unbecoming their holy profession, yet every slip and failing in their lives, is no sufficient warrant for you to censure their persons as hypocrites; much less to fall upon religion itself, and condemn it for the faults of them that profess it. There is many an upright heart overtaken by temptation. You see their miscarriages, but you see not their humiliations and self-condemnations before God for them. 'Foul, and fearful (saith a grave divine\*) was the scandal of David; and what was the issue? Presently the enemies of God and godliness began to lift their heads, and fall upon David's religion, 2 Sam. xxii. they blasphemed the name of God. 'O, this is he that was so grand a zealot, that the zeal of God's house did eat him up. This is the man, that, out of his transcendent zeal, danced before the ark; this is he that prayed thrice a day, at morning, noon, and night: This is he that was so precise and strict in his family, that a wicked person should not

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\* Jer. Dyke, of scandal, p. 55.

‘ dwell in his house. This your great, precise zealot, hath defiled  
 ‘ the wife, and murdered the husband. Now you see what his re-  
 ‘ ligious is, now you see what comes of this profession of so much  
 ‘ holiness and godliness.’

O that men would seriously consider their evil in such censures as these! what is all this to religion? Doth religion any way countenance, or patronize such practices? Nay, doth it not impartially and severely condemn them? It is the glory of the Christian religion, that it is pure and undefiled, James i. 27. These practices flow from no principle of religion, nor are chargeable upon it, for it teacheth men the very contrary, Tit. ii. 11, 12. If I see a Papist sin boldly, or an Arminian slight grace, I justly condemn their principles, in, and with their practices, because Popery sets pardons to sale, and Arminianism exalts nature into the place of grace: But doth the doctrine of the gospel lead to any immoralities? Charge it, if you can.

*Fourthly,* And as senseless a thing it is to condemn all, for the miscarriages and faults of some; which, yet, is the common practice of the world. Are all that profess godliness loose and careless? No; many are an ornament to their holy profession, and the glory of Christianity, and why must the innocent be condemned for the guilty? What is your reason and ground for that? Why might not the enemies of Christianity have condemned the eleven apostles upon the fall of Judas? Had they not as good a warrant for it, as you have for this?

To conclude, You little know what a snare of the devil is laid for your souls, in all those prejudices and offences, you take at the ways and professors of godliness; and what a wo you bring upon your own souls by them. You speak evil of persons and things you know not, and prejudice is like still to keep you in ignorance of them. “Wo to the world (saith Christ) because of offences; and “blessed is he that is not offended at me.”

*The eleventh way of ruining the precious soul opened.*

XI. The eleventh way, wherein abundance of precious souls perish in the christianized and professing world, is the way of formal hypocrisy in religion, and zeal about the externals of worship. Such a generation of men have, in all ages, mingled themselves with the sincere worshippers of God; and the inducement to it is obvious; the form of godliness is an honour, but the power of it a burden. By the former, earthly interests are accommodated; by the latter, they are frequently exposed and hazarded.

We find in the Jewish church, abundance of such chaff intermixed with the wheat, which the doctrine of Christ discovered, and

purged out of the floor, Mat. iii. 9, 12. such were the Pharisees, who were exceeding zealous for traditions, and the external rites and ceremonies of the law, but inwardly full of all filthiness, Mat. xv. 7, 8, 9. Men that honoured the dead, and persecuted the living saints; that revered the material temple, and destroyed the living temples; that strained at gnats of ceremonies, and swallowed down the grossest immoralities.

And well had it been, if this generation had ended with the state and time of the church; but we find a prophecy of the increase of these men in the latter days, 2 Tim. iii. 5. which is every where sadly verified. Religion runs into stalk, and blade, into leaves, and suckers, which should be concocted into pith and fruit: Yea, it is of sad consideration, that amongst many high pretenders to reformation, their zeal, which should nourish the vitals of religion, and maintain their daily work of mortification and communion with God, spends itself in some by-opinion, whilst practical godliness visibly languisheth in their conversations. How many are there that hate doctrinal errors, who yet perish by practical ones? who hate a false doctrine, but, in the mean time, perish by a false heart? It is very difficult to reclaim this sort of men from the error of their way; and thereby save their souls from hell. However, let the means be used, and the success left with God.

*The eleventh way to hell, by formality, barred up.*

1. No sin entangles the souls of men faster, or damns them with more certainty and aggravation, than the sin of formal hypocrisy; it holds the soul fastest on earth, and sinks it deepest into hell. There was no sort of men upon whom the doctrine of Christ and the apostles, had so little success and effect, as the Scribes and Pharisees; they derided him, when *publicans* and *sinner*s trembled, and believed, Luke xvi. 14, 15. The form of godliness wards off all convictions; their zeal for the externals of religion secures them against the fears of damnation, whilst in the mean time, their hypocrisy plunges them deeper into hell than others that never made such shews of sanctity and devotion: "He shall appoint him his portion with hypocrites;" Mat. xxiv. 51. that is, he shall be punished in hell, as hypocrites are punished, *viz.* with the greatest, and sorest punishment. Hypocrisy is a double iniquity, and will be punished with double destruction: their ungrounded hopes of heaven serve but to pull up their wretched souls to a greater height of vain confidence, which gives them the more dreadful jerk in their lamentable, and eternal disappointment.

2. Blind, superstitious zeal, which spends itself only about the externals of religion, usually prepares, and engageth men in a

more violent persecution of those that are really godly, and conscientious. The Lord opened a great door of opportunity at Antioch to Paul; the whole city came together to attend the discoveries of Christ in the first publication of the gospel, and the poor Gentiles began to taste the sweetness of the gospel; but the devil, perceiving his kingdom begin to totter, immediately stirred up his instruments to persecute the apostles, and drive them out of the country: and who more fit for that work, than the devout, and honourable women? Acts xiii. 15. These stirred up their husbands, and all they had influence upon, under a fair pretence of zeal for the law, to obstruct the progress of the gospel. *No bird (saith one) like the living bird, to draw others into the net.* Men of greatest names, and pretensions to religion, if graceless, are the most dangerous instruments the \* devil can employ to the ruin and extirpation of true godliness. Such a zealot was Paul, in his unregenerate state.

3. Nothing is more common, than to find men hot and zealous against false worship, whilst their hearts are as cold as a stone in the *vitals*, and *essentials* of *true religion*. Many can dispute warmly against *adoration of images, praying to angels and saints departed*, who all the while are like those dead images which others worship. Jehu was a zealot against idolatry; and yet the vital power of true godliness was a stranger to his soul, 2 Kings x. 15, 16. The Pharisees spared no pains to make a *proselyte*, and yet all the while were the children of the devil themselves, Mat. xxiii. 15.

This was a sad case, yet what more common? The Lord open the eyes of these men, and convince them, in season, that their zeal runs in the wrong channel, and spends itself upon things which shall never profit them. O if they were but as much concerned to promote the love of God, and life of godliness in themselves and others, as they are about some external accidents and appendages of religion, what blessings would they be to the world, and what evidence would they have of their own sincerity?

*The twelfth way to hell, opened.*

XII. The twelfth way to hell, in which many souls are carried on smoothly, and securely, to their own destruction, is, the way of *mere civility* and *moral honesty*, wherein men rest as in a safe state, never doubting but a civil life will produce an issue into an happy death. *Moral honesty* is a lovely thing, and greatly tends to the peace and order of the world; but it is not saving grace, nor gives any man a good title to Christ and salvation. Indeed there

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\* Satan ascends by the rib, as by a ladder to the heart. *Gregor.*

can be no grace in that soul in which civility and moral honesty are not found: but these may be found in thousands that have no grace.

That which ruins souls, is not the exercise of moral virtues, but their reliance upon them: they use their morality as a shield to secure their consciences from the convictions of the word, which would shew them their sinful and miserable state by nature. Thus the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11, 12. "God I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican;" he bleaseth himself in the conceits of his own safety and happiness. Let debauched and profane persons look to it, I am well enough; though, alas! poor man, his being less evil, at best, could but procure him a cooler hell, or a milder flame. This was the case of the young man, Matth. xix. 28. and like a young man, indeed, he reasons. He sums up all the stock of his civil life, and thinks it strange if that be not enough to make a purchase of eternal life. *What lack I yet?* Alas! poor soul, every thing necessary to salvation: the very first stone was not laid, when he thought the building was finished: And this is the case of multitudes, both young and old; and that which greatly confirms, and settles them in this their dangerous security, is the general, indistinct doctrine of some, who pretend to be guides to the souls of others, the scope of whose ministry aims at no higher mark than to civilize the people, and press moral duties upon them, as if this were all that were necessary to salvation: Nay, it is well if some do not industriously pull down the pale of distinction betwixt morality and regeneration, and tell the world, in plain English, *That there is no reason to put a difference betwixt such as are baptized, and live morally honest, and those that have saving grace; and they that do so, are only a few, who are highly conceited of themselves, and censorious of all others, whom they please to vote formal, and moral.*

This, indeed, is the way to fix them where they are; if Christ had not taken another method with Nicodemus, and his ministers had not pressed *the necessity of regeneration, and the insufficiency of moral honesty to salvation*, how thin had the number of true converts been, though, at most they are but a handful in comparison of the *unregenerate!*

O that God would bless what follows, to undeceive and save some poor soul out of this dangerous snare of the devil!

*The twelfth way to damnation barred, by three considerations.*

1. Blind not yourselves with the lustre of your own moral virtues, a life smoothly drawn with civility through the world: for though it must be acknowledged there is a loveliness, and attracting sweetness in morality and civility, yet these things rather res-

pect earth than heaven, and are designed for the conservation of the order and peace of this world, not for your salvation and title to the world to come. Without justice and truth, *kingdoms* and *commonwealths* would become *mountains of prey*, and *dens of robbery*. Where there is no trust there can be no traffic; and where there is no truth, there can be no trust. Civility is the very basis of human society; a world of good accrues to men by it, and abundance of mischief is prevented by it; but it never gave any man *an interest in Christ*, or *a title to salvation*. The Romans and Lacedemonians, who perished in the darkness of Heathenism, excelled in morality; there is nothing of Christ or regeneration in these things, how much of excellency soever be ascribed to them. Paul, the Pharisee, was a blameless person, touching the law, and yet, at the same time, not only utterly ignorant of Christ, but a bitter enemy to him, and all that were his. Till you can find another way to heaven than by regeneration, repentance, and faith, never lean upon such a deceitful and rotten prop, as mere civility is.

2. *Civilized nature is unsanctified nature* still; and without *sanctification* there is no *salvation*, Heb. xii. 14. Civility adorneth nature, but doth not change it. Moral virtues are so many sweet flowers strewed over a dead corpse, which hide the loathsomeness of it, but inspire not life into it. “\* *Morality hides and covers, but never mortifies, nor cures the corruptions of nature;*” and mortified they must be, or you cannot be saved: take the best nature in the world, and let it be adorned with all the ornaments of morality (which they call *homiletical virtues*) and add to these all the common gifts of the Spirit, which are for assistance and ministry; yet all this cannot secure that soul from hell, or be the ground-work for a just claim to any promise of salvation: all this is but nature improved, not regenerated. Morality is neither produced as saving grace is, nor works such effects as grace worketh; there are no pangs of repentance introducing it, it may cost many an aking head, but no aking heart for sin; no such distressed outcries as that, Acts ii. 37. “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Nor doth it produce such humility, self-abasement, heavenly tempers, and tendencies of soul, as grace doth. Cheat not yourselves, therefore, in so important a concern as salvation is, with an empty shadow.

3. Civility is not only found in multitudes that are out of Christ, but may be the cause and reason why they are christless: mistake not, I am not pleading the cause of profaneness, nor disputing civility out of the world; I heartily wish there were more of it to be found in every place; it would exceedingly promote the peace,

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\* *Abscondit, non abscondit vitia. Lactans.*

order and tranquillity of the world: but yet it is certain, that the eyes of thousands are so dazzled with the lustre of their own morality, that they see no need of Christ, nor feel any want of his righteousness, and this is the ruin of their souls. Thus Christ brings in the Pharisee with his proud boast, that he is “no extortioner, adulterer, nor unjust, or such an one as that publican,” Luke xviii. 11. O what a saint doth he vote himself, when he compared his life with the others! Well, then, beware you be not deceived by thinking you are safe, because you are got out of the dirty road to hell, when, all the while you have only stepped over the hedge into a cleaner path to damnation. *You have had a short account of some few of those many ways in which the precious souls of men are eternally lost: Let us briefly apply it in the following inferences.*

*Infer.* 1. If there be so many ways of losing the soul, and such multitudes of souls lost in every one of them, *then the number of saved souls must needs be exceeding small.*

The number of the saved may be considered, either *absolutely* or *comparatively*: In the first consideration they appear great, and many, even a great multitude, which no man can number, Rev. vii. 9. but if compared with those that are lost, they make but *a small remnant*, Isa. i. 9. *a little flock*, Matth. xii. 32. For when we consider how vastly the kingdom of Satan is extended, who is called *the god of this world*, from the world of people who are in subjection to him, how small a part of this earthly globe is enlightened with the beams of gospel-light, and that Satan is the acknowledged ruler of all the rest, Eph. vi. 12. But when it shall be farther considered, that out of this spot, on which the light of the gospel is risen, the far greatest part are lost, also: O what a poor handful remains to Jesus Christ, as the purchase of his blood!

It is of trembling consideration, how many thousands of families, amongst us, are mere nurseries for hell, parents bringing forth and breeding up children for the devil; not one word of God (except it be in the way of blasphemy, or profaneness) to be heard among them. How naturally their ignorant and wicked education puts them in the course and tide of the world, which carries them away irresistibly to hell; how one sinner confirms and animates another, in the same sinful course, till they are all past hope, or remedy: how the rich are taken with the baits of sensual pleasures, and the poor lost in the brake of distracting, worldly cares, except here and there a soul plucked out of the snare of the devil, by the wonderful power, and arm of God. On the one side, you may see multitudes drowned in open profaneness and debauchery; and, on the other side, many thousands securely sleeping in the state of

civility and morality: some key-cold, and without the least sense of religion; others hell-hot with blind zeal, and superstitious madness against true godliness, and the sincere practisers of it. Some living all their days under the ordinances of God, and never touched with any conviction of their sin and misery; others convinced, and making some faint offers at religion; but their convictions (like blossoms nipt with a frosty morning) fall off, and no fruit follows. And as *rubies*, *sapphires*, and *diamonds* are very few, in comparison of the *pebbles* and *common stones* of the earth; so are true Christians in comparison of multitudes that perish in the snares of Satan.

*Inf. How little reason have the unregenerate to glory, and boast themselves in their earthly acquisitions and successes, whilst in the mean time, their souls are lost!* they have gotten other things, but lost their souls. It is strange to see how some men, by rolling a small fortune up and down the world (as boys do a snow-ball) have increased the heap, and raised a great estate; they have attained their design and aim in the world, and hug themselves in the pleased thoughts of their happiness; but, alas, among all the thoughts of their gains, there is not one thought of what they have lost. O if such a thought as this could find room in their hearts, ‘I have indeed gotten an estate, but I have lost my soul; I have much of the world, but nothing of Christ; gold and silver I have, but grace, peace, and pardon I have not; my body is well provided for, but my soul is naked, empty, and destitute.’ Such a thought, like the sentence written on the wall, would make their hearts fail within them. What a rapture and transport of joy did the sight of a full barn cast that worldling into! Luke xii. 19, 20. “Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;” little dreaming that death was just then at the door, to take away the cloth, guest, and all together; that the next hour his friends would be scrambling for his estate, the worms for his body, and the devils for his soul.

O how many have not only lost their souls, whilst they have been drudging for the world, but have sold their souls to purchase a little of the world! parted, by consent, with their best treasure for a very trifle, and yet think they have a great bargain of it! Surely, if poor sinners did but apprehend what they have lost, as well as what they have gained, their gains would yield them as little comfort as Judas’ money did, for which he sold both his soul and Saviour. Instead of those pleasing frolicks of wanton worldlings, what a cold shiver would run through all their bones and bowels, did they but understand what it is to lose a gracious God, and a precious soul, and both eternally, and irrecoverably!

The just God remains still to avenge and punish the sinner;

but the favour of God, that friendly look is gone; the peace of God, that heaven upon earth, is gone; the essence of the soul remains still, but its purity, peace, joy, hope, and happiness, these are gone; and these being gone, what can remain, but a tormenting, piercing sight of those things, for which you have sold them?

*Infer. 3. Hence let us estimate the evil of sin, and see what a dreadful thing that is, which men commonly sport themselves with, and make so light of: it is not only a wrong and injury to the soul, but the loss and utter ruin of the soul for ever.*

It is said, Prov. viii. 36. "He that sinneth against me, wrong-eth his own soul." And if this were all the mischief sin did us, it were bad enough; a wrong to the soul is a greater evil than the ruin of the body or estate, and all the outward enjoyments of this life can be; but to lose the precious soul, and destroy it to all eternity, O what can estimate such a loss! Now the result and last effect of sin is death, the death of the precious soul. Rom. vi. 21. "The end of those things is death." So Ezek. xviii. 4. "The soul that sinneth shall die."

Sin doth not destroy the being of the soul by *annihilation*, but it doth that which the damned shall find, and acknowledge to be much worse; it cuts off the soul from God, and deprives it of all its felicity, joy, and pleasure, which consists in the enjoyment of him. Such is the dolefulness and fearfulness of this result and issue of sin, that when God himself speaks of it, he puts on a passion, and speaks of it with the most feeling concernment. Ezek. xxxiii. 11. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel? q. d. Why will you wilfully cast away your own souls? Why will you choose the pleasures of sin for a season, at the price of my wrath and fury poured out for ever? O think of this, you that make so light a matter of committing sin! We pity those, who, in the depth of melancholy or desperation, lay violent hands upon themselves, and in a desperate mood, cut their own throats; but certainly for a man to murder his own soul, is an act of wickedness as much beyond it, as the value of the soul is above that of the body.

*Inf. 4. What an invaluable mercy is Jesus Christ to the world, who came on purpose to seek and to save such as were lost?*

In Adam all were shipwrecked and cast away: Christ is the plank of mercy, let down from heaven to save some. The loss of souls by the fall, had been as irrecoverable as the loss of the fallen angels, had not God, in a way above all human thoughts and counsels, contrived the method of their redemption. It is astonish-

ing to consider the admirable harmony and glorious triumph of all the divine attributes, in this great project of heaven, for the recovery of lost souls. It is the "wonder of angels," 1 Pet. i. 12. the "great mystery of godliness," 1 Tim. iii. 16. the matter and subject of the triumphant song of redeemed saints, Rev. i. 5. and well it may, when we consider a more noble species of creatures finally lost, and no Mediator of reconciliation appointed betwixt God and them: this is to save an earthen pitcher, whilst the vessel of gold is let fall, and no hand is stretched out to save it.

But what is most astonishing, is, that so great a person as the Son of God, should come himself from the Father's bosom, to save us, by putting himself into our room and stead, being made a curse for us, Gal. iii. 13. He leaves the bosom of his Father, and all the ineffable delights of heaven, disrobes himself of his glory, and is found in fashion as a man, yea, becomes a worm, and no man; submits to the lowest step and degree of abasement, to save lost sinners. What a low stoop doth Christ make in his humiliation to catch the souls of poor sinners out of hell! Herein was love, that God sent his own Son, "to be the propitiation of our sins," 1 John iv. 10. and "God so loved the world," John iii. 16. at this rate he was content to save lost sinners.

How seasonable was this work of mercy, both in its general exhibition to the world, in the incarnation of Christ, and in his particular application of it to the soul of every lost sinner, by the Spirit! When he was first exhibited to the world, he found them all lost sheep gone astray, every one turning to his own way, Isa. liii. 6. he speaks of our lost estate by nature, both collectively, or in general: "we all went astray:" and distributively, or in particular, "Every one turned to his own way;" and in the fulness of time a Saviour appeared.

And how seasonable was it, in its particular application? How securely were we wandering onwards in the paths of destruction, fearing no danger, when he graciously opened our eyes by conviction, and pulled us back by heart-turning grace! No mercy like this: it is an astonishing act of grace. It stands alone!

*Inf. 5. If there be so many ways to hell, and so few that escape it, how are all concerned to strive, to the utmost, in order to their own salvation?*

In Luke xiii. 23. a certain person proposed a curious question to Christ; "Lord, are there few that be saved?" He saw a multitude flocking to Christ, and thronging with great zeal to hear him; and he could not conceive but heaven must fill proportionably to the numbers he saw in the way thither. But Christ's answer, ver. 24. at once rebukes the curiosity of the questionist, fully resolves the question propounded, and sets home his own duty and greatest

concernment upon him. It rebukes his curiosity, and is, as if he should say,—Be the number of the saved more or less, what is that to thee? Strive thou to be one of them. It fully solves the question propounded, by distinguishing those that attend upon the means of salvation, into Seekers and Strivers. In the first respect there are many, who by a cheap and easy profession, seek heaven; but take them under the notion of strivers, i. e. persons heartily engaged in religion, and who make it their business, then they will shrink up into a small number; and he presseth home his great business, and concern upon him, *Strive to enter in at the strait gate.*

By *gate* understand whatsoever is introductive to blessedness and salvation; by the epithet *strait*, understand the difficulties and severities attending religion; all that suffering and self-denial, which those that are bound for heaven should reckon upon, and expect: and by *striving*, understand the diligent and constant use of all those means and duties, how hard, irksome, and costly soever they are. The word *αγωνίζεσθε* hath a deep sense and emphasis, and imports striving, even to an agony; and this duty is enforced two ways upon him, and every man else: First, by the indisputable sovereignty of Christ, from whom the command comes; and also from the deep interest and concern every soul hath in the commanded duty. It is not only a simple compliance with the will of God, but what also involves our own salvation and eternal happiness in it: our great duty, and our greatest interest are twisted together in this command; your eternal happiness depends upon the success of it. A man is not crowned except he strive lawfully, i. e. successfully and prevalently. O therefore, so run, so strive, that ye may obtain! if you have any value for your souls, if you would not be miserable to eternity, strive, strive! Believe it, you would find that the assurance of salvation drops not down from heaven in a night-dream, as the Turks fable their Alcoran to have done in that *lail-ato hazili*, night of demission, as they call it; no, no; the righteous themselves are scarcely saved; many seek, but few find. Strive, therefore, as men and women that are heartily concerned for their own salvation; sit not, with folded arms, like so many heaps of stupidity and sloth, whilst the door of hope is yet open, and such a sweet voice from heaven calls to you, saying, Strive, souls, strive, if ever you expect to be partakers of the blessedness that is here to be enjoyed; strive to the utmost of your abilities and opportunities. Such an heaven is worth striving to obtain, such an hell is worth striving to escape, such an invaluable soul is worth striving to save.

I confess, heaven is not the purchase or reward of your striving: no soul shall boastingly say there, Is not this the glory which my

duties and diligence purchased for me? and yet, on the other side, it is as true, that without striving you shall never set foot there. Say not, it depends upon the pleasure of God, and not upon your diligence; for it is his declared will and pleasure, to bring men to glory in the way, though not for the sake of their own striving. As in the works of your civil calling, you know all the care, toil, and sweat of the husbandman, avails nothing of itself, except the sun and rain quicken and ripen the fruits of the earth; and yet no wise man will neglect ploughing and harrowing, sowing and weeding, because these labours avail not, without the influences of heaven, but waits for them in the way of his duty and diligence. Rational hope sets all the world to work. Do they plough in hope, and sow in hope, and will you not pray in hope, and hear in hope? You that know your souls to be hitherto strangers to Christ and the regenerating work of the Spirit; how is it that you take them not aside sometimes out of the distracting noise and hurries of the world, and thus bemoan them?

‘O my poor graceless, christless, miserable soul, how sad a case art thou in! Others have, but thou never feltest the burden of sin; thousands in the world are striving and labouring, searching and praying, to make their calling and election sure; whilst thou sittest still with folded hands, in a supine regardlessness of the misery that is hastening upon thee. Canst thou endure the devouring wrath of God? Canst thou dwell with everlasting burnings? Hast thou fancied a tolerable hell? Or, is it easy to perish? Why dost thou not cast thyself at the feet of Christ, and cry, as long as breath will last, Lord, pity a sinful, miserable, undone, and self-condemning soul? Lord, smite this rocky heart, subdue this stubborn will, heal and save an undone soul ready to perish: The characters of death are upon it, it must be changed or condemned, and that in a little time. Bowels of pity, hear the cry of a soul distressed, and ready to perish.

And you that do not understand the case and state your souls are in, have you never a bible near you? O turn to those places, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. where you will presently find the more obvious marks and characters God hath set upon the children of perdition; and if you find not yourself in that catalogue, among the unrighteous, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners, &c. then turn to John iii. 3. and solemnly ask thy own soul this question, Am I born again? Am I a new creature, or still in the same condition I was born in? What solid evidence of the new birth have I to rely upon, if I were now within a few grasps of death? Am not I the man or woman who lives in the very same sins which the word of God makes the symptoms and characters of damnation? And doth not my *conscience*

witness against me, that I am utterly void and destitute of all that saving grace, and a mere stranger to the regenerating work of the Spirit, without which there can be no well bottomed hope of salvation? And if so, are not the tokens of death upon me? Am not I a person marked out for misery? And shall I sit still in a state of so much danger, and not once strive to make an escape from the wrath to come? Is this vile body worth so much toil and labour to support and preserve it? And is not my soul worth as much care and diligence to secure it from the everlasting wrath of the great, just, and terrible God? O that the consideration of the wrath to come, the multitudes all the world over preparing as fuel for it, and the door of opportunity yet held open to souls by the hand of grace to escape that wrath, might prevail with thy heart, reader, to strive, and that to the uttermost, to secure thy precious soul from the impending ruin.

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EPH. v. 16.

—*Redeeming the time* (or opportunity) *because the days are evil.*

**T**IME is deservedly reckoned among the most precious mercies of this life; and that which makes it so valuable are the commodious seasons and opportunities for salvation which are vouchsafed to us therein: opportunity is the golden spot of time, the sweet and beautiful flower, growing upon the stalk of time\*. If time be a *ring* of gold, opportunity is the rich *diamond* that gives it both its value and glory. The apostle well knew the value of time; and seeing how prodigally it was wasted by the most, doth therefore in this place, earnestly press all men to redeem, save, and improve it with the utmost diligence. In this, and the former *verse*, we have,

1st, The duty enjoined, *Walk circumspectly.*

2dly, The *injunction* explained;

1. More generally, *Not as fools, but as wise.*

2. More particularly, *Redeeming the time.*

3. The exhortation strongly inforced with a powerful motive, *Because the days are evil.*

Among these particulars, my discourse is principally concerned about the redemption of time, or opportunities, which in this life are graciously vouchsafed us, in order to that which is to come: And here it will be needful to enquire,

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\* Καίρος αὐτοῦ χρόνος.

1. What the apostle means by *time*.

2. What by *the redemption of time*.

1. Time is taken more largely and strictly according to the double acceptation of the Hebrew word  $\text{תָּו}$  which signifies sometimes *time*, and sometimes *occasion, season, or opportunity*, and accordingly is expressed by  $\chi\rho\nu\nu\sigma$  and  $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\sigma$ , *tempus* and *tempestivitas*: the latter is the word here used, and denotes the commodiousness and fitness of some parts of time above others, for the successful and prosperous management and accomplishment of our main and great business here, which is to secure our interest in Christ, and glorify God in a course of fruitful obedience. For these great and weighty purposes our time is graciously lengthened out, and many fit opportunities presented us in the revolutions thereof.

2. By the *redemption of time*\*, we must understand the study, care, and diligence of Christians, at the rate of all possible pains, at the expence of all earthly pleasures, ease, and gratifications of the flesh, to rescue their precious seasons, both of salvation and service, out of the hands of temptations, which so commonly rob unwary souls of them. Satan trucks with us for our time, as we did at first with the silly Indians for their gold and diamonds, who were content to exchange them for glass-beads, and tinsel-toys. Many fair seasons are forced, or cheated out of our hands, by the importunity of earthly cares, or deceitfulness of sensual pleasures: at the expence and loss of these, we must redeem and rescue our time for higher and better uses and purposes. We must spend these hours in prayer, meditation, searching our hearts, mortifying our lusts, which others do, and our flesh fain would spend, in sensual pleasures and gratifications of the fleshly appetite. If ever we expect to win the port of glory, we must be as diligent and careful as seamen are, to take every gale that blows, directly or obliquely, to set them forward in their voyage. The note from hence is this:

Doct. *That the wisdom of a Christian is eminently discovered in saving and improving all opportunities in this world, for that world which is to come.*

God hangs the great things of eternity upon the small wires of times and seasons in this world: that may be done, or neglected in a day, which may be the ground-work of joy or sorrow to all eternity. There is a nick of opportunity which gives both success and facility to the great and weighty affairs of the soul as well as body; to come before it, is to seek the bird before it be hatched;

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\* Εξαγοραζόμενοι τον καιρον.

and to come after it, is to seek it when it is fled. There is a two-fold season, or opportunity of salvation.

1. One was Christ's season for the purchase of it.

2. The other is ours for the application of it.

1. Christ had a season assigned him for the impetration and purchase of our salvation; so you hear his Father bespeaking him, Isa. xlix. 8. "Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee," בערתי רען, *in tempore opportuno voluntatis, vel placito*. It was the wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ to set in with the Father's time, to comply with his season: and it became a day of salvation, because it was the acceptable time which Christ took for it.

2. Men have their seasons and opportunities for the application of Christ and his benefits, to their own souls: 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. "We then as workers together with God, beseech you also, that you receive not the grace of God in vain; for he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee. Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." He exhorts the Corinthians not to dally or trifle any longer in the great concerns of their salvation; for now, saith he, is your day. Christ had his day to purchase it, and he procured a day also for you to apply it, and this is that day; you enjoy it, you live under it: that golden day is now running: O! see that you frustrate not the design thereof, by receiving the gospel-grace in vain.

Now two things concur to make a fit season of salvation to the souls of men.

1. The external means and instruments.

2. The agency of the Spirit internally by, or with those external means.

1. Men have a season of salvation, when God sends the means and instruments of salvation among them. When the gospel is powerfully preached among a people, there is a door opened to them: 2 Cor. ii. 12. "When I came to Troas to preach the gospel, a door was opened to me of the Lord." God, as it were, unlocks the door of heaven by the preaching of the gospel: Souls have then an opportunity to step in and be saved.

2. But yet it is not a *wide and effectual door* (as the apostle phrases it, 1 Cor. xvi. 9.) till the Spirit of God joins with, and works upon the heart by those external means and instruments; as the waters of the pool of Bethesda had no inherent sanative virtue in themselves, until the angel of the Lord descended and troubled them: but both together make a blessed season for the souls of men. Then he stands at the door, and knocks, by convictions and persuasions, Rev. iii. 20. strives with men as he did with the old

world by the ministry of Noah, Gen. vi. 3. Now the door of opportunity is indeed opened: but this will not always last; there is a time when *the Spirit ceases to strive*, and when *the door is shut*, Luke xiii. 25.

There is a season, when by the fresh impression of some *ordinance* or *providence* of God, men's hearts are awakened, and their affections stirred. It is now with the souls of men as it is with fruit trees in the spring, when they put forth blossoms; if they knit and set, fruit follows, if they be nipt and blasted, no fruit can be expected. For all convictions and motions of the affections are to grace, much the same thing as blossoms are to fruit, which are but the rudiments thereof, *fructus imperfectus et ordinabilis*, somewhat in order to it; and look, as that is a critical and hazardous season to trees, so is this to souls. I do not say it is in the power of any soul to make the work of the Spirit effectual and abiding, by adding his endeavours to the Spirit's motions; for then conversion would not be the free and arbitrary act of the Spirit, as in John iii. 8. neither would souls be born of God, but of the will of man, contrary to John i. 13. And yet it is not to be thought or said, that men's endeavours and strivings are altogether vain, needless, and insignificant; because, though they cannot make God's grace effectual, his grace can make them effectual; they are our duty, and God can bless them to our great advantage. Now there are, among others, five remarkable essays, efforts, or strivings of a soul under the impression and hand of the Spirit, that greatly tend to the fixing, settling, and securing of that great work on the soul; and it is seldom known any soul miscarries in whom these things are found.

1. Deep, serious, and fixed consideration, which lets conviction deep into the soul, and settles it, and roots it fast in the heart, Psal. cxix. 59. "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." There are close and anxious debates in those souls in whom convictions prosper to full conversion: they sit alone, and think close to their great and eternal concerns: they carry their thoughts back to the evils of their life past, then smite on the thigh, and cry, *What have I done?* They run their thoughts forward into eternity, and that to a great depth, and then cry, "What shall I do to be saved?" They deliberate and weigh, in their most advised thoughts, what is to be done, and that speedily, for escaping wrath to come: thus they fix those tender, weak, and hazardous motions, which die away in multitudes of souls; and, in the loss of them, the seasons of salvation are also lost.

2. The first stirrings and motions of the Spirit upon men's hearts, do then become a season of salvation to them, when they are accompanied with spiritual, fervent, and frequent prayer: so

it was with Paul, Acts ix. 11. "Behold he prayeth." It is a good sign when souls get alone, and effect privacy and retirement, to pour out their fears, sorrows, and requests unto God. It is in the espousals of a soul to Christ, as it is in other marriages; a third person may make the motion, and bring the parties together, but they only betwixt themselves must conclude and agree the matter. Prayer is the first breath which the new creature draws in, and the last (ordinarily) it breathes out in this world. This nourishes and maturates those weak, tender, and first motions after God, and brings them to some consistence and fixedness in the soul.

3. Then do those motions of the Spirit on men's hearts make a season of salvation to them, when they remain and settle in the heart, and are in them *per modum quietus*, by way of rest and abode, following the man from place to place, from day to day; so that whatever unpleasing diversions the necessities and incumbrances of this world at any time give, yet still they return again upon the heart, and will not vanish or suffer any longer suspension: but in others, who lose their blessed advantage and season, it is quite contrary; James i. 23, 24. "They are as one that seeth his natural face in a glass, and goeth away and forgetteth what manner of man he was:" He sees some spot on his face, or disorder in his band, which he purposeth to correct; but by one occurrence or another, he forgets what he saw in the glass, and so goes all the day with his spot upon him. This was an evanid light purpose, which came to nothing for want of a present execution; just so it is with many in reference to their great concerns: but if the impression abide in its strength, if it return, and follow the soul, and will not let it be quiet, it is like then to prosper, and prove the time of mercy indeed to such a soul.

4. An anxious solicitude and inquisitiveness about the means and ways of salvation, speaks an effectual door of salvation to be set open to the souls of men, Acts ii. 37. and xvi. 30. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Men and brethren, what shall we do?" q. d. we are in a miserable condition: Oh, you the ministers of Christ, instruct, counsel, and shew us what course to take! Is there no balm in Gilead? no door of hope in this valley of Achor? Alas! we are not able to dwell with our own fears, terrors, and presages of wrath to come. Oh for a messenger, one among a thousand, to teach us the way of salvation. Thus the Lord rivets and fixes those motions in some souls, that vanish like a morning mist or dew in others.

5. Lastly, That which secures and completes this work, is the execution of those purposes and convictions, by falling, without delay, to the work of faith and repentance in good earnest, dally-

ing no more with so great a concern, standing no longer at *shall I? shall I?* when mean while time flies away, and opportunities may be lost: but bring their thoughts and debates to a peremptory resolution, as the *Lepers* at Samaria did; and seeing themselves shut up to one only door of hope, there they resolve to take their station, lying at the feet of Jesus Christ, and casting their poor burdened souls upon him, whatever be the issue. When the Spirit of God ripens the first motions to this, and carries them through that critical season thus far, there is an effectual door of opportunity opened indeed: this is an acceptable time, a day of salvation: but oh! how many thousands miscarry in this season, and like trees removed from one soil to another, die in the removal!

But certainly, it is the most solemn and important concern of every soul to watch upon all these seasons of salvation, when God comes nigh to them by convictions and motions of his Spirit; and to put the same value upon these things that they do upon their souls, and the salvation of them. This is the door of hope set open, a fresh gale to carry you home to your port of glory. Salvation is now come nigh to your souls; there is but a little betwixt you and blessedness. Wise and happy is that soul which knows and improves its season. To persuade and press men to discern and improve such seasons as these, is the principal work of the preachers of the gospel, and that special work to which I now address myself, in the following motives and arguments.

*Arg.* 1. And first, who, that hath the free exercise of reason, and the sense of a future eternal estate, would carelessly neglect any season of salvation, whilst he seeth all the rational world so carefully attending, and watching all opportunities to promote and secure their lower concerns and designs for the present life?

Is not the saving a man's soul as weighty a concern as the getting of an estate? You cannot but observe how careful merchants are, to nick the opportunity which promiseth them a good turn; how do poor seamen look out for a wind to waft them to their port, and industriously shift their sails, to improve every flaw that may set them on their voyage; how many miles tradesmen will travel to be in season at a fair, to put off, or purchase goods to their advantage: No entertainments, recreations, or importunities of friends can prevail with any of these, to lose a day on which their business depends; all things must give way to their business; they all understand their seasons, and will not be diverted. But, alas! what childish toys are all these, compared with their salvation! what is the loss of a little money to the loss of a man's soul? If a man's life depended upon his being at such a place, by such a precise hour, sure he would not oversleep his time that morning; and

had he but the least fear of coming too late, every stroke of the clock would strike to his heart; and yet remissness and carelessness, in such a case as this, is infinitely more excusable than in the matter of salvation. Certainly the solicitude and care of all the world for the interests thereof, yea, your own diligence and circumspection in temporal things, will be an uncontrollable and confounding self-conviction to you in the day of your account, and leave you without plea or apology for your supine neglects of the seasons of salvation.

*Arg. 2.* The consideration of the uncertainty and slippery nature of these spiritual seasons, must awaken in us all care and diligence to secure and improve them: This nick of opportunity is *tempus labile*, a slippery season; it is but short in itself, and very uncertain: "To-day, whilst it is said to-day (saith the apostle) if ye will hear "his voice," Heb. iii. 15. q. d. You have now a short, uncertain, but most precious and valuable season for your souls, lay hold on it whilst it is called *to-day*; for if this season be let slip, the time to come is called by another name, that is not *to-day*, but *to-morrow*. Your time is the *present time*; take heed of procrastinating and putting it off, till that which is called *to-day*, (which is your *only season*) be past and gone. The precious inch of time, though it be more worth than all the other greater parts and portions of your time, yet it is as much *in fluxu*, in hasty motion, and spending as other parts of time are; and being once lost, is never more to be recalled or recovered. Few men know, or understand it whilst it is current: other seasons for natural, or civil actions are known and stated, but the time of grace is not so easily discerned, and therefore commonly mistaken, and lost: And this comes to pass partly through,

1. Presumptuous hopes.

2. Discouraging fears.

1. Presumptuous hopes, which put it too far forth, and persuade us this season is yet to come; that we have time before us, and that *to-morrow* shall be as *to-day*. "Thus through presumption\*, "men hope, and by their presumptuous hopes they perish." This is the ruin of most souls that perish.

2. Discouraging fears put it too far back, and represent it as long since past and gone, whilst it is yet in being, and in our hands. By such pangs of desperation, Satan cuts the nerves of industry and diligence, and causes souls to yield themselves as by consent for lost, and hopeless, even whilst the gospel is opening their eyes, to see their sin and misery, which is a part of the work in order to their recovery. Thus the eyes of thousands are dazzled that they

\* *Præsumendo sperant, et sperando pereunt.*

cannot discern the season of mercy, and so it slides from them as if it had never been.

God came near to them in the means of their conversion, yea, and nearer in the motions of his Spirit upon their consciences and affections; but they knew not the time of their visitation, and now the things of their peace are hid from their eyes. Had those convictions been obeyed, and those purposes that were begotten in their hearts, been followed by answerable executions of them, happy had they been to all eternity: But their careless neglects have quenched them, and the door is shut; and who knows whether it may be opened any more? O dally not with the Spirit of God, resist not his calls! his motions on the soul are tender things; they may soon be quenched, and never recovered.

*Arg. 3.* Neglect not the seasons of mercy, the day of grace, because opportunity facilitates the great work of your salvation; it is much easier to be done in such a season than it can be afterwards: An impression is easily made on wax, when melted, but stay till it be hardened, and if you lay the greatest weight on the seal, it leaves no impression upon it. Much so it is with the heart, there is a season when God makes it soft and yielding, when the affections are thawed, and melted under the word; conscience is full of sense and activity, the will pliable: Now is the time to set in with the motions of the Spirit; there is now a gale from heaven, if you will take it, and if not, it tarries not for man, nor waits for the sons of men: Neglect of the season is the loss of the soul. The heart, like melted wax, will naturally harden again, and then to how little purpose are your own feeble essays? Heb. iii. 15. It is both easy and successful striving when the Spirit of God strives in you, and with you; you are now workers together with God, and such work goes on smoothly and sweetly; that which is in motion is easily moved; but if once the heart is set, you may labour to little purpose.

*Arg. 4.* The infinite importance and weight of salvation, is alone, instead of all motives and arguments, to make men prize and improve every proper season for it. It is no ordinary concern, it is your life, yea, it is your eternal life; the solemnity and awfulness of such a business as this is enough to swallow up the spirit of man. O what an awful sound have such words as these, Ever with the Lord? Suppose you saw the glory of heaven, the full reward of all the labours and sufferings of the saints, the blessed harvest of all their prayers, tears, diligence, and self-denial in this world; or suppose you had a true representation of the torments of hell, and could but hear the wailings of the damned, for the neglect of the season of mercy, and their passionate, but vain wishes for one of those days which they have lost: Would you think any care, any

pains, any self-denial too much, to save and redeem one of these opportunities? Surely you would have a far higher estimation of them than ever you had in your lives.

A trial for a man's whole estate is accounted a solemn business among men; the cast of a dye for a man's life is a weighty action, and seldom done without anxiety of the mind, and trembling of the hand: Yet both these are but children's play compared with salvation-work.

Three things put an unspeakable solemnity upon this matter; it is the precious soul, which is above all valuation, that lies at stake, and is to be saved, or lost. The saving or losing of it is not for a time, but for ever; and this is the only season in which it will be eternally saved or cast away: All hangs upon a little inch of time, which, being over-slipt and lost, is never more to be recalled or recovered. *Lord! with what serious spirits, deep and weighty considerations, fears, and tremblings of heart, should men and women attend the seasons of their salvation!*

Believe it, reader, since thy soul projected its first thoughts, there never was a more weighty and concerning subject than this presented to thy thoughts. O! therefore, let not thy thoughts trifle about it, and slide from it as they use to do in other things of common concernment.

*Arg. 5.* If we set any value on the true pleasure of life, or solid comfort of our souls at death, let us by no means neglect the special seasons and opportunities of salvation we now enjoy.

These two things, the pleasure of life, and comforts in death, should be prized by every man more than his two eyes; certainly no being at all is more desirable than a being without these: Take away the true, spiritual pleasure of life, and you level the life of man with the beast that perisheth; and take away the hope and comfort of the soul in death, and you sink him infinitely below the beasts, and make him a being only capable of misery for ever.

Now there can be no true, spiritual pleasure found in that soul that has neglected and lost his only season of salvation: All the solid delight and comfort of life results from the settlement and security of a man's great concern in the proper season thereof. The true mirth of the *converted Prodigal* bears date from the time of his return, and *reconciliation to his father*, Luke xv. 24. Two things are absolutely pre-requisite to the comfort of life, *viz. a change of the state by justification, and a change of the frame and temper of the heart by sanctification.* To be in a pardoned state, is a matter of all joy, Mat. ix. 2. and "to be spiritually minded is life and peace," Rom. viii. 6. No good news comes to any man before this; and no bad news can sink a man's heart after this.

And for hope and comfort in death, let none be fond to expect

it, till he has first complied with, and obeyed God's call in the time thereof: A careless life never did, nor never will produce a comfortable death. What is more common among all that die, not stupid and senseless, as well as unregenerate and christless, than the bitter, dolorous complaints of their mis-spent time, and losing their seasons of mercy? *Reader, if thou wouldst not feel that anguish thou hast seen and heard others to be in on this account, know the time of thy visitation, and finish thy great work whilst it is day.*

*Arg. 6.* Neglect no season of salvation which is graciously afforded you, because your time is short; death and eternity are at the door. "You know that you must shortly put off these tabernacles," 2 Pet. i. 13, 14. that when a few years are come, you "shall go the way whence you shall not return," Job xvi. 22. All the living are listed soldiers, and must conflict, hand to hand, with that dreadful enemy death, and there is no discharge in that war, Eccles. viii. 8. It will be in vain to say, You are not willing to die; for willing, or unwilling, away you must go, when death calls you. It will be as vain to say, You are not ready; for ready or unready you must be gone when death comes. Your readiness to die would indeed be a cordial to your hearts in death; but then you must improve and ply the time of life, and husband your opportunities diligently; carelessness of life, and readiness for death are inconsistent, and exclusive of each other. The bed is sweeter to none than the hard labourer, and the grave comfortable to none but the laborious Christian. You know nothing can be done by you after death; the *compositum* is then dissolved; you cease to be what you were, to enjoy the means you had, and to work as you did. O therefore slip not the only season you have, both of attaining the end of life, and escaping the danger and hour of death.

#### *The USE.*

I shall close all with a word of exhortation, persuading (if possible) the careless and unthinking neglecters of their precious time and souls, to awake out of that deep and dangerous security in which they lie fast asleep on the very brink of eternity, and "to-day, whilst it is yet called to-day," to hear God's voice calling them to repentance and faith, and thereby to Christ and everlasting blessedness. "Behold, he yet stands at the door, and knocks," Rev. iii. 20. The door of hope is not yet finally shut, there are yet some stirrings at certain times in men's consciences: God comes near them in his word, and in some rousing acts of providence, the death of a near relation, the seizure of a dangerous disease, the blasting and disappointment of a man's great design and project for this world, a fall into some notorious sin; these, and many such like methods of providence, as well as the

convincing voice of the word, have the efficacy of an awakening voice to men's drowsy consciences; and if careless sinners would but attend to them, and follow home those motions they make upon their hearts, who knows to what these weak beginnings might rise and prosper? The souls of men are, as it were, embarked in the calls of God, your life is bound up in them; if these are lost, your souls are lost; if these abide upon you, and grow up to sound conversion, you are saved by them. More particularly consider,

1. What a mercy it is, to have your lot providentially cast under the gospel; to be born under, and bred up with the means and instruments of conversion and salvation. We have lived from our youth up, under the calls of God, and within the joyful sound of the gospel; "God hath not dealt so with other nations," Psal. cxlvii. 20. Though others should seek the means of life, they cannot find them; and though you seek them not, you can hardly miss them.

2. How great a mercy it is, to have your lives lengthened out hitherto by God's patience under the gospel! that neither that golden lamp, nor the lamp of your life, (both which are liable to be extinguished every moment) are yet put out. Thousands and ten thousands, your contemporaries, are gone out of the hearing of the voice of the gospel, they shall never hear another call; the treaty of God is ended with them; the master of the house is risen up, and the doors are shut. Your neglects and provocations have not been inferior to theirs: but the patience and goodness of God has exceeded and abounded to you beyond whatever it did to them.

3. Bethink yourselves what an aggravation of your misery it will be, to sink into hell with the calls of God sounding in your ears! to sink into eternal misery, betwixt the tender, out-stretched arms of mercy! this is the hell of hell, the emphasis of damnation, the racking engine on which the consciences of the damned are tortured. "And thou Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall be brought down to hell, Matth. xi. 23. Such a fall, after so high an exaltation, is the very strappado which will torment your consciences. Hell will prove a cooler and milder place to the Heathens that never enjoyed your light, means, and mercies in this world, than it will to you. None sink so deep into misery in the world to come, as they that fall from the fairest opportunities of salvation in this world.

4. Let no man expect that God will hear his cries and intreaties in time of misery, who neglects and slights the calls of God in time of mercy. God calls, but men will not hear: the day is coming, "when they shall cry, but God will not hear," Prov. i. 24, 25.

“ Will God hear his cry, when trouble cometh upon him? Job xxvii. 9. No; he will not: and this is but a just retribution from the righteous God, whose calls and counsels men have set at nought. But whatever men now think of it, it is certainly the greatest misery incident to men in all the world: for as no words can make another fully sensible what a privilege it is to have the ear, favour, pity, and help of God in a day of straits; so it is impossible for any words to express the doleful state and case of that soul whom God casts off in trouble, and whose cries he shuts out.

5. Beware of neglecting any call of God, because that call you are now tempted to neglect, may be the last call that God ever intends to give your souls. Sure I am, there is a call which will be the last call of God to rebellious sinners, and after that no more calls, but an eternal deep silence: *his Spirit shall not always strive with men*; and the more motions and calls you have already slighted, the more probable it is that this may be the last voice of God in a way of mercy to thy soul: and what if, after this, God should seal up thy heart, and judicially harden it? make thy will utterly inflexible, and thine ears deaf, as he threatens, Isa. vi. 10. What an undone, miserable man or woman art thou then! Oh! beware of provoking the sorest of all judgments, by persisting any longer in a course of rebellion against light and mercy.

6. Whilst your hearts put off and neglect the calls of God, you can by no means arrive to the evidence and assurance of your election; for your election is only secured to you by your effectual calling, 2 Pet. i. 10. There is no way for men to discern their names written in the book of life, but by reading the work of sanctification in their own hearts, Rom. x. 8. I desire no miraculous voice from heaven, no extraordinary signs, or unscriptural notices and informations in this matter: Lord, let me but find my heart complying with thy calls, my will obediently submitting to thy commands; sin my burden, and Christ my desire: I never crave a fairer or surer evidence of thy electing love to my soul: and if I had an oracle from heaven, an extraordinary messenger from the other world, to tell me thou lovest me, I have no reason to credit such a voice, whilst I find my heart wholly sensual, averse to God, and indisposed to all that is spiritual.

7. What reason have you why you should not presently embrace the call of God, and thankfully lay hold only on the first opportunity and season of salvation? Have you any greater matters in hand than the salvation of your precious souls? Is there any thing in this world that more concerns you? If the affairs of this life be so indispensably necessary, and those of the world to come so indifferent; if you think that meat and drink, trade and business, wife,

and children are such great things, and Christ, the soul, and eternity, such little things; or if you think salvation to be a work of the greatest necessity, and yet may safely enough be put off to an uncertain time, I may assure you, you will not be long of this mind. How soon are all the mistakes of men in these matters rectified in a few moments after death! Rectified, I say, but not remedied; your opinion will be changed, but not your condition.

8. Do you not every day easily and readily obey the calls of Satan and your own lusts, whilst God and conscience are suffered to call and strive with you in vain? If Satan or your lusts call you to the tavern, to the world, and sinful pleasures, you speedily comply with their call, and yield a ready obedience; if pride or covetousness call, or passion and revenge call, they need not call twice; and shall God and conscience call only in vain? Lord, what a creature is man become! If a vain companion call, you have no power to deny him; if God call, you have no ear to hear him.

9. You cannot but observe the obedience and diligence of many others, how seriously, painfully, and assiduously they ply, and follow on the work of their own salvation, and yet are no more concerned in the events and consequences of these things than you are. Doth it not trouble you when you compare yourselves with them? Do not such thoughts as these sometimes arise in your hearts upon such observations? ‘Lord, what a difference is there like to be betwixt their end and mine, when there is so apparent a difference in our course and conversation? Doth not God distinguish persons in this world by the frames of their hearts, and tenor of their lives, in order to the great distinction he will make betwixt one and another in the day of judgment? Have not I as precious a soul to save or lose as any of them? What is the matter that I sit with folded arms, whilst they are working out their salvation with fear and trembling? Why should any man or woman in the world be more careful for their souls than I for mine? Surely its capacity and excellency is equal with theirs, though my care and diligence be so unequal.’

10. To conclude, God will shortly give you an irresistible call to the grave, and after that his voice shall call to you in your graves, *Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment*: But wo be to you, wo and alas that ever you were born, if you should hear the call of God to die, before you have heard and obeyed his call to Christ! Will your death-bed be easy to you? Can you with any hope or comfort shoot the gulph of eternity before you have done one act for the security of your own souls from the wrath to come? It is a dreadful thing for a poor christless soul to sit quivering upon the

lips of a dying sinner, not able to stay, nor yet endure a parting pull from the body, in such a case as it is.

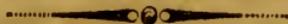
In a word ; If that God had made, and will shortly judge you ; if the Redeemer that shed his invaluable blood, and now offers you the purchases and benefits of it ; if you have any love to, or care of your own souls, which are more worth than the whole world ; if you have any value for heaven, or dread of hell, then, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for your precious soul's sake, trifle with heaven and hell no longer, but be in earnest to *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*. Could I think of any other means or motives to secure your souls from danger, I would surely use them : could I reach your hearts effectually, I would deeply impress this great concern upon them : But I can neither do God's part of the work, nor yours ; it is some ease to me, I have in sincerity, (though with much imperfection and febleness) done part of my own : The Lord prosper it by the blessing of his Spirit in the hearts of them that read it. *Amen.*

## PRACTICAL TREATISE

OF

## F E A R.

Wherein the various *kinds, uses, causes, effects* and *remedies* thereof are distinctly opened and prescribed, for the relief and encouragement of all those that fear God in these doubtful and distracting times.



To the Right Worshipful Sir JOHN HARTOP, Knight and  
Baronet.

SIR,

AMONG all the creatures God hath made (devils only excepted) man is the most apt and able to be his own tormentor; and of all the scourges with which he lasheth and afflicteth both his mind and body, none is found so cruel and intolerable as *his own fears*. The worse the times are like to be, the more need the mind hath of succour and encouragement, to confirm and fortify it for hard encounters; but from the worst prospect, *fear* inflicts the deepest and most dangerous wounds upon the mind of man, cutting the very nerves of its passive fortitude and bearing ability.

The grief we suffer from evil felt would be light and easy, were it not incensed by *fear*; reason would do much, and religion more, to demulce and lenify our sorrows, did not *fear* betray the succours of both. And it is from *things to come* that this prospecting creature raiseth up to himself vast hopes and fears: if he have a fair and encouraging prospect of serene and prosperous days, from the *scheme* and position of second causes, *hope* immediately fills his heart with cheerfulness, and displays the signals of it in his very face, answerable to that fair, benign aspect of things: but if the face of things to come be threatening and inauspicious, *fear* gains the ascendent over the mind; and unmanly and unchristian faintness pervades it, and, among the many other mischiefs it inflicts, this is not the least, that it brings the evil of *to-morrow* upon *to-day*, and so makes the duties of to-day wholly unserviceable to the evils of to-morrow;

which is as much as if man having an intricate and difficult business cut out for the next day, which requires the utmost intention, both of his mind and body, and (haply) might be prosperously managed, if both were duly prepared, should lie all the night restless and disquieted about the event, torturing and spending himself with his own presaging fears, so that when the day is come, and the business calls for him, his strength is no way equal to the burden of it, but he faints and fails under it.

There is indeed an excellent use that God makes of our fears, to stimulate our slothful hearts to greater vigilance and preparation for evils; and there is a mischievous use Satan makes of our fears to cast us under despondency and unbecoming pusillanimity: and I reckon it one of the greatest difficulties of religion, to cut, by a thread here, and so to manage ourselves under threatening or doubtful providences, as to be touched with so much sense of those approaching evils as may prepare us to bear them; and yet to enjoy that constancy and firmness of mind, in the worst times, that may answer the excellent principles we are professedly governed by.

These last times are certainly the most perilous times; great things are yet to be acted upon the *stage* of this world, before it be taken down; and the *scena antipenultima*, latter-end, I say, not the last, will be a *tragedy*. There is an *ultima clades adhuc metuenda*, a dismal slaughter of the witnesses of Christ yet to be expected: the last bite of the cruel beast will be deadly, and if we flatter not ourselves, all things seem to be disposing themselves in the course of providence towards it.

But, Sir, if our union with Christ be sure in itself, and sure to us also; if faith give us the daily visions and prelibations of the world to come, what well-composed spectators shall we be of these tragedies! Let things be tossed *susque, deque*, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea, yet then the assured Christian may sing his song upon *Alamothe*\*, A song composed for God's hidden ones. This so poiseth and steadies the mind, that we may enjoy the comfort and tranquillity of a resigned will, when others are at their wit's end.

With design to promote this blessed frame, in my own and others hearts in these frightful times, I meditated, and now publish this small tract, to which a dear friend (from whom I have often had the fair *idea* and character of your excellent spirit) hath occasioned the prefixing of your worthy name; I beg pardon for such an unusual presumption, as also your charity in censuring the faults that will appear in it, when it shall come under so exact and judicious an eye; it may be useful though it be not elegant; its seasonableness

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\* Psal. xlvi.

is its best commendation, and its aim better than its performance. As for you, Sir, I hope faith hath really placed your soul in that serene and happy station where Seneca fancied moral virtue to have placed a good man, *Fatendum est, cacumine Olympi constitutus, supra ventos et procellas, et omnes res humanas*: Above the storms and tempests of this unquiet and distracting world. But there are many gracious persons at this day labouring under their own fears, and whose hearts are ready to fail with looking for those things that are coming to try them that dwell upon the earth; and possibly somewhat of relief may be administered to many such, by this discourse; some bivious and staggering souls may be established; some discouraged and fainting spirits may be revived; some doubts may be dissolved that have long perplexed gracious hearts. Whatever use it may be to any, I humbly call in the aid of your prayers to my own, for a special blessing upon it, and remain, Sir,

*Yours to honour, love, and serve you,*

JOHN FLAVEL.

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Isa. viii. 12, 13. and part of ver. 14.

Ver. 12. *Say ye not, A confederacy to all them to whom this people shall say a confederacy; neither fear ye [their fear] nor be afraid.* 13. *Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread;* 14. *And he shall be for a sanctuary.—*

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## CHAP. I.

*Wherein the text and context are opened, the doctrines propounded, and the general method stated.*

**T**HERE is not more diversity found in the outward features, than in the inward tempers and dispositions of men; some are as timorous as hares, and start at every sound or yelp of a dog; others as bold as lions, and can face dangers without trembling; some fear more than they ought, and some before they ought, and others when they ought not at all. The carnal person fears man, not God; the strong Christian fears God, not man; the weak Christian fears man too much, and God too little.

There is a fear which is the effect of sin springing from guilt,

and hurrying the soul into more guilt; and there is a fear which is the effect of grace, springing from our love to God, and his interest, and driving the soul to God in the way of duty. The less fear any man hath, the more happiness, except it be of that fear which is our happiness and our excellency.

It cannot be said of any man, as it is said of Leviathan, Job xli. 33. that he is made without fear; those that have most fortitude are not without some fears; and when the church is in the storms of persecution, and almost covered with the waves, the stoutest passengers in it may suffer as much from this boisterous passion within, as from the storm without; and all for want of thoroughly believing, or not seasonably remembering that the Lord high Admiral of all the ocean, and Commander of all the winds, is on board the ship, to steer and preserve it in the storm.

A pregnant instance hereof is furnished to our hands in this context, where you find the best men trembling in expectation of the worst events both on the church in general, and themselves in particular. "Their hearts were moved like the trees of the wood "shaken with the wind," chap. vii. 2.

And, indeed, if their dangers were to be measured by sense only, their fears were not above the value of the cause, yea, their danger seemed to exceed their fears; for it was the invasion of a foreign and cruel enemy, even the Assyrian, who were to break in upon them, like a breach of the sea, and overflow the land of Immanuel. Ver. 7. "The Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of "the river, strong and many; even the king of Assyria, and all "his glory, and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over "all his banks." And as the 7th verse resembles the enemy to waters, which quickly drown the country into which they break, so the 8th verse tells you how far they should prevail, and how near it should come to a general and total ruin. "He shall pass through "Judah, he shall overflow and go over; he shall reach even to the "neck, and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of "thy land, O Immanuel." All the body shall be under water, except the capital city, which remained above water.

Having thus described the power and success of the invading enemy, in the 9th and 10th verses, he derides their plots and combinations, assuring them, that although God, for just and holy ends, would permit them, for a time, to afflict his people; yet the issue of all these counsels and cruelties should recoil upon themselves, and end in their own ruin and confusion.

And thereupon Isaiah is commanded to encourage the feeble and trembling hearts of such as feared God in those distracting and frightful times. Ver. 11, 12, 13. "The Lord spake unto me "with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in

“the way of this people, saying, Say ye not a confederacy,” &c.

God speaking to the prophet by a strong hand, imports the strong and mighty impression that was made upon his heart, by the spirit of prophecy; wherein the Lord did, as it were, lay his hand upon him, as a man doth upon one to whom he is about to impart some special secret in a familiar way, q. d. Come hither, Isaiah, (drawing him to him at the same instant, with a friendly hand) take deep notice of what I am now to give thee in charge, both with respect to thyself, and my elect people that follow thee; “Say not ye, A confederacy to all them to whom this people “shall say a confederacy,” i. e. let not these frightful tidings work upon you as they do upon Ahaz, and the common multitude with him, who are so terrified and scared with the approaching dangers, that all their counsels, thoughts, and studies, are taken up in preventing it, by making a confederacy or league with the Assyrian: Hos. v. 13. or if that cannot be, then with some foreign power that may secure them against the Assyrian: but their eyes are not at all to me for protection and deliverance; they expect more from Egypt than from heaven; from a broken reed, than from the rock of ages. Fear not you their fear; their fear drives them from God to the creature; it first distracts them, and then ensnares them.

But, on the contrary, see that thou and all the faithful in the land with thee, do sanctify me in your hearts, and make me your fear and your dread, i. e. rely upon me by faith in this day of trouble, and see that you give me the glory of my wisdom, power, and faithfulness, by relying entirely upon those my attributes engaged for you in so many tried promises; and do not betake yourselves to such sinful and vain shifts as those do that have no interest in me, nor experience of me. This is the general scope and design of the text, wherein more particularly, you have,

1. An evil practice prohibited.
  2. An effectual remedy prescribed.
  3. A singular encouragement to apply that remedy.
1. An evil practice prohibited, “Fear not their fear, neither be “afraid.” This is that sinful principle, which was but too apt to incline them to do as others did, to wit, to say, A confederacy. Sinful fears are apt to drive the best men into sinful compliances and indirect shifts to help themselves.

Their fear may be understood two ways;

1. Subjectively.
  2. Effectively.
1. *Subjectively*, for the self-same fear wherewith the carnal and unbelieving Jews feared; a fear that enslaved them in bondage of

spirit, a fear that is the fruit of sin, a sin in its own nature, the cause of much sin to them, and a just punishment of God upon them for their other sins.

2. *Effectively*, Let not your fear produce in you such mischievous effects as their fear doth; to make you forget God, magnify the creature, prefer your own wits and policies to the Almighty Power and never-failing Faithfulness of God: if you say, but how shall we help it?

2. Why, in the next place, you have an *effectual remedy prescribed*; but *sanctify the Lord of hosts himself*, and let him be your fear and your dread. The fear of God will swallow up the fear of man, a reverential awe and dread of God will extinguish the slavish fear of the creature, as the sun-shine puts out fire, or as one fire fetches out another; so will this fear fetch out that.

*By sanctifying the Lord of hosts himself* is meant a due ascription of the glory of his sovereign power, wisdom, and faithfulness, not only in verbal and professed acknowledgments thereof, but especially in those internal acts of affiance, resignation, and entire dependence on him, which, as they are the choicest respects of the creature towards its God, and give him the greatest glory, so they are certainly the most beneficial and comfortable acts we can perform for our own peace and safety in times of danger.

If a man do really look to God in a day of trouble and fear as to the *Lord of hosts*, i. e. one that governs all the creatures, and all their actions; at whose beck and command all the armies of heaven and earth are, and then can rely upon the care and love of this God, as a child in danger of trouble reposes on, and commits himself with greater confidence to the care and protection of his father: O what peace, what rest, must necessarily follow upon this! Who would be afraid to pass through the midst of armed troops and regiments, whilst he knows that the general of the army is his own father? The more power this filial fear of God obtains in our hearts, the less will you dread the power of the creature. When the Dictator ruled at Rome, then all other officers ceased; and so, in a great measure, will all other fears, where the fear of God is dictator in the heart. This is the remedy.

3. And to enable us to apply this remedy in the worst and most difficult times, we have a singular encouragement proposed: if we will thus sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, by such an acknowledgment of, and child-like dependence on him in times of danger, then he will be to us for a *sanctuary, Asyli loco*, i. e. he will surely protect, defend, and provide for us in the worst times and cases\*; then

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\* *Præstabit vos inaccessos, et inviolabiles ab his regibus.*—He will render you inaccessible, and preserve you from being violated by these kings.

will the Lord “create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, “and upon her assemblies, a cloud, and smoke by day, and the “shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall “be a defence, and there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the “day-time, from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a “covert from the storm and from rain.” Let the winds roar, the rain beat, the lightnings flash, you are in safety, and have a good roof over your heads. Hence these two points of doctrine offer themselves:

Doct. 1. *That the best men are too apt to be overcome with slavish fears, in times of imminent distress and danger.*

Doct. 2. *That the fear of God is the most effectual means to extinguish the sinful fear of men, and to secure us from danger.*

These two points take in the substance and scope of the text; but because I design to treat, in the following chapters, of the *kinds, nature, uses, causes, effects, and remedies* of fear, I shall not distinctly prosecute them, but proceed in this order, in the following chapters.

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## CHAP. II.

*Wherein the kinds and nature of fear are opened, and particularly the distracting, slavish fears of creatures.*

Sect. I. **T**HERE is a threefold fear found in man, viz.

1. Natural. 2. Sinful. 3. Religious fear.

1. Natural fear, of which all are partakers that partake of the common nature, not one excepted.

*Natural fear is the trouble or perturbation of mind, from the apprehension of approaching evil, or impending danger.*

The word *φειδος* comes from a verb\* that signifies flight; this is not always sinful, but it is always the fruit and consequent of sin. Since sin entered into our nature, there is no shaking off fear. No sooner had Adam transgressed but he feared and fled, hiding himself among the trees of the garden, Gen. iii. 8. When he had transgressed the covenant, he presently feared the execution of the curse: first he *eats*, then he *hides*; and this afflictive passion is from him transmitted, and derived to all his children.

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\* *φειδομαι* fugio, perfect. med. *πεφοβα*, inde *φοβος* timor, fuga.

To this natural fear it pleased our Lord Jesus Christ to subject himself in the days of his flesh; he was afraid, yea, he was sore amazed, Mark xiv. 33. for though his human nature was absolutely free from sin, yet he came in the "likeness of sinful flesh," Rom. viii. 3.

This fear creates great trouble and perturbation in the mind, 1 John iv. 18. *Fear hath torment*; in proportion to the danger, is the fear; and in proportion to the fear, the trouble and distraction of the mind: if the fear be exceeding great, reason is displaced, and can conduct us no farther, as the Psalmist speaks of mariners in a storm, "they are at their wits end," Psal. cvii. 27. or as it is varied in the \* margin, all wisdom is swallowed up. And this is the meaning of Deut. xxviii. 25. that they should go out against their enemies one way, and "flee before them seven ways," i. e. so great shall be the fright and distraction, that they shall attempt now one way, then another, striving every way, but liking none; for fear so far betrays the succours of reason, that their † counsels are always in uncertainty, and at a loss, and the usual voice of a man in this condition is, *I know not what to do, I know not which way to turn.*

Evil is the object of fear, and the greater the evil is, the stronger the fear must needs be, and therefore the terrors of an awakened and terrified conscience must be allowed to be the greatest of terrors, because in that case a man hath to do with a great and terrible God, and is scared with apprehensions of his infinite and eternal wrath, than which, no evil is or can be greater. You see at what height Christ's conflict wrought with it when it made him sweat as it were, great clots of blood. Of all temporal evils death is the greatest, and therefore Job calls it *the King of terrors*, Job xviii. 14. or the most terrible of terribles. Thuanus ‡ relates two strange instances of the fear of death: "One of a certain captain " who was so terrified with the fear of death, that he poured out " a kind of bloody sweat from all parts of his body. Another is of " a young man condemned for a small matter by || Sixtus Quintus, who was so vehemently terrified with the fears of death, " that he shed a kind of bloody tears." These are strange and terrible effects of fear, but vastly short of what Christ felt and suffered, who grappled with a far greater evil than the terrors of death, even the wrath of an incensed God poured out, to the full, and that immediately upon him.

\* *Rector in incerto est, nec quid fugiatve petatve, invenit.*—Ovid.

† *Pavidi semper consilia in incerto.*

‡ *Dux quidam indigno mortis metu, adeo concussus fuit, ut sanguineum sudorem toto corpore fulsit,* Hist. lib. 11.

|| *Juvenis ob levem causam a Sixto V. damnatus, præ doloris vehementia fertur lacrymas cumentas fuisse.* Lib. 30.

But yet evil, as evil, is rather the object of hatred than of fear, it must be an imminent or near approaching evil, which we see not how to escape or put by, that provokes fear, and rouses this lion. And therefore the saints in glory are perfectly freed from fear, because they are out of the reach of all danger: nor do we, that are here in the midst of evils, fear them till we see them approaching us, and we see not how to avoid them. To hear of fire, plague, or the sword in the Indies, doth not affright us, because the evil is so remote from us; it is far enough off, we are in no danger of it; but when it is in the town, much more when within our own dwellings, we tremble. Evil hurts us not by a simple apprehension of its nature, but of its union; and all propinquity is a degree of union, as a \* learned divine speaks. And it is worth observation, that all carnal security is maintained by putting evils at a great distance from us, as it is noted of those secure sensualists, Amos vi. 3. "They put far from them the evil day." The meaning is not that they did, or could put the evil one minute farther from them in reality, but only by imagination and fancy: they shut their own eyes, and would not see it, lest it should give an unpleasing interruption to their mirth; and this is the reason why death puts the living into no more fear, because it is apprehended as remote, and at an undetermined distance, whereas if the precise time of death were known, especially if that time were near, it would greatly scar and terrify.

This is the nature of natural fear, the infelicity of nature, which we all groan under the effects of: it is in all the creatures in some degree; but among them all, none suffer more by it than man, for hereby he becomes his own tormentor; nor is any torment greater than this when it prevails in a high degree upon us. Indeed all constitutions and tempers admit not the same degrees of fear; some are naturally courageous and stout, like the lion for magnanimity and fortitude; others exceeding timorous and faint-hearted, like the hare or hart, one little dog will make a hundred of them flee before him. Luther was a man of great courage and presence of mind in dangers, † Melancthon very timorous and subject to despondency. Thus the difference betwixt them is expressed in one of Luther's letters to him: "I am well nigh a secure spectator of things, and esteem not any thing these fierce and threatening Papists say. I much dislike those anxious cares, which, as thou writest, do almost consume thee." There might be as great a stock of grace in one as in the other, but Melancthon's grace had not the advantage of so stout and courageous a temper of body and mind as Luther's had. Thus briefly of natural fear.

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\* Dr. Reynolds.

† *Epist. ad. Melanct. Ann. 1549.*

*Sect. II.* There is a fear which is formally and intrinsically sinful, not only our infelicity, but our fault; not our simple affliction and burden, but our great evil and provocation; and such is the fear here dissuaded, called *their fear*, i. e. the fear wherewith carnal and unbelieving men do fear when dangers threaten them; and the sinfulness of it lies in five things.

1. In the spring and cause of it which is unbelief, and an unworthy distrust of God, when we dare not rely upon the security of a Divine promise, nor trust to God's protection in the way of our duty. This was the very case of that people, Isa. xxx. 15. "Thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, in returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not. But ye said, no, for we will flee upon horses; therefore ye shall flee: and we will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one," &c.

Thus stood the case: Sennacherib with a mighty host was ready to invade them; this puts them into a fright; in this distress God assures them, by the mouth of his prophet, that in "returning and rest they should be saved, in quietness and confidence should be their strength." The meaning is, never perplex yourselves with various counsels and projects to secure yourselves under the wings of Egypt or any other Protector, but with a composed, quiet and calm temper of mind, rest upon my power by faith, take my promises for your security, this shall be your salvation and your strength, more effectual to your preservation than armies, garrisons, or any creature-defence in the world; one act of faith shall do you better service than Pharaoh and all his forces can do.

But ye said no, *q. d.* we dare not trust to that, a good horse will do us more service at such a time than a good promise; Egypt is a better security in their eye than Heaven. This is the fruit of gross infidelity. And as wicked men do thus forsake God, and cleave to the creature in the time of trouble, so there is found a spice of this distrustfulness of God, producing fear and trouble, in the best of men. It was in the disciples themselves, Matth. viii. 26. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" A storm had befallen them at sea, and danger began to threaten them, and presently you find a storm within, their fears were more boisterous than the winds, and had more need of calming than the sea; and it was all from their unbelief, as Christ tells them; the less their faith, the greater their fear. If a man can but rely upon God in a promise, so far as he is enabled to believe, so far he will reckon himself well secured. \* Illyricus, in his catalogue of the Witnes-

ses, relates this remarkable passage of one Andreas Proles, a godly aged divine, who lived somewhat before Luther, and taught many points soundly, according to his light then. He was called to a Synod at Milan, and afterwards in the Lateran, where, opposing a proposition of the Pope about burdening the church with a new holiday, he was brought into much danger, and escaping very narrowly from Rome, he bought him a bow and weapons: but as he was riding, he began to bethink himself, that the cause was not his but God's, and not to be maintained with sword and bow; and if it were, yet what could such a decrepit old man do with weapons? upon which he threw away his weapons, committed himself, his cause, and his journey to God, relied upon his promises more than sword or bow, and came home safe, and afterwards died quietly in his bed.

2. The sinfulness of fear lies in the excess and immoderacy of it, when we fear more than we ought; for it may be truly said of our fears, as the Philosopher speaks of waters, *difficile suis terminis continentur*, it is hard to keep them within bounds; every bush is a bear, every petty trouble puts us into a fright; our fear exceeds the value and merit of the cause. It is a great sin to love or fear any creature above the rate of a creature, as if they were masters of all our temporal and eternal comforts. Thus when the men of Israel heard of the confederacy and conjunction of their enemies against them, the text saith, "their hearts were moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind," Isa. vii. 1. or as we use to say proverbially, like an *aspine leaf*: It is a sad sight to behold men shaking and quivering as the trees do on a windy day; yet thus did the house of David, partly through the remembrance of past calamities, but especially through incredulity in God's protecting care in their present and future dangers; yea, this is too often the fault of good men in creature-fear as well as in creature-love, to transgress the due bounds of moderation. It is noted of Jacob, though a man of much faith, and one that had the sweetest encouragement to strengthen it, both from former experiences, and God's gracious promises to be with him, yet when Esau was come nigh, he was "greatly afraid and distressed," Gen. xxxii. 7. It was but a little before, that God had graciously appeared to him, and sent a royal guard of angels to attend him, even two hosts or armies of angels, ver. 1, 2. and yet as soon as Esau approached him, he was afraid, yea greatly afraid, afraid and distressed, notwithstanding such an encouraging vision as this was.

3. The sinfulness of our fears lies in the inordinacy of them; to fear it more than we ought is bad enough, but to magnify its power above the power of a creature; to exalt the power of any creature by our fears, and give it such an ascendant over us, as

it had an arbitrary and absolute dominion over us, or over our comforts, to do with them what it pleased; this is to put the creature out of its own class and rank, into the place of God, and is therefore a very sinful and evil fear.

To trust in any creature, as if it had the power of a God to help us, or to fear any creature, as if it had the power of a God to hurt us, is exceeding sinful, and highly provoking to God: This inordinate trust is taxed and condemned, in Isaiah xxxi. 3. They would needs go down to Egypt for help, and trust in their horses and horsemen, because they were strong; *i. e.* in their opinion, they were able to secure them against all those dangers the prophet from the Lord's own mouth had threatened them with: but, to take them off from this sinful and inordinate dependence on the creature, he tells them, ver. 3. "Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit: when the Lord shall stretch forth his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they shall fall together."

*q. d.* It is a sinful and dangerous mistake for one creature to give that trust and dependence to another creature, which is due only to God; to look upon men as if they were gods, and horses as if they were spirits: all creatures, even the strongest, are but as the hop, the vine, or the ivy; if they clasp about the pole, the wall or the oak, they may be supported, as you may also by leaning upon God; but if they depend and entangle themselves one upon another, as you and the Egyptians do, you shall fail, and fall all together.

And, as one creature is apt inordinately and sinfully thus to trust and lean upon another, so there is as great a profaneness in the creatures inordinately to fear and dread each other, as if the creature feared were rather a god than a man, rather a spirit than flesh; and thus our fear magnifies and exalts the creature, and puts it, as it were, into the room and place of God. This was the sin which God rebuked in his own people, Isa. li. 12, 13. "I, even I, am he that comforteth thee: Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man who shall be made as grass? and forgettest the Lord thy maker," &c. See how fear exalts man, and depresseth God; it thinks upon the noxious power of men so much, that it forgets the saving power of God, as if that stood for nothing: thus a mortal worm, that shall perish as the grass, eclipses the glory of the great God, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth.

And this was the evil against which Christ cautioned his own disciples, in Matth. x. 28. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell;" *q. d.* Have a care

you never fear any man, be he armed with never so much power and rage: as if the power of making or marring you for ever were in his hands, as if you lay at the feet of his will and pleasure to be saved or ruined for ever: fear not him that can only touch your bodies, as if he could damn your souls; invest not any creature with the sovereign and incommunicable power of God.

4. The sinfulness of fear consists in the distracting influence it hath upon the hearts of men, whereby it discomposeth and unfits them for the discharge of their duties.

Fear sometimes puts men into such a hurry, and their thoughts into such disorder, that for the present they have scarce any succour or relief from their graces, or from their reason; for under an extraordinary fear both grace and reason, like the wheels of a watch, wound above its due height, stand still, and have no motion at all. It is rare to find a man of that largeness and constancy of heart and mind, in a day of fear, that was found in Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 2, 3. "Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, "There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea, on this side Syria, and behold they be in Hazazon-Tamar, which is Engedi; and Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord." He set himself, i. e. he composed and fixed his heart for prayer in the time of so great a fright and terrible alarm: but it is rare to find such constancy and evenness of mind as this; in like cases it is with most in great frights, as the prophet describes the condition of the Jews, Isa. xxii. 2, 3. when the city of Jerusalem was besieged, and the enemy came under the walls of it; that which a little before was the joyous city, or as some read, the revelling city, is now in such a panic fear, that it is full of stirs and tumults, some run up to the tops of the houses, either to hide or bewail themselves, or take a view of the dreadful enemy without; others prevent the sword of the enemy, and die by fear before-hand, their own apprehensions of misery killed them before the sword of any other enemy once touched them; but you read of none that ran into their closets to seek the Lord; the city was full of stirs, but not of prayers, alas, fear made them cry to the mountains, rather than to God, ver. 5. The best men find it hard to keep their thoughts from wandering, and their minds from distraction, in the greatest calm of peace, but a thousand times harder in the hurries and tumults of fear.

5. The sinfulness of fear consists in the power it hath to dispose and incline men to the use of sinful means to put by their danger, and to cast them into the hands and power of temptation. "The fear of man bringeth a snare," Prov. xxix. 25. or puts and lays a snare before him: Satan spreads the net, and fear, like the stalking-horse, drives men right into it. It was fear which drew Abra-

ham, that great believer, into the snare of dissimulation, to the great disparagement of religion; for it was somewhat an odd sight to see Abimelech, an Heathen, so schooling an Abraham for it, as he did, Gen. xx. 9. And for the same evil you find God chiding his people, in Isa. lvii. 11. "And of whom hast thou been afraid, or "feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me?" There is a double lie occasioned by fear, one in words, and another in deeds; hypocrisy is a lie done, a practical lie, and our church history abounds with sad examples of dissimulation through fear: it is Satan's great engine to make his temptations victorious and successful with men.

*Sect. III.* There is an holy and laudable fear, a fear which is our treasure, not our torment; the chief ornament of the soul, its beauty and perfection, not its infelicity or sin, *viz.* the awful filial fear of God; natural fear is a pure and simple passion of the soul; sinful fear is the disordered and corrupt passion of the soul; but this is the natural passion sanctified, and thereby changed and baptized into the name and nature of a spiritual grace. This fear is also mentioned in my text, and prescribed as an antidote against sinful fears; it devours carnal fears, as Moses' serpent did those of the enchanters. It is one of the sorest judgments to be in the fear of man day and night, Deut. xxviii. 65, 66, 67. and one of the sweetest mercies to be in the fear of God all the day long, Prov. xxiii. 17. The fear of man shortens our days, Isa. xxii. 34. but the fear of the Lord prolongeth our days, Prov. x. 27. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, Prov. xiv. 27. But the fear of man a fountain of mischiefs and miseries: By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil, Prov. xvi. 6. but, by the *fear of man* men run themselves into evil, Prov. xxix. 25.

This fear is a *gracious habit or principle planted by God in the soul, whereby the soul is kept under an holy awe of the eye of God, and from thence is inclined to perform and do what pleaseth him, and to shun and avoid whatsoever he forbids and hates.*

1. It is planted in the soul as a permanent and fixed habit; it is not of the natural growth and production of man's heart, but of supernatural infusion and implantation, Jer. xxxii. 40. "I will put "my fear into their inward parts." To fear man is natural, but to fear God is wholly supernatural.

2. This gracious fear puts the soul under the awe of God's eye, Psal. cxix. 161. "My heart standeth in awe of thy word." It is the reproach of the servants of men to be *eye-servants*, but it is the praise and honour of God's servants to be so.

3. This respect to the eye of God inclines them to perform and do whatsoever pleaseth him, and is commanded by him: Hence, fearing God, and working righteousness, are connected and linked

together, Acts x. 35. If we truly fear God, we dare not but do the things he commands; and if his fear be exalted in our hearts to an high degree, it will enable us to obey him in duties accompanied with deepest self-denial, Gen. xxii. 12. "Now I know thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

4. This fear engageth, and in some degree enableth the soul, in which it is, to shun and avoid whatsoever is displeasing to God, and forbidden by him; in this Job discovered himself a true fearer of God, he would not touch what God had forbidden, and therefore was honoured with this excellent character, "He was one that feared God, and eschewed evil," Job i. 3.

And thus of the several kinds of fear.



### CHAP. III.

*Shewing the various uses of Fear, both natural, sinful, and religious, in the government of the world by Providence.*

**H**AVING taken a brief view of the several kinds and sorts of fear that are found among men, our next work will be to open the uses of them in the government of this world: for one way or other they all subserve the most wise and holy purposes of God therein. And we will first enquire into.

#### I. *The use of natural fear,*

Which if we well consider, it will be found exceeding necessary and useful to make man a governable creature by law; and consequently the order, comfort, and tranquillity of the world necessarily depend upon it. How immorigerous and intractable would the corruptions of man's nature make him, uncapable of any moral restraint from the most flagitious and barbarous crimes, had not God planted such a passion as this in his nature, which, like a \* bridle, curbs in the corrupt propensions thereof. If fear did not clap its manacles and fetters upon the wild and boisterous lusts of men, they would certainly bear down all milder motives, and break loose from all ingenious bands of restraint; the world would inevitably be filled with disorders, tumults, rapines, thefts, murders, and all manner of uncleanness and unrighteousness, *nec hospes ab hospite*

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\* Fear is like a bridle by which the horse is governed: if this passion of fear is removed, all other restraints will be broken down. *Lavat. on Prov. xxix. 25.*

*tutus*, i. e. the lodger is not safe from the person entertaining him; \* men would become like the fishes of the sea, as the prophet complains, Habak. i. 14. where the greater swallow up a multitude of the smaller fry alive at one gulp; propriety could not be maintained in the world, no man's person could be safe or inviolate; power and opportunity to do mischief would measure out to men their lot and inheritance, and consequently all societies must disband and break up. We say, and the observation is sure, *He that fears not his own, may easily be master of another man's life.* It is the law and fear of punishment that keeps the world in order: men are afraid to do evil, because they are afraid to suffer it; they see the law hath inseparably linked penal and moral evils together; if they will presume upon the one, they must necessarily pull the other upon them too; and this keeps them in some order and decorum: there would be no order or security without law; but if laws had not annexed penalties to enforce them, and give them their sanction, as good there were no laws; they would have no more power to restrain the corruptions of men's hearts, than the new cords or green withs had to bind Samson. And yet, if the severest penalties in the world were annexed to, or appointed by the law, they could signify nothing to the ends of government without fear. This is that tender, sensible power or passion on which threatenings work, and so brings men under moral government and restraint, Rom. xiii. 3, 4. "Magistrates are a terror to evil works; wilt thou not then be afraid of the power? But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain." And by this means a world of evils is restrained and prevented in the world.

It was the custom and policy of the Persians, (I cannot say laudable) at the death of their kings, to give every man liberty for the space of five days to do what he would; and such mischiefs were done every-where by the unbridled lusts of men in those days, that it made the people long and pray for the instalment of their next king: it exceedingly endeared government to them. Blessed be God for law and government, for curbing by this means the raging lusts of the hearts of men, and procuring rest and comfort for us in the world this way.

## 2. *The use of sinful fear.*

This is formally evil and sinful in its own nature, as well as the

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\* An intelligent creature, as a *creature*, has a Superior, to whose providence and disposal it is subjected; and as it is *intelligent*, it is capable of moral government, by which it may be directed to good, and restrained from evil; and such a law is absolutely necessary to it, that it may live suitably to its nature. *Suarez of laws, book 1. c. 3.*

fruit of sin, and offspring of sinful nature ; yet the Lord knows how to over-rule in his providential government of the world to his own wise and holy purposes. And he doth so,

1. By making it his scourge to punish his enemies. If men will not fear God, they shall fear men ; yea, they shall be made a terror to themselves. And indeed it is a dreadful punishment for God to deliver a man up into the hands of his own fears. I think there is scarce a greater torment to be found in the world than for a man to be his own tormentor, and his mind made a rack and engine of torture to his body. We read in 2 Kings xvii. 25. that God sent lions among the people ; but certainly that is not so bad as for God to let loose our own fears upon us. No lion is so cruel as this passion, and therefore David esteemed it so great a deliverance to be delivered from all his fears, Psal. xxxiv. 4. It is a dreadful threatening which is recorded in Deut. xxviii. 65, 66, 67. against the disobedient and rebellious, “ Thou shalt find no ease, neither  
 “ shall the sole of thy foot have rest, but the Lord shall give thee  
 “ there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind,  
 “ and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear  
 “ day and night, and shalt have no assurance of thy life. In the  
 “ morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even ; and at even  
 “ thou shalt say, Would God it were morning, for the fear of thine  
 “ heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes  
 “ which thou shalt see.” When fear hath once seized the heart, you may see death’s colours displayed in the face. What a dismal life do they live, who have neither any peace by day, nor rest by night, but wearisome days and nights are appointed them ! The days of such men are tiresome days ; they wish for the night, hoping it may give them a little rest ; but their fears go to bed with them, their hearts pant and meditate terror ; and then, Oh that it were day again !

2. By fear God punisheth his enemies in hell : it is that *flagellum Dei*, terrible scourge of God, by which a great part of the torment of the damned is inflicted on them. Divines use to make this tripartite distinction of hell-torments, and tell us, God punishes the wicked there partly by remembrance of what is past, *viz.* the mercies and means they once had, but are there irrecoverably lost ; partly by the sense of things present, even the wrath of God overlaying soul and body ; and partly by the fear of what is to come ; and sure this is not the least part of the misery of these wretched cast-aways. Oh that fearful \* expectation of fiery indignation ! more and more of God’s wrath still coming on, as the waves of the

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\* The mind, anxious about futurity, is in a calamitous state, and miserable before miseries come. *Sen.*

sea, thrusting forward one on another; yea, this is that which makes the devils tremble, James ii. 19. *φρῆσις*, the word signifies such a noise as the roar of the sea, or the roaring of the waves when they break themselves against the rocks, and this is occasioned by the fears which are continually held as a whip over them.

3. Providence makes use of the slavish fears and terrors of wicked men, to dissipate and scatter them, when they are combined, and confederated against the people of God; by these have they been routed, and put to flight, when there hath been no other visible power to do it: it is said Psalm lxxviii. 55. God cast out the heathen before his people Israel; and by what means were those mighty nations subdued? Not by the strength of multitudes of the Israelites, but by their own fears; for it is said, Josh. xxiv. 11, 12. "The Lord sent the hornet before them, which drave them out †." These hornets were the fears and terrors of their own guilty and presaging minds, which buzzed and swarmed in their own breasts, and stung them to the heart, worse than the swords of the Israelites could do. "‡ Theodoret relates a memorable story of Saporez king of Persia, who had besieged many Christians in the city Nisibis, and put them to great straits, so that little hopes of safety were left them; but in the depth of their distress, God sent an army of hornets, and gnats, among their enemies, which got into the trunks of their elephants, and ears, and nostrils of their horses; which so enraged them, that they brake their harness, cast their riders, and put them all to the rout, by which providence the Christians escaped." These hornets were terrible to them, but fears, which are hornets in a figure, are ten thousand times more terrible; they will quell, and sink the very hearts of the stoutest men; yea, they will quickly make those that in their pride and haughtiness, took themselves rather to be gods, and almighty powers, to know themselves to be but men, as it is, Psal. ix. 20. "Put them in fear, O Lord, that they may know themselves to be but men." One fright will scare them out of a thousand fond conceits and idle dreams.

### 3. *The use of religious fear.*

If God can make such fruit to grow upon such a bramble as the sinful, slavish fear of man is, what may we expect from religious

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† Hornets, by a metaphor, signify sudden fear which was raised in their guilty minds by God. *Lavat. on the place.*

‡ *Sapores rex Pericarum cum urbem Nisibin, in qua erant Christiani, obsedisset; eamque affligeret, magna vis crabonum et culicum repente venit, et in promuscides cavas Elephantorum consedit, complevitque aures equorum, ita ut sessorum excusserint, et turbatos ordines in fugam converterint.* Hist. lib. 2. cap. 30.

fear, a choice root of his own Spirit's planting? The uses and benefits hereof are innumerable, and inestimable; but I must contract, and will only instance in three special uses of it.

1. By this fear the people of God are excited to, and confirmed in the way of their duty. Eccles. xii. 13. "Fear God, and keep his commandments." It is, *custos utriusque tabulae*, the keeper of both tables, because the duties of both tables are influenced by it. It is this fear of God that makes us have a due respect to all his commands, and it is as powerful to confirm us in, as it is to excite us to our duties. Jer. xxxii. 40. "I will put my fear into their inwards, and they shall not depart from me." Look, as he that soweth doth not regard the winds, but goes on in his labour, whatever weather the face of heaven threatens; so he that fears God, will be found in the way of his duty, let the aspect of the times be never so lowring and discouraging: and, truly, this is no small advantage, in times of frights and distractions. Slavish fear sets a man upon the devil's ground, religious fear upon God's ground: And, how vast an odds is there in the choice of our ground, when we are to *endure a great fight of affliction!*

2. Another excellent use of this fear is, to preserve the purity and peace of our consciences, by preventing grief and guilt therein, Prov. xvi. 6. "The fear of the Lord is to depart from evil." See how it kept Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 9. and Nehemiah, chap. v. 15. And this benefit is invaluable, especially in a day of outward calamity and distress. Look, in what degree the fear of God prevails in our hearts, answerable thereunto will the serenity, peace, and quietness of our consciences be; and proportionable unto that will our strength and comfort be in the evil day, and our courage and confidence to look dangers in the face.

3. To conclude, a principal use of this fear of God is, to awaken us to make timely provisions for future distresses, that whensoever they come, they may not come by way of surprize upon us. Thus "Noah, being moved with fear, prepared an ark," Heb. xi. 7. It was the instrument of his and his family's salvation. Some men owe their death to their fears, but good men, in a sense, owe their lives to their fears; sinful fears have slain some, and godly fears have saved others. "A wise man feareth and departeth from evil, (saith Solomon) but a fool rageth and is confident. His fears give him a timely alarm before the enemy fall into his quarters, and beat them up; by this means he hath time to get into his chambers of security and rest before the storm fall: But the fool "rageth, and is confident," he never fears till he begin to feel; yea, most time he is past all hope before he begin to have any fear.

These are some of the uses God makes of the several kinds of fear.

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CHAP. IV.

*Wherein the spring and causes of sinful fear are searched out, and the evils of such fears thence discovered.*

*Sect. 1.* **H**AVING shewn before, the kinds and uses of fear; it remains, that next we search out the springs from which these waters of Marah are derived and fed. And,

*Cause 1. First,* We shall find the sinful fears of most good men to spring out of their ignorance, and the darkness of their own minds; all darkness disposes to fear, but none like intellectual darkness. You read, Cant. iii. 8. how Solomon's life-guard had every man his sword upon his thigh, *because of fear in the night.* The night is the frightful season, in the dark every bush is a bear; we sometimes smile by day, to see what silly things those were that scared us in the night. So it is here; were our judgments but duly informed, how soon would our hearts be quieted?

Now there is a five-fold ignorance, out of which our fears are generated:

1. Ignorance of God: Either we know not, or at least do not duly consider his Almighty Power, vigilant care, unspotted faithfulness, and how they are all engaged, by covenant, for his people. This ignorance, and inconsiderateness, lay at the root of their fears, Isa. xl. 27, 28. "My way (saith Zion) is hid from the Lord, and my judgment passed over from my God:" Words importing a suspicion that God hath left her out of the account of his providence, and the catalogue of those whom we would look after, and take care for.

But were it once thoroughly understood and believed, what power there is in God's hand to defend us, what tenderness in his bowels to commiserate us, what faithfulness in all the promises, in which they are made over to us, O how quiet and calm would our hearts be! Our courage would quickly be up, and our fears down.

2. Our ignorance of men generate our fears of men; we fear them, because we do not know them; if we understood them better, we would fear them less; we over-value them, and then fright at them. They say the lion is painted more fierce than he is; I am sure our fancy paints out man more dreadful than indeed he is; if wicked men, especially if multitudes of wicked men be con-

federated against us, our hearts fail, and presently apprehend inevitable ruin. "The floods of the ungodly made me afraid," saith David, i. e. the multitudes of them which he thought, like a flood or mighty torrent of water, must needs sweep away such a straw, such a feather, as he was, before them; but, in the mean time, we know or consider not that they have no power against us, but what is given them from above, and that it is usual with God to cramp their hands, and clap on the bands of restraint upon them, when their hearts are fully set in them to do mischief: did we see and consider them as they are in the hand of our God, we should not tremble at them as we do.

3. Ignorance of ourselves, and the relation we have to God, creates slavish fears in our hearts, Isa. li. 12. for did believers but thoroughly understand how dear they are to God, what relations they sustain to him, of what account and value they are in his eyes, and how well they are secured by his faithful promises and gracious presence, they would not start and tremble at every noise and appearance of danger, as they do. God reckoned it enough to cure all Abraham's sinful fears, when he told him how his God stood engaged for his defence. Gen. xv. 1. "Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield."

And noble Nehemiah valued himself in times of danger and fear, by his interest in God, as his words import, Neh. vi. 11. The conspiracy against him was strong, the danger he and the faithful with him at that time were in, was extraordinary; some, therefore advised to flee to the temple, and barricado themselves there, against the enemy: But Nehemiah understood himself better; *Should such a man as I flee? And who, being as I am, should flee?* saith he, q. d. A man so called of God to this service, a man under such promises, a man of such manifold and manifest experiences, should such a man flee? Let others, who have no such encouragements, flee if they will; for my part, I will not flee. I remember it was an argument used by \*Tertullian, to quiet the fears, and stay the flight of Christians in those bloody times: Art thou afraid of a man, O Christian! when devils are afraid of thee, as a prisoner of his judge, and whom the world ought to fear, as being one that shall judge the world. O that we could, without pride and vanity, but value ourselves duly, according to our Christian dignities and privileges, which, if ever it be necessary to count over and value, it is in such times of danger and fear, when the heart is so prone to dejection and sinking fears.

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\* Art thou afraid of a man, O Christian! who should be feared by angels, since thou art to judge angels; who shouldst be feared by devils, since thou hast got power over devils; who shouldst be feared by all the world, since all the world is to be judged by thee. *Tertul. on Fear.*

4. Ignorance of our dangers and troubles, causes our frights and terrors, we mistake them, and therefore are frightened at them: we are ignorant of two things in our troubles among others, viz.

1. The comforts that are in them.
2. The outlets and escapes from them.

There is a vast odds betwixt the outward appearance and face of trouble, and the inside of it; it is a lion to the eye at a distance, but open it, and there is honey in its belly. Paul and Silas met that in a prison which made them to sing at mid-night, and so have many more since their day.

And as we are not ignorant of the comforts that are sometimes found in our troubles, so of the outlets and doors of escape, God can, and often doth open out of trouble; "To God the Lord, belong the issues from death," Psal. lxxviii. 20. "He knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation," 2 Pet. ii. 9. He can, with every temptation, make a way to escape, 1 Cor. x. 13. the poor captive exiles reckoned upon nothing, but dying in the pit, making their graves in the land of their captivity, Isa. li. 14. for they could think upon none, but the usual methods of deliverance, power, or price, and they had neither; little did they dream of such immediate influences of God upon the king's heart, to make him dismiss them, freely, contrary to all rules of state policy, Isa. xlv. 12.

5. But especially the fears of good men arise out of their ignorance and inconsiderateness of the *covenant of grace*. If we were better acquainted with the nature, extent, and stability of the *covenant*, our hearts would be much freed thereby from these tormenting passions; this covenant would be a *panacea*, an universal remedy against all our fears, upon spiritual, or temporal accounts, as will be made evident hereafter in this discourse.

*Cause 2.* Another cause and fountain of sinful fear, is guilt upon the conscience. A servant of sin cannot but, first or last, be a slave of fear; and they that have done evil, cannot chuse but expect evil. No sooner had Adam defiled and wounded his conscience with guilt, but he presently trembles and hides himself: So it is with his children; God calls to Adam, not in a threatening, but gentle dialect; not in a tempest, but in the cool of the day; yet it terrifies him, there being in himself, *mens. conscia facti*, a guilty and condemning conscience, Gen. iii. 8. "It is\* Seneca's observation, that a guilty conscience is a terrible whip and torment to the sinner, perpetually lashing him with solicitous

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\* *Male facinorum conscientia flagellari, et plurimum illi tormentorum esse, eo quo perpetuo illam sollicitudo urget, ac verberat quod sponsoribus securitatis suae non potest credere.* Senec. Epist. 97.

“ thoughts and fears, that he knows not where to be secure, nor dare he trust to any promises of protection, but distrusts all, doubts, and is jealous of all.” Of such it is said, Job xv. 21. that a *dreadful sound is in their ears*; noting not only the effects of real, but also of imaginary dangers: His own presaging mind, and troubled fancy, scares him, where no real danger is, suitable to that, Prov. xxviii. 1. *The wicked fleeth when none pursues, but the righteous is bold as a lion.* Just as they say of sheep, that they are affrighted by the clattering of their own feet, when once they are set a running; so is the guilty sinner with the noise of his own conscience, which sounds nothing in his ears but misery, wrath, and hell. We may say of all wicked men in their frights as Tacitus \* doth of *tyrants*, “ That if it were possible to open their inside, their mind and conscience, many terrible stripes and wounds would be found there:” And it is said, Isa. xxxiii. 14. the sinners in Zion are afraid, trembling taketh hold of the hypocrite. Fear and trembling as naturally rise out of guilt, as the sparks do out of a fiery charcoal. Histories abundantly furnish us with sad examples of the truth of this observation. Cataline, that monster of wickedness, would start at any sudden noise, being haunted with the furies of his own evil conscience. Charles IX. after his bloody and barbarous massacre of the Protestants, could neither sleep nor wake without music to divert his thoughts. And our Richard III. after the murder of his two innocent nephews, saw divers images or shapes like devils in his sleep, pulling and hauling him. Mr. Ward tells us of a Jesuit in Lancashire, who being followed by one that had found his glove, out of no other design but to restore it to him, but being pursued by his own guilty conscience also, he leaped over the next hedge, and was drowned. And remarkable is that which Mr. Fox relates of cardinal Crescen- tius, who fancied the devil was walking in his chamber, and sometimes couching under his table, as he was writing letters to Rome against the Protestants. *Impius tantum metuit, quantum nocuit*: so much mischief as conscience tells them they have done, so much it bids them expect. Wolsius tells us of one John Hofmeister who fell sick with the very terrors of his own conscience in his inn, as he was travelling towards Aspurge in Germany, and was frighted by his own conscience to that degree, that they were fain to bind him in his bed with chains; and all that they could get from him was, *I am cast away for ever, I have grievously wounded my own conscience.*

To this wounded and trembling conscience is opposed the spirit of a sound mind, mentioned 2 Tim. i. 7. “ God hath not given

\* *Si recludantur mentes tyrannorum, posse aspici lantatus et ictus.* Annal.

“us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind:” A sound mind is, in this place, the same thing with a pure and peaceable conscience, a mind or conscience not infirm or wounded with guilt, as we say a sound or hale body, which hath no disease attending it, such a mind is opposed to the spirit of fear; it will make a man bold as a lion;

—*Nil conscire sibi, nulla pallescere culpa,  
Hic murus aheneus esto.*— Hor. l. 1. ep. 1.

By this thy brazen bulwark of defence,  
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence,  
Nor e'er turn pale with guilt.—

An evil and guilty conscience foment fears and terrors three ways.

1. By aggravating small matters, and blowing them up to the height of the most fatal and destructive evils; so it was with Cain, Gen. iv. 14. “Every one that meets me will slay me.” Now every child was a giant in his eye, and any body he met his over-match. A guilty conscience gives a man no sight of his enemy, but through a magnifying or multiplying glass.

2. It begets fears, by interpreting all doubtful cases in the worst sense that can be fastened upon them: *Pessimus in dubiis augur timor*. If the swallows do but chatter in the chimney, Bessus interprets it to be a discovery of his crime, that they are telling tales of him, and saying, Bessus killed a man. Nay,

3. If a guilty conscience hath nothing to aggravate and magnify, nor any doubtful matter to interpret in a frightful sense, it can, and often doth create fears and terrors out of nothing at all: the rules of fear are not like the rules in arithmetic, where many nothings make nothing, but fear can make something out of nothing, yea, many things, and great things out of nothing at all, Psal. liii. 5. *there were they in great fear where no fear was*; here was a great fear raised or created out of nothing at all; had their fear been examined and hunted home to its original\*, it would have been found a pure creature of fancy, a *chimera* having no *fundamentum in re*, no other foundation but a troubled fancy, and a guilty conscience; thus it was with Pashur, he was a very wicked man, and a bitter enemy to the prophet Jeremiah, and if there be none to fright and terrify him abroad, rather than he shall want it, he shall be a terror to himself, Jer. xx. 3, 4. he was his own bugbear, afraid of his own shadow; and truly this is a great plague and misery; he that is a terror to himself, can no more flee from terrors than he can flee from himself. Oh, the efficacy of conscience! how doth it arrest the stoutest sinners, and make them tremble, when

\* In time of fear and danger, objects of terror appear to those who are terrified, more numerous and greater than they are in reality; as such things are then more credulously believed, and more easily imagined. *Cicero*.

there is no visible external cause of fear! *Nemo, se judice, nocens absolvitur*: i. e. No guilty man is absolved, even when himself acts the part of the judge.

*Objection 1.* But may not a good man, whose sins are pardoned, be affrighted with his own fancies, and scared with his own imaginations?

*Solution.* No doubt he may, for there is a twofold fountain of fears, one in the body, another in the soul, one in the constitution, another in the conscience; it is the affliction and infelicity of many pardoned and gracious souls, to be united and married to such distempered and ill-habited bodies, as shall afflict them without any real cause from within, and wound them by their own diseases and distempers; and these wounds can no more be prevented or cured by their reason or religion, than any other bodily disease, suppose an ague or fever, can be so cured. Thus \* physicians tell us, when adust choler or melancholy overflows and abounds in the body, as in the hypochondriacal distempers, &c. what sad effects it hath upon the mind as well as upon the body, there is not only a sad and fearful aspect or countenance without, but sorrow, fear, and afflicting thoughts within; this is a sore affliction to many good men, whose consciences are sprinkled with the blood of Christ from guilt, but yet God sees good to clog them with such affliction as this for their humiliation, and for the prevention of worse evils.

*Object. 2.* But many bold and daring sinners are found, who, notwithstanding all the guilt with which their consciences are loaded, can look danger in the face without trembling, yea, they can look death itself, the king of terrors, in the face, with less fear than better men.

*Sol.* True, but the reason of that is from a spiritual judgment of God upon their hearts and consciences, whereby they are hardened, and seared as with a hot iron, 2 Tim. iv. 2. and so conscience is disabled for the present to do its office; it cannot put forth its efficacy and activity now, when it might be useful to their salvation, but it will do it to purpose hereafter, when their case shall be remediless.

*Cause 3.* We see what a forge of fears a guilty conscience is; and no less is the sin of unbelief the real and proper cause of most distracting and afflictive fears; so much as our souls are empty of faith, they are, in times of trouble, filled with fear: We read of some that have died by no other hand but their own fears; but we never read of any that died by fear, who were once brought

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\* Fernel. *Patliol. lib. 2. cap. 16. Corporis habitus siccus et macilentus, aspectus, inconstans, horridus ac mæstus, in morbis animi metus et mæstitia, taciturnitas, sollicitudo, inanis rerum commentatio somnus turbulentus, horrendus, insomnis, fluctuans, et agitata spectris rerum nigrarum, &c.*

to live by faith: if men would but dig to the root of their fears, they would certainly find unbelief there, Matth. viii. 26. *Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith!* The less faith, still the more fear: Fear is generated by unbelief, and unbelief strengthened by fear, as in nature there is an observable *κυκλογενησις*, circular generation, vapours beget showers, and showers new vapours; so it is in things moral, and therefore all the skill in the world can never cure us of the disease of fear, till God first cure us of our unbelief? Christ therefore took the right method to rid his disciples of their fear, by rebuking their unbelief. The remains of this sin in God's own people are the cause and fountain of their fears, and more particularly to shew how fear is generated by unbelief, let a few particulars be heedfully adverted to.

1. Unbelief weakens and stumbles the assenting act of faith, and thereby cuts off from the soul, in a great measure, its principal relief against danger and troubles. It is the use and office of faith to realize to the soul the invisible things of the world to come, and thereby encourage it against the fears and dangers of the present world: Thus *Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured, as seeing him that is invisible*, Heb. xi. 27. If this assenting act of faith be weakened or staggered in the soul, if once invisibles seem uncertainties, and visibles the only realities, no wonder we are so scared and frightened when these visible and sensible comforts are exposed and endangered, as they often are and will be in this mutable world. That man must needs be afraid to stand his ground that is not thoroughly persuaded the ground he stands on is firm and good; it is not to be wondered that men should tremble, who seem to feel the ground shake and reel under them.

2. Unbelief shuts up the refuges of the soul in the divine promises, \* and by leaving it without those refuges, must needs leave it in the hand of fears and terrors. That which fortifies and emboldens a Christian in evil times, is his dependence upon God for a protection, Psal. cxliii. 9. *I fly unto thee to hide me*. The cutting off this retreat (which nothing but unbelief can do) deprives the soul of all those succours and supports which the promises afford, and consequently fills the heart with anxiety and fear.

3. Unbelief makes men negligent and careless in providing for troubles before they come, and so brings them by way of surprise upon them: and the more surprising any evil is, the more frightful it is always found to be: we cannot think that Noah was so affrighted at the flood, when it began to swell above all the hills and mountains, as all the rest of the world were; nor was there

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\* *Multa fidem promissa levant*, i. e. Many promises support faith.

any reason that he should, having foreseen it by faith, and made provision for it, Heb. xi. 7. *By faith Noah, being warned of God, prepared an ark.* \* Augustine relates a very pertinent and memorable story of Paulinus, bishop of Nola, who was a very rich man both in goods and grace: he had much of the world in his hands, but little of it in his heart; and it was well there was not, for the Goths, a barbarous people, breaking into that city, like so many devils, fell upon the prey; those that trusted to the treasures which they had, were deceived and ruined by them, for the rich were put to tortures to confess where they had hid their monies: This good bishop fell into their hands, and lost all he had, but was scarce moved at the loss, as appears by his prayer, which my author relates thus: *Lord, let me not be troubled for my gold and silver: thou knowest it is not my treasure; that I have laid up in heaven, according to thy command. I was warned of this judgment before it came, and provided for it; and where all my interest lies, Lord, thou knowest.*

Thus Mr. Bradford, when the keeper's wife came running into his chamber suddenly, with words able to have put the most men in the world into a trembling posture: Oh, Mr. Bradford! I bring you heavy tidings; to-morrow you must be burned, and your chain is now buying: He put off his hat, and said, *Lord, I thank thee; I have looked for this a great while, it is not terrible to me; God make me worthy of such a mercy.* See the benefit of a prospect of, and preparation for sufferings!

4. Unbelief leaves our dearest interests and concerns in our own hands, it commits nothing to God, and consequently must needs fill the heart with distracting fears when imminent dangers threaten us. Reader, if this be thy case, thou wilt be a Magor Missabib, surrounded with terrors, whensoever thou shalt be surrounded with dangers and troubles. Believers in this, as well as in many other things, have the advantage of thee, that they have committed all that is precious and valuable to them into the hands of God by faith, to him they have committed the keeping of their souls, 1 Pet. iv. 19. and all their eternal concerns, 2 Tim. i. 16. And these being put into safe hands, they are not distracted with fears about other matter of less value, but can trust them where they have entrusted the greater, and enjoy the quietness and peace of a resigned soul to God, Prov. xvi. 3. But as for thee, thy life, thy liberty, yea, which is infinitely more than all these things, thy soul will lie upon thy hands in the day of trouble, and thou wilt not know what to do with them, nor which way to dispose of them. Oh! these be the dreadful straits and frights that unbelief leaves men in; it is a fountain of fears and distractions. And indeed it

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\* *Aug. de Civita. Dei, lib. 1. cap. 10.*

cannot but distract and confound carnal men, in whom it reigns, and is in its full strength, when sad experience shews us what fears and tremblings the very remains and reliques of this sin beget in the best men, who are not fully freed from it. If the unpurged reliques of unbelief in them can thus darken and cloud their evidences, thus greaten and multiply their dangers; if it can draw such sad and frightful conclusions in their hearts, notwithstanding all the contrary experience of their lives, as we see in that sad instance, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. what panic fears and unrelieved terrors must it put those men under, where it is in its full strength and dominion?

*Cause 4.* Moreover, we shall find many of our fears raised and provoked in us by the promiscuous administrations of providence in this world, when we read in scripture, “that there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, and all things come alike to all,” Eccl. ix. 2. that when the sword is drawn, God suffers it to cut off the righteous and the wicked, Ezek. xxi. 3. The sword makes no difference where God hath made so great a difference by grace; it neither distinguishes faces nor breasts, but is as soon sheathed in the bowels of the best as the worst of men. When we read how the same fire of God’s indignation devours the green tree and the dry tree, Ezek. xx. 47. how the baskets of good figs (the emblem of the best men of those times) were carried into Babylon as well as the bad, Jer. xxiv. 5. how the flesh of God’s saints hath been given for meat to the fowls of heaven, and to the beasts of the field, Psal. xcvi. 12. and how the wicked have devoured the man that is more righteous than himself, as it is Hab. i. 13. I say, when we observe such things in scripture, and find our observations confirmed by the accounts and histories of former and later ages; when we reflect upon the unspeakable miseries and butcheries of those plain hearted and precious servants of Christ, the Albigenses and Waldenses, how they fell as a prey to their cruel adversaries, notwithstanding the convincing simplicity and holiness of their lives, and all their fervent cries and appeals to God; how the very flower of the reformed Protestant interest in France was cut off with more than barbarous inhumanity, so that the streets were washed, and the canals of Paris ran with their precious blood; what horrid and unparalleled torture the servants of God felt in that cruel massacre in Ireland, a history too tragical for a tender-hearted reader to stay long upon; and how, in our own land, the most eminent ministers and Christians were sent to heaven in a fiery chariot in those dreadful Marian days: I say, when we read and consider such things as these, it rouses our fears, and puts us into frights, when we see ourselves threatened with the same enemies and danger; when the feet of them that carried out the dear servants of God in bloody

winding-sheets to their graves, stand at the door to carry us forth next, if providence loose their chain, and give them a permission so to do; and our fears, on this account, are heightened, by considering and involving these four things in our thoughts, which we are always more inclined to do, than the things that should fortify our faith, and heighten our Christian courage. As,

1. We are apt to consider, that as the same race and kind of men that committed these outrages upon our brethren, are still in being, and that their rage and malice is not abated in the least degree, but is as fierce and cruel as ever it was. Gal. iv. 29. "As then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." So it was then, and just so it is still: the old enmity is entailed upon all wicked men, from generation to generation. *Multi adhuc qui clavum sanguine Abelis rubentem adhuc circumferunt*, Cain's club is to this day carried up and down the world, stained with the blood of Abel, as Bucholtzer speaks. It is a rooted antipathy, and it runs in a blood, and will run as long as there are wicked men, from whom, and to whom it shall be propagated, and a devil in hell, by whom it will not fail to be exasperated and irritated.

2. We know also that nothing hinders the execution of their wicked purposes against us but the restraints of Providence. Should God loose the chain, and give them leave to act forth the malice and rage that is in their hearts, no pity would be shewn by them, or could be rationally expected from them, Psal. cxxiv. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. We live among lions, and them that are set on fire of hell, Psal. lvii. 4. The only reason of our safety is this, that he who is the keeper of the lions, is also the shepherd of the sheep.

3. We find, that God hath many times let loose these lions upon his people, and given them leave to tear his lambs in pieces, and suck the blood of his saints: how well soever he loves them, yet hath he often delivered them into the hands of their enemies, and suffered them to perpetrate and act the greatest cruelties upon them; the best men have suffered the worst things, and the histories of all ages have delivered down unto us the most tragical relations of their barbarous usage.

4. We are conscious to ourselves how far short we come in holiness, innocency, and spiritual excellency of those excellent persons who have suffered these things; and therefore have no ground to expect more favour from providence than they found: we know also there is no promise in the scriptures to which they had not as good a claim and title as ourselves. With us are found as great, yea, greater sins than in them; and therefore have no reason to please ourselves with the fond imaginations of extraordinary exemptions. If we think these evils shall not come in our days, it is

like many of them thought so too; and yet they did, and we may find it quite otherwise. Lam. iv. 12. "Who would have thought that the enemy should have entered in at the gates of Jerusalem?" The revolving of these, and such like considerations in our thoughts, and mixing our own unbelief with them, creates a world of fears, even in good men, till, by resignation of all to God, and acting faith upon the promises that assure us of the sanctification of all our troubles, as that Rom. viii. 28. God's presence with us in our troubles, as that Psal. xci. 15. his moderation of our troubles to that measure and degree, in which they are supportable, Isa. xxvii. 8. and the safe and comfortable outlet and final deliverance from them all at last; according to that in Rev. vii. 17. we do, at last, recover our hearts out of the hands of our fears again, and compose them to a quiet and sweet satisfaction in the wise and holy pleasure of our God.

*Cause 5.* Our immoderate love of life, and the comforts and conveniences thereof, may be assigned as a proper, and real ground, and cause of our sinful fears, when the dangers of the times threaten the one or the other: did we love our lives less, we should fear and tremble less than we do. It is said of those renowned saints, Rev. xii. 11. "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death."

They overcame not only the fury of their enemies without them, but their sinful fears within them; and this victory was achieved by their mortification to the inordinate and immoderate love of life. Certainly their own fears had overcome them, if they had not first overcome the love of life: it was not, therefore, without very great reason, that our Lord enjoined it upon all his disciples and followers, *to hate their own lives*, Luke xiv. 26. not absolutely, but in comparison and competition with him, i. e. to love it in so remiss a degree as to slight and undervalue it, as a poor low thing in such a comparison: he foresaw what sharp trials and sufferings were coming upon them, and he knew if the fond and immoderate love of life were not overcome and mortified in them, it would make them warp and bend under such temptations.

This was it that freed Paul from slavish fears, and made him so magnanimous and undaunted; indeed he had less fear upon his spirits, though he was to suffer those hard and sharp things in his own person, than his friends had, who only sympathized with him, and were not farther concerned, than by their own love and pity: he spake like a man who was rather a spectator than a sufferer. Acts xx. 24, 25. "None of these things move me," saith he. Great soul! not moved with bonds and afflictions! how did he attain so great courage and constancy of mind, in such deep and

dreadful sufferings! It was enough to have moved the stoutest man in the world, yea, and to have removed the resolutions of any that had not loved Christ better than his own life: but life was a trifle to him, in comparison with Jesus Christ, for so he tells us in the next words, "I count not my life dear unto me," q. d. It is a low-priced commodity in my eyes, not worth the saving, or regarding on such sinful terms. Oh! how many have parted with Christ, peace, and eternal life, for fear of losing that which Paul regarded not. And if we bring our thoughts closer to the matter, we shall soon find that this is a fountain of fears in times of danger, and that from this excessive love of life we are racked and tortured with ten thousand terrors. For,

1. Life is the greatest and nearest interest men naturally have in this world, and that which wraps up all other inferior interests in itself, Job ii. 4. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life." It is a real truth, though it came from the mouth of the father of lies; afflictions never touch the quick, till they touch the life; liberty, estates, and other accommodations in this world receive their value and estimation from hence; if life be cut off, these accidents perish, and are of no account, Gen. xxv. 32. "Behold, I am at the point to die, (said Esau) and what profit shall this birth-right do to me?"

2. Life being naturally the dearest interest of men in this world, the richest treasure, and most beloved thing on earth, to a natural man; that which strikes at, and endangers life, must, in his eyes, be the greatest evil that can befall him; on this account death becomes terrible to men; yea, as Job calls it, the *king of terrors*, Job xviii. 14. The black prince, or the prince of clouds and darkness, as some translate those words: Yea, so terrible is death upon this account, that the very fear of it hath sometimes precipitated men into the hands of it, as we sometimes observe in times of pestilence, the excessive fear of the plague hath induced it\*.

3. Though death be terrible in any shape, in the mildest form it can appear in; yet a violent and bloody death, by the hands of cruel and merciless men, is the most terrible form that death can appear in; it is now the king of terrors indeed, in the most ghastly representation and frightful form, in its scarlet robes, and terrifying formalities; in a violent death, all the barbarous cruelty that the

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\* Galen reports, that some have died suddenly through fear: It is not therefore a thing to be wondered at, in the opinion of Aristotle, and almost all others, that a man should die, through the fear of death. The fear of evil sometimes brings on men that which they dread; as is evident from the example of those whose fear has prevented the death appointed them by the judge. *Stern on death*, p. 167.

wit of our enemies can invent, or their malice inflict, is mingled together; in a violent death are many deaths converted into one, and it oftentimes approaches men by such slow and deliberate paces, that they feel every tread of its foot, as it advanceth towards them. *Moriatur, ut sentiat se mori*; Let him so die, (said the tyrant) that he may feel himself to die; yea, and how he dies by inch-meal, or slow, lingering degrees, and this is exceeding frightful, especially to those that are of most soft and tender nature and temper, who must needs be struck through with the terrors of death, except the Lord arm them against it with the assurance of a better life, and sweeten these bitter apprehensions by the foretastes of it. This is enough to put even sanctified nature into consternation, and make a very gracious heart to sink, unless it be so upheld by divine strength and comfort: And hence come many, very many of our fears and terrors, especially when the same enemies that have been accustomed to this bloody work, shall be found confederating and designing again to break in upon us, and act over again as much cruelty, as ever they have done upon our brethren in times past.

*Cause 6.* To conclude: many of our sinful fears and consternations flow from the influences of Satan upon our phantasies. They say winds and storms are oft-times raised by Satan, both by sea and land; and I never doubted, but the prince of the power of the air, by God's permission, can, and often doth put the world into great frights and disturbances by such tempests, Job i. 19. He can raise the loftiest winds, pour down roaring showers, rattle in the air with fearful claps of thunder, and scare the lower world with terrible flashes of lightning. And I doubt not but he hath, by the same permission, a great deal of influence and power upon the fancies and passions of men; and can raise more terrible storms and tempests within us, than ever we heard or felt without us: he can, by leave from God, approach our phantasies, disturb and trouble them exceedingly by forming frightful ideas there; for Satan not only works upon men mediately, by the ministry of their external senses, but by reason of his spiritual, angelical nature, he can have immediate access to the internal sense also, as appears by diabolical dreams; and by practising upon that power of the soul, he influences the passions of it, and puts it under very dreadful apprehensions and consternations. Now if Satan can provoke and exasperate the fury and rage of wicked men, as it is evident he can do, as well as he can go to the magazines and store-houses of thunder, lightnings, and storms: O, what inward storms of fear can he shake our hearts withal! and if God give him but a permission, how ready will he be to do it, seeing it is so conducive to his design; for by putting men into such frights, he at once

weakens their hands in duty, as is plain from his attempt this way upon Nehemiah, chap. vi. 13. and if he prevail there, he drives them into the snares and traps of his temptations, as the fisherman and fowler do the birds and fishes in their nets, when once they have flushed and frightened them out of their coverts. And thus you have some account of the principal and true causes of our sinful fears.

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## CHAP. V.

*Laying open the sinful and lamentable effects of slavish and inordinate fear, both in carnal and regenerate persons.*

Sect. I. **H**AVING taken a view in the former chapters of the kind and causes of fear, and seen what lies at the root of slavish fear, and both breeds and feeds it, what fruit can we expect from such a cursed plant, but gall and wormwood, fruit as bitter as death itself? Let us then, in the next place, examine and well consider these following and deplorable effects of fear, to excite us to apply ourselves the more concernedly to those directions that follow in the close of this treatise, for the cure of it. And,

*Effect 1.* The first effect of this sinful and exorbitant passion is distraction of mind and thoughts in duty: Both Cicero and Quintilian will have the word *tumultus*, a tumult, to come from *timor multus*, much fear, it is a compound of those two words; much fear raises great uproars and tumults in the soul, and puts all into hurries and distractions, so that we cannot attend upon any service of God with profit or comfort. It was therefore a very necessary mercy that was requested of God, Luke i. 74. "That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear." For it is impossible to serve God without distractions, till we can serve him without the slavish fear of enemies. The reverential fear of God is the greatest spur to duty, and choicest help in it, but the distracting fears of men will either wholly divert us from our duty, or destroy the comfort and benefit of our duties; it is a deadly snare of the devil to hinder all comfortable intercourse with God.

It is very remarkable, that when the apostle was giving his advice to the Corinthians about marriage in those times of persecution and difficulty, he commends them to a single life as most eligible: where it may be without sinful inconveniencies, and that principally for this reason, "That they might attend upon the Lord without distraction," 1 Cor. vii. 35. He foresaw what

straits, cares, and fears must unavoidably distract those in such times that were most clogged and incumbered with families and relations; when a man should be thinking, O, what shall I do now to get my doubts and fears resolved about my interest in Christ? How may I so behave myself in my sufferings as to credit religion, and not become a scandal and stumbling-block to others? His thoughts are taken up with other cares and fears: O, what will become of my wife and poor little ones? What shall I do with them and for them, to secure them from danger.

I doubt not but it is a great design of the devil to keep us in continual alarms and frights, and to puzzle our heads and hearts with a thousand difficulties, which possibly may never befall us, or if they do, shall never prove so fatal to us as we fancy them, and all this is to unfit us for our present duties, and destroy our comfort therein; for if by frights and terrors of mind he can but once distract our thoughts, he gains three points upon us to our unspeakable loss.

1. Hereby he will cut off the freedom and sweetness of our communion with God in duties, and what an empty shell will the best duties be, when this kernel is wormed out by such a subtle artifice? Prayer, as Damascen aptly expresses it, is *Ἀναβασις τῆς ψυχῆς* the ascension of the mind or soul to God; but distraction clips its wings; he can never offer up his soul and thoughts to God, that hath not possession of them himself: and he that is under distracting fears possesseth not himself. The life of all communion with God in prayer, consists in the harmony that is betwixt our hearts and words, and both with the will of God; this harmony is spoiled by distraction, and so Satan gains that point.

2. But this is not all he gains and we lose by distracting fears; for as they cut off the freedom and sweetness of our intercourse with God in prayer, so they cut off the soul from the succours and reliefs it might otherwise draw from the promises. We find when the Israelites were in great bondage, wherein their minds were distracted with fears and sorrows, they regarded not the supporting promises of deliverance sent them by Moses, Exod. vi. 3. David had an express and particular promise of the kingdom from the mouth of God which must needs include his deliverance out of the hand of Saul, and all his stratagems to destroy him; but yet, when imminent hazards were before his eyes, he was afraid, and that fear betrayed the succours from the promise, so that it drew a quite contrary conclusion, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul:" And again he is at the same point, Psal. cxvi. 11. "All men are liars," not excepting Samuel himself, who had assured him of the kingdom. This is always the property and nature of fear (as I shewed before) to make men distrust the best

security when they are in imminent peril: But oh! what a mischief is this to make us suspicious of the promises, which are our chief relief and support in times of trouble: Our fears will unfit us for prayer, they will also shake the credit of the promises with us; and so great is the damage we receive both ways, that it were better for us to lose our two eyes, than two such advantages in trouble. But,

3. This is not all; by our present fears we lose the benefit and comfort of all our past experiences, and the singular relief we might have from all that faithfulness and goodness of God, which our eyes have seen in former straits and dangers, the present fear clouds them all, Isa. li. 12, 13. Men and dangers are so much minded, that God is forgotten, even the God that hath hitherto preserved us, though our former fears told us, the enemy was daily ready to devour us. All these sweet reliefs are cut off from us by our distracting fears, and that at a time when we have most need of them.

*Effect 2.* Dissimulation and hypocrisy are the fruit of slavish fear; distraction you see is bad enough, but dissimulation is worse than distraction, and yet as bad as it is, fear hath driven good men into this snare; it will make even an upright soul warp and bend from the rules of that integrity and candour, which should be inseparable at all times from a Christian: of whom (saith God to his Israel) hast thou been afraid, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me? God finds falsehood, and charges it upon fear, q. d. I know it was against the resolutions of my people's hearts thus to dissemble, this certainly is the effect of a fright; who is he that hath scared you into this evil? It was Abraham's fear that made him dissemble to the reproach of his religion, Gen. xx. 2, 11. And indeed it was but an odd sight to see an heathen so schooling and reproving great Abraham about it, as he there doth.

It was nothing but fear that drew his son Isaac into the like snare, Gen. xxvi. 7. And it was fear that overcame Peter against his promise, as well as principle, to say concerning his dear Saviour, *I know not the man*, Matth. xxxi. 69. Had Abraham at that time remembered, and acted his faith freely upon what the Lord said to him, Gen. xvii. 1. *Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield*, he had escaped both the sin and the shame into which he fell, but even that great believer was foiled by his own fears; and certainly this is a great evil, a complicated mischief. For,

1. By these falls and scandals, religion is made vile and contemptible in the eyes of the world, it reflects with much reproach upon God and his promises, as if his word were not sufficient security for us to rely upon in times of trouble, as if it were safer trusting to our wit, yea, to sin, than to the promises.

2. It greatly weakens the hands of others, and proves a sore discouragement to them in their trials, to see their brethren faint for fear, and ashamed to own their principles; sometimes it hath this mischievous effect, but it is always improved by Satan and wicked men to this purpose. And,

3. It will be a terrible blow and wound to our own consciences, for such flaws in our integrity we may be kept waking and sighing many a night; O see the mischiefs of a timorous and faint spirit!

*Effect 3.* Slavish fears of the creature exceedingly strengthen our temptations in times of danger, and make them very efficacious and prevalent upon us, Prov. xxix. 25. *The fear of man brings a snare.* Satan spreads the net, but we are not within its reach, till our own fears drive us unto it; the recoiling of our spirits from some imminent dangers may cause the pulse of a true Christian to intermit and falter, how regular soever it beats at other times: this will cause great trepidation and timidity in men that are sincere and upright, and that is it that brings the snare over their souls. Aaron was a good man, and idolatry he knew to be a great sin, yet fear prevailed with that good man to give too much way to that great evil, Exod. xxxii. 22. *Thou knowest the people that they are set upon mischief,* saith he, in his own excuse in the matter of the golden calf, q. d. Lord, I durst do no otherwise at that time, the people were violently and passionately set upon it; had I resisted them, it might have cost me dear.

It was fear that prevailed with Origen to yield so far as he did in offering incense to the *idol*, the consideration of which fact brake his heart to pieces. It was nothing but fear that made David play the fool, and act so dishonourably as he did, 1 Sam. xxi. 12. Fear is a snare in which Satan hath caught as many souls as in any other of his stratagems and snares whatsoever.

It were easy to give instances, so many and so sad, as would enlarge this head even to tediousness, but I chuse rather to come to the particulars, wherein the danger of this snare of the devil consists. And

1. Herein lies the ensnaring danger of sinful fear, that it drives men out of their proper station, out of their place and duty, beside which there is none to be found, but what is Satan's ground. The subtle enemy of our salvation is aware that we are out of gunshot, beyond his reach, whilst we abide with God in the way of our duty, that the Lord is with us whilst we are with him, and there is no attempting our ruin under the wings of his protection. If ever, therefore, he meaneth to do any thing upon us, he must get us off that ground, and from under those wings; and there is nothing like fear to do this: then we are as the birds that are wandering

from their nests, Prov. xxvii. 8. or like Shimei out of his limits.

2. Fear is usually the first passion in the soul that beats a parley with the enemy, and treats with the tempter about terms of surrender; and, as the French proverb is, *The castle that parleys is half won.* It is fear that consults with flesh and blood, whilst faith is engaged with God for the supply of strength to endure the siege. We have a sad and doleful instance of this in Spira; he tells us how his own fears betrayed him by parleying with the tempter: for thus Mr. Bacon, in the history of his life, records the occasion of his fall. ‘Whilst Spira was tossing upon the restless waves of doubts, without guide to trust to, or haven to flee for succour, on a sudden, God’s Spirit assisting, he felt a calm, and began to discourse with himself in this manner:’ “Why wanderest thou thus in uncertainties? Unhappy man! cast away fear, put on thy shield of faith; where is thy wonted courage, thy goodness, thy constancy? Remember that Christ’s glory lies at the stake, suffer then without fear, and he will defend thee, he will tell thee what thou shalt answer; he can beat down all danger, bring thee out of prison, raise thee from the dead; consider Peter in the dungeon, the martyrs in the fire,” &c.

‘Now was Spira in reasonable quiet, being resolved to yield to those weighty reasons; yet holding it wisdom to examine all things, he consults also with flesh and blood: thus the battle renews, and the flesh begins in this manner:’ “Be well advised, fond man, consider reasons on both sides, and then judge: how canst thou thus overween thine own sufficiency, as thou neither regardest the examples of thy progenitors, nor the judgment of the whole church? Dost thou not consider what misery this day’s rashness will bring thee unto? Thou shalt lose all thy substance gotten with so much care and travail, thou shalt undergo the most exquisite torments that malice itself can devise, thou shalt be counted an heretic of all, and to close up all, thou shalt die shamefully. What thinkest thou of the loathsome, stinking dungeon, the bloody ax, the burning faggot? Are they delightful?” &c. Thus through fear he first parleyed with the tempter, consulted with flesh and blood, and at last fainted and yielded.

3. It is fear that makes men impatient of waiting God’s time and method of deliverance, and so precipitates the soul, and drives it into the snare of the next temptation, Isa. li. 14. “The captive hasteth to be delivered out of the pit.” Any way or means of escape that comes next to hand, saith fear, is better than to lie here in the pit; and when the soul is thus prepared by its own fears, it becomes an easy prey to the next temptation: by all which you see the mischief that comes by fear in times of danger.

*Effect 4.* Fear naturally produceth pusillanimity and cowardliness in men, a poor, low spirit, that presently faints and yields upon every slight assault. It extinguisheth all Christian courage and magnanimity wherever it prevails: and therefore you find it joined frequently in the scriptures with discouragement, Deut. i. 21. "Fear not, neither be discouraged; with fainting and trembling." Deut. xx. 3. "Let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble;" with dismayedness, Deut. xxxi. 6. and faint-heartedness, Isa. vii. 4. these are the effects and consequents of sinful fear. And how dangerous a thing it is to have our courage extinguished, and faintness of heart prevail upon us in a time when we have the greatest need and use of courage, and our perseverance, peace, and eternal happiness rely and depend so much upon it, let all serious Christians judge. It is sad to us, and dishonourable to religion, to have the hearts of women, as it is said of Egypt, Isa. xix. 16. when we should play the men, as the apostle exhorts us, 1 Cor. xvi. 13. We find, in all ages, those that have manifested most courage for Christ in time of trial, have been those whose faith hath surmounted fear, and whose hearts were above all discouragements from this world.

Such a man was Basil, as appears by his answer to Valens the emperor: who tempting him with offers of preferment, received this answer, *offer these things*, said he, *to children*: and when he threatened him with grievous sufferings, he replied; *Threaten these things to your purple gallants, that give themselves to pleasure, and are afraid to die.*

And this was the spirit of courage and magnanimity with which the generality of the primitive Christians were animated; they feared not the faces of tyrants, they shrunk not from the most cruel torments: and it redounded not a little to the credit of Christianity, when one of Julian's nobles, present at the tormenting of Marcus, bishop of Arethusa, told the apostate to his face, *We are ashamed, O emperor, the Christians laugh at your cruelty, and grow more resolute by it.* So Lactantius also testifies of them, *Our women and children, saith he, not to speak of men, overcame their torments, and the fire cannot fetch so much as a sigh from them.* If carnal fear once get the ascendant over us, all our courage and resolution will flag and melt away; we may suffer out of unavoidable necessity, but shall never honour Christ and religion by our sufferings.

*Effect 5.* Carnal fear is the very root of apostasy, it hath made thousands of professors to faint and fall away in the hour of temptation. It is not so much from the fury of our enemies without, as from our fears within, that temptations become victorious over us. From the beginning of fears, Christ dates the beginning of apostasy, Matt. xxiv. 9, 10. "Then shall they deliver you up to

“be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake, and then shall many be offended.” When troubles and dangers come to an height, then fears begin to work at an height too, and then is the critical hour; fears are high, and faith is low; temptation strong, and resistance weak: Satan knocks at the door, and fear opens it, and yields up the soul to him, except special aid and assistance come in seasonably from heaven; so long as we can profess religion without any great hazard of life, liberty, or estates, we may shew much zeal and forwardness in the ways of godliness: but when it comes to the sharps, *to resisting unto blood*, few will be found to own and assert it openly in the face of such dangers. The first retreat is usually made from a free and open, to a close and concealed practice of religion; not opening our windows, as Daniel did, to shew we care not who knows we dare worship our God, and are not ashamed of our duties, but hiding our principles and practice with all the art and care imaginable, reckoning it well if we can escape danger by letting fall our profession which might expose us to it: but if the inquest go on, and we cannot be secured any longer under this refuge, we must comply with false worship, and give some open signal that we do so, or else be marked out for ruin; then saith fear, Give a little more ground, and retreat to the next security, which is to comply seemingly with that which we do not allow, hoping God will be merciful to us and accept us, if we keep our hearts for him, though we are forced thus to dissemble and hide our principles. *Eamus ad communem errorem*, said Calderinus, when going to the mass, Let us go to the common error; and, as Seneca adviseth about worshipping the Roman gods, *In animo religionem non habeat, sed in actibus fingat*; let us make a semblance and shew of worshipping them, though our hearts give no religious respect to them. But if still the temptation hunts us farther, and we come to be more narrowly sifted and put to a severer test, by subscribing contrary articles, or renouncing our former avowed principles, and that upon penalty of death, and loss of all that is dear to us in this world; now nothing in all the world hazards our eternal salvation as our own fears will do; this is like to be the rock on which we shall split all, and make an horrible shipwreck both of truth and peace. This was the case of Cranmer, whose fears caused him to subscribe against the dictates of his own conscience, and cowardly to betray the known truth; and indeed there is no temptation in the world that hath overthrown so many, as that which hath been backed and edged with fear: the love of preferments and honours hath slain its thousands, but fear of sufferings its ten thousands.

*Effect 6.* Sinful fear puts men under great bondage of spirit,

and makes death a thousand times more terrible and intolerable than it would otherwise be to us. You read of some, Heb. ii. 16. "who through the fear of death were all their life-time subject to "bondage," i. e. it kept them in a miserable anxiety and perplexity of mind, like slaves that tremble at the whip which is held over them: thus many thousands live under the lash; so terrible is the name of Death, especially a violent death, that they are not able with patience to hear it mentioned; which gave the ground of that saying, *Præstat semel, quam semper mori*; it is better to die once than to be dying always. And surely there is not a more miserable life any poor creature can live than such a trembling life as this is.

For,

1. Such a bondage as this destroys all the comfort and pleasure of life; no pleasure can grow or thrive under the shadow of this cursed plant. *Nil ei beatum cui semper aliquis terror impendat*, saith Cicero \*, all the comforts we possess in this world are embittered by it. It is storied of Democles, a flatterer of Dionysius the tyrant, that he told him he was the happiest man in the world, having wealth, power, majesty, and abundance of all things: Dionysius sets the flatterer in all his own pomp at a table furnished with all dainties, and attended upon as a king, but with a heavy sharp sword hanging by a single horse hair right over his head; this made him quake and tremble, so that he could neither eat nor drink, but desired to be freed from that estate. The design was to convince him how miserable a life they live, who live under the continual terrors of impending death and ruin. It was a sore judgment which God threatened against them in Jer. v. 6. "A lion "out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evening shall "spoil them; a leopard shall watch over their cities, every one "that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces." What a miserable life must those people live who could not stir out of the city, but they presently were seized by lions, wolves, and leopards, that watched over them, and lurked in all the avenues to make them a prey! and yet this is more tolerable than for a man's own fear to watch continually over him.

2. And yet I could wish this were the worst of it, and that our fears destroyed no better comforts than the natural comforts of this life: but alas, they also destroy our spiritual comforts which we might have from God's promises, and our own and others' experiences which are incomparably the sweetest pleasures men have in this world: but as no creature-comfort is pleasant, so no promise relishes like itself to him that lives in this bondage of fear; when

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\* Cicero, Tusc. Q. 15.

the terrors of death are great, the consolations of the Almighty are small.

In the written word are found all sorts of refreshing, strengthening and heart-reviving promises prepared by the wisdom and care of God for our relief in the days of darkness and trouble; promises of support under the heaviest burdens and pressures, Isa. xli. 10. "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of my righteousness." A promise able to make the most timorous and trembling soul to shout with the joy of men in harvest, or as they that divide the spoil.

There are found the encouraging promises of defence and protection, Isa. xxvii. 2, 3. and Isa. xxxiii. 2. promises that lead us unto the Almighty power of God, and put us under the wings of his care in time of danger.

Promises of moderation and mitigation in the day of sharp affliction, that we may be able to bear it, Isa. xxvii. 8. 1 Cor. x. 13. Promises of deliverance out of trouble, if the malice of man bring us into trouble, the mercy of God will assuredly bring us out, Ps. xci. 14, 15. and Psal. cxxv. 3. And, which are most comfortable of all the rest, promises to sanctify and bless our troubles to our good, so that they shall not only cease to be hurtful, but, by virtue of the promise, become exceeding beneficial to us, Isa. xxvii. 9. Rom. viii. 28.

All these promises are provided by our tender Father for us against a day of straits and fears; and because he knew our weakness, and how apt our fears would be to make us suspect our security by them, he hath, for the performance of them, engaged his wisdom, power, care, faithfulness, and unchangeableness, 2 Pet. ii. 9. Isa. xxvii. 2, 3. 2 Cor. xvi. 9. 1 Cor. x. 13. Isa. xliii. 1, 2. In the midst of such promises so sealed, how cheerful and magnanimous should we be in the worst times! and say as David, Psal. xlix. 5. "Why should I fear in the day of evil?" Let those that have no God to flee to, no promise to rely upon, let them fear in the day of evil, I have no cause to do so. But even from these most comfortable refuges in the promises our own fears beat us; we are so scared that we mind them not so as to draw encouragement, resolution, and courage from them. Thus the shields of the mighty are vilely cast away.

So for all the choice records of the saints experiences in all former troubles and distresses, God hath, by a singular providence (aiming at our relief in future distresses) preserved them for us; if danger threaten us, we may turn to the recorded experiences his people have left us of the strange and mighty influence of his pro-

vidence upon the hearts of their enemies to shew them favour, Gen. xxxi. 29. Psal. xvi. 46. Jer. xv. 11.

There are also found the ancient rolls and records of the admirable methods of his people's deliverance, contrived by his infinite and unsearchable wisdom for them, when all their own thoughts have been at a loss, and their understandings posed and staggered, Exod. xv. 6. 2 Chron. xx. 12, 15. 2 Kings xix. 3, 7.

There are the recorded experiences of God's unspotted faithfulness, which never failed any soul that durst trust himself in its arms, Micah vi. 4, 5. Josh. vii. 9.

There are also to be found the records of his tender and most fatherly care for his children, who have been to him as a peculiar treasure in times of danger, Psal. xl. 17. Deut. xxxii. 10, 11, 12. Isa. xlix. 16. Job xlix. 16. and xxxvi. 7. 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

All these and many more supports and cordials are made ready to our hand, and provided for a day of trouble; but alas! to what purpose, if our own fears so transport us, that we can neither apply them, nor so much as calmly ponder and consider them.

3. To conclude; by these fears we are deprived of those manifold advantages we might gain by the calm and composed meditations of our own death, and the change it will make upon us; could we sit down in peace, and meditate in a familiar way upon death: could we look with a composed and well-settled mind into our own graves, and not be scared and frightened with the thoughts of death, and startle whenever we take it (though but in our thoughts) by the cold hand: To what seriousness would those meditations frame us? And what abundance of evils would they prevent in our conversations? The sprinkling of dust upon new writing prevents many a blot and blur in our books or letters: And could we thus sprinkle the dust of the grave upon our minds, it would prevent many a sin and miscarriage in our words and actions. But there is no profit or advantage redounding to us either from promises, experiences, or death itself, when the soul is discomposed and put into confusion by its own fears. And thus you see some of those many mischievous effects of your own fears.

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## CHAP. VI.

*Prescribing the rules to cure our sinful fears, and prevent these sad and woful effects of them.*

Sect. I. **W**E are now come to the most difficult part of the work, viz. the cure of the sinful and slavish fear of creatures in

times of danger, which if it might, through the blessing of God be effected, we might live at heart's ease in the midst of all our enemies and troubles, and, like the sun in the heavens, keep on our steady course in the darkest and gloomiest day. But before I come to the particular rules, it will be necessary, for the prevention of mistakes, to lay down three useful cautions about this matter.

1 *Caution.* Understand that none but those that are in Christ are capable to improve the following rules to their advantage. The security of our souls is the greatest argument used by Christ to extinguish our fears of *them that kill the body*, Matth. x. 28. But if the soul must unavoidably perish when the body doth, if it must drop into hell before the body be laid in the grave, if he that kills the body doth, by the same stroke, cut off the soul from all the means and possibilities of mercy and happiness for ever, what can be offered in such a case, to relieve a man against fear and trembling?

2 *Caution.* Expect not a perfect cure of your fears in this life; whilst there are enemies and dangers, there will be some fears working in the best hearts: If our faith could be perfected, our fears would be perfectly cured; but whilst there is so much weakness in our faith, there will be too much strength in our fears. And for those who are naturally timorous, who have more of this passion in their constitution than other men have, and those in whom melancholy is a rooted and chronical disease, it will be hard for them totally to rid themselves of fears and dejections, though in the use of such helps and means as follow, they may be greatly relieved against the tyranny of them, and enabled to possess their souls in much more tranquillity and comfort.

3 *Caution.* Whosoever expects the benefit of the following prescriptions and rules, must not think the reading, or bare remembering of them will do the work, but he must work them into his heart by believing and fixed meditation, and live in the daily practice of them. It is not our opening of our case to a physician, nor his prescriptions and written directions that will cure a man, but he must resolve to take the bitter and nauseous potion, how much soever he loath it; to abstain from hurtful diet, how well soever he loves it, if ever he expect to be a sound and healthful man. So it is in this case also. These things premised, the

1 *Rule.* The first rule to relieve us against our slavish fears, *Is seriously to consider, and more thoroughly to study the covenant of grace, within the blessed clasp and bond whereof all believers are.* I think the clear understanding of the nature, extent, and stability of the covenant, and of our interest therein, would go a great way in the cure of our sinful and slavish fears.

A covenant is more than a naked promise; in the covenant, God hath graciously consulted our weakness, fears, and doubts, and therefore proceeds with us in the highest way of solemnity, confirming his promises by oath, Heb. vi. 13, 17. and by his seals, Rom. vi. 11. Putting himself under the most solemn ties and engagements that can be, to his people, that from so firm a ratification of the covenant with us, we might have strong consolation, Heb. vi. 18. He hath so ordered it, that it might afford strong supports, and the most reviving cordials to our faint and timorous spirits, in all the plunges of trouble both from within and from without. In the covenant, God makes over himself to his people, to be unto them a God, Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. 10. Wherein the Lord bestows himself in all his glorious essential properties upon us, to the end that whatsoever his almighty power, infinite wisdom, and incomprehensible mercy can afford for our protection, support, deliverance, direction, pardon, or refreshment; we might be assured shall be faithfully performed to us in all the straits, fears, and exigencies of our lives. This God expects we should improve by faith, as the most sovereign antidote against all our fears in this world, Isa. xliii. 1, 2. "Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine; when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee," &c. Isa. xli. 10. "Fear not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God."

And if thou, reader, be within the bonds of the covenant, thou mayest surely find enough there to quiet thy heart, whatever the matter or ground of thy fears be: If God be thy covenant-God, he will be with thee in all thy straits, wants, and troubles, he will never leave, nor forsake thee. From the covenant it was that David encouraged himself against all his troubles, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation, and all my desire, though he make it not to grow." He could fetch all reliefs, all comforts, and salvation out of it, and why cannot we? He desired no more for the support of his heart; *this is all my desire*; and sure if we understood and believed it as he did, we could desire no more to quiet and comfort our hearts than what this covenant affords us. For,

1. Are we afraid what our enemies will do? We know we are in the midst of potent, politic, and enraged enemies; we have heard what they have done, and see what they are preparing to do again. We tremble to think what bloody tragedies are like to be acted over again in the world by their cruel hands: But O what heroic and noble acts of faith should the covenant of God enable

thee to exert amidst all these fears! If God be thy God, then thou hast an Almighty God on thy side, and that is enough to extinguish all these fears, Psal. cxviii. 6 "The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me." Your fears come in the name of man, but your help in the name of the Lord; Let them plot, threaten, yea, and smite too; God is a shield to all that fear him, and if God be for us, who can be against us?

2. Are we afraid what God will do; fear it not, your God will do nothing against your good: think not that he may forget you, it cannot be; sooner may a tender mother forget her sucking child, Isa. xlix. 15. no; "He withdraweth not his eye from the "righteous," Job xxxvi. 7. His eyes are continually upon all the dangers and wants of your souls and bodies, there is not a danger or an enemy stirring against you, but his eye is upon it, 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

Are you afraid he will forsake and cast you off? It is true your sins have deserved he should do so, but he hath secured you fully against that fear in his covenant, Jer. xxxii. 40. "I will not turn away from them, to do them good." All your fears of God's forgetting or forsaking you, spring out of your ignorance of the covenant.

3. Are you afraid what you shall do? It is usual for the people of God to propose difficult cases to themselves, and put startling questions to their own hearts; and there may be an excellent use of them to rouse them out of security, put them upon the search and trial of their conditions and estates, and make preparation for the worst; but Satan usually improves it to a quite contrary end, to deject, affright, and discourage them. O, if fiery trials should come, if my liberty and life come once to be touched in earnest, I fear I shall never have strength to go on a step farther in the way of religion: I am afraid I shall faint in the first encounter, I shall deny the words of the Holy One, make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience in the first gust of temptation. I can hear, and pray, and profess; but I doubt I cannot burn, or bleed, or lie in a dungeon for Christ. If I can scarce run with footmen in the land of peace, how do I think to contend with horses in these swellings of Jordan?

But yet all these are but groundless fears, either forged in thy own misgiving heart, or secretly shuffled by Satan into it; for God hath abundantly secured thee against fear in this very particular, by that most sweet, supporting, and blessed promise, annexed to the former in the same text, Jer. xxxii. 40. "I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Here is another kind of fear than that which so startles thee, promised to be put into thy heart, not a fear to shake and undermine thy assurance,

as this doth, but to guard and maintain it. And this is the fear that shall be enabled to vanquish and expel all thy other fears.

4. Or are you afraid what the church shall do? And what will become of the ark of God? Do you see a storm gathering, winds begin to roar, the waves to swell; and are you afraid what will become of that vessel the church, in which you have so great an interest?

It is an argument of the publicness and excellency of thy spirit, to be thus touched with the feeling sense of the church's sufferings and dangers. Most men seek their own things, and not the things that are Christ's, Phil. ii. 21. But yet it is your sin so to fear, as to sink and faint under a spirit of despondency and discouragement, which yet many good men are but too apt to do. I remember an excellent passage in a letter of \* Luther's to Melancthon upon this very account. 'In private troubles, saith he, I am weaker, and thou art stronger; thou despisest thy own life, but fearest the public cause: but for the public I am at rest, being assured that the cause is just and true, yea, that it is Christ's and God's cause. I am well nigh a secure spectator of things, and esteem not any thing these fierce and threatening Papists can do. I beseech thee by Christ, neglect not so Divine promises and consolations, where the scripture saith, Cast thy care upon the Lord, wait upon the Lord, be strong, and he shall comfort thy heart.' † And in another epistle! 'I much dislike those anxious cares, which, as thou writest, do almost consume thee. It is not the greatness of the danger, but the greatness of thy unbelief. John Huss and others were under greater danger than we; and if it be great, he is great that orders it. Why do you afflict yourself? if the cause be bad, let us renounce it; if it be good, why do we make him a liar who bids us be still? as if you were able to do any good by such unprofitable cares. I beseech thee, thou that in other things art valiant, fight against thyself, thine own greatest enemy, that puts weapons into Satan's hand.'

You see how good men may be even overwhelmed with public fears; but certainly if we did well consider the bond of the covenant that is betwixt God and his people, we should be more quiet and composed. For by reason thereof it is, 1. That *God is in the midst of them*, Psal. xlv. 1, 2, 3, 4. When any great danger threatened the reformed church in its tender beginning, in Luther's time, he would say, *Come let us sing the xlv. Psalm*; and indeed it is a lovely song for such times: it bears the title of *A song upon Alamoth*, or a song for the hidden ones; God is with them to cover

\* Epist. ad Melanct. Anno 1549.

† Anno 1530.

them under his wings. 2. And it is plain matter of fact, evident to all the world, that no people under the heavens have been so long and so wonderfully preserved as the church hath been; it hath over-lived many bloody massacres, terrible persecutions, subtle and cruel enemies; still God hath preserved and delivered it, for his promises obliged him to do it, amongst which those two are signal and eminent ones, Jer. xxx. 11. Isa. xxvii. 3. And it is obvious to all that will consider things, that there are the self-same motives in God, and the self-same grounds and reasons before him, to take care of his church and people, that ever were in him, or did ever lie before him from the beginning of the world. For (1.) The relation is still the same. What though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, those renowned believers, be in their graves, and those that succeed be far inferior to them in grace and spiritual excellency; yet saith the church, *doubtless thou art our Father*. There is the same tie and bond betwixt the Father and the youngest weakest child in the family, as the eldest and strongest. (2.) His pity and mercy is still the same, for that endures for ever: his bowels yearn as tenderly over his people in their present, as ever they did in any past afflictions or straits. (3.) The rage and malice of his and his people's enemies is still the same, they will reflect as blasphemously and dishonourably upon God now, should he give up his people, as ever they did. Moses' argument is as good now as ever it was, *What will the Egyptians say?* and so is Joshua's too, *What wilt thou do unto thy great name?* Oh! if these things were more thoroughly studied and believed, they would appease many fears.

2. Rule. *Work upon your hearts the consideration of the many mischiefs and miseries men draw upon themselves and others, both in this world and that to come, by their own sinful fears.*

1. The miseries and calamities that sinful fear brings upon men in this world are unspeakable: this is it that hath plunged the consciences of so many poor wretches into such deep distresses: this it is that hath put them upon the rack, and made them roar like men in hell among the damned. Some have been recovered, and others have perished in these deeps of horror and despair. “\* In the year 1550 there was at Ferrara in Italy one Faninus, who by reading good books was by the grace of God converted to the knowledge of the truth, wherein he found such sweetness, that by constant reading, meditation, and prayer, he grew so expert in the scriptures, that he was able to instruct others; and though he durst not go out of the bounds of his calling to preach open-

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\* Clark's Exam. p. 47.

“ly, yet by conference and private exhortations he did good to many. This coming to the knowledge of the pope’s clients, they apprehended and committed him to prison, where he renounced the truth, and was thereupon released: but it was not long before the Lord met with him for it; so as falling into horrible torments of conscience, he was near unto utter despair; nor could he be freed from those terrors before he had fully resolved to venture his life more faithfully in the service of Christ.”

Dreadful was that voice which poor Spira seemed to hear in his own conscience, as soon as ever his sinful fears had prevailed upon him to renounce the truth. “Thou wicked wretch thou hast denied me, thou hast renounced the covenant of thine obedience, thou hast broken thy vow; hence, apostate, bear with thee the sentence of thine eternal damnation.” Presently he falls into a swoon, quaking and trembling, and still affirmed to his death, “That from that time he never found any ease or peace in his mind:” but professed, “that he was captivated under the revenging hand of the Almighty God: and that he continually heard the sentence of Christ, the just Judge against him; and that he knew he was utterly undone, and could neither hope for grace, or that Christ should intercede for him to the Father.”

In our dreadful Marian days, Sir John Cheek, who had been tutor to King Edward VI. was cast into the tower, and kept close prisoner, and there put to this miserable choice, *either to forego his life, or that which was more precious, his liberty of conscience*; neither could his liberty be procured by his great friends at any lower rate than to recant his religion: This he was very unwilling to accept of, till his hard imprisonment, joined with threats of much worse in case of his refusal, at last wrought so upon him, whilst he consulted with flesh and blood, as drew from him an *abrenunciation* of that truth which he had so long professed, and still believed: Upon this he was restored to his liberty, but never to his comfort; for the sense of his own apostasy, and the daily sight of the cruel butcheries exercised upon others for their constant adherence to the truth, made such deep impressions upon his broken spirit, as brought him to a speedy end of his life, yet not without some comfortable hopes at last.

Our own histories abound with multitudes of such doleful examples.

Some have been in such horror of conscience that they have chosen strangling rather than life; they have felt that anguish of conscience that hath put them upon desperate resolutions and attempts against their own lives to rid themselves of it. This was the case of poor Peter Moon, who being driven by his own fears to deny the

truth, presently fell into such horror of conscience, that seeing a sword hanging in his parlour, would have sheathed it in his own bowels. So Francis Spira, before-mentioned, when he was near his end, saw a knife on the table, and running to it, would have murthered himself, had not his friends prevented him; thereupon he said, *O! that I were above God, for I know that he will have no mercy on me.* He lay about eight weeks (saith the historian) in a continual burning, neither desiring or receiving any thing but by force, and that without digestion, till he became as an anatomy; vehemently raging for drink, yet fearing to live long; dreadful of hell, yet coveting death; in a continual torment, yet his own tormentor; and thus consuming himself with grief and horror, impatience and despair, like a living man in hell, he represented an extraordinary example of God's justice and power, and so ended his miserable life.

Surely it were good to fright ourselves by such dreadful examples out of our sinful fears; is any misery we can fear from the hands of man like this? O, reader! believe it, "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God." Hadst thou ever felt the rage and efficacy of a wounded and distressed conscience, as these poor wretches felt it, no fears or threats of men should drive thee into such an hell upon earth as this is.

2. And yet, though this be a doleful case, it is not the worst case your own sinful fears will cast you into, except the Lord overcome and extinguish them in you by the fear of his name, they will not only bring you into a kind of hell upon earth, but into hell itself for evermore; for so the righteous God hath said in his word of truth, Rev. xxi. 8. "but the fearful and unbelieving, &c. shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Behold here the martial law of heaven executed upon cowards and renegadoes, whose fears make them revolt from Christ in the time of danger. Think upon this, you timorous and faint-hearted professors: you cannot bear the thoughts of lying in a nasty dungeon, how will you lie then in the lake of fire and brimstone? You are afraid of the face and frowns of a man that shall die, but how will you live among devils? Is the wrath of man like the fury of God poured out? Is not the little finger of God heavier than the loins of all the tyrants in the world? Remember what Christ hath said, Mat. x. 33. "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Reader, the time is coming when he that spake these words shall break out of heaven with a shout, accompanied with myriads of angels, and ten thousands of his saints, the heavens and the earth shall be in dreadful conflagrations round about him; the last trump shall sound, the graves shall open, the earth and sea shall give up the dead that are

in them. Thine eyes shall see him ascend the awful throne of judgment, his faithful ones that feared not to own and appear for him in the face of all enemies and dangers, sitting on the bench, as assessors with him; and then to be disclaimed and renounced for ever by Jesus Christ, in the face of that great assembly, and proclaimed a delinquent, a traitor to him, that deniedst his name and truths, because of the frowns of a fellow-creature, long since withered as the grass. Oh how wilt thou be able to endure this! Now put both these together, in thy serious consideration, think on the terrors of conscience here, and the desperate horror of it in hell; this is a par-boiling, that as a roasting in the flames of God's insufferable wrath: these as some scalding drops sprinkled before-hand upon thy conscience, that tender and sensible part of man; that as the lake burning for ever with fire and brimstone. Oh! who would suffer himself to be driven into all this misery, by the fears of these sufferings which can but touch the flesh; and for their duration, they are but for a moment!

Think, and think again upon those words of Christ, Mark viii. 35. "He that will save his life shall lose it." It may be a prolonging of a miserable life, a life worse than death, even in thine own account; a life without the comfort or joy of life; a life ending in the second death; and all this for fear of a trifle, compared with what thou shalt afterwards feel in thine own conscience, and less than a trifle, *nothing*, compared with what thou must suffer from God for ever.

Rule 3. *He that will overcome his fears of sufferings, must foresee and provide before-hand for them.*

The fear of *caution* is a good cure to the fear of *distraction*; and the more of *that*, the less of *this*; *this* fear will cure *that*, as one fire draws forth another, Heb. xi. 7. "Noah being moved with fear, prepared an ark." In which he provided as much for the rest and quiet of his mind, as he did for the safety of his person and family. That which makes evils so frightful as they are, is their coming by way of surprize upon us. Those troubles that find us secure, do leave us distracted and desperate. Presumption of continued tranquillity proves one of the greatest aggravations of misery. Trouble will lie heavy enough when it comes by way of expectation, but it is intolerable when it comes quite contrary to expectation. It will be the lot of Babylon to suffer the unexpected vials of God's wrath, and I wish none but she and her children may be so surprized. Rev. xviii. 7. Oh! it were well for us, if, in the midst of our pleasant enjoyments, we would be putting the difficultest cases to ourselves, and mingle a few such thoughts as these with all our earthly enjoyments and comforts.

I am now at ease in the midst of my habitation, but the time

may be at hand when my habitation shall be in a prison. I see no faces at present but those of friends, full of smiles and honours; I may see none shortly but the faces of enemies, full of frowns and terrors. I have now an estate to supply my wants, and provide for my family; but this may shortly fall as a prey to the enemy, they may sweep away all that I have gathered, reap the fruits of all my labours.—*Impius has segetes.* I have yet my life given me for a prey; but oh! how soon may it fall into cruel and blood-thirsty hands! I have no better security for these things than the martyrs had, who suffered the loss of all these things for Christ's sake. A double advantage would result to us from such meditations as these, viz. the advantage,

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| 1. Of acquittance with | } Troubles. |
| 2. Of preparation for  |             |

1. Hereby our thoughts would be better acquainted with these evils; and the more they are acquainted with, the less they will start and fright at them. We should not think it strange concerning the fiery trial, as it is, 1 Pet. iv. 12. It is with our thoughts as it is with young colts; they start at every new thing they meet; but we cure them of it, by bringing them home to that they start at, and making them smell to it; better acquaintance cures this startling humour. The newness of evil\*, saith a late grave and learned divine, is the cause of fear, when the mind itself hath had no preceding encounter with it, whereby to judge of its strength, nor example of another man's prosperous issue, to confirm its hopes in the like success: For, as I noted before out of the Philosopher †, experience is instead of armour, and is a kind of fortitude, enabling both to judge, and to bear troubles; for there are some things which are *μορμολυκεια και προσωπεια*, scare-crows and vizors, which children fear only out of ignorance; as soon as they are known they cease to be terrible.

I know our minds naturally reluctate and decline such harsh and unpleasant subjects: It is hard to bring our thoughts to them in good earnest, and harder to dwell so long as is necessary to this end upon them. We had rather take a pleasant prospect of future felicity and prosperity in this world; of *multiplying our days as the sand, and at last dying quietly in our nest*, as Job speaks. Our thoughts run nimbly upon such pleasant fancies, like oiled wheels, and have need of triggings; but when they come into the deep and dirty ways of suffering, there they drive heavily, like Pharaoh's chariots dismounted from their wheels. But that which is most pleasant is not always most useful and necessary; our Lord

\* Dr. Edward Reynolds.

† Epictetus.

was well acquainted with griefs, though our thoughts be such great strangers to them; he often thought and spake of his sufferings, and of the bloody baptism with which he was to be baptized, Luke xii. 50. and he not only minded his own sufferings before-hand, but when he perceived the fond imaginations and vain fancies of some that followed and professed him, deluding them with expectations of earthly prosperity and rest, he gave their thoughts a turn to this less pleasing, but more needful subject, the things they were to suffer for his name; instead of answering a foolish and groundless question, of sitting on his right and left hand, like earthly grandees, he rebukes the folly of the Questionist, and asks a less pleasing question, Mat. xx. 22. "But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask; are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I shall be baptized with? q. d. You do but abuse yourselves with such fond and idle dreams, there is other employment cut out for you in the purposes of God; instead of sitting upon thrones and tribunals, it would become you to think of being brought before them as prisoners to receive your doom and sentence to die for my sake; these thoughts would do you a great deal more service.

2. As such meditations would acquaint us better, so they would prepare us better to encounter troubles and difficult things when they come. Readiness and preparation would subdue and banish our fears; we are never much scared with that for which our minds are prepared. There is the same difference in this case, as there is betwixt a soldier in complete armour, and ready at every point for his enemy; and one that is alarmed in his bed, who hath laid his clothes in one place, and his arms in another, when his enemy is breaking open his chamber door upon him. It was not therefore without the most weighty reason, that the apostle presses us so earnestly, Eph. vi. 13, 14. "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." We see the benefit of such provisions and provisions for suffering, in that great example of courage and constancy, Acts xxi. 13. "I am ready, (saith Paul) not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem." And the same courage and constancy remained in him, when he was entering the very lists, and going to lay his very neck upon the block, 2 Tim. iv. 6. "I am ready to be offered up, the time of my departure is at hand." The word *σπενδομαι*, properly signifies a *libation* or drink-offering, wherein some conceive he alluded to the very kind of his own

death, viz. by the sword; his heart was brought to that frame, that he could with as much willingness pour out his blood for Christ, as the priests used to pour out drink-offerings to the Lord. It is true, all the meditations and preparations in the world, made by us, are not sufficient in themselves to carry us through such difficult services; it is one thing to see death as our fancy limns it out at a distance, and another thing to look death itself in the face. We can behold the painted lion without fear, but the living lion makes us tremble: but yet, though our suffering-strength comes not from our own preparations or forethoughts of death, but from God's gracious assistance; yet usually that assistance of his is communicated to us in and by the conscientious and humble use of these means; let us therefore be found waiting upon God for strength, patience, and resolutions to suffer as it becomes Christians, in the daily serious use of those means whereby he is pleased to communicate to his people.

Rule 4. *If ever you will subdue your own slavish fears, commit yourselves, and all that is yours into the hands of God by faith.*

This rule is fully confirmed by that scripture, Prov. xvi. 3. "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established." The greatest part of our trouble and burden, in times of danger, arises from the unsettledness and distraction of our own thoughts; and the way to calm and quiet our thoughts is to commit all to God. This rule is to be applied for this end and purpose, when we are going to meet death itself, and that in all its terrible formalities, and most frightful appearances, 1 Pet. iv. 19. "Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." And if this committing act of faith be so useful at such a time, when the thoughts must be supposed to be in the greatest hurry, and fears in their full strength; much more will it establish the heart, and calm its passions in lesser troubles. You know what ease and relief it would be to you, if you had a trial depending in law for your estates, and your hearts were overloaded and distracted with cares and fears about the issue of it: if one whom you know to be very skilful and faithful, should say to you at such a time, trouble not yourself any farther about this business, never break an hour's sleep more for this matter; be you an unconcerned spectator, commit it to me, and trust me with the management of it; I will make it my own concernment, and save you harmless. O what a burden, what an heavy load would you feel yourselves eased of, as soon as you had thus transferred and committed it to such a hand! then you would be able to eat with pleasure and sleep in quietness: much more ease and quietness doth your committing the matter of your fears to God give, even so much more as his

power, wisdom, and faithfulness is greater than what is to be found in men. But to make this rule practicable and improveable to peace and quietness of heart in an evil day, it will be necessary that you well understand,

1. *What the committing act of faith is.*

2. *What grounds and encouragements believers have for it.*

1. Study well the nature of this committing act of faith, and what it supposes or implies in it; for all men cannot commit themselves to God, it is his own people only that can do it: nor is it every thing they can commit to God; they cannot commit themselves to his care and protection in any way but only in his own ways. Know more particularly,

1st, That he who will commit himself to God, must commit himself to him in well doing, as the apostle limits it in 1 Pet. iv. 19. and in things agreeable to his will; else we would make God a patron and protector of our sins: *Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing.* We cannot commit our sins, but our duties to God's protection; God is so great a friend to truth and righteousness, that in such a case he will not take your part, how dear soever you be to him, if truth be found on your enemies part, and the mistake on yours. Think not to entitle God to your errors and failings, much less to any sinful designs; you may commit a doubtful case to him to be decided, but not a sinful case to be protected. It is in vain to shelter any cause of your own under his wings, except you can write upon it, as David did, Psal. lxxiv. 22. *Thine own cause, O Lord, as well as mine.* Lord, plead thine own cause.

2dly, He that commits his all to God supposes and firmly believes that all events and issues of things are in God's hands; that he only can direct, over-rule, and order them all as he pleaseth. Upon this supposition the committing acts of faith in all our fears and distresses are built: *I trusted in thee, O Lord, I said, Thou art my God, my times are in thy hand, deliver me from the hands of my enemies, and from them that persecute me.* His firm assent to this great truth, *That his times were in God's hands,* was the reason why he committed himself into that hand. If our times, or lives, or comforts were in our enemies' hands, it were to little purpose for us to commit ourselves into God's hands. And here the contrary senses and methods of faith and unbelief are as conspicuous as in any one thing whatsoever: unbelief persuades men that their lives and all that is dear to them is in the hands of their enemies, and therefore persuades them the best way they can take to secure themselves, is by compliance with the will of their enemies, and pleasing them: but faith determines quite contrary, it tells us, *We and all that is ours, is in God's hand, and no enemy can touch us, or ours, till he*

*give them a permission ; and therefore it is our duty and interest to please him, and commit all to him.*

3. The committing ourselves to God implies the resignation of our wills to the will of God, to be disposed of as seems good in his eyes: So David commits to God the event of that sad and doubtful providence, which made him fly for his life, from a strong conspiracy, 2 Sam. xv. 25. "And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation: but, if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him;" q. d. Lord, the conspiracy against my life is strong, the danger great, the issue exceeding doubtful; but I commit all into thy hand; if David may be yet used in any farther service for his God, I shall see this city and thy lovely temple again; but if not, I lie at thy foot, to be disposed either for life or death, for the earthly or the heavenly Jerusalem, as seemeth best in thine eyes. This submission to Divine pleasure is included in the committing act of faith. Christian, what sayest thou to it? Is thy will content to go back, that the will of God may come on, and take place of it? It may be thou canst refer a difficult case to God, provided he will determine and issue it according to thy desires; but, in truth, that is no submission or resignation at all, but a sinful limiting of, and prescribing to God. It was an excellent reply that a choice Christian once made to another, when a beloved and only child lay in a dangerous sickness at the point of death, a friend asked the mother, What would you now desire of God in reference to your child? would you beg of him its life or its death, in this extremity that it is now in? The mother answered, I refer that to the will of God. But, said her friend, if God would refer it to you, what would you chuse then? Why truly, said she, if God would refer it to me, I would even refer it to God again. This is the true committing of ourselves and our troublesome concerns to the Lord.

4. The committing act of faith implies our renouncing and disclaiming all confidence and trust in the arm of flesh, and an expectation of relief from God only. If we commit ourselves to God, we must cease from man, Isa. ii. 22. To trust God in part, and the creature in part, is to set one foot upon a rock, and the other upon a quicksand. Those acts of faith that give the entire glory to God, give real relief and comfort to us.

2. Let us see what grounds and encouragements the people of God have to commit themselves and all the matters of their fears to God, and so to enjoy the peace and comfort of a resigned will; and there are two sorts of encouragements before you, let the case be

as difficult and frightful as it will, you may find sufficient encouragement in God, and somewhat from yourselves, viz. your relation to him, and experiences of him.

1. In God there is all that your hearts can desire to encourage you to trust him over all, and committ all into his hands. For,

1. He is able to help and relieve you: let the case be never so bad, yet "let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is plentiful redemption," Psal. cxxx. 7, 8. Plenteous redemption, i. e. all the stores of power, choice of methods, plenty of means, abundance of ways to save his people, when they can see no way out of their troubles: therefore hope, Israel, in Jehovah.

2. As his power is almighty, so his wisdom is infinite and unsearchable; "He is a God of judgment, blessed are all they that wait for him," Isa. xxx. 18. When the apostle Peter had related the wonderful preservation of Noah in the deluge, and of Lot in Sodom, one in a general destruction of the world by water, and the other in the overthrow of those cities by fire; he concludes, and so should we, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation," 2 Pet. ii. 9. Some men have much power, but little wisdom to manage it, others are wise and prudent, but want ability; in God there is an infinite fulness of both.

3. His love to, and tenderness over his people, is transcendent and unparalleled: and this sets his wisdom and power both at work for their good: hence it is, that his eyes of providence run continually throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose hearts are perfect, i. e. upright towards him, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. Thus you see how he is every way fitted as a proper object of your trust.

2. Consider with yourselves, and you shall find encouragements to commit all to God. For,

1. You are his children, and to whom should children commit themselves in dangers and fears but to their own father? *Doubtless thou art our Father*, saith the distressed church, Isa. lxiii. 15, 16. yea, Christian, *Thy Maker is thy husband*, Isa. liv. 5. Is not that a sufficient ground to cast thyself upon him? What! a child not trust its own father? a wife not commit herself to her own husband?

2. You have trusted him with a far greater concern already than your estates, liberties, or lives; you have committed your souls to him, and your eternal interests, 2 Tim. i. 12. Shall we commit the jewel, and dispute the cabinet; trust him for heaven, and doubt him for earth?

3. You have ever found him faithful in all that you trusted him with, all your experiences are so many good grounds of confidence,

Psal. ix. 10. Well then, resolve to trust God over all, and quietly leave the disposal of every thing to him: he hath been with you in all former straits, wants, and fears, hitherto he hath helped you; and cannot he do so again, except you tell him how? Oh! trust in his wisdom, power, and love, and lean not to your own understandings. The fruit of resignation will be peace.

Rule 5. *If ever you will get rid of your fears and distractions, get your affections mortified to the world, and to the inordinate and immoderate love of every enjoyment in the world.*

The more you are mortified, the less you will be terrified: it is not the dead, but the living world, that puts our hearts into such fears and tremblings; if our hearts were once crucified, they would soon be quieted. It is the strength of our affections that puts so much strength into our afflictions. It was not therefore without great reason that the apostle compares the life of a Christian to the life of a soldier, who, if he mean to follow the camp, and acquit himself bravely in fight, must not entangle himself with the affairs of this life, 2 Tim. ii. 4. Sure there is no following Christ's camp, but with a disentangled heart from the world; for, proportionable to the heat of our love, will be the strength and height of our fears about these things; more particularly, if ever you will rid yourselves of your uncomfortable and uncomely fears, use all God's means to mortify your affections to the exorbitant esteem and love of,

1. Your estates. 2. Your liberty. 3. Your lives.

1. Get mortified and cooled hearts to your possessions and estates in the world. The poorest age afforded the richest Christians and noblest martyrs. Ships deepest laden are not best for encounters. The believing Hebrews *took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and enduring substance*, Heb. x. 34. They carried it rather like unconcerned spectators, than the true proprietors; they rejoiced when rude soldiers carried out their goods, as if so many friends had been bringing them in. And whence was this but from an heart fixed upon heaven, and mortified to things upon earth? Doubtless, they esteemed and valued their estates, as the good providences of God for their more comfortable accommodation in this world; but it seems they did, and O that we could look upon them as mercies of the lowest and meanest rank and nature. The substance laid up in heaven was a better substance, and as long as that was safe, the loss of this did not afflict them.

They could bless God for these things which for a little time did minister refreshment to them, but they knew them to be transitory enjoyments, things that would make to themselves wings and flee away, if their enemies had not touched them; but the substance

laid up for them in heaven, that was an enduring substance. So far as those earthly things might further them towards heavenly things, so far they prized and valued them, but if Satan would turn them into snares and temptations to deprive them of their better substance in heaven, they could easily slight them, and take the spoiling of them joyfully. In a stress of weather, when the ship is ready to sink and founder in a storm, all hands are readily employed to throw the richest goods overboard; no man saith it is pity to cast them away, but reason dictates to a man in that case, Better these perish, than I perish with and for them. These be the wares that some will not cast overboard, and therefore they are said to drown men in perdition, 1 Tim. vi. 9. Demas would *rather perish than part with these things*, 2 Tim. iv. 10. But, reader, consider seriously what comforts they can yield thee, when thou must look upon them as the price for which thou hast sold heaven, and all the hopes of glory; even as much as the price of blood yielded Judas; and so they will ensnare thee, if thy unmortified heart be overheated with the love of them as his was.

2. Be mortified to your liberty, and take heed of placing too great an esteem upon it, or necessity in it. Liberty is a desirable thing to the very birds in the air; accommodate them the best you can in your cages, feed them with the richest fare, they had rather be cold and hungry with their liberty in the woods, than fat and warm in your houses. But yet, as sweet as it is, there may be more comfort and sweetness in parting with it, than in keeping it, as the case may stand. The doors of a prison may lock you in, but they cannot lock the Comforter out. Paul and Silas lost their liberty for Christ, but not their comfort with it; they never were so truly at liberty, as when their feet were made fast in the stocks, they never fared so deliciously as when they fed upon prisoner's fare. God spread a table for them in the prison, sent them in a rich feast, yea, and they had music at their feast too, and that at midnight, Acts xvi. 25.

Patmos was a barren island, and a place designed for banished persons; it lay in the Egean sea, not far from the coast of the Lesser Asia\*: it was inhabited by none, because of the exceeding barrenness of it, but such who were appointed to it for their punishment; so that here John could meet with no more earthly refreshment than what the barren rocks, or wild and desperate persons condemned to live upon it, could afford. Ay, but there, there it was, that Christ appeared to him in inexpressible glory; there it was that he had those ravishing visions, and saw the whole scheme of Providence in the government of this world; there he

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\* Rev. i. 9, 10.

saw the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, as a bride prepared for her husband. This made a Patmos become a Paradise; never did any place afford him such comfort as this did. So that Christians may not think there is so strict and necessary a connexion betwixt liberty and comfort, that he that takes away the first, must needs deprive them of the other.

Again, Suppose we should be so fond of our liberty as to exchange truth and a good conscience for it; cannot God so imberter it to you, yea, hath he not so imbertered it to many, that they were quickly weary of it, and glad of an opportunity to change it for a prison. Our own Martyrology furnishes us with many sad examples of it. Oh, what will you do with your bitter, dear-bought liberty, when your peace is taken away from the inward man? when God shall clap up your souls in prison, and put your consciences into his bonds and fetters, then will you say as the martyr did, "I am in prison till I be in prison."

3. Be mortified to the inordinate and fond love of life, as ever you expect relief against the fears of death. Reason thyself into a lower value of thy life. Methinks you have arguments enough to cure your fondness in this point. Have you found it such a pleasant life to you, for so much of it as is past? You know how the apostle represents it, 2 Cor. v. 4. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burthened." And is a burthened and a groaning life so desirable? You know also, as he speaks in the next verse, that "whilst you are at home in the body, you are absent from the Lord." And is a state of absence from Jesus Christ so desirable to a soul that loves him? Can you find much pleasure so far from home? You may fancy what you will, but, upon serious recollection, you will never be out of the reach of Satan's temptations, never freed from your own indwelling corruptions, these conflicts cannot have an end till life be ended. You also stand convinced, that till you be dead, your souls cannot be satisfied, nor your desires be at rest, have what comforts soever from God in the way of faith and course of duties, your hearts are still off the centre, and will still gravitate and gasp heavenward. You also know that die you must, and the time of your departure is at hand; and of all deaths, if you might have your choice, none is more honourable to God, or like to be so evidential and comfortable to you, as a violent death for Christ; therein you come to him by consent and choice, not by necessity and constraint; therein you give a public testimony for Christ, which is the highest use that ever our blood can be put to, or honoured by; and for the pain and torment, as the martyr said, *He that takes away from my torment, takes away from my reward.* But even in that point God can make it easier to you than a natural death would be; he will be with you

in your extremity, and administer such reviving cordials as other men must not look to taste, at least not ordinarily, they being prepared and reserved for such, against such an hour.

Oh then, work out the inordinate love of life, by working in such mortifying considerations upon your own hearts; and if once you gain but this point, you will quickly find all your pains and prayers richly answered in the ease and rest of your hearts, in the most scaring and frightful times.

Rule 6. *Eye the encouraging examples of those that have trod the path of sufferings before you, and strive to imitate such worthy patterns.*

Behold the cloud of witnesses encompassing you round about: a cloud like that over the Israelites to direct you; yea, a cloud for multitude of excellent persons to animate and encourage you, Heb. xii. 1. "Oh take them for an ensample in suffering affliction and "patience," James v. 10. Examples of excellent persons that have broken the ice, and beaten the path before us, are of excellent use to suppress our fears, and rouse our courage in our own encounters.

The first sufferers had the hardest task; they that first entered the lists for Christ, wanted those helps to suppress fear which they have left unto us. Strange and untried torments are most terrible, for *magnitudinem rerum consuetudo subducit*, trial and acquaintance abates the formidable greatness of evils; they knew not the strength of that enemy they were to engage, but we fight with an enemy that hath been often beaten and triumphed over by our brethren that went before us. Certainly we that live in the last times have the best helps that ever any had to subdue their fears; we have heard of the courage and constancy of our brethren, in as sharp trials of their courage as ever we can be called to; we have read with what Christian gallantry they have triumphed over all sorts of sufferings and torments, how they have been strengthened with all might in the inner man unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness, Col. i. 11. how they have gone away from the courts that censured and punished them, rejoicing that they were honoured to be dishonoured for Christ, as the strict reading of that text is, Acts v. 41\*. counting the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, Heb. xi. 26. which at that time was the magazine of the world for riches: You read what "trials they have had of cruel mockings, yea, moreover of bonds "and imprisonments; how they were stoned, sawn asunder, "tempted, slain with the sword, wandered about in sheep's "skins, and goat's skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, Heb. xi.

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\* Οτι κατηξιωθησαν ατιμασθησαι.

36, 37. In all which they obtained a good report ; they came out of the field with triumphant faith and patience ; and this was not the effect of an over-heated zeal at the first outset, but the same spirit of courage was found among Christians in after ages, who have put off their persecutors with a kind of pleasant scorn and contempt of torments.

So did Basil, truly surnamed the Great, when Valens the emperor in a great rage threatened him with banishment and tortures ; as to the first said he, † I little regard it : for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof ; and as for tortures, what can they do upon such a poor thin body as mine, nothing but skin and bone ? And at another time ‡, when Eusebius, governor of Pontus, told him in a great rage, he would tear his very liver out of his bowels : Truly, said Basil, you will do me a very good turn in it, to take out my naughty liver ; which inflames and diseaseth my whole body. Their enemies have professed the Christians put them to shame, by smiling at their cruelties and threatenings. Ignatius's love to Christ had so perfectly overcome all fears of sufferings, that when he was going to be thrown for a prey among the lions and leopards, he professed he longed to be among them, and, said he, if they will not dispatch me the sooner, I will provoke them, that I may be with my sweet Jesus. And if we come down to later ages, we shall find as stout champions for Christ. The courage and undauntedness of Luther is trumpeted abroad throughout the Christian world, it would swell this small tract too much, but to note the most eminent instances of his courage for Christ : the last he gave was by his sorrow in his last sickness, that he must carry his blood to the grave. The like heroic spirit appeared in divers persons of honour and eminence, who zealously espoused the same cause of reformation with him. Remarkable to this purpose is that famous epistle written by Ulricus ab Hutten, a German knight, in defence of Luther's cause against the cardinals and bishops assembled at Worms. ‘ I will go through (said he) ‘ with what I have undertaken against you, and will stir up men ‘ to seek their freedom : such as yield not to me at first, I will ‘ overcome with importunity ; I neither care nor fear what may ‘ befall me, being prepared for either event ; either to ruin you, ‘ to the great benefit of my country, or myself to fall with a good ‘ conscience ; therefore that you may see with what confidence I ‘ contemn your threats, I do profess myself to be your irreconcil- ‘ able enemy, whilst ye persecute Luther and such as he is. No ‘ power of yours, no injury of fortune shall alter this mind in me ;

† Socrates, hist. l. 4. c. 26.

‡ Theod. lib. 4. cap. 19.

‘ though you take away my life, yet this well-deserving of mine towards my country’s liberty, shall not die. I know that my endeavour to remove such as you are, and to place worthy ministers in your room, is acceptable to God; and in the last judgment, I trust it will be safer for me to have offended you, than to have had your favour.’

It was also a brave heroic spirit by which John duke of Saxony was acted to defend the reformation, who despising all the favours and offers of the court, and of Rome, and the terrors of death itself; appeared, as my author speaks, in its behalf against all the devils, and the pope \*, in three public imperial assemblies, saying openly to their faces, I must serve God, or the world; and which of these two do ye think is the better? And as soon as Luther’s sermons were forbidden, he hasted away, saying, I will not stay there, where I cannot have my liberty to serve God.

And now reader, thou hast a little taste of the courage and zeal of those worthies who are gone before thee in defence of that cause for which thou fearest to suffer. Most men, saith Chrysostom, that read or hear such examples, are like the spectators of the Roman gladiators, who stood by and praised their courage, but durst not enter the lists to do what they did. If ever thou wilt get like courage for Christ, thus improve such famous examples.

1. Make use of them to obviate the prejudice of singularity; you see you have store of good company, the same things you are like to suffer for Christ, have been accomplished in the rest of your brethren in the world, 1 Pet. v. 9.

2. Improve them against the prejudice of all that shame that attends sufferings, here you may see the most excellent persons in the world reckoning it their glory to suffer the vilest things for Jesus Christ, Acts v. 31. Heb. xi. 26.

3. Improve them against the conceit of the insupportableness of sufferings. Lo here, poor weak creatures which have been carried honourably and comfortably through the cruelest and difficultest sufferings for Christ. Our women and children, not to speak of men, (saith Tertullian) overcome their tormentors, and the fire cannot fetch so much as a sigh from them.

4. Improve them against thine own unbelief and staggerings at the faithfulness of God in that promise, Isa. xliii. 2. “When thou passest through the fire, I will be with thee,” &c. Lo here you have the recorded and faithful testimonies of such as have tried it, with one voice witnessing for God, *Thy word is truth, thy word is truth.*

5. Improve them against the sensible weakness of your own.

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\* Spangenberg, ad an. 1551.

graces ; are you afraid your faith, love, and patience are too weak to carry you through great trials? Why doubtless so were many of them too, they were men of like fears, troubled with a bad heart and a busy devil as well as you, they also had their clouds and damps as you have ; yet the almighty power of God supported them ; and out of weakness they were made strong : despond not therefore, but get a judgment satisfied, Psal. xlv. 22. a conscience sprinkled, 2 Tim. i. 7. and a call cleared, Dan. vi. 10. Exercise faith also with respect to Divine assistances and everlasting rewards as they did : and doubt not but the same God that enabled them to finish their course with joy, will be as good to you as he was to them. Consider, Christ hath done as much for you as he did for any of them, and deserves as much from you as from any of them ; and hath prepared the same glory for you that he prepared for them : O that such considerations might provoke you to shew as much courage and love to Christ as any of them ever did.

*Rule 7. If ever you will get above the power of your own fears in a suffering day make haste to clear your interest in Christ, and your pardon in his blood before that evil day come.*

The clearer this is, the bolder you will be ; an assured Christian was never known to be a coward in sufferings ; it is impossible to be clear of fears till you are cleared of the doubts about interest in, and pardon by Christ. Nothing is found more strengthening to our fears than that which clouds our evidences ; and nothing more to quiet and cure our fears than that which clears our evidences. The shedding abroad of God's love in our hearts will quickly fill them with a spirit of glorying in tribulations, Rom. v. 5. When the believing Hebrews once came to know in themselves that they had an enduring substance in heaven, they quickly found in themselves an unconcerned heart for the loss of their comforts on earth, Heb. x. 34. and so should we too. For,

1. Assurance satisfies a man that his treasure and true happiness is secured to him, and laid out of the reach of all his enemies ; and so long as that is safe he hath all the reason in the world to be quiet and cheerful, " I know (saith Paul) whom I have believed, " and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have " committed to him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12. And he gives this as his reason why he was not ashamed of Christ's sufferings.

2. The assured Christian knows that if death itself come, (which is the worst men can inflict) he shall be no loser by the exchange ; nay he shall make the best bargain that ever he made since he first parted with all his afflictions, to follow Christ. There are two rich bargains a Christian makes ; one is, when he exchanges the

world for Christ in his first choice at his conversion, in point of love and estimation: the other is, when he actually parts with the world for Christ at his dissolution: both these are rich bargains, and upon this ground it was the apostle said, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," Phil. i. 21. The death of a believer in Christ, is gain unspeakable, but if a man would make the utmost gain by dying, he shall find it in dying for Christ, as well as in Christ: and to shew you wherein the gain of such a death lies, let a few particulars be weighed, wherein the gain will be cast up in both; he that is assured he dies in Christ, knows,

1. That his living time is his labouring time, but his dying time is his harvest time; whilst we live we are plowing and sowing in all the duties of religion, but when we die, then we reap the fruit and comforts of all our labours and duties, Gal. vi. 8, 9. As much therefore as the reaping time is better than the sowing and plowing time, so much better is the death than the life of a believer.

2. A believer's living time is his fighting time, but his dying time is his conquering and triumphing time, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56. The conflict is sharp, but the triumph is sweet; and as much as victory and triumph are better than fighting, so much is death better than life to him that dieth in Jesus.

3. A believer's living time is his tiresome and weary time, but his dying time is his resting and sleeping time. Isa. lvii. 2. Here we spend and faint, there we rest in our beds, and as much as refreshing rest in sleep is better than tiring and fainting, so much is a believer's death better than his life.

4. A believer's living time is his waiting and longing time, but his time of dying is the time of enjoying what he hath long wished and waited for, Phil. i. 23. here we groan and sigh for Christ, there we behold and enjoy Christ, and so much as vision and fruition are better and sweeter than hoping and waiting for it; so much is a believer's death better than his life.

2. As the advantage a believer makes of death is great to him by dying only in Christ; so it is much greater, and the richest improvement that can be made of death, to die *for* Christ as well as *in* Christ: for compare them in a few particulars, and you shall find,

1. That though a natural death hath less horror, yet a violent death for Christ hath more honour in it. To him that dies united with Christ, the grave is a *bed of rest*; but to him that dies as a martyr for Christ, the grave is a bed of honour. "To you (saith the apostle) it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe but also to suffer for his sake," Phil. i. 22. To you it is granted as a great honour and favour to suffer for Christ; all that live in Christ have not the honour to lay down their lives for Christ.

It was the great trouble of Ludovicus Marsacus \*, a knight of France, to be exempted because of his dignity from wearing his chain for Christ, as the other prisoners did : and he resented it as a great injury. “ Give me (saith he to his keeper) my chain as well “ as they, and create me a knight of that noble order.”

2. By a natural death we only submit ourselves to the unavoidable consequence of sin, but in dying a violent death for Christ, we give our testimony against the evil of sin, and for the precious truths of Jesus Christ. The first is the payment of a debt of justice due by the fall of Adam; the second is the payment of a debt of thankfulness and obedience due to Christ, who redeemed us with his own blood. Thus we become witnesses for God, as well as sufferers, upon the account of sin: in the first, sin witnesseth against us, in this we witness against it; and indeed it is a great testimony against the evil of sin: we declare to all the world that there is not so much evil in a dungeon, in a bloody ax, or consuming flames, as there is in sin: that it is far better to lose our carnal friends, estates, liberties, and lives, than part with Christ’s truths and a good conscience, as † Zuinglius said, “ What sort of death should “ not a Christian chuse, what punishment should he not rather “ undergo; yea, into what vault of hell should he not rather chuse “ to be cast, than to witness against truth and conscience.”

3. A natural death in Christ may be as safe to ourselves, but a violent death for Christ will be more beneficial to others; by the former we shall come to heaven ourselves, but by the latter we may bring many souls thither. The blood of the martyrs is truly called the seed of the church. Many waxed confident by Paul’s bonds, his sufferings fell out to the furtherance of the gospel, and so may ours: in this case a Christian like Samson, doth greater service against Satan and his cause, by his death, than by his life.

If we only die a natural death in our beds, we die in possession of the truths of Christ ourselves: but if we die martyrs for Christ, we secure that precious inheritance to the generations to come, and those that are yet unborn shall bless God, not only for his truths, but for our courage, zeal, and constancy, by which it was preserved for them, and transmitted to them.

By all this you see that death to a believer is great gain, it is great gain if he only die in Christ, it is all that, and a great deal more added, if he also die for Christ: and he that is assured of such advantages by death either way, must needs feel his fears of death shrink away before such assurances; yea, he will rather have life in patience, and death in desire; he will not only submit

\* *Cur me non quoque torque donas, et illustris illius ordinis militem non creas?*

† *Quas non oportet merces praccligere, quod non supplicium potius ferre, imo in quam profundam inferni abyssum non intrare, quam contra conscientiam attestari?*

quietly, but rejoice exceedingly to be used by God in such honourable employment\*. Assurance will call a bloody death a safe passage to Canaan through the Red sea. It will call Satan that instigates these his instruments, and all that are employed in such bloody work by him, so many Balaams brought to curse, but they do indeed bless the people of God, and not curse them. The assured Christian looks upon his death as his wedding-day, Rev. xix. 7. And therefore it doth not much differ whether the horse sent to fetch him to Christ be pale, or red, so he may be with Christ, his love, as Ignatius called him.

He looks upon death as his day of enlargement out of prison, 2 Cor. v. 8. and it is not much odds what hand opens the door, or whether a friend or enemy close his eyes, so he have his liberty, and may be with Christ.

O then, give the Lord no rest, till your hearts be at rest by the assurance of his love, and the pardon of your sins; when you can boldly say the Lord *is your help*, you will quickly say what immediately follows, *I will not fear what man can do unto me*, Heb. xiii. 6. And why, if thy heart be upright, mayest thou not attain it? Full assurance is possible, else it had not been put into the command, 2 Pet. i. 10. The sealing graces are in you, the sealing Spirit is ready to do it for you, the sealing promises belong to you; but we give not all diligence, and therefore go without the comfort of it. Would we pray more, and strive more, would we keep our hearts with a stricter watch, mortify sin more thoroughly, and walk before God more accurately; how soon may we attain this blessed assurance, and in it an excellent cure for our distracting and slavish fears.

Rule 8. *Let him that designs to free himself of distracting fears, be careful to maintain the purity of his conscience, and integrity of his ways, in the whole course of his conversation in this world.*

Uprightness will give us boldness, and purity will yield us peace. Isa. xxxii. 17. "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and "the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." Look as fear follows guilt and guile, so peace and quietness follow righteousness and sincerity, Prov. xxviii. 1. *The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion.* His confidence is great, because his conscience is quiet, the peace of God guards his heart and mind. There are three remarkable steps by which Christians rise to the height of courage in tribulations, Rom. v. 1, 2, 3, 4. First they are justified and acquitted from guilt by faith, ver. 1. Then they are brought into a state of favour and acceptance with God, ver. 2. Thence they rise one step higher, even

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\* They are rather delights to us than torments. *Basil.*

to a view of heaven and the glory to come, ver. 3. and from thence they take an easy step to glory in tribulations, ver. 4.

I say, it is an easy step; for let a man once obtain the pardon of sin, the favour of God, and a believing view and prospect of the glory to come; and it is so easy to triumph in tribulation, in such a station as that is, that it will be found as hard to hinder it, as to hinder a man from laughing when he is tickled.

Christians have always found it a spring of courage and comfort, 2 Cor. i. 12. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Their hearts did not reproach them with by-ends in religion: their consciences witnessed that they made not religion a cloak to cover any fleshly design, but were sincere in what they professed: and this enabled them to rejoice in the midst of sufferings. An earthen vessel set empty on the fire will crack and fly in pieces, and so will an hypocritical, formal, and mere nominal Christian: but he that hath such substantial and real principles of courage as these within him, will endure the trial, and be never the worse for the fire.

The very Heathens discovered the advantage of moral integrity, and the peace it yielded to their natural consciences in times of trouble.

*Nil conscire tibi, nulla pallescere culpa,  
Hic murus aheneus esto.—\**

It was to them as a wall of brass. Much more will godly simplicity, and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon our consciences secure and encourage our hearts. This atheistical age laughs conscience and purity to scorn; but let them laugh, this is it which will make thee laugh when they shall cry. Paul exercised himself, or made it his business, "To have always a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards man," Acts xxiv. 16 †. And it was richly worth his labour, it re-paid him ten thousand fold in the peace, courage, and comfort it gave him in all the troubles of his life, which were great and many.

Conscience must be the bearing shoulder on which the burden must lie, beware therefore it be not galled with guilt, or put out

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\* *Nil conscire &c.* Englished thus,  
Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,  
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence,  
Nor e'er turn pale with guilt.—

† *Ασζω meditor, operam do.*

of joint by any fall into sin, it is sad bearing on such a shoulder; instead of bearing your burdens, you will not be able to bear its pain and anguish. To prevent this carefully, observe these rules.

1. Over-awe your hearts every day, and in every place with the eye of God. This walking as before God will keep you upright, Gen. xvii. 1. If you so speak and live as those that know God sees you, such will be your uprightness, that you will not care if all the world see you too. An artist came to Drusius, and offered to build him an house, so contrived, that he might do what he would within doors, and no man see him: Nay, said Drusius, *so build it that every one may see.*

2. Do no action, undertake no design, that you dare not preface with prayer; this is the rule, Phil. iv. 6. Touch not that you dare not pray for a blessing upon; if you dare not pray, dare not to engage; if you cannot spend your prayers before, be confident, shame and guilt will follow after.

3. Be more afraid of grieving God, or wounding conscience, than of displeasing or losing all the friends you have in the world besides; look upon every adventure upon sin to escape danger to be the same thing as if you should sink the ship to avoid one that you take to be a pirate; or as the fatal mistake of two vials, wherein there is poison and physic.

4. What counsel you would give another, that give yourselves when the case shall be your own; your judgment is most clear, when interest is least felt. David's judgment was very upright when he judged himself in a remote parable.

5. Be willing to bear the faithful reproofs of your faults from men, as the reproving voice of God; for they are no less when duly administered. This will be a good help to keep you upright, Psal. cxxxv. 23, 24. "Let the righteous smite me, &c. It is said of Sir Anthony Cope, that he shamed none so much as himself in his family-prayers, and desired the ministers of his acquaintance not to favour his faults; but tell me, said he, and spare not.

6. Be mindful daily of your dying-day, and your great audit-day, and do all with respect to them. Thus keep your integrity and peace, and that will keep out your fears and terrors.

Rule 9. *Carefully record the experiences of God's care over you, and faithfulness to you in all your past dangers and distresses, and apply them to the cure of your present fears and despondencies.*

Recorded experiences are excellent remedies, Exod. xvii. 14. "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua." There were two things in that record; the victory obtained over Amalek, and the way of obtaining it by incessant prayer: and there are two things to be done to secure this mercy for their use and benefit in future fears, it must be recorded

and rehearsed, preserved from oblivion, and seasonably produced for relief.

There are two special assistances given us against fear by experience.

1. It abates the terror of sufferings.
2. It assists faith in the promises.

1. Experience greatly abates the terror of sufferings, and makes them less formidable and scaring than otherwise they would be. Fear saith, they are great waters, and will drown us; experience saith, they are much shallower than we think, and are safely fordable; others have, and we may pass through the Red sea, and not be over-whelmed. Fear saith, the pains of death are unconceivable, sharp, and bitter, the living little know what the dying feel; and to lie in a stinking prison in continual expectation of a cruel death, is an unsupportable evil: Experience contradicts all these false reports which make our hearts faint, as the second spies did the daunting stories of the first; and assures us prisons and death are not, when we come home to them for Christ, what they seem and appear to be at a distance. O what a good report have those faithful men given, who have searched and tried these things! who have gone down themselves into the valley of the shadow of death, and seen what there is in a prison, and in death itself, so long as they were in sight and hearing, able by words or signs to contradict our false notions of it. Oh what a sweet account did Pomponius Algerius give of his stinking prison at Lyons in France! dating all his letters whilst he was there, *From the delectable orchard of the Leonine prison*; and when carried to Venice, in a letter from the prison there, he writes thus to his Christian friend; *I shall utter that which scarce any will believe, I have found a nest of honey in the entrails of a lion, a paradise of pleasure in a deep dark dungeon, in a place of sorrow and death, tranquillity of hope and life.* Oh! here it is that the Spirit of God and of glory rests upon us.

So blessed Mr. Philpot, our own martyr, in one of his sweet encouraging letters: ‘Oh how my heart leaps (saith he) that I am so near to eternal bliss! God forgive me my unthankfulness and unworthiness of so great glory. I have so much joy of the reward prepared for me, the most wretched sinner, that though I be in the place of darkness and mourning, yet I cannot lament, but am night and day so joyful, as though I were under no cross at all; in all the days of my life I was never so joyful, the name of the Lord be praised.’

Others have given the signals agreed upon betwixt them and their friends in the midst of the flames, thereby, to the last, confirming this truth, that God makes the inside of sufferings quite another thing to what the appearance and outside of them is to

sense. Thus the experience of others abates the terrors of sufferings to you; and all this is fully confirmed by the personal experience you yourselves have had of the supports and comforts of God, wherein soever you have conscientiously suffered for his sake.

2. And this cannot but be a singular assistance to your faith; your own and others experiences, just like Aaron and Hur, stay up the hands of faith on the one side and the other, that they hang not down, whilst your fears, like those Amalekites, fall before you. For what is experience, but the bringing down of the divine promises to the test of sense and feeling? It is our duty to believe the promises without trial and experiments, but it is easier to do it after so many trials; so that your own and others experiences, carefully recorded and seasonably applied, would be food to your faith, and a cure to many of your fears in a suffering day.

*Rule 10. You can never free yourself from sinful fears, till you thoroughly believe and consider Christ's providential kingdom over all the creatures and affairs in this lower world.*

Poor timorous souls! is there not a King, a supreme Lord, under whom devils and men are? Hath not Christ the reins of government in his hands? Mat. xxviii. 18. Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11, 12. John xvii. 2. Were this dominion of Christ, and dependence of all creatures on him, well studied and believed, it would cut off both our trust in men, and our fear of men; we should soon discern they have no power either to help us or to hurt us, but what they receive from above. Our enemies are apt to over-rate their own power, in their pride, and we are as apt to over-rate it too in our fears. *Knowest thou not* (saith Pilate to Christ) *that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee?* q. d. Refusest thou to answer me? dost thou not know who and what I am? Yes, yes, saith Christ, I know thee well enough to be a poor impotent creature, who hast no power at all but what is given thee from above; I know thee, and therefore do not fear thee. But we are apt to take their own boasts for truth, and believe their power to be such as they vainly vogue it to be; whereas in truth all our enemies are sustained by Christ, Col. i. 17. they are bounded and limited by Christ, Rev. ii. 10. Providence hath its influences upon their hearts and wills immediately, Jer. xv. 11. Psal. cvi. 46. so that they cannot do whatever they would do, but their wills as well as their hands are ordered by God. Jacob was in Laban's and in Esau's hands; both hated him, but neither could hurt him. David was in Saul's hand, who hunted for him as a prey, yet is forced to dismiss him quietly, blessing instead of slaying him. Melancthon and Pomeron both fell into the hands of

Charles V. than whom Christendom had not a more prudent prince, nor the church of Christ a fiercer enemy; yet he treats these great and active reformers gently, dismisseth them freely, not once forbidding them to preach or print the doctrine which he so much opposed and hated.

Oh Christian! if ever thou wilt get above thy fears, settle these things upon thy heart by faith.

1. That the reins of government are in Christ's hands; enemies, like wild horses, may prance and tramp up and down the world, as though they would tread down all that are in their way; but the bridle of providence is in their mouths, and upon their proud necks, 2 Kings xix. 28. and that bridle hath a strong curb.

2. The care of the saints properly pertains to Christ; he is the head of the body, Eph. i. 22, 23. our consulting head; and it were a reproach and dishonour to Christ, to fill our heads with distracting cares and fears, when we have so wise an head to consult and contrive for us.

3. You have lived all your days upon the care of Christ hitherto; no truth is more manifest than this, that there hath been a wisdom beyond your own, that hath guided your ways, Jer. x. 23. a power above your own, that hath supported your burdens, Psal. lxxiii. 26. a spring of relief out of yourselves that hath supplied all your wants, Luke xxiii. 35. He hath performed all things for you.

4. Jesus Christ hath secured his people by many promises to take care of them, how dangerous soever the times shall be, Eccl. viii. 12. Psal. lxxvi. 10. Amos ix. 8, 9. Rom. viii. 28. Oh! if these things were thoroughly believed and well improved, fears could no more distract or afflict our hearts, than storms or clouds could trouble the upper region: but we forget his providences and promises, and so are justly left in the hands of our own fears to be afflicted for it.

Rule 11. *Subject your carnal reasonings to faith, and keep your thoughts more under the government of faith, if ever you expect a composed and quiet heart in distracting evil times.*

He that layeth aside the rules of faith, and measures all things by the rule of his own shallow reason, will be his own bugbear; if reason may be permitted to judge all things, and to make its own inferences and conclusions from the aspects and appearances of second causes, your hearts shall have no rest day nor night: this alone will keep you in continual alarms.

And yet how apt are the best men to measure things by this rule, and to judge of all God's designs and mysterious providences

by it! In other things it is the judge and arbiter, and therefore we would make it so here too; and what it concludes and dictates we are prone to believe, because its dictates are backed and befriended by sense, whence it gathers its intelligence and information. *O quam sapiens argumentatrix sibi videtur ratio humana?* How wise and strong do its arguments and conclusions seem to us! saith Luther. This carnal reason is the thing that puts us into such confusions of mind and thoughts. It is this that,

1. Quarrels with the promises, shakes their credit, and our confidence in them, Exod. v. 22, 23.

2. It is this that boldly limits the divine power, and assigns it boundaries of its own fixing, Psal. lxxviii. 20, 41.

4. It is carnal reason that draws desperate conclusions from providential appearances and aspects, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. and prognosticates our ruin from them.

4. It is this carnal reason that puts us upon sinful shifts and indirect courses to deliver and save ourselves from danger, which do but the more perplex and entangle us, Isa. xxx. 15, 16.

5. It is mostly from our arrogant reasonings that our thoughts are discomposed and divided; from this fountain it is that they flow into our hearts in multitudes when dangers are near, Psal. xciv. 16. and xlii. 1.

All these mischiefs owe themselves to the exorbitant actings and intrusions of our carnal reasons; but these things ought not to be so, this is beside rule. For,

1. Though there be nothing in the matters of faith or providence contrary to right reason, yet there are many things in both, quite above the reach, and beyond the ken of reason, Isa. lv. 8. And,

2. The confident dictates of reason are frequently confuted by experience all the world over: it is every day made a liar, and the frights it puts us into, proved to be vain and groundless, Isa. li. 13.

Nothing can be better for us, than to resign up our reason to faith, to see all things through the promises, and trust God over all events.

Rule 12. *To conclude, exalt the fear of God in your hearts, and let it gain the ascendant over all your other fears.*

This is the prescription in my text for the cure of all our slavish fears, and indeed all the fore-mentioned rules for the cure of sinful fears run into this, and are reducible to it. For,

1. Doth the knowledge and application of the covenant of grace cure our fears? The fear of God is both a part of that covenant, and an evidence of our interest in it, Jer. xxxii. 40.

2. Doth sinful fear plunge men into such distresses of conscience?

Why, the fear of God will preserve your ways clean and pure, Psal. xix. 9. and so those mischiefs will be prevented.

3. Doth foresight and provision for evil days prevent distracting fears when they come? Nothing like the fear of God enables us to such a prevision and provision for them, Heb. xi. 7.

4. Do we relieve ourselves against fear by committing all to God? Surely it is the fear of God that drives us to him as our only *asylum* and sure refuge, Mal. iii. 16. *They feared God, and thought upon his name*, i. e. they meditated on his name, which was their refuge, his attributes their chambers of rest.

5. Must our affections to the world be mortified before our fears can be subdued? This is the instrument of mortification, Neh. v. 15.

6. Do the worthy examples of those that are gone before us, tend to the cure of our cowardice and fears? Why, the fear of God will provoke in you an holy self-jealousy, lest you fail of the grace they manifested, and come short of those excellent patterns, Heb. xii. 15.

7. Is the assurance of interest in God, and the pardon of sin such an excellent antidote against slavish fear? Why, he that walks in the fear of God, shall walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost also, Acts ix. 31.

8. Is integrity of heart and way such a fountain of courage in evil times? Know, reader, no grace promotes this integrity and uprightness more than the fear of God doth, Prov. xvi. 6. and xxiii. 17.

9. Do the reviving of past experiences suppress sinful fears? No doubt this was the subject which the fear of God put them upon, for mutual encouragement, Mal. iii. 16.

10. Are the providences of God in this world such cordials against fear? The fear of God is the very character and mark of those persons over whom his providence shall watch in the difficultest times, Eccles. viii. 12.

11. Doth our trusting in our own reason, and making it our rule and measure, breed so many fears? Why, the fear of God will take men off from such self-confidence, and bring them to trust the faithful God with all doubtful issues, and events, as the very scope of my text fully manifests. Fear not their fear: their fear, moving by the direction of carnal reason, drove them not to God, but to the Assyrian for help. Follow not you their example in this. But how shall they help it? Why, *sanctify the Lord of Hosts, and make him your fear.*

## CHAP. VII.

*Answering the most material pleas for slavish fears, and dissolving the common objections against courage and constancy of mind in times of danger.*

**T**HE pleas and excuses for our cowardly faintness in the day of trouble are endless, and so would his task be that should undertake particularly to answer them all. It is but the cutting off an *Hydra's* head, when one is gone, ten more start up; what is most material I will here take into consideration. When good men (for with such I am dealing in this chapter) see a formidable face and appearance of sharp and bloody times approaching them, they begin to tremble, their hearts faint, and their hands hang down with unbecoming despondency, and pusillanimity; their thoughts are so distracted, their reason and faith so clouded by their fears, that their temptations are thereby exceedingly strengthened upon them, and their principles and professions brought under the derision and contempt of their enemies: and if their brethren, to whom God hath given more courage and constancy, and who discern the mischief like to ensue from their uncomely carriage, admonish and advise them of it: they have abundance of pleas and defences for their fears, yea, when they reason the point of suffering in their own thoughts, and the matter is debated (as in such times it is common) betwixt faith and fear, O what endless work do their fears put upon their faith, to solve all the *buts* and *ifs* which their fears will object or suppose.

Some of the principal of them I think it worth while here to consider, and endeavour to satisfy, that, if possible, I may prevail with all gracious persons to be more magnanimous. And first of all.

*Plea* 1. Sufferings for Christ are strange things to the Christians of this age, we have had the happy lot to fall into milder times than the primitive Christians did, or those that struggled in our own land in the beginning of reformation; and therefore we may be excused for our fears, by reason of our own unacquaintedness with sufferings in our times.

*Answer* 1. One fault is but a bad excuse for another, why are sufferings such strangers to you? Why did you not cast upon them in the days of peace, and reckon that such days must come? Did you not covenant with Christ to follow him whithersoever he should go, to take up your cross, and follow him? And did not the word plainly tell you, that "All that will live godly in Christ

“Jesus must suffer persecution,” 2 Tim. iii. 12. “And that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God,” Acts xiv. 22. Did we fall asleep in quiet and prosperous days, and dream of halcyon days all our time on earth? that the mountain of our prosperity stood strong, and we should never be moved? That we should die in our nest, and multiply our days as the sand; Babylon’s children indeed dream so, Rev. xviii. 7. but the children of Sion should be better instructed. Alas! how soon may the brightest day be overcast? The weather is not so variable, as the state of the church in this world is; now a calm, Acts ix. 31. and then a storm, Acts xii. 1, 2. You could not but know what contingent and variable things all things on earth are; why then did you delude yourselves with such fond dreams? But as a learned man \* rightly observes, *Mundus senescens patitur phantasias*. The older the world grows, the more drowsy and dotting it still grows, and these are the days in which the wise as well as the foolish virgins slumber. Sure it is but a bad plea, after so many warnings from the word, and from the rod to say, I did not think of such times, I dreamed not of them.

2. Or if you say, though you have conversed with death and sufferings by speculation, yet you lived not in such times wherein you might see (as other sufferers did) the encouraging faith, patience and zeal of others set before your eyes in a lively pattern and example. Sufferings were not only familiarized to them by frequency, but facilitated also by the daily examples of those that went before them.

But think you indeed that nothing but encouragement and advantage to followers, arose from the trials of those that went before? Alas, there were sometimes the greatest damps and discouragements imaginable; the zeal of those that followed have often been inflamed by the faintings of those that were tried before them. In the seventh persecution under Decius, anno 250, there were standing before the tribunal, certain of the warriors or knights, viz. Ammon, Zenon, Ptolomeus, Ingenuus, and a certain aged man called Theophilus, who all standing by as spectators when a certain Christian was examined, and there seeing him for fear, ready to decline, and fall away, did almost burst for sorrow within themselves: they made signs to him with their hands, and all gestures of the body to be constant; this being noted by all the standers by, they were ready to lay hold upon them; but they preventing the matter, pressed up of their own accord, before the bench of the judge, professing themselves to be Christians, insomuch that both the president and the benchers were all astonished, and

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\* Gerson.

the Christians which were judged, the more encouraged. Such damping spectacles the Christians of former ages had frequently set before them.

And it was no small trial to some of them, to hear the faintings and abnegation of those that went before them, pleaded against their constancy; as in the time of Valens, it was urged by the persecutors; Those that came to their trial before you, have acknowledged their errors, begged our pardon, and returned to us: and why will you stand it out so obstinately? But the Christians answered, *Nos hac potissimum ratione viriliter stabimus, For this very reason we will stand to it the more manfully, to repair their scandal, by our greater courage for Christ.* These were the helps and advantages they often had in those days, therefore lay not so much stress upon that; their courage undoubtedly flowed from an higher spring and better principle, than the company they suffered with.

3. And if precedents and experiences of others to break the ice before you, be so great an advantage, surely we that live in these latter times have the most and best helps of that nature that ever any people in the world had. You have all their examples recorded for your encouragement, and therefore *think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, as though some strange thing had happened to you,* as the apostle speaks, 1 Pet. iv. 12. This plea is weighed, and no great weight found in it.

*Plea 2.* But my nature is soft and tender, my constitution more weak and subject to the impressions of fear than others: some that have robust bodies, and hardy stout minds, may better grapple with such difficulties than I can, who by constitution and education, am altogether unfit to grapple with those torments, that I have not patience enough to hear related; my heart faints and dies within me, if I do but read, or hear of the barbarous usages of the martyrs, and therefore I may well be excused for my fears and faint-heartedness, when the case is like to be my own.

*Answer 1.* It is a great mistake to think that the mere strength of natural constitution, can carry any one through such sufferings for Christ, or that natural tenderness and weakness divinely assisted, cannot bear the heaviest burden that ever God laid upon the shoulders of any sufferer for Christ. Our suffering and bearing abilities are not from nature, but from grace. We find men of strong bodies and resolute daring minds, have fainted in the time of trial. Dr. Pendleton, in our own story, was a man of a robust and massy body, and a resolute daring mind; yet when he came to the trial, he utterly fainted and fell off. On the other side, what poor feeble bodies have sustained the greatest torments, and out of weakness have been made strong! Heb. xi. 34. The virgin Eulalia, of Emerita in Portugal, was young and tender, but twelve

years old, and with much indulgence and tenderness brought up in an honourable family, being a person of considerable quality; yet how courageously did she sustain the most cruel torments for Christ! When the judge fawned upon her with this tempting language, "Why wilt thou kill thyself, so young a flower, and so near those honourable marriages and great dowries thou mightest enjoy?" Instead of returning a retracting or double answer, Eulalia threw down the idol, and spurned abroad with her feet the heap of incense prepared for the censers; and when the executioner came to her, she entertained him with this language: \* "Go to, thou hangman, burn, cut, mangle thou these earthly members; it is an easy matter to break a brittle substance, but the inward mind thou shalt not hurt." And when one joint was pulled from another, she said, "Behold what a pleasure it is for them, oh Christ! that remember thy triumphant victories, to attain unto those high dignities." So that our constitutional strength is not to be made the measure of our passive fortitude: God can make the feeblest and tenderest persons stand, when strong bodies, and blustering, resolute, and daring minds faint and fall.

2. Are our bodies so weak, and hearts so tender, that we can bear no suffering for Christ? Then we are no way fit to be his followers. Christianity is a warfare, and Christians must endure hardships, 2 Tim. ii. 3. Delicacy and tenderness is as odd a sight in a Christian, as it is in a soldier; and we cannot be Christ's disciples, except we deliberate the terms, and having considered well what it is like to cost us, do resolve, in the strength of God, to run the hazard of all with him and for him. It is in vain to talk of a religion that we think not worthy the suffering and enduring any great matter for.

3. And if indeed, reader, thy constitution be so delicate and tender, that thou art not able to bear the thoughts of torments for Christ, how is it that thou art not more terrified with the torments of hell, which all they that deny Christ on earth must feel and bear eternally? Oh, what is the wrath of man, in comparison with the wrath of God? but as the bite of a flea to the rendings of a lion. This is the consideration propounded by Christ, in Matth. x. 28. "Fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." The infinite and insupportable wrath of the great and terrible God, should make our souls shrink and shake at the thoughts of it, rather than the sufferings of the flesh, which are but for a moment.

4. Know that the wisdom and tenderness of thy Father will pro-

portion the burden thou must bear to thy back that must bear it; he will debate in measure, and not overload thy feeble shoulders: thou shalt find those things easy in trial, that now seem insupportable in the terrible prospect; a way of escape or support will certainly be opened, that thou mayest be able to bear it.

*Plea 3.* But others plead the sad experiences they have had of their own feebleness and weakness in former trials and exercises of an inferior nature, in which their faith and patience hath failed them: and how can they imagine they shall ever be able to stand in the fiercest and most fiery trial? If we have run with the footmen, and they have wearied us in the land of peace, how shall we then contend with horses in the swellings of Jordan, Jer. xii. 5.

*Answer 1.* We are strong or weak in all our trials, be they great or small, according to the assisting grace we receive from above; if he leave us in a common and light trial to our own strength, it will be our over-match, and if he assist us in great and extraordinary trials, we shall be more than conquerors. At one time Abraham could offer up his only son to God with his own hand; at another time he is so afraid of his life, that he acts very unsuitably to the character of a believer, and was shamefully rebuked for it by Abimelech. At one time David could say, *Though an host encamp against me, I will not fear*; at another time he feigns himself mad, and acted beneath himself, both as a man, and as a man enriched with so much faith and experience. At one time Peter is afraid to be interrogated by a maid; at another time he could boldly confront the whole council, and own Christ and his truths to their faces. In extraordinary trials we may warrantably expect extraordinary assistances, and by them we shall be carried through the greatest, how often soever we have failed in smaller trials.

2. The design and end of God's giving us experience of our own weakness in lesser troubles, is not to discourage and daunt us against we come to greater, (which is the use Satan here makes of it,) but to take us off from self-confidence and self-dependence; to make us see our own weakness, that we may more heartily and humbly betake ourselves to him in the way of faith and fervent supplication.

*Plea 4.* But some will object that they cannot help their fears and tremblings when any danger appears; because fear is the disease, at least the sad effect and symptom of disease, with which God hath wounded them: a deep and fixed melancholy hath so far prevailed, that the least trouble overcomes them; if any sad afflictive providence befall, or but threaten them, their fears presently rise, and their hearts sink, sleep departs, thoughts tumultuate, the blood boils, and the whole frame of nature is put into

disorder. If therefore the Lord should permit such great and dreadful trials to befall them, they can think of nothing less than dying by the hand of their own fears, before the hand of any enemy touch them; or, which is a thousand times worse, be driven by their own fears into the net of temptation, even to deny the Lord that bought them.

*Answer.* This I know is the sad case of many gracious persons, and I have reason to pity those that are thus exercised: O it is a heavy stroke, a dismal state, a deep wound indeed: but yet the wisdom of God hath ordered this affliction upon his people for gracious ends and uses; hereby they are made the more tender and watchful, circumspect and careful in their ways, that they may shun and escape as many occasions of trouble as they can, being so unable to grapple with them. I say not but there are higher and nobler motives that make them circumspect and tender, but yet the preservation of our own quietness is useful in its place, and it is a mercy if that or any thing else be sanctified to prevent sin, and promote care of duty. This is your clog to keep you from straying.

2. And when you shall be called forth to greater trials, that which you now call your snare, may be your advantage, and that in divers respects.

1. These very distempers of body and mind serve to imbitter the comforts and pleasures of this world to you, and make life itself less desirable to you than it is to others; they much wean your hearts from, and make life more burdensome to you than it is to others, who enjoy more of the pleasure and sweetness of it than you can do. I have often thought this to be one design and end of providence, in permitting such distempers to seize so many gracious persons as labour under them; and providence knows how to make use of this effect to singular purpose and advantage to you, when a call to suffering shall come; this may have its place and use under higher and more spiritual considerations, to facilitate death, and make your separation from this world the more easy to you\*; for though it be a more noble and raised act of faith and self-denial to offer up to God our lives, when they are made most pleasant and desirable to us upon natural accounts, yet it is not so easy to part with them as it is when God hath first imbittered them to us. Your lives are of little value to you now, because of this burdensome clog you must draw after you, but if you should increase your burden by so horrid an addition of guilt, as the denying

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\* It was common with the martyrs to sweeten death to themselves, by reckoning what infirmities it would cure them of, one of his blindness, another of his lameness, &c.

Christ or his known truths would do, you would not know what to do with such a life; it would certainly lie upon your hands as a burthen. God knows how to use these things in the way of his providence to your great advantage.

2. Art thou a poor melancholy and timorous person? Certainly if thou be gracious as well as timorous, this will drive thee nearer to God; and the greater thy dangers are, the more frequent and fervent will thy addresses to him be: thou feelest the need of everlasting arms underneath thee to bear thee up under, and to carry thee through smaller troubles, that other persons make nothing of, much more in such deep trials, that put the strongest Christians to the utmost of their faith and patience.

And 3dly, What if the Lord will make an advantage out of your weakness, to display more evidently his own power in your support? You know what the apostle saith, 1 Cor. xii. 9, 10. "And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness: most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me—for when I am weak then am I strong." If his infirmities might serve as a foil to set off the grace of God with a more bright and sparkling lustre, he would rejoice in his infirmities, and so should you: Well then, let not this discourage you, the infirmity of nature you complain of may make death the less terrible; it served to that purpose to blessed Basil, (as you heard before) when his enemy threatened to tear out his liver, he thought it a kindness to have that liver torn out, that had given him so much trouble. It may drive thee nearer to God, and minister a fit opportunity for the display of his grace in the time of need.

*Plea 5.* But what if God should hide his face from my soul in the day of my straits and troubles, and not only so, but permit Satan to buffet me with his horrid temptations and injections, and so I should sail like the ship in which Paul sailed, betwixt these two boisterous seas; what can I suspect less than a shipwreck of my soul, body, and all the comforts of both, in this world and in that to come?

*Answer 1.* So far as the fears of such a misery awaken you to pray for the prevention of it, it may be serviceable to your souls, but when it only works distraction and despondency of mind, it is your sin and Satan's snare. The prophet Jeremiah made a good use of such a supposed evil by way of deprecation, Jer. xvii. 17. "Be not a terror unto me, thou art my hope in the day of evil." q. d. in the evil day I have no place of retreat or refuge, but thy love and favour; Lord, that is all I have to depend on, and relieve myself by: I comfort myself against trouble with this confidence, that if men be cruel, yet thou wilt be kind; if they frown, thou wilt smile; if the world cast me out, thou wilt take me in;

but if thou shouldst be a terror to me instead of a comforter, if they afflict my body, and thou affright my soul with thy frowns too; what a deplorable condition shall I be in then! Improve it to such an end as he did, to secure the favour of God, and it will do you no harm.

2. It is not usual for God to estrange himself from his people in trouble, nor to frown upon them when men do. The common evidence of believers stands ready to attest and seal this truth, that Christians never find more kindness from God than when they feel most cruelty from men for his sake; consult the whole cloud of witnesses, and you will find they have still found the undoubted verity of that tried word, in 1 Pet. iv. 14. That "the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon sufferers." The expression seems to allude to the dove that Noah sent forth out of the ark, which flew over the watery world, but could not rest herself any where till she returned to the ark. So the Spirit of God is called here the Spirit of glory, from his effects and fruits, viz. his cheering, sealing, and reviving influences which make men glory and triumph in the most afflicted state. The Spirit of God seems, like that dove, to hover up and down, to flee hither and thither, over this person and that, but resteth not so long upon any, as those that suffer for righteousness sake; there he commonly takes up his abode and residence.

3. And what if it should fall out in some respect according to your fears, that heaven and earth should be both clouded together? Yet it will not be long before the pleasant light will spring up to you again, Psal. cxii. 4. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." You shall have his supporting presence till the Comforter do come. When Mr. Glover came within sight of the stake, he suddenly cries out, Oh Austin! *he is come! he is come.*

*Plea 6.* Oh! but what if my trial should be long, and the siege of temptations tedious? Then I am persuaded I am lost; I am no way able to continue long in a prison, or in tortures for Christ, I have no strength to endure a long siege, my patience is too short to hold out from month to month, and from year to year as many have done. Oh! I dread the thoughts of long continued trials, I tremble to think what must be the issue.

*Answer 1.* Cannot you distrust your own strength and ability, but you must also limit God's? What if you have but a small stock of patience? Cannot the Lord strengthen you with all might in the inner-man, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, according to his glorious power, Col. i. 11. And is it not his promise to confirm you to the end? 1 Cor. i. 8. You neither know *how much*, nor *how long* you can bear and suffer. It is not inherent, but assisting grace, by which your suffering abilities are to be measured. God can make that little stock of patience you have to hold

out as the poor widow's cruse of oil did, till deliverance come; he can enable your patience unto its perfect work, i. e. to work as extensively to all the kinds and sorts of trials, as intensively to the highest degree of trial, and as protensively to the longest duration and continuance of your trials as he would have it: if this be a marvellous thing in your eyes, must it be so in God's eyes also?

2. The Lord knows the proper season to come in to the relief of your sliding and fainting patience, and will assuredly come in accordingly in that season; for so run the promises, "The Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants when he seeth that their power is gone, and that there is none shut up or left," Deut. xxxii. 36. *Cum duplicantur lateres venit* Moses; in the mount of difficulties and extremities it shall be seen. "The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity," Psal. cxxv. 3. *Ubi definit humanum, ibi incipit divinum auxilium*; God's power watches the opportunity of your weakness.

*Plea 7.* But what if I should be put to cruel and exquisite tortures, suppose to the rack, to the fire, or such most dreadful sufferings as other Christians have been? What shall I do? Do I think I am able to bear it? Is my strength the strength of stone, or are my bones brass, that ever I should endure such barbarous cruelties? Alas! Death in the mildest form is terrible to me: how terrible then must such a death be?

*Answer.* Who enabled those Christians you mention to endure these things? They loved their lives, and sensed their pains as well as you, they had the same thoughts and fears, many of them, that you now have; yet God carried them through all, and so he can you. Did not he make the devouring flames a bed of roses to some of them? Was he not within the fires? Did he not abate the extremity of the torment, and enable weak and tender persons to endure them patiently and cheerfully? Some singing in the midst of flames, others clapping their hands triumphantly, and to the last sight that could be had of them in this world, nothing appeared but signs and demonstrations of joy unspeakable. Ah friends! we judge of sufferings by the out-side and appearance, which is terrible; but we know not the inside of sufferings which is exceeding comfortable. Oh! when shall we have done with our unbelieving *ifs* and *buts*, our questionings and doubtings of the power, wisdom, and tender care of our God over us, and learn to trust him over all. Now *the just shall live by faith*; and he that lives by faith shall never die by fear. The more you trust God, the less you will torment yourselves. I have done; the Lord strengthen, stablish, and settle the trembling and feeble hearts of his people, by what hath been so seasonably offered for their relief by a weak hand. *Amen.*

THE  
RIGHTEOUS MAN'S REFUGE.

THE EPISTLE TO THE READER.

*Christian Reader,*

IF \* Heinsius, when he had shut up himself in the library at Leyden, reckoned himself placed in the very lap of eternity, because he conversed there with so many Divine souls, and professed he took his seat in it with so lofty a spirit and sweet content, that he heartily pitied all the great and rich men of the world, that were ignorant of the happiness he there daily enjoyed;” How much more may that soul rejoice in its own happiness, who hath shut himself up in the chambers of the Divine Attributes, and exerciseth pity for the exposed and miserable multitude that are left as a prey to the temptations and troubles of the world.

That the days are evil, is a truth preached to us by the convincing voice of sense; and that they are like to be worse, few can doubt that look into the moral causes of evil times, the impudent height of sin, or into the prophecies relating to these latter days; for whom the sharpest sufferings are appointed to make way for the sweetest mercies. A faithful † watchman of our own hath given us fresh and late warning in these words of truth: *Hath God said nothing? doth faith see nothing of a flood coming upon us? Is there such a deluge of sin among us, and doth not that prophesy to us a deluge of wrath? Lift up your eyes, Christians, stand, and look through the land, eastward and westward, northward and southward, and tell me what you see? Behold, a flood cometh: a flood of sin is already broken forth upon us, the fountains of the great deeps are broken up, and the windows of hell are opened, &c.* In such an evil day as this is, happy is the soul that hath made God its refuge, even the most high God its habitation. He shall sit Noah-like, *Mediis tranquillis in undis*, safe from the fear of evil. In con-

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\* *Plerumque in qua simulac pedem posui, foribus pessulum obdo, et in ipso æternitatis gremio inter tot illustres animas sedem mihi sumo; cum ingenti quidem animo, ut subinde magnatum me misereat qui felicitatem hanc ignorant.* Epistola primar.

† Mr. R. A. of Godly Fear, p. 19.

sideration of the distress of many unprovided souls for the misery that is coming on them, and not knowing how short my time will be useful to any, (for I know it cannot be long) I have endeavoured once more the assistance of poor Christians in these two small treatises, one of *fear*, the other of *preparation for the worst of times*; which, it may be, is the last help I shall this way be able to afford them. It is therefore my earnest request to all that fear the Lord, and tremble at his word, to redeem their time with double diligence, because the days are evil; to clear up their interest in Christ and the promises, lest the darkness of their spiritual estate, meeting with such a night of outward darkness, overwhelm them with terrors insupportable. Some help is offered in this treatise to direct the gracious soul to its rest in God: May the blessings of his Spirit accompany them, and bless them to the soul of him that readeth; it will be a matter of joy beyond all earthly joys to the heart of,

*Thy friend and servant in Christ,*

JOHN FLAVEL.

## ISA. xxvi. 20.

*Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over-past.*

## CHAP. I.

*Wherein the literal and real importance of the text is considered, the doctrine propounded, and the method of the following discourse stated.*

**Sect. I.** **M**AN being a prudent and prospecting creature, can never be satisfied with present safety, except he may also see himself well secured against future dangers. Upon all appearance of trouble, it is natural for him to seek a refuge, that he may be able to shun what he is loath to suffer, and survive those calamities which will ruin the defenceless and exposed multitude. Natural men seek refuge in natural things. "The rich man's "wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit," Prov. xviii. 11. Hypocrites make lies their refuge, and under falsehood do they hide themselves, Isa. xxviii. 15. not doubting but they shall stand dry and safe, when the over-flowing flood lays all others under water. But,

Godly men make God himself their hiding place, to him they have still betaken themselves in all ages, as often as calamities have befallen the world, Psal. xlvi. 1. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." As chickens run under the wings of the hen for safety when the kite hovers over them, so do they fly to their God for sanctuary, Psal. lvi. 3. "At what time I am afraid I will trust in thee;" q. d. Lord, if a storm of trouble at any time overtake me, I will make bold to come under thy roof for shelter; and indeed not so bold as welcome: it is no presumption in them after so gracious an invitation from their God, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers."

My friends, a sound of trouble is in our ears, the clouds gather and blacken upon us more and more: Distress of nations with perplexity seems to be near, our day hastens to an end, and the shadows of the night are stretching forth upon us. What greater service therefore can I do for your souls, than by the light of this scripture (as with a candle in my hand) to lead you to your chambers, and shew you your lodgings in the attributes and promises of God, before I take my leave of you, and bid you good night.

O with what satisfaction should I part with you, were I but sure to leave you under Christ's wings! It was Christ's lamentation over Jerusalem that they should not be gathered under his wings, when the Roman eagle was ready to hover over that city; and you know how dear they paid for their obstinacy and infidelity. Be warned by that dreadful example, and among the rest of your mercies bless God heartily for this, that so sweet a voice sounds from heaven in your ears this day, this day of frights and troubles; "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers," &c.

This chapter contains a lovely song fitted for the lips of God's Israel, notwithstanding their sad captivity; for their God was with them in Babylon, and cheered their hearts there with many promises of deliverance, and in the mystical sense it relates to the New Testament churches, of whose troubles, protections, and deliverances, the Jews in Babylon were a type.

This chapter, though full of excellent and seasonable truths, will be too long to analyze; it shall suffice to search back only to the 17th verse, where you find the poor captivated church under dependency of mind, comparing her condition to that of a woman in travail, who hath many sharp pains and bitter throes, yet cannot be delivered, much like that in 2 Kings xix. 3. "The children are come to the birth, and there is no strength to bring forth."

Against this discouragement a double relief is applied in the following verses; the one is a promise of full deliverance at last, the other an invitation into a sure sanctuary and place of defence for the present, until the time of their full deliverance came. The promise we have in verse 19. "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise: awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust," &c. Their captivity was a civil death, and Babylon as a grave to them. So it is elsewhere described, Ezek. xxxvii. 1, 2, 3, 14. "I will open your graves, and cause you to come out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." And therefore their deliverance is carried under the notion of a resurrection in that promise.

*Object.* Yea, (might they reply) the hopes of deliverance at last is some comfort, but alas, that may be far off: How shall we subsist till then?

*Solut.* Well enough, for as you have in that promise a sure ground of deliverance at last, so in the interim here is a gracious invitation into a place of security for the present, *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers.* In which invitation four things call for our close attention.

1. The form of the invitation, including in it the qualified subject, *Come, my people.* God's own peculiar people, who have chosen God for their protection, and resigned up themselves sincerely to

him in the covenant, are the persons here invited, the same which he before called the righteous nation that kept the truth, ver. 2. he means those that remained faithful to God, as many of them did in Babylon, witness their sorrow for Sion, Psal. cxxxvii. *per totum*; and their solemn appeal to God, that their hearts were not turned back, nor had their steps declined though they were sore broken in the place of dragons, and covered with the shadow of death, Psal. xlv. 18, 19, 20. These are the people invited to the chambers of security. And the form of invitation is full of tender compassion; *Come, my people*; like a tender father who sees a storm coming upon his children in the fields, and takes them by the hand saying, Come away, my dear children, hasten home with me, lest the storm over-take you; or as the Lord said to Noah before the deluge, Come thou and all thy house into the ark, and God shut him in, Gen. vii. 1, 16. This is the form of invitation, *Come, my people*.

2. The privilege invited to; *Enter thou into thy chambers*. There is some variety, and indeed variety rather than contrariety in the exposition of these words.

In this all are agreed, that by their chambers is not meant the chambers of their own houses, Ezek. xxi. 14. for alas, their houses were left unto them desolate; and if not, yet they could be no security to them now, when neither their own houses nor their fortified city was able to defend them before.

Grotius\* expounds it of the grave, and makes these chambers the same with the chambers of death. *Ite in cubicula*, i. e. *sepulchra vestra*. The grave indeed is a place of security, where God sometimes hides some of his people in troublesome times, as it is plain in Isa. lvii. 1, 2. but I cannot allow this to be the sense of this text; God doth not comfort his captives with a natural against a civil death, but with protection in their troubles upon earth, as is evident from the scope of the whole chapter.

By chambers therefore, others understand the chambers of Divine Providence, where the saints are hid in evil days. So our Annotators on the place, and no doubt but this is in part the special intendment of the text.

Others understand the attributes and promises of God to be here meant, as well as his providence. And I conceive all three make the sense of the text full, i. e. the Divine attributes engaged in the promises, and exercised or actuated in the providences of God; these are the sanctuaries and refuges of God's people in days of trouble.

Calvin understands it of the quiet repose of the believer's mind

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\* Grotius on the place.

in God, but that is rather the effect of his security, than the place of it. It is God's attributes, or his name (which is the same thing) to which the righteous fly and are safe, Prov. xviii. 10.

*Object.* But you will, say, why are they called *their chambers*? Those attributes are not theirs, but God's.

*Solut.* The answer is easy; though they be God's properties, yet they are his people's privileges and benefits; for when God makes over himself to them in covenant to be their God, he doth, as it were, deliver to them the keys of all his attributes for their benefit and security; and is as if he should say, my wisdom is yours, to contrive for your good; my power is yours, to protect your persons; my mercy yours, to forgive your sins; my all-sufficiency yours to supply your wants; all that I am, and all that I have, is for your benefit and comfort. These are the chambers provided for the saints' lodgings, and into these they are invited to enter. *Enter thou into thy chambers.* By entering into them understand their actual faith exercised in acts of affiance and resignation to God in all their dangers. So Psal. lvi. 3. "At what time I am afraid (saith David) I will trust in thee:" q. d. Lord, if a storm come I will make bold to shelter myself from it under thy wings by faith; look, as unbelief shuts the doors of all God's attributes and promises against us; so faith opens them all to the soul: and so much of the privilege invited to, which is the second thing.

3. We have here a needful caution for the securing of this privilege to ourselves in evil times, *shut thy doors about thee.* Or as the Syriac renders גַּבְרָךְ behind or after thee, i. e. saith Calvin, *Diligenter cavendum ne ulla rimula diabolo ad nos pateat.* Care must be taken that no passage be left open for the devil to creep in after us, and drive us out of our refuge; for so it falls out too often with God's people when they are at rest in God's name or promises, Satan creeps in by unbelieving doubts and puzzling objections, and beats them out of their refuge back again into trouble; it is therefore of great concernment, in such times especially, *not to give place to the devil*, as the phrase is, Eph. iv. 17. but cleave to God by a resolved reliance.

4. Lastly, We are to note with what arguments or motives they are pressed to betake themselves to this refuge. There are two found in the text, the one working upon their fear, the other upon their hope.

1. That which works upon their fear is a supposition of a storm coming, the indignation of God will fall like a tempest; this is supposed in the text, and plainly expressed in the words following, "For the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth," ver. 21.

2. The other is fitted to work upon their hope, though his indignation fall like a storm, yet it will not continue long; it shall be but for a moment, better days and more comfortable dispensations will follow. From all which the general observation is this,

Doct. *That the attributes, promises, and providences of God, are the chambers of rest and security, in which his people are to hide themselves, when they foresee the storms of his indignation coming upon the world.*

“The name of the Lord (saith Solomon) is a strong tower; “the righteous run into it, and are safe,” Prov. xviii. 10. And his attributes are his name, Exod. xxxiv. 5. For by them he is known as a man is known by his name, and this his name is a strong tower for his people's security; now what is the use and end of a tower in a city, but to receive and secure the inhabitants when the out-works are beaten to the ground, the wall scaled, and the houses left desolate?

And as it is here resembled to a tower, so in Isa. xxxiii. 16. it is shadowed out unto us by a munition of rocks, “His place of defence shall be a munition of rocks.” How secure is that person that is invironed with rocks on every side? Yea, you will say, but yet a rock is but a cold and barren refuge; though other enemies cannot, yet hunger and thirst can invade and kill him there. No, in this rock is a storehouse of provision, as well as a magazine for defence; so it follows, “Bread shall be given him, and his water shall be sure.”

And sometimes it is resembled to us by the wings of a fowl, spread with much tenderness over her young for their defence, Ps. lvii. 1. “Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, “until these calamities be overpast.” So Psal. xvii. 8. “Keep me “as the apple of thine eye, hide me under the shadow of thy “wings.” No part of the body hath more guards upon it than the apple of the eye. God is as careful to preserve his people as men are to preserve their eyes; *and he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye.* But we need not go from one metaphor to another to shew you where the saint's refuge is in time of danger; you have a whole bundle of them lying together in that one scripture, Psal. xviii. 2. “The Lord is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer, “my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the “horn of my salvation, and my high tower.” Where you find all kinds of defence, whether natural or artificial, under a pleasant variety of apt metaphors, ascribed to God for the security of his people.

Now for the casting of this great point into as easy and profitable a method as I can; I shall resolve this general truth into these

following propositions, which are implied or expressed in the text and doctrine thence deduced; and the first is this;

Prop. 1. *That there are times and seasons appointed by God for the pouring out of his indignation upon the world.*

Prop. 2. *That God's own people are concerned in, and ought to be affected with those judgments.*

Prop. 3. *That God hath a special and particular care of his people in the days of his indignation.*

Prop. 4. *That God usually premonishes the world, especially his own people, of his judgments before they befall them.*

Prop. 5. *That God's attributes, promises, and providences are prepared for the security of his people, in the greatest distresses that befall them in the world.*

Prop. 6. *That none but God's people are taken into those chambers of security, or can expect his special protection in evil times.*

And then I shall apply the whole in the proper uses of it.

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## CHAP. II.

*Demonstrating the first proposition, that there are times and seasons appointed by God for the pouring out of his indignation upon the world.*

Sect. I. **T**HIS is plainly implied in the text, that there are times of indignation appointed to befall the world; yea, and more than this; not only that such times shall come, but the duration and continuance is also under an appointment. "Hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be over-past." The prophet tells us in Zeph. ii. 2. that these stormy times are under a decree, and that decree is there compared to a pregnant woman which is to go out her appointed months, and then to travail and bring forth: Even so it is in the judgments God brings upon the world. We see them not in the days of provocation, *sed adhuc foetus in utero latent*, but all this while they are in the womb of the decree, and at the appointed season they shall become visible to the world. As there are in nature fair halcyon days, and cloudy, over-cast, and stormy: So it is in providences, Eccl. vii. 14. "God hath set the one over-against the other." Yea, one is the occasion of the other; for look as the sun in a hot day exhales abundance of vapours from the earth and sea, these occasion showers, thunder, and tempests, and those again clear the air, and dispose it to fair weather again. So it is here, prosperity is the occasion of abundance of sin, this brings on adversity from the justice of God to correct it; adversity being sanctified, humbles, reforms, and purges

the people of God, and this again by mercy procures their prosperity: So you find the account stated in Psal. cvii. 17. "Fools because of their iniquities are afflicted, then they cry to the Lord in their troubles, and he saveth them out of their distresses."

And this appointment of times of distress is both profitable and necessary for the world, especially God's own people in it.

In general, hereby the being and righteousness of God is cleared and vindicated against the atheism and infidelity of the world, Psal. ix. 16. "The Lord is known by the judgments that he executeth." Impunity is the occasion of many atheistical thoughts in the world, Jer. xlviii. 11. "Moab hath been at ease from his youth; and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity; therefore his taste remaineth in him, and his scent is not changed." So Psal. lv. 19. "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." Kingdoms, families, and particular persons, like standing water and ponds, are apt to corrupt by long continued peace and prosperity; the Lord therefore sees it necessary to purge the world by his judgments; "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Those sermons that God preaches from heaven by the terrible voice of his judgments, startle and rouse the secure world, more than all the warnings and exhortations of his ministers could ever do. Those that slept securely under our ministry, will fear and tremble under his rods; those that are without faith, are not without sense and feeling, their own eyes will affect their hearts, though our words could make no impression on them.

*Sect. 2.* But of what use soever these national judgments are to others, to be sure they shall be beneficial to God's own people; when others die by fear, they shall live by faith; if they be baneful poison to the wicked, they shall be healthful physic to the godly. For,

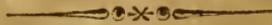
1. By these calamities God will mortify and purge their corruptions; this winter weather shall be useful to destroy and rot those rank weeds, which the summer of prosperity bred, Isa. xxvii. 9. "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged." Physic in its own nature is griping and unpleasant, but very useful and necessary to purge the body from noxious and malignant humours, which retained, may put life itself in hazard: And it is with the body politic, as with the body natural.

2. National judgments drive the people of God nearer to him, and to one another; they drive the people of God to their knees, and make them pray more frequently, more fervently, and more feelingly than they ever were wont to do; in this posture you find

them in ver. 8, 9. of this chapter. "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee, the desire of our souls is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early."

3. In a word, by these distractions and distresses of nations, the people of God are more weaned from the world, and made to long more vehemently after heaven; being now convinced by experience that this is not their rest. When all things are tranquil and prosperous, God's own people are but too apt to fall asleep and dream of pleasure and rest on earth, to say as Job in his prosperity, "I shall die in my nest, I shall multiply my days as the sand." And then are their heads and hearts filled with many projects and designs, to promote their comforts, and make provision for their accommodations on earth: the multiplicity of earthly cares and comforts take up their time and thoughts too much, and make them that they mind death and eternity too little. But saith God, this must not be so, things must not go on at this rate, the prosperous world must not thus enchant my people; I must embitter the earth that I may thereby sweeten heaven the more to them; when they find no rest below, they will surely seek it above.

These, and such like, are the gracious designs and ends of God in shaking the world by his terrible judgments; but yet, though national troubles must necessarily come, the wisest of men cannot positively determine the precise time of those judgments; we may indeed, by the signs of the times, discern their near approach; yet our judgment can be but probable and conjectural, seeing there are tacit conditions in the dreadfullest threatenings, Jer. xviii. 7, 8. Jonah iii. 9, 10. And such is the merciful nature of God, that he oft-times turns away his anger from his people, when it seems ready to pour down upon them, Psal. lxxviii. 38. The consideration whereof no way indulges security, but encourages to repentance and greater fervency in prayer.



### CHAP. III.

*Opening and confirming the second proposition, viz. That God's own people are much concerned in, and ought to be suitably affected with those judgments that befall the nation wherein they live.*

**Sect. I.** **I**F God's people have no concernment in these things, why are they called upon in this text, to turn into their chambers, hide themselves, and shut their doors, till the indignation be overpast? Certainly though God hath better provided for them than

others, yet they are two ways concerned in these cases as much as others: viz.

- |                     |            |
|---------------------|------------|
| 1. Upon a political | } Account. |
| 2. Upon a religious |            |

1. Upon a political account, as they are members of the community, and so are equally concerned in the good or evil that befalls the nation in which they live; their cabins must follow the fate of the ship in which they sail: their lives, liberties, estates, and interest sink and swim with the Public. The good figs were carried away with the bad, Jer. xxiv. 5. In these outward respects it often-times bears as hard upon the righteous as upon the wicked. Ezek. xxi. 3. "I will draw forth my soul out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked." In these outward respects, as it is with the good, so with the sinner, Eccl. ix. 2. The same fire that burns the dry tree, often-times burns the green tree too, Ezek. xx. 47. Grace is above all hazards, but creature-enjoyments and comforts are not. The sins of the Sodomites involves not only their own houses and estates, but Lot's also, in the ruin and overthrow; wicked men often fare the better for the company of the godly, and the godly often fare the worse for the company of the wicked.

And it is not to be wondered at, if we consider that even the saints themselves have an hand in the provocation of these judgments, as well as others, Deut. xxxii. 19. "And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters." We have contributed to the common heap of guilt, and therefore must justify God if we partake with others in the common calamity.

2. They are greatly concerned in such judgments upon a religious and Christian account, for it is usual for the flood of God's judgments not only to sweep away our civil and natural, but our spiritual and best enjoyments and comforts. Thus the ordinances of God ceased in Babylon, and there the faithful bewailed their misery upon that account, Psal. cxxxvii. *per totum*; "we wept when we remembered thee, O Zion." Not only Israel flies, but the ark is taken prisoner by the enemy, 1 Sam. iv. 11. And you find the people of God more deeply concerned upon this account, than for all their outward losses and other sufferings, Zeph. iii. 18. "I will gather them of thee that are sorrowful for the solemn assemblies, to whom the reproach of it was a burthen." For by how much our souls are more excellent than our bodies, and the concerns of eternity over-balance those of time; by so much the more are we concerned in the loss of our spiritual, more than of our temporal mercies and enjoyments.

Grace indeed cannot be lost, but the means and instruments by

which it is begotten may; the golden candlestick is one of the moveables in God's house, Rev. ii. 5.

Thus you see a two-fold concernment that the people of God have in the effects of national judgments.

*Sect. 2.* This being so, how should all that fear God be affected with the appearances and signs of his indignation? So was David, Psal. cxix. 120. "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am "afraid of thy judgments." He that feared not a bear, a lion, a Goliath, yet trembleth at God's judgment. So did Habakkuk, chap. iii. ver. 16. "When I heard, my belly trembled, my lips quivered "at the voice, rottenness entered into my bones." Expressions denoting the deepest seizures of fear and greatest consternations: not that I would persuade you to such slavish fear or unchristian dejection, as it is not only sinful in itself, but the cause and inlet of many other sins; but to a due sense both of the evils of misery that will befall the nation when God's indignation comes upon it; and the evils of sin that have incensed it; and to such a fear of both as may seasonably awaken us to the use of all preventing remedies. And, First,

1. O that all would lay to heart the national miseries that God's indignation threatens upon us. It is said, Psal. cvii. 34. "A "fruitful land is turned into barrenness for the wickedness of them "that dwell therein." It was long since told England by one of its faithful watchmen\*, 'The nation and church in which we are, 'are the common ship in which we are all embarked, and if this in 'judgment be cast away, whether dashed against the rocks of any 'foreign power, or swallowed up in the quicksands of domestic 'divisions, it must need hazard all the passengers: Or if you were 'sure, that for your parts you might be safe, would it not be a 'bitter thing to stand upon the shore, and see such a glorious 'vessel as this nation is, to be cast away? To see this glorious 'land defaced, the blessed gospel polluted, the golden candlestick 'removed, it cannot but affect men that have any bowels.

'Or if this move you not, yet to see a stranger to lord it in thy 'habitation, and thy dwelling place to cast thee out; for your 'delightful dwellings, your fruitful, pleasant, and well tilled 'fields to be made a prey; for you to sow, and another to reap, '*Impius has segetes*; for the delicate women upon whom the wind 'must not blow, to be exposed to the lust and cruelty of an 'enemy, and be glad to fly away naked to prolong a miserable 'life, which they would be glad to part with for death, were it 'not for fear of the exchange. For the tender mother to look

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\* Mr. Strong.

‘ upon the child of her womb, and consider, must this child in  
 ‘ whom I have placed the hope of my age; for,

*Omnis in Ascanio stat chari cura parentis;*

‘ He that hath been so tenderly brought up, must he fall into the  
 ‘ rough hands of a bloody soldier, skilful to destroy? It had been  
 ‘ well for me if God had given me dry breasts, or a miscarrying  
 ‘ womb, rather than to bring forth children unto murderers; or  
 ‘ if you might be safe, how could you endure to see the miseries  
 ‘ that should come upon your people, and the destruction of your  
 ‘ kindred.’ Thus far he. But alas! What security have any of  
 us as to our earthly comforts from the common calamity? We  
 may please ourselves as Baruch did, Jer. xlv. 4, 5. and dream of  
 exemption, but by so much the greater will our distress be, when  
 it shall surprize us.

2. You that are the people of God ought to be deeply affected  
 with the spiritual miseries that threaten us in the day of God’s in-  
 dignation: do you consider what the removing the candlestick out  
 of its place is? A departing gospel, the going down of the sun upon  
 the prophets, the loss of your sweet sabbaths and gospel feasts,  
 and the gross darkness of popery to fill the earth: O it is hard  
 parting with these things. It is said, 1 Sam. vii. 2. when the ark  
 was removed, “ that all the house of Israel lamented after the  
 “ Lord.” Pity your own souls, and be deeply affected with the  
 misery of others, the poor Christless world who are like to perish  
 for want of vision, Prov. xxix. 18. In the year 1072, saith Mat-  
 thew Paris, preaching was suppressed at Rome, and then letters  
 were framed by some as coming from hell, in which the devil  
 gives them thanks for the multitude of souls sent to him that  
 year.

3. But especially labour to affect your hearts with the sins that  
 have incensed God’s indignation: So did the saints in Jerusalem,  
 Ezek. ix. 4. they sighed and mourned for all the abominations  
 committed in it. So did Lot, 2 Pet. ii. 7. “ He vexed his righteous  
 “ soul from day to day.” So did David, Psal. cxix. 36. “ Rivers  
 “ of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law.”  
 O who that loves God can refrain tears, to see the God of pity,  
 the God of tender mercies, a Father full of bowels of compassion,  
 so incensed and provoked to indignation! Oh, it is an heart-melting  
 consideration where there is any ingenuity. If our afflictions grieve  
 God to the heart, as it doth, Judges x. 16. our souls should be  
 grieved for his dishonour.

4. To conclude, get upon your hearts such a sense of God’s in-  
 dignation as may quicken you to the use of preventing duties. So  
 Amos iv. 12. “ Because I will do this, prepare to meet thy God,

“O Israel.” So the prophet, Zeph. ii. 1, 2. “Gather yourselves before the decree bring forth.” It was Moses’s honour to stand in the breach, Psal. cvi. 23. And Abraham’s to plead so with God, *though he did not prevail.*

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CHAP. IV.

*Confirming the third proposition. viz. That God hath a special and peculiar care of his own people in the days of his indignation.*

**Sect. I.** PROPRIETY and relation engage care and solicitude in times of danger; we see God hath put such a *storge*, and inclination into the very creatures, that they will expose themselves to preserve their young; and it cannot be imagined that the Fountain of pity which dropt this tenderness into the bowels of the creatures, should not abound with it himself; is there such strong inclination in the very birds of the air, that they will hazard their own lives to save their young; much more is God solicitous for his people, Isa. xxxi. 5. *As birds flying, &c. to their nest when their young are in danger, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem.* No mother is more solicitous for her dearest child in danger and distress, than the Lord is for his people, Isa. xl. 15. “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee.” A woman [the more affectionate sex] forget her child, a piece of herself, her sucking child, which, together with milk from her breast, draws love from the heart! This may rather be supposed, than that the Lord should forget his people.

Two things must here be cleared. 1. That it is so. 2. Why it is so.

1. That it is so, will appear from,

1. Scripture emblems.

2. Scripture promises.

3. Scripture instances.

1. Scripture emblems; and among many, I will, upon this occasion, single out two or three principal ones. In Ezek. v. 1, 2, 3. “And thou son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber’s razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head, and upon thy beard, then take thee balances to weigh and divide the hair; thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled; and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife; and a third part

“ thou shalt scatter in the wind, and I will draw out a sword after them; thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts.” You find this truth shadowed out in this excellent emblem; Jerusalem, the capital city, is the head; the numerous inhabitants are the hair; the King of Babylon the razor; the weighing it in balances is the exactness of God’s procedure in judgment with them; the fire, knife, and wind, are the various judgments to which the people were appointed; the hiding of a few in the prophet’s skirt, is the care of God for the preservation of his own remnant in the common calamity. This is one emblem clearing this point. And then Ezek. ix. 3, 4. the same truth is presented to us in another emblem, as lively and significant as the former. “ And behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth towards the north, and every man a slaughter-weapon in his hand, and one among them was clothed in linen, with a writer’s inkhorn by his side, and they went in, and stood before the brazen altar; and the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house, and he called to the man clothed in linen, which had the writer’s inkhorn by his side; and the Lord said unto him, go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.” The men that had the charge of the city are the angels appointed for that service; some with slaughter-weapons, whose work it was to destroy; but one among them had a writer’s inkhorn by his side, and he was employed to take the names and mark the persons of God’s faithful ones among them, whom the Lord intended to preserve and hide in that common overthrow and desolation of the city, and these were to be all marked, man by man, before the destroying angel was to begin his bloody work. Oh! see the tender care of God over his upright mourning servants! Once more, the same truth is represented in a third emblem, Mal. iii. 17. “ And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day that I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him:” where the world is compared to an house on fire; God to the master and father of the family, the wicked to the useless lumber therein; the saints to the children and jewels in the house; about these his first and principal care of preservation is exercised, these he will be sure to save, whatever become of the rest. Thus you have the chosen emblems that illustrate this comfortable truth.

2. As these scripture-emblems illustrate it, so there are many excellent scripture-promises to confirm it, Isa. xxxii. 2. “ A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the

tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place." This man is the man Christ Jesus; the tempests spoken of, are the miseries and calamities of war, which make the land on which it falls, an hot, dry and weary land; in the midst and rage whereof, Christ shall be to his faithful ones a covert for protection, a river of water for supply, and a shadow for refreshment; that is to say, whatsoever shall be necessary either for their safety or comfort. Christ is not only a shadow to his people from the wrath of God, but also from the rage of men. Again, Zech. ii. 5. "I will be a wall of fire round about:" alluding to travellers in the desert, who, to prevent danger from wild beasts in the night, use to make a circular fire round about the place where they lie down to rest, and this fire was as a wall to secure them. You have the like gracious promise also made to the poor captivated church, in Ezek. xi. 16. "Although I have cast them far off, among the Heathen, and scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come."

*A little sanctuary.* The \* word is variously rendered and expounded; some adverbially, and render it *paulisper*, a sanctuary for a little while, viz. during their danger, at the shortness of which this adverb points: so Junius. Others adjectively, as we translate it, *templum paucorum*, as Vatablus. There was but an handful of them, and God would be as a sanctuary to secure and protect that remnant.

3. And all these promises have in all ages been faithfully fulfilled to the saints. You have an excellent scripture for this, 2 Pet. ii. 4, 5, 6. when the flood was brought upon the old world, there was one Noah a righteous man in it, and for him God provided an ark. When Sodom was overthrown, there was one Lot in it, a just man, and God secured him out of danger; upon which that comfortable conclusion is built, ver. 9. "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly." When Jerusalem was destroyed, a Pella was provided as a refuge for the godly there. Remarkable is that place to this purpose, Isa. xxv. 4. "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." And this hath God been not only once or twice, but in all ages, Psal. xc. 1. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations;" or as the Hebrew, "in generations and generations." What he hath been in former generations to his distressed people, that he is, and will be without alteration in all generations.

*Section II.* Yet we must remember, that all who are preserved in

common calamities, are not the people of God; nor are all that are indeed his people preserved; he hath people enough to divide into two ranks, as the husbandman his corn, some for the mill, and some to reserve for seed. There be stars enough in the heaven to shine in both hemispheres, and there are saints enough in the world, some to shine in heaven, and some to preserve the church on earth.

1. All that are preserved are not the people of God. In the ark a wicked Ham was preserved; and those that were preserved in Egypt, many of them were afterwards destroyed for their unbelief, Jude 5. So Ezekiel's vision, a part even of those hairs which were spared were afterwards cast into the fire, Ezek. v. 4. Preservation from the dominion of sin and the wrath to come, is peculiar to God's own people; but as for temporal deliverances, we cannot infer that conclusion.

2. Nor yet can we say that all God's people shall be preserved; that promise, Zeph. ii. 3. leaves it upon a may-be; many a precious Christian hath fallen in the common calamity; they have been preserved in, but not from trouble.

But it is usual with God to preserve some in the sorest judgments: and the grounds of it are,

1. Because some must be left as a seed to propagate and preserve the church, which is perpetual, and can never fail; he never so overthrows nations as Sodom was overthrown, Isa. i. 9. This was the ground of that promise, Jer. xxx. 11. "For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee, though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee." And of that plea, Amos vii. 2. "O Lord God forgive, I beseech thee; by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small." Except the Lord had left a small remnant, we had been as Sodom. Remarkable to this purpose is that scripture, Isa. vi. 13. "But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as the teil-tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." This preserved remnant is the holy seed by which the church is propagated and continued, Psal. cii. 28.

2. Because God will, even in this world, own and reward the fears and sorrows of his people for the sins of the times, and sufferings of the church, with the joy and comfort of better times, and a participation of Zion's consolation; so Isa. lxvi. 10. *Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, ye that have mourned for her.* They that have sown in tears, do sometimes live to reap in joy, Psal. cxxv. 6. They shall say as Isa. xxv. 9. "Lo this is our God, we have waited for him, and he is come to save us." And those that live not to reap down in this world the harvest of their own prayers and tears, shall

be no losers: a full and better reward shall be given them in heaven, Isa. lvii. 22.

3. Because the preserved remnant of saints are they that must actually give unto God the glory of all his providential administrations in the world, both of judgments and mercies upon others, and towards themselves: "They that go down to the pit do not celebrate his praise; the living, the living they praise him," Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19. Thus when God turned back Zion's captivity, the remnant of the saints that were preserved were they that recorded his praise, Psal. cxxxvi. 1, 2. "Then was our mouth filled with laughter." And fully to this sense is that scripture, Psal. cii. 19, 20, 21. "He delivers those that are appointed to death," i. e. that men had doomed to death, "that they may declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem."

4. The hiding of the saints in evil days is the greatest discovery of the hand of God in the world; when he hides them, he shews himself, and that both to the saints, and to their enemies.

It is one of the most glorious mysteries of providence that ever the world beheld, viz. the strange and wonderful protection of poor helpless Christians from the rage and fury of their mighty and malicious enemies; though they walk visibly among them, yet they are, as it were, hid from their hands, but not from their eyes: So Jer. i. 18. you find God made that prophet, among the envious princes, and against an enraged and mighty king, *as a defenced city, and as an iron pillar, and as a brazen wall.* And indeed it was easier for them to conquer and take the strongest fort or garrison, than that single person, who yet walked day by day naked among them. So Luther, a poor monk, was made invincible; all the papal power could not touch him, for God hid him. All the world against one Athanasius, and yet not able to destroy him, for God hid him. This is the display of the glorious power of God in the world, and he hath much honour by it.

Well then, if there be a God that takes care of his own in evil days; do not you be distractingly careful what will become of you in such times; you cannot see how it is possible for you to escape: but, 2 Pet. ii. 4, 5, 6. the Lord knows how to deliver when you do not. Little did Lot know the way and manner of his preservation till God opened it to him; nor Noah till God contrived it for him: there was no way to be contrived by them for escape: he that knew how to deliver them, can deliver you also.

Leave yourselves to God's disposal, it shall certainly be to your advantage: the church is his peculiar care; Isa. xxviii. 3. "I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

The more you commit yourselves to his care, the more you en-

gage it, Isa. xxvi. 2. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." He will certainly find a place of safety for his people under, or in heaven.

Neither be too much dejected when the number of visible professors seems but small; think not the church will perish when it is brought so low. This was Elijah's case, he thought he had been left alone, that religion had been preserved in his single person, as the *phœnix* of the world; but see, 1 Kings ix. 18. God hath enough left, if we were all in our graves, to continue religion in the world; it concerns him more than you to look to that.

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## CHAP. V.

*Evincing the fourth proposition, viz. That God usually premonisheth the world, especially his own people, of his judgments before they befall them.*

**Sect. I.** **G**OD first warns, and then smites, he delights not to surprize men; when indignation was coming, he tells his people of it in the text, and admonisheth them to hide themselves. "Surely the Lord will do nothing, but he revealeth his secrets to his servants the prophets," Amos iii. 7. Thus when the flood was to come upon the old world, he gave them 120 years warning of it, Gen. vi. 3. compared with 1 Pet. iii. 19. So when Sodom was to be destroyed, God would not hide it from Abraham; Gen. xviii. 17. "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?" The like discovery was made unto Lot, Gen. xix. 12, 13, 14. So when the captivity was at hand, Ezekiel was commanded to give the Jews solemn warning of it from God, Ezek. iii. 17. "Hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me."

And when their city and temple were to be destroyed by the Romans, how plainly did Christ foretel them of it by his own mouth! Luke xix. 43, 44. "Thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Josephus \* also tells us, that a little before the execution of this judg-

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\* Joseph. de Bell. Jud. lib. vii. cap. 2. Tacit. Annal. lib. xxi.

ment upon them, a voice was heard in the temple, *Migremus hinc*, i. e. Let us go hence; which voice Tacitus also in his annals, mentions, *Audita major humana vox, excedere Deos, simul ingenus motus excedentium*. It was more than a human voice, telling them God was departing from them, and withal there was heard the rushing noise, as of some that were going out of the temple.

And as there were extraordinary premonitions of approaching judgments, by revelation to the prophets of old, and signs from heaven, so there are still standing and ordinary rules by which the world may be admonished of God's judgments before they come upon them.

And the general rule, by which men may discern the indignation of God before it comes, is this,

*\* \* \* When the same provocations and evils are found in one nation, which have brought down the wrath of God upon another nation; this is an evident sign of God's judgment at the door.* For God is unchangeably holy and just, and will not favour that in one people, which he hath punished in another; nor bless that in one age, which he hath cursed in another. And therefore that which hath been a sign of judgment to one, must be so to all.

Here it is that the carcasses of those sinners whose sins had cast them away, are, as it were, cast upon the scripture shore, for a warning to all others that they steer not the same ill course they did: 1 Cor. x. 9. "Now these things were our examples." The Israelites are made examples to us, plainly intimating, that if we tread the same path, we must expect the same punishment. Let us therefore consider what were the evils that provoked God's judgments against his ancient people, whom he was so loth to give up, Hos. xi. 8. and so long ere he did give up, Jer. xv. 9. and we shall find, by the concurrent accounts that the prophets give,

1. That God's worship among men was generally mixed and corrupted with their own inventions; for so it is said, Psal. cvi. 40, 41. "They went a whoring after their own inventions." And this so inflamed the wrath of God, who is a jealous God, and tender over his own honour, that he abhorred his own inheritance; yea, he expresses himself as a man doth, whose heart is broken by the unfaithfulness of his wife, Ezek. vi. 9. Upon this account his professing people became the generation of his wrath, Jer. vii. 29, 30.

2. Incurable obstinacy under gentler correction, Amos iv. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. Scarcity, mildews, pestilence, and sword, had been upon them; and still those that remained, though saved as a brand out of the fire, in which their fellow-sinners perished, would not return to God; and this hastened on the general ruin, ver. 12. This présages the ruin of nations indeed.

3. Stupidity and senselessness of God's hand was a sad omen, and cause of that people's ruin; so Isa. xxvi. 10, 11. "Lord when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see." No, nor yet when his hand is laid on, Isa. xlii. 24, 25. It is not some small drop of God's anger that passes without observation, but the *fury of his anger*; not some *light skirmish of his judgments with them*, but the *strength of battle*: not in a corner upon some particular person, or family, but that which set him on fire round about; yet all this could not awaken them. "He hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle, and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew it not, and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." Prodigious stupidity! to be in the midst of flames, yea, to be seized by them, and destroyed sooner than awakened. So you find again in Hos. vii. 9. "Gray hairs were here and there upon Ephraim, yet he knew it not." Youth and age are easily distinguished, and gray hairs do plainly distinguish them, being the plain tokens of a declining state, yet they took no notice of them. Such stupidity is evermore the forerunner of misery.

4. Persecution of God's faithful ministers and people, was another forerunning sign of their ruin, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. "They mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy." There were also a number of upright souls among them, that desired to worship God according to his own prescription, but a snare was laid for them in Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor; and therefore was judgment towards that people, Hos. v. 1. Mizpah and Tabor were places in the way lying betwixt Samaria and Jerusalem, where the true worship of God was, and there was informers or spies set by the priest, to intercept such as would venture to serve God at Jerusalem, according to his own prescription; this also foreboded the judgments of God upon that nation.

5. The decay of the life and power of godliness among them plainly foreshewed their ruin at hand, Hos. iv. 18. *Their drink is sour*: where, under the *metaphor* of dead and sour drink, which hath lost its spirit, and is become flat, their formal, heartless, and perfunctory duties are severely taxed and condemned.

6. To conclude, the mutual animosities and feuds among that professing people, evidently shewed judgment to be at the door. Hos. ix. 7. "The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred." This great hatred was one of the greatest

sins, and saddest signs upon them. This spirit of enmity sowed by the devil among them, hastened their calamity. If Ephraim will envy Judah, and Judah vex Ephraim, the common enemy shall part the fray: when the whole nation was under water, and the Roman armies under the very walls of Jerusalem, their own historians tells us, what bitter contentions and sharp conflicts continued among them to the very last; these things must be looked upon by all wise and considerate men, no otherwise than we look upon glaring meteors, and blazing comets portending judgment and ruin at the door. We have had indeed terrible signs in heaven, a dreadful rod of God shaken over us of late, which all men ought to behold with trembling; yet I must say those moral signs of judgments fore-mentioned, are much more terrible and portentous. According therefore to the evidence of these signs among us, let all upright hearts be affected and awakened with expectations of God's righteous judgments. It is indeed below faith to expect evil days with despondency and distraction; but surely it is a noble exercise of faith, so to expect them, as to make due preparation for them.

*Section 2.* And if we enquire for what end God gives such warning to the world, and premonishes them from heaven of the judgments that are coming on the earth, know that he doth it upon a threefold account.

1. To prevent their execution.

2. To leave the careless inexcusable.

3. To make them more tolerable and easy to his own people.

1. Warning is given with a design to prevent the execution of judgments; this is plain from Amos iv. 12. "Therefore will I do this unto thee;" there is warning given; "and because I will do this, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel:" there is the gracious designs of preventing it, by bringing them seasonably upon their knees at the foot of an angry God: you see the Lord expects it from all his children, that they fall at his feet in deep humiliation, and fervent intercession, whenever he goes forth in the way of judgment. What else was the design of God in sending Jonah to Nineveh with that dreadful message, but to excite them to repentance, and prevent their ruin? This Jonah guessed at, and therefore declined the message, to secure his credit, well knowing, that if they took warning and repented, the gracious nature of God would soon melt into compassion over them: free grace would make him appear as a liar among the people; for to that sense his own words sound, Jonah iv. 2. "Was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I knew that thou art a gracious God." q. d. I thought before-hand it would come to this; I knew how willing thou art

to be prevented by repentance; therefore to secure my credit, I fled to Tarshish.

2. He forewarns of judgments to leave the incorrigible wholly inexcusable, that those who have neither sense of sin, nor fear of judgment before, might have no cloak for their folly, nor plea for themselves afterward? "What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee?" Jer. xiii. 21, 22. q. d. What plea or apology is left thee, after so many fair warnings? You cannot say you were surprized before you were admonished, or ruined before you were warned.

3. God warns of judgments before they come, to make them the more easy to his people when they come indeed; thus in John xvi. 4. Christ foretold his disciples of their approaching sufferings, that when they come, they should not be found amazed at them, or unprovided for them; for unexpected miseries are astonishing to the best men, and destructive to wicked men, Luke xvii. 26, 27, 28.

Well then, if it be so, let all that are wise in heart consider the signs of the times, and seasonably hearken to God's warnings. "The Lord's voice crieth to the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name; hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it," Mic. vi. 9. It is our wisdom to way-lay our troubles, and provide for the worst estate, whilst we enjoy the best: happy is he that is at once believing and praying for good days, and preparing for the worst. Noah's example is our advantage, Heb. xi. 7. "Who, by faith being warned of God, of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark." Preventing mercies are the most ravishing mercies, Psal. lxxix. 10. And preventing calamities are the sorest calamities, Amos ix. 10.

And let us heartily beware the supineness and carelessness of the world in which we live, who take no notice of God's warning, but put the evil day far from them, Amos vi. 3. who will admit no fear till they are past all hope; they see God housing his saints apace, yet will not see the evil to come from which God takes them, Isa. lvii. 1, 2. "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." They hear the cry of sin which is gone up to heaven, but cry not for the abominations that are committed, nor tremble at the judgments that they will procure.

O careless sinners, drowned in stupidity, and sleeping like Jonah under the hatches, when others are upon their knees, and at their wits-end! Do saints tremble, and are you secure? Have not you more reason to be afraid than they? if judgments come, the great

est harm it can do them is but to hasten them to heaven : but as for you, it may hurry you away to hell : they only fear tribulation in the way ; but you will not fear damnation in the end. Believe it reader, in days of common calamity both heaven and hell will fill apace.

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CHAP. VI.

*Demonstrating the fifth proposition, viz. That God's attributes, promises, and providences, are prepared for the security of his people, in the greatest distresses that can befall them in the world.*

**Sect. I.** **H**AVING more briefly dispatched the foregoing preliminary propositions, it remains that we now more fully open this fifth proposition, which contains the main subject matter of this discourse ; here therefore our meditations must fix and abide, and truly such is the deliciousness of the subject to spiritual hearts, that I judge it wholly needless to offer any other motive besides itself to engage your affections. Let us therefore view our chambers, and see how well God hath provided for his children in all the distresses that befall them in this world ; it is our Father's voice that calls to us, *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers.* And the

1. *Chamber* which comes to be opened as a refuge to distressed believers in a stormy day, is that most secure and safe attribute of Divine Power : into this let us first enter by serious and believing meditation, and see how safe they are whom God hides under the protection thereof, in the worst and most dangerous days. In opening this attribute, we shall consider it,

1. In its own nature and properties.

2. With respect to the promises.

3. As it is actuated by providence in the behalf of distressed saints.

And then give you a comfortable prospect of their safe and happy condition, who take up their lodgings by faith in this attribute of God.

1. Let us consider the power of God in itself, and we shall find it represented to us in the scriptures, in these three lovely properties, *viz.*

1. Omnipotent	} Power.
2. Supreme	
3. Everlasting	

1. As an omnipotent and all-sufficient power, which hath no

bounds or limits but the pleasure and will of God, Dan. iv. 34, 35. "He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?" So Psal. cxxxv. 6. "Whatsoever the Lord pleased that did he, in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places." You see Divine pleasure is the only rule according to which Divine Power exerts itself in the world; we are not therefore to limit and restrain it in our narrow and shallow thoughts, and to think in this, or in that, the power of God may help or secure us; but to believe that he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. Thus those worthies, Dan. iii. 17. by faith exalted the power of God above the order and common rule of second causes. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." Their faith resting itself upon the omnipotent power of God, expected deliverance from it in an extraordinary way; it is true, this is no standing rule for our faith ordinarily to work by; nor have we ground to expect such miraculous salvations, but yet when extraordinary difficulties press us, and the common ways and means of deliverance are shut up, we ought by faith to exalt the omnipotency of God, by ascribing the glory thereof to him, and leave ourselves to his good pleasure, without straitening or narrowing his Almighty Power, according to the mould of our poor, low thoughts and apprehensions of it: for so the Lord himself directeth our faith in difficult cases, Isa. lv. 8, 9. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." He speaks there of his pardoning mercy, which he will not have his people to contract and limit according to the model and platform of their own desponding, misgiving, and unbelieving thoughts; but to exalt and glorify it, according to its unbounded fulness; as it is in the thoughts of God, the fountain of that mercy; so it ought to be with respect to his power, about which his thoughts and ours do vastly differ; the power of God as we cast in the mould of our thoughts, is as vastly different and disproportionate from what it is in the thoughts of God the fountain thereof, as the earth is to the heavens, which is but a small inconsiderable point compared with them.

2. The power of God is a supreme and sovereign power, from which all creature-power is derived, and by which it is over-ruled, restrained, and limited at his pleasure. Nebuchadnezzar was a great monarch, he ruled over other kings, yet he held his kingdom from God; it was God that placed not only the crown upon

his head, but his head upon his shoulders, Dan. ii. 37. "Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory." Hence it follows, that no creature can move tongue or hand against any of God's people, but by virtue of a commission or permission from their God, albeit they think not so. *Knowest thou not, saith Pilate unto Christ, that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?* Proud worm! what an ignorant and insolent boast was this of his own power! and how doth Christ spoil and shame it in his answer? John xix. 11. *Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.*

Wicked men, like wild horses, would run over and trample under foot all the people of God in the world, were it not that the bridle of Divine Providence had a strong curb to restrain them: Ezek. xxii. 6. "The princes of Israel every one were in thee, to their power to shed blood." And it was well for God's Israel that their power was not as large as their wills were; this world is a raging and boisterous sea, which sorely tosses the passengers for heaven that sail upon it, but this is their comfort and security: "The Lord stilleth the noise of the sea, the noise of the waves, and the tumult of the people," Psal. lxxv. 7. Moral, as well as natural waves, are checked and bounded by Divine power. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain," Psal. lxxvi. 10. As a man turns so much water into the channel as will drive the mill, and turns away the rest into another sluice.

Yea, not only the power of man, but the power of devils also is under the restraint and limitation of this power, Rev. iii. 10. "Satan shall cast some of you into prison, and ye shall have tribulation ten days." He would have cast them into their graves, yea, into hell if he could, but it must be only into a prison: He would have kept them in prison till they had died and rotted there, but it must be only for ten days. Oh glorious sovereign power! which thus keeps the reins of government in its own hand!

3. The power of God is an everlasting power; time doth not weaken or diminish it, as it doth all creature-powers, Isa. xl. 28. "The Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary," Isa. lix. 1. "The Lord's hand is not shortened," i. e. He hath as much power now as ever he had, and can do for his people as much as ever he did; time will decay the power of the strongest creature, and make him faint and feeble; but the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not. "Thou (saith the Psalmist) abideth for ever, thy years flee not," Psal. cii. 27. In God's working there is no expence of his strength, he is able to do as much for his church now as ever he did, to act over-

again all the glorious deliverances that ever he wrought for his people from the beginning of the world; to do as much for his church now, as he did at the Red-sea; and upon this ground the church builds its plea, Isa. li. 9, 10. "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord, awake as in the ancient days, as in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" q. d. Lord, why should not thy people at this day expect as glorious productions of thy power, as any of them found in former ages?

*Sect. II.* Let us view the power of God in the vast extent of its operations, and then you will find it working beyond the line,

1. Of creature-power,
2. Of creature-expectation,
3. Of human probability.

1. Beyond the line of all created power, even upon the hearts, thoughts, and minds of men, where no creature hath any jurisdiction. So Gen. xxxi. 29. God bound up the spirit of Laban, and becalmed it towards Jacob. So Psal. cvi. 46. "He made them also to be pitied of all them that carried them captives." Thus the Lord promised Jeremiah, Jer. xv. 11. "I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well, in the time of evil." This power of God softens the hearts of the most fierce and cruel enemies, and sweetens the spirits of the most bitter and enraged foes of his people.

2. Beyond the line of all creature-expectations, Eph. iii. 20. "God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." He doth so in spirituals; as appears by those two famous parables, Luke xv. 19, 22. "And am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. But the Father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." The prodigal desired to be but as an hired servant, and lo, the fatted calf is killed for him, and music to his meat; and the gold ring upon his finger. And in Matth. xviii. 26, 27. the debtor did but desire patience, and the creditor forgave the debt. Oh! thinks a poor humbled sinner, if I might have but the least glimpse of hope, how sweet would it be! But God brings him to more than he expects, even the clear shining of assurance. It is so in temporals, the church confesses the Lord *did things they looked not for*, Isa. lxiv. 3. And in both spirituals and temporals this power moves in an higher orb than our thoughts, Isa. lv. 8, 9. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor my ways your ways; but as far as the heavens are above the earth, so are my thoughts above your thoughts." The earth is but a punctum to the hea-

vens; all its tallest cedars, mountains and pyramids cannot reach it: He speaks, as was said before, of God's pitying, pardoning, and merciful thoughts, and shews that no creature can think of God, as he doth of the creature under sin, or under misery; our thoughts are not his thoughts; either first, by way of simple cogitation we cannot think such thoughts towards others in misery, by way of pity; or under sin against us by way of pardon, as God doth: Nor secondly, are our thoughts as God's in respect of reflexive comprehension; i. e. We cannot conceive or comprehend what those thoughts of God towards us are; when we fall into sin or misery, just as he thinks them, they are altered, debased, and straitened as soon as ever they come into our thoughts. See an excellent instance in Gen. xlviii. 11. "I had not thought to see thy face, and lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed." A surprizing providence; and thus the divine power works in a sphere above all the thoughts, prayers, and expectations of men.

3. It works beyond all probabilities, and rational conjectures of men; this Almighty power hath created deliverances for the people of God, when things have been brought to the lowest ebb, and all the means of salvation have been hid from their eyes. We have divers famous instances of this in scripture, wherein we may observe a remarkable gradation in the working of this Almighty power: It is said in 2 Kings xiv. 26, 27. "The Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter, for there was not any shut up, or any left, nor any helper for Israel." A deplorable state! How inevitable was their ruin to the eye of sense? Well might it be called a bitter affliction; yet from this immediate power arose for them a sweet and unexpected salvation: And if we look into 2 Cor. i. 9, 10. we shall find the apostles and choicest Christians of those times, giving up themselves as lost men; all ways of escaping being quite out of sight, for so much those words signify, *We had the sentence of death in ourselves*; i. e. We yielded ourselves for dead men. But though they were sentenced to death, yea, though they sentenced themselves, this power, which wrought above all their thoughts and rational conjectures, reprieved them. And yet one step farther, in Ezek. xxxvii. 4, 5, 6, 7. The people of God are there represented as actually dead, yea, as in their graves, yea, as rotted in their graves, and their very bones dry, like those that are dead of old; so utterly improbable was their recovery: Yet by the working of this Almighty power, which subdueth all things to itself, their graves in Babylon were opened, the breath of life came into them, bone came to bone, and there stood up a very great army; it was the working of his power above the thoughts of man's heart, which gave the ground of that famous proverb, Gen. xxii. 14. "In the mount of the Lord it shall be

“ seen.” And the ground of that famous promise, Zech. xiv. 7. “ At evening time it shall be light ;” i. e. Light shall unexpectedly spring up, when all men according to the course and order of nature, expect nothing but increasing darkness. How extensive is the power of God in its glorious operations !

*Sect. III.* Let us view the power of God in its relation to the promises, for so it becomes our sanctuary in the day of trouble ; if the power of God be the chamber, it is the promise of God which is that golden key that opens it. And if we will consult the scriptures in this matter, we shall find the Almighty power of God made over to his people by promise, for many excellent ends and uses in the day of their trouble. As,

1. To uphold and support them when their own strength fails, Isa. xli. 10. “ Fear thou not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed, “ for I am thy God : I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, “ yea, I will uphold thee, with the right hand of my righteousness.” And which of the saints have not sensibly felt these everlasting arms underneath their spirits, when afflictions have pressed them above their own strength ! So runs the promise to Paul, in 2 Cor. xii. 9. “ My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made “ perfect in weakness ;” i. e. It is made known in thy weakness. Our weakness adds nothing to God’s power, it doth not make his power perfect, but it hath the better advantage of its discovery, and puts forth itself more signally and conspicuously in our weakness ; as the stars which never shine so gloriously as in the darkest night.

2. To preserve them in all their dangers, to which they lie exposed in soul and body, 1 Pet. i. 5. “ You are kept (saith the “ apostle by the mighty power of God.” Kept as in a garrison ; this is their arm every morning, as it is Isa. xxxiii. 2. “ O Lord “ be gracious unto us, we have waited for thee, be thou their arm “ every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.” The arm is that member which is fitted for the defence of the body, and for that end so placed by the God of nature, that it may guard every part above and below it ; but as good they were bound behind our backs, for any help they can give us in some cases : It is God’s arm that defends us and not our own. This invisible power of God makes the saints the world’s wonder. Psal. lxxi. 7. “ I am as a wonder to many, but thou art my strong “ refuge.” To see the poor defenceless creatures preserved in the midst of furious enemies, that is just matter of wonder ; but God being their invisible refuge, that solves the wonder ; to this end the power of God is by promise engaged to his people, Isa.

xxvii. 3. "I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." And thus they subsist in the midst of dangers and troubles; as the burning bush (the emblem of the church) did amidst the devouring flames, Exod. iii. 3.

3. To deliver them out of their distresses; so runs the promise, Psal. xci. 14, 15. "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name; he shall call upon me, and I will answer him, I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him." And Jer. xxx. 7. "Alas for that day is great, so that none is like it: It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but ye shall be saved out of it." And surely there can be no distress so great, no case of believers so forlorn, but,

1. It is easy with God to save them out of it. Are they to the eye of sense lost, as hopeless as men in the grave? Yet see Ezek. xxxvii. 12. "O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." And he doth whatever he doth easily, with a word, Psal. xliv. 4. "Thou art my king, O God, command deliverances for Jacob." And it requireth no more violent motion to do it, than he that swimmeth in the water uses, Isa. xxv. 11. A gentle easy motion of the hand doth it.

2. And as the power of God can deliver them easily, so speedily. Their deliverance is often wrought by way of surprisal. Isa. xvii. 14. "Behold, at evening-tide, trouble, and in the morning he is not." So the church prays, in Psal. cxxxvi. 14. "Turn again our captivity as the streams in the south." The southern countries are dry, the streams there come not in a gentle and slow current, but being occasioned by violent sudden spouts of rain, they presently overflow the country, and as soon retire: So speedily can the power of God free his people from their dangers and fears.

3. Yea, such is the excellency of his delivering power, that he can save alone, without any contribution of creature-aids. So Isa. lix. 16. "He wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore his hand brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness sustained him." We read indeed, Judg. v. 23. of helping the Lord, but that is not to express his need, but their duty; we have continual need of God, but he hath no need of us: he uses instruments, but not out of necessity, his arm alone can save us, be the danger never so great, or the visible means of deliverance never so remote.

4. Once more, let us view this chamber of Divine Power, as it is continually opened by the hand of providence, to receive and secure the people of God in all their dangers. It is said, 2 Chron.

xvi. 9. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him." Where you have an excellent account of the immediacy, universality, and efficacy of Divine Providence, as it uses and applies this Divine Power for the guard and defence of that people who are its charge; he doth not only set angels to watch for them, but his own eyes guard them, even those seven eyes of providence mentioned, *Zech. iii. 9.* which *never sleep nor slumber*; for they are said to run continually to and fro, and that not in this or that particular place only, for the service of some more eminent and excellent persons; but through the whole earth. It is an encompassing and surrounding providence which hath its eye upon all whose hearts are upright; all the saints are within the line of its care and protection; the eye of providence discovereth all their dangers, and its arm defends them, for he shews himself strong in their behalf.

The secret, but the almighty efficacy of providence is also excellently described to us in *Ezek. i. 8.* where the angels are said to have their hands under their wings, working secretly and undiscernibly, but very effectually for the saints committed to their charge. Like unto which is that in *Hab. iii. 4.* where it is said of God, "that he had horns coming out of his hands, and there was the hiding of his power." The hand is the instrument of action, denoting God's active power, and the horns coming out of them are the glorious rays and beams of that power shining forth in the salvation of his people. Oh that we could sun ourselves in those cheerful and reviving beams of Divine Power, by considering how gloriously they have broken forth, and shone out for the salvation of his people in all ages. So it did for Israel at the Red-sea, *Exod. xv. 6.* So for Jehoshaphat in that great strait, *2 Chron. xx. 12, 15.* And so in the time of Hezekiah, *2 Kings xix. 3, 7.* Yea, in all ages from the beginning of the world the saints have been sheltered under these wings of Divine Power, *Isa. li. 9, 10.* Thus providence hath hanged and adorned this chamber of Divine Power with the delightful histories of the church's manifold preservations by it.

*Section IV.* Having taken a short view of this glorious chamber of God's power, absolutely in itself, and also in relation to his promises and providences, it remains now, that I press and persuade all the people of God under their fears and dangers, according to God's gracious invitation, to enter into it, shut their doors, and to behold with delight this glorious attribute working for them in all their exigencies and distresses.

1. Enter into this chamber of Divine Power, all ye that fear the

Lord, and hide yourselves there in those dangerous and distressful days; let me say to you as the prophet did to the poor distressed Jews, Zech. ix. 12. "Turn ye to your strong hold, ye prisoners of "hope." Strong holds might they say; why, where are they? The walls of Jerusalem are in the dust, the temple burnt with fire, Sion an heap; what meanest thou in telling us of our strong holds? Why, admit all this, yet there is *satis præsidii in uno Deo*, refuge enough for you in God alone, as Calvin excellently notes upon that place. Christian, art thou not able to fetch a good subsistence for thy soul by faith, out of the Almighty Power of God? The renowned saints of old did so. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob met with as many difficulties and plunges of trouble in their time, as ever you did, or shall meet with; yet, by the exercise of their faith upon this attribute, they lived comfortably, and why cannot you? Exod. vi. 3. "I appeared (saith God) unto Abraham, Isaac, "and Jacob, by the name of God Almighty." They kept house and feasted by faith upon this name of mine; O that we could do as Abraham did, Rom. iv. 21. We have the same attribute, but, alas, we have not such a faith as his was to improve it. It is easy to believe the Almighty power of God in a calm, but not so easy to resign ourselves to it, and securely rest upon it in a storm of adversity; but oh what peace and rest would our faith procure us by the free use and exercise of it this way! to assist your faith in this difficulty wherein we find the faith of a Moses sometimes staggered, let me briefly offer you these four following encouragements.

1. Consider how your gracious God hath engaged this his Almighty Power, by promise and covenant for the security of his people. God pawned it, as it were, to Abraham, in that famous promise, Gen. xvii. 1. "I am the Almighty God, walk thou before "me, and be thou perfect." And Gen. xv. 1. "Fear not, Abra- "ham, I am thy shield." Say not, this was Abraham's peculiar privilege, for if thou consult Hosea xii. 4. and Heb. xiii. 5, 6. you will find that believers in these days have as good a title to the promises made in those days, as those worthies had to whom they were immediately made.

2. If you be believers, your relation to God strongly engageth his power for you, as well as his own promises, "Surely, (saith "God) they are my people, children that will not lie: so he be- "came their Saviour," Isa. lxiii. 8. We say relations have the least of entity, but the greatest efficacy; you find it so in your own experience, let a wife, child, or friend be in imminent danger, and it shall engage all the power you have to succour and deliver them.

3. This glorious power of God is engaged for you by the very malice and wickedness of your enemies, who will be apt to impute

the ruin of the saints to the defect of power in God ; from whence those excellent arguments are drawn, Numb. xiv. 15, 16. " Now " if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations " which have heard the fame of thee, will speak, saying, Because " the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which " he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilder- " ness." And again, Deut. xxxii. 26, 27. you will find the Lord improving this argument for them himself ; if they do not plead it for themselves, he will. " I would scatter them into corners, I " would make the remembrance of them to cease from among " men, were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their " adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they " should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all " this." O see how much you are beholden to the very rage of your enemies, for your deliverances from them !

4. To conclude, the very reliance of your souls by faith upon the power of God, your very leaning upon his arm engages it for your protection, Isa. xxvi. 3. " Thou wilt keep him in perfect " peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in " thee." Puzzle not yourselves therefore any longer about qualifications : but know that the very acting of your faith on God, the recumbency of your souls upon him, is that which will engage him for your defence, how weak and defective soever thou art in other respects.

2. Having thus entered by faith into this chamber of Divine Power, the next counsel the text gives you, is, to shut the door behind you ; i. e. after the acting of your faith, and the quiet repose of your souls upon God's almighty power ; then take heed lest unbelieving fears and jealousies creep in again, and disturb the rest of your souls in God ; you find a sad instance of this in Moses, Numb. xi. 21, 23. " After so many glorious acts and triumphs of his faith, how were his heels tripped up by diffidence which crept in afterwards ! Good men may be posed with difficult providences, and made to stagger. The Israelites had lived upon miracles many years, Psal. lxxviii. 20. " Can he give bread also ? " Good Martha objects difficulty to Christ, John xi. 39. " By this time he stinketh." Oh ! it is a glorious thing to give God the glory of his Almighty Power in difficult cases that we cannot comprehend. See Zech. viii. 6. " If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in " these days, should it be as marvellous in mine eyes ? saith the " Lord of hosts." Difficulties are for men, but not for God ; because it is marvellous in your eyes, must it be so in God's ! Various objections will be apt to arise in your hearts to drive you out of this your refuge. As,

*Object.* 1. Oh ! but the long continuance of our troubles and

distresses will sink our very hearts, Isa. xl. 27. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God."

*Sol.* But, oh! wait upon God without fainting, Heb. ii. 3. "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

*Object.* 2. Oh, but our former hopes and expectations of deliverance are frustrated, Jer. viii. 15. "We looked for peace, but no good came: and for a time of health, and behold trouble."

*Sol.* Oh, but yet be not discouraged: see how the Psalmist begins the lxxixth Psalm with trembling, and ends it with triumph; the husbandman waiteth, and so must you.

*Object.* 3. But there is no sign or appearance of our deliverance.

*Sol.* What then, this is no new thing, Psal. lxxiv. 9. "We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet, neither is there any among us that knoweth how long."

*Object.* 4. But all things work contrary to our hope.

*Sol.* Why, so did things with Abraham; yet see, Rom. iv. 18. "Against hope, he believed in hope."

3. Observe farther with delight, the outgoings and glorious workings of Divine power for you and for the church in times of trouble: this is sweet entertainment for your souls, it is food for faith, Psal. lxxiv. 14. "Thou brakest the heads of Leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness." And here I beseech you behold and admire,

1. Its mysterious and admirable protection of the saints in all their dangers. They feed as sheep in the midst of wolves, Luke x. 3. They lie among them that are set on fire, Psal. lvii. 4. "Their habitation is in the midst of deceit," Jer. ix. 6. Yet they are kept in safety by the mighty power of God.

2. Behold and admire it in casting the bonds of restraint upon your enemies, that though they would, yet they cannot hurt you; our dangers are visible, and our fears great, but our security and safety admirable, Isa. li. 13. "Thou hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy; and where is the fury of the oppressor?"

3. Behold its opening unexpected and unlikely refuges and securities for the saints in their distresses; Isa. xvi. 4. "Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab, be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler; for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land." Rev. xii. 16. "The earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth."

5. Behold it frustrating all the designs of our enemies against us, Isa. liv. 17. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. Behold, I have created the smith," Isa. liv. 16. q. d. He that created the smith, can order as he pleaseth the weapon made by him; hence our enemies are not masters of their own designs.

Oh then, depend upon this power of God, for it is your security; there is a twofold dependence, the one natural and necessary, the other elective.

1. Natural dependence, so all do, and must depend upon him.

2. Elective and voluntary, and so we all ought to depend upon him; and for your encouragement take this scripture, Psal. ix. 9, 10. "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble, and they that know thy name will put their trust in thee, for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." And thus of the first attribute of God, prepared for the safety of his people in times of trouble.

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## CHAP. VII.

*Opening that glorious attribute of Divine Wisdom, as a second chamber of security to the saints in difficult times.*

**Sect. I.** **T**HE next chamber of Divine protection into which I shall lead you is the *infinite wisdom of God*; I call it the next, because I so find it placed in scripture, Job xxxvi. 5. "He is mighty in power and wisdom." Dan. ii. 20. "Wisdom and might are his."

This attribute may be fitly called the *council-chamber* of heaven, where all things are contrived in the deepest wisdom, which are afterwards wrought in the world by power, Eph. i. 11. "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Counsel in the creature implies weakness and defect; we are not able at one thought to fathom the depth of a business, and therefore must deliberate and spend many thoughts about it, and when we have spent all our thoughts, we are oft-times at a loss, and must borrow help, and ask counsel of others; but in God it notes the perfection of his understanding, for as those acts of the creature which are the results of deliberation and counsel, are the height and top of all rational contrivement; so in its accommodation to God, it notes the excellent results of his infinite and most perfect understanding.

Now this wisdom of God is to be considered either absolutely or relatively.

1. Absolutely in itself, and so it is, *That whereby he most perfectly and exactly knows himself, and all things without himself, ordering and disposing them in the most convenient manner, to the glory of his own name.*

Wisdom comprehends two things, 1. Knowledge of the nature of things which, in the creature, is called *science*. 2. Knowledge how to govern, order and dispose them, which, in the creature, is called *prudence*; these things in a man are but faint shadows of that which is in God, in the most absolute perfection; he fully knows himself, for his understanding is infinite, Psal. cxlvii. 5. and the thoughts he thinks towards us, Jer. xxix. 11. And as he perfectly understands himself, so likewise all things that are without himself, Acts xv. 18. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Together with all the secret designs, thoughts, and purposes which lie hid from all others, in the inmost recesses of men's hearts, Psal. cxxxix. 2.

And as he perfectly knows all things, so he fully understands how to govern and direct them to the best end, even the exalting of his own praise, Psal. civ. 24. Rom. xi. 36. "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things:" of him, as the efficient cause: through him as the conserving cause: and to him as the final cause. And in this wise disposition of all things, he hath a gracious respect to the good of his chosen, Rom. viii. 28. "All things shall work together for good to them that love God." More particularly, the wisdom of God is to be considered by us in its excellent properties, among which these four following are eminently conspicuous, as it is the

1. Original,

3. Perfect, and

2. Essential,

4. Only wisdom.

1. The wisdom of God is the original wisdom, from which all the wisdom found in angels or men is derived, and into that fountain we are directed to go for supplies of wisdom, James i. 5. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God." There is indeed a spirit in man, but it is the inspiration of the Almighty that giveth understanding, Job xxxii. 8. The natural faculty is ours, but the illumination thereof is God's, the understanding of the creature is the dial, which signifies nothing till the sun shine upon it.

2. God's wisdom is essential wisdom. Wisdom in the creature is but a quality separable from the subject; but in God it is his nature, his very essence, he can as soon cease to be God as to be most wise.

3. The wisdom of God is perfect wisdom, full of itself, and ex-

clusive of its contrary; the wisest of men are not wise at all times; the greatest wits are not without some mixture of madness; it is an high attainment in human wisdom to understand our own weakness and folly; the deepest heads are but shallows, but the wisdom of God is an unsearchable depth, Rom. xi. 33. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

4. To conclude, the wisdom of God is the only wisdom: there is no wisdom without him, none against him, he is the only wise God, Jude, ver. 25.

2. The wisdom of God must be considered relatively, and that in a double respect:

1. To his promises.

2. To his providences.

*Sect. II.* Let us view it in its relation to the promises, where you shall find it made over by God to his people for divers excellent uses and purposes in times of distress and danger. As,

1. It was made over to them in promises for their direction and guidance when they knew not what to do, or which way to take. So Psal. xxv. 9. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way:" and Isa. lviii. 11. "The Lord shall guide thee continually;" and Psal. xxxiii. 8. "I will guide thee with mine eye." And with this the Psalmist encourages himself, Psal. lxxiii. 24. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." O what an invaluable mercy is this! we should make shipwreck both of our temporal and eternal mercies quickly, were it not for the guidance of Divine wisdom.

2. To extricate them when involved in difficulties. So 2 Pet. ii. 9. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." They know not how, but their God doth; they are often at a loss, but he is never. So 1 Cor. x. 13. "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man, but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

3. To over-rule and order all their troubles to their good and real advantage. So runs that most comprehensive promise, Rom. viii. 28. "All things shall work together for good to them that love God." In the faith whereof Paul concludes, Phil. i. 19: Even this shall work for his salvation. Thus the people of God were sent into captivity for their good, Jer. xxiv. 8. and Joseph into Egypt, Gen. l. 20. "Ye thought evil against me, but God

“meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive.”

2. Let us view the wisdom of God in its relation to his providences, for there it shines forth eminently, Ezek. i. 18. The wheels were full of eyes, i. e. the motions and providential revolutions in this lower world are very judicious and advised motions; *Non cæco impetu volvuntur rotæ*; it hath an end and design which no man understands till it open itself in the event.

The enemies of the church are oft-times men of the finest brains and deepest policies: Herod a fox for subtlety, Luke xiii. 32. Julian and Aithophel, with many others, who have digged as deep as hell in their counsels, and laid their designs so sure that they doubted not to be masters of it; yet their hands could not perform their enterprize.

The wisdom of providence has still befooled them, and baffled the cunningest head-pieces that ever undertook any design against the church, as fast as ever they arose; and here the wisdom of providence is remarkable in three things especially.

1. In revealing and discovering the secret conspiracies and counsels of the church's enemies, and thereby frustrating their designs, Gen. xxvii. 41, 42. Providence (as one calls it) is the bird of the air, that carries tidings, and whistles deeds of darkness; Job xii.

22. “He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death.” And this God hath done both immediately and mediately. 1. Immediately, 2 Kings vi. 11. What counsel soever the king of Syria took in his bed-chamber was still discovered by the word to the prophet. So true is that, Job xxxiv. 22. “There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.” Thus the design of Herod is revealed to Joseph in a dream.

But commonly he doth it by means; as,

1. By giving knowledge of it to some that are under obligations of duty or affection to reveal it to those that are concerned in the danger. So Paul's sister's son, Acts xxiii. 16. revealed the conspiracy against his life, and so the plot miscarried by revealing it before it was ripe for execution.

2. By the failure of some circumstance, the whole is brought to light; there be many fine threads upon which the designs of politicians hang; if one break, the whole design is unravelled. Thus the wisdom of God sometimes prevents his people's ruin, by taking away the speech of the trusty from him, and making their own tongues to fall upon themselves.

3. By their own confession, so Psal. lxiv. 5, 6, 7, 8. where you have the plot laid, ver. 5. “They encourage themselves in an evil matter, they commune of laying snares privily, they say, who

“shall see them?” The deep contrivance of it, ver. 6. “They search out iniquity, they accomplish a diligent search, both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart is deep.” Their plot destroyed, ver. 7. “But God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded.” The method or way of providence in destroying it, ver. 8. “So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves, all that see them shall fly away.” Thus hath the wisdom of our God wrought for us this day, beyond all the thoughts of our hearts; and oh that it might make such impressions upon all our hearts, as follow in ver. 9, 10. “All men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God, for they shall wisely consider his doing. The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him, and all the upright in heart shall glory.”

2. The wisdom of God discovers itself in behalf of that people who are his own, in diverting the danger from them, and putting by the deadly thrusts their enemies make at them; thus it spoils their game by an unforeseen rub in the green, and that especially three ways.

1. By making their counsels to jar among themselves, in which jars is the sweetest harmony of providence; thus the counsel of Ahithophel jars with the counsel of Hushai, 2 Sam. xvii. 5, 7. by which means David escaped: The Pharisees clashed with the Sadducees, Acts xxiii. 7. and by that means Paul escaped.

2. By cutting out other work, and starting some new design, which puts them, as a fresh scent does the dog, to a loss. Thus the people of God in Jerusalem were delivered by a diversion, 2 Kings xix. 7. “Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour and shall return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land: so Rabshakeh returned.” By this means also was David delivered from the hand of Saul, 1 Sam. xxiii. 27. And in this method of providence, that scripture is often fulfilled, Prov. xxi. 18. “The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.”

3. By cutting off the capital enemies of his church, by whose seasonable destruction they are delivered. Thus fell Julian, that bitter enemy of the Christians, when he was preparing to put his last and most bloody design against them in execution. And thus fell Haman, Nero, and many more in the very height and heat of their designs against the church.

4. The wisdom of God gloriously displays itself in causing the designs of the wicked, like a surcharged gun, to recoil upon and destroy themselves: it often falls out with the undermining enemies of the church, as it sometimes doth with them that dig deep mines

in the earth, who are destroyed and buried in their own works. Psal. ix. 15, 16. "The Heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made, in the net which they hid is their own feet taken. "The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth, the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgajon, "Selah." There is a double mercy in this providence, one in delivering the saints from the danger, the other in causing it to fall upon the contrivers, and is therefore celebrated with a double note of attention: in these observable strokes, the righteousness of God shines forth in repaying his people's enemies in their own coin\*.

Thus Haman did eat the first-fruits of that tree which his own hands planted, and thus Jerusalem becomes a burdensome stone to all that burden themselves with it, Zech. xii. 3.

4. Admire and adore the wisdom of your God in those great and unexpected advantages, which arise to you out of those very dangers and designs of your enemies that threatened your ruin; the hands of your very enemies are sometimes made the instruments of your advancement and enlargement; your persecutions become your privileges, the motto of the palm-tree fitly becomes yours, *Suppressa resurgo.*

In three things the wisdom of God makes advantage out of your troubles.

1. In fortifying your souls and bodies with suitable strength, when any eminent trial is intended for you; so it was with the apostles, 2 Cor. i. 5. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation by Christ." God lays in suitably to what men lay on mercilessly: Christ would not draw the poor timorous disciples out of Jerusalem unto hard encounters, until first he had endued them with power from on high, Luke xxiv. 49.

2. The wisdom of your God can, and often doth make your very troubles and sufferings, instead of so many ordinances, to strengthen your faith and fortify your patience. So the heads of Leviathan became meat to his people inhabiting the wilderness, Psal. lxxiv. 14. And so the plots of Balak and Balaam were designed by God to be as a standing instructing ordinance for the encouragement of his people's faith in future difficulties, Mic. vi. 5. "O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord." q. d. You cannot but remember how those your enemies courted me with

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\* ————— *Nec lex est justior ulla,  
Quam necis artifices arte perire sua.*

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Nor is there any juster law, than that contrivers of mischief perish by their own art.

multitudes of offerings to deliver you up into their hands, and how faithfully I stood by you in all those dangers; that plot discovered at once the policy of your enemies, and the righteousness of your God.

3. His wisdom is discovered to your advantage, in permitting your dangers to grow to an extremity, on purpose to magnify his goodness, and increase your comfort in your deliverance from it. Psal. cxxvi. 1. "When the Lord turned our captivity, we were as them that dreamed." Proportionable to the greatness of your dangers will your joys be.

*Section III.* Well then, if the wisdom of God shines forth so gloriously in the times of his people's trouble, be persuaded by faith to enter into this chamber also; it is a chamber where a believing soul may enjoy the sweetest rest and quietness in the most hurrying and distracting times; shut the door behind you, and improve this attribute to your best advantage.

1. Enter into this chamber by faith, believe firmly that the management of all the affairs of this world, whether public or personal, is in the hands of your all-wise God; more particularly, exercise your faith about the wisdom of God in these things:

1. Believe that the wisdom of God can contrive and order the way of your escape and deliverance, when all doors of hope are shut up to sense and reason; we know not what to do, said good Jehoshaphat, but our eyes are unto thee; q. d. Lord, though I am at a loss, and see no way of escape, thou art never at a loss. The Lord, (saith Peter) knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation: Divine Wisdom hath infinite methods and ways of deliverance unknown to man, till they are opened in the event.

2. Believe that the wisdom of God can turn your greatest troubles and fears into the choicest blessings and mercies to you: I know (saith Paul) that this shall turn to my salvation, Phil. i. 19. meaning his bonds and sufferings for Christ. Divine wisdom can give you honey out of the carcase of the lion, cause you to part with those afflictions, admiring and blessing God for them, which you met with fear and trembling, as suspecting your destruction was imported in them.

3. In consideration of both these, resign up yourselves to the wisdom of God, and lean not to your own understandings: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established," Prov. xvi. 3. When Melancthon was oppressed with cares and doubts about the distracting affairs of the church in his time, Luther thus chides him out of his despondency, *Desinat Philippus esse rector mundi*, do not thou presume to be the governor of the world, but leave the reins of government in his hands that made it, and best knows how to rule it: let God alone to chuse thy

lot and portion, to order thy condition, and manage all thy affairs, and let thy soul take its rest in this quiet chamber of Divine Wisdom. But then,

2. Be sure to shut thy door behind thee, and beware, lest unbelief, anxieties, fears, and doubts, creep in after thee to disturb thy rest, and shake thy faith in this point; we are apt, in two cases, to be stumbled in this matter.

1. When subtle and cunning enemies are engaged against us; this was David's case, 2 Sam. xv. 31. "One told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom; and David said, O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." When he heard Ahithophel was with the conspirators, it greatly puzzled him. Though a whole conclave of politicians be against us, yet if God be with us, let us not fear.

2. When our own reason intrudes too far, and offers its dictates too boldly in the case, we are apt to say in the arrogance of our own reason, we cannot be delivered; but oh that we would learn to resign it up to the wisdom of God. The Lord knows how to deliver the godly. When the question was asked the prophet, Ezek. xxxvii. 3. Can these dry bones live? he answers, Lord, thou knowest. That is excellent counsel, Prov. iii. 5. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding."

3. Improve the wisdom of God for yourselves in all difficult and distressful cases.

1. Beg of God to exercise his wisdom for you, when enemies conspire against you: so did David, 2 Sam. xv. 31. "Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!" Oh it is the noblest and surest way to vanquish an enemy: it was but asked and done.

2. Comfort yourselves with this whenever you are at a loss in your own thoughts, and know not what to do, then commit all to Divine conduct; let God steer for you in a storm; he loves to be trusted, Psal. xxxvii. 5. "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."

3. Encourage yourselves from this when the church is in the greatest danger, and most sorely shaken; O that is a blessed promise, Zech. iii. 9. "Upon one stone shall be seven eyes." Meaning Christ, and the church built on him as the chief corner-stone; the seven eyes are the seven eyes of providence, which are never all asleep.

## CHAP. VIII.

*Opening that glorious attribute of Divine faithfulness, as a third chamber of security to the people of God, in times of distress and danger.*

**Sect. I.** **H**AVING viewed the saint's refuge in the power and wisdom of God, we next proceed to a third chamber of safety for the saints refuge, viz. The faithfulness of God.

In this attribute is our safety and rest, amidst the confusions of the world, and daily disappointments we are vexed withal, through the vanity and falseness of the creature; as to creatures, the very best of them are but vanity, yea, vanity of vanity, the vainest vanity, Eccl. i. 2. "Every man in his best estate is altogether vanity," Psal. xxxix. 5. Yea, those that we expect most from, give us most trouble, Mic. vii. 5. Nearest relations bring up the rear of sorrows, Job vi. 15. "My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook." Especially their deceit appears most, when we have most need of their help, Psal. cxlii. 4. How great a mercy is it then to have a refuge in the faithfulness of God as David had; "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me, refuge failed me, no man cared for my soul." And likewise the church, Mic. vii. 7. "I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation, my God will hear me." A time may come, when you shall not know where to trust in all this world. Let me therefore open to you this chamber of rest in the faithfulness of God against such a day, and this I shall do in a twofold consideration of it, viz.

1. Absolutely in its own nature.

2. Relatively in the promises and providences of God.

1. Absolutely, and so the faithfulness of God is his sincerity, firmness, and constancy in performing his word to his people in all times and cases. So Moses describes him to Israel, Deut. vii. 9. "Know therefore, that the Lord thy God he is God, the faithful God." And Joshua appeals to their experience for the vindication of it, Josh. xxiii. 14. "Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass, and not one thing hath failed thereof." And it is also fully asserted, Jer. xxxi. 35, 36, 37. and greatly admired even in the darkest day, Lam. iii. 23. *Great is thy faithfulness.* And it is well for us that his faithfulness is great, for great is that weight that leans upon it, even all our hopes for both worlds, for this world, and for that to come, Tit. i. 2. "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began."

It was a very dishonourable character that \* Suidas gave of Tiberius, "That he never made shew of having what he desired "to have, nor ever minded to do what he promised to do:" but God is faithful, and that will appear by these following evidences of it.

*Evid. 1.* By his exact fulfilling of his promises of the longest date. So Acts vii. 6. four hundred and thirty years were run out before the promise of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt was accomplished; yet, Acts vii. 17. when the time of the promise was come, God was punctual to a day: Seventy years in Babylon, and at the expiration of that time, they returned, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21. Men may forget, but God cannot, Isa. xlix. 15, 16.

*Evid. 2.* By making way for his promises through the greatest difficulties, and seeming impossibilities. So to Abraham when old, Gen. xviii. 13, 14. "Is there any thing too hard for the Lord? "At the appointed time will I return unto thee, according to the "time of life; and Sarah shall have a son." And likewise to the Israelites, Can these dry bones live? Ezek. xxxvii. 3. Difficulties are for men, not God, Gen. xviii. 14. What art thou, O great mountain, Zech. viii. 9. "If it be marvellous in the eyes of the "remnant of this people, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? "saith the Lord of hosts."

*Evid. 3.* By fulfilling promises to his people, when their hopes and expectations have been given up. So Ezek. xxxvii. 11. Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, we are cut off for our part. And Isa. xlix. 14. "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my "Lord hath forgotten me." There may be much unbelief in good men, their faith may be sorely staggered, yet God is faithful; men may question his promises, yet God cannot deny himself, 2 Tim. ii. 13.

*Evid. 4.* By God's appealing to his people, and referring the matter to their own judgment, Micah vi. 3, 4, 5. "O my people, "what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? "Testify against me, for I brought thee up out of the land of "Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants, "and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my "people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, "and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim "unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord;" q. d. If I have failed in a punctilio of my promise, shew it: Did not Balak and Balaam court me, and try all ways to win me over to them by multitudes of sacrifices? yet I did not desert you. So

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\* *Eorum quæ appetebat ne quicquam præ se ferebat, et eorum quæ dicebat, ne quicquam facere volebat.* Suidas.

Jer. ii. 31. "O generation, see ye the word of the Lord: Have I  
 "been a wilderness unto Israel, a land of darkness? Wherefore  
 "say my people, We are lords, we will come no more unto thee,"  
 Isa. xlv. 8.

*Evid. 5.* The faithfulness of God is abundantly cleared by the constant testimonies given unto it in all ages by them that have tried it, they have all witnessed for God, and attested his unspotted faithfulness to the generations that were to come. So did Joshua, chap. xxiii. 14. "All is come to pass," and so did Daniel, chap. ix. 4. "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him:" with which David's testimony concurs, Psal. cxlvi. 6. "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, which made the heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is, which keepeth truth for ever." Thus his people have been witnesses in all generations, unto the faithfulness of God in his promises; the consideration whereof leaves no doubt or objection behind it.

*Sect. II.* And if we enquire into the grounds and reasons why God is, and ever must be most faithful in performing his promises, we shall find it is built upon stable and unshaken pillars: viz.

1. The holiness of his nature.
2. The all-sufficiency of his power.
3. The honour of his name.
4. the unchangeableness of his nature.

1. The faithfulness of God is built upon the perfect holiness of his nature, by reason whereof it is impossible for God to lie, Tit. i. 2. Heb. vi. 11. The deceitfulness of a man flows from the corruption of the human nature, but "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Numb. xxxiii. 19. If there be no defect in his being, there can be none in his working; if his nature be pure holiness, all his ways must be perfect faithfulness.

2. It is built upon the all-sufficiency of his power; whatsoever he hath promised to his people, he is able to perform it; men sometimes falsify their promises through the defects of ability to perform them; but God never out-promised himself; if he will work, none can let, Isa. xliii. 13. He can do whatsoever he pleaseth to do, Psal. cxxxv. 6. The holiness of his nature engageth, and the Almightyness of his power enables him to be faithful.

3. The glory and honour of his name may assure us of his faithfulness, in making good the promises, and all that good which is

in the promises, to a tittle; for wherever you find a promise of God, you also find the name and honour of God given as a security for the performance of it; and so his name hath ever been pleaded with him by his people, as a mighty argument to work for them, Josh. vii. 9. *What wilt thou do for thy great name*, q. d. Lord, thine honour is a thousand times more than our lives, it is no such great matter what becomes of us; but ah, Lord, it is of infinite concernment that the glory of thy name be secured, and thy faithfulness kept pure and unspotted in the world. So again, Exod. xxxii. 11, 12. "And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, "Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people which thou "hast brought out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and "with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, "and say, for mischief did he bring them out to slay them in the "mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? turn "from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people." q. d. It will be sad enough for the hands of the Egyptians to fall upon thy people, but infinitely worse for the tongues of the Egyptians to fall upon thy name.

4. The unchangeableness of his nature gives us the fullest assurance of his faithfulness in the promises, Mal. iii. 6. "I am the "Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." God's unchangeableness is his people's indemnity, and best security in the midst of dangers; as there is not *yea* and *nay* with God, neither should it be so with our faith; that which gives steadiness to the promises should give steadiness also to our expectations for the performance of them: and so much, briefly, of the faithfulness of God, absolutely considered in the nature and grounds of it.

2. Next let us view the faithfulness of God, as it relates to the many great and precious promises made unto his people for their security, both in their

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| 1. Temporal  | } Concernments. |
| 2. Spiritual |                 |

1. We find the faithfulness of God pledged for the security of his people, in their spiritual and eternal concernments against all their dangers and fears, threatening them on that account, and that more especially in these three respects.

1. It is given them as their great and best security for the pardon of their sins, 1 John i. 9. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Our greatest danger comes from sin; guilt is a fountain of tears, a pardoned soul only can look other troubles in the face boldly: as guilt begets fear, so pardon produces courage, and God's faithfulness in the covenant is, as it were, that pardon-office

from whence we fetch our discharges and acquittances, Isa. xliii. 25. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake." The promises of remission are made for Christ's sake, and when made, they must be fulfilled for his own, that is, his faithfulness sake.

2. It is engaged for the perseverance of the saints, and their continuance in the ways of God in the most hazardous and difficult times; this was the encouragement given them. 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ; God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Ah Lord! might those Corinthians say, the powers of the world are against us, suffering and death are before us, a treacherous and fearful heart within us. Ay, but yet fear not, Christ shall confirm you whosoever opposes you; though the world and your own hearts be deceitful, yet comfort yourselves with this, your God is faithful.

3. The faithfulness of God is given by promise for his people's security in, and encouragement against all their sufferings and afflictions in this world, 2 Thess. iii. 2, 3. "That we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, for all men have not faith; but the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil." He prays they may be delivered from absurd, treacherous, and unfaithful men, who would trepan and betray them to ruin; but this is proposed as their relief, that when the treachery of men shall bring them into troubles, the faithfulness of God shall support them under, and deliver them out of those troubles; they shall have spiritual supports from God under their deepest sufferings from men, 1 Pet. iv. 19.

2. God's faithfulness is engaged for his people's indemnity and security, amidst the temporal and outward evils whereunto they are liable in this world; and that, either to preserve them from troubles, Psal. xci. 1, 2, 3, 4. or to open a seasonable door of deliverance out of trouble, 1 Cor. x. 13. In both, or either of which, the hearts of Christians may be at rest in this troublesome world; for what need those troubles fright us, which either shall never touch us, or if they do, shall never hurt, much less ruin us?

*Sect. III.* Having taken a short view of God's faithfulness in the promises, it will be a lovely sight to take one view of it more, as it is actuated, and exerted in his providences over his people. Believe it, Christians, the faithfulness of God runs through all his works of providence, whenever he goes forth to work in the world. "Faithfulness is the girdle of his loins," Isa. xi. 5. It is an allusion to workmen who going forth in the morning to their labour, gird their loins or reins with a girdle; now there is no work

wrought by God in this world, but his faithfulness is as the girdle of his loins: The consideration whereof should make the most despondent believer, *Gird up the loins of his mind*, that is, encourage and strengthen his drooping and discouraged heart. Those works of God which are wrought in faithfulness, and in pursuit of his eternal purposes and gracious promises, should rather delight than affright us, in beholding them. It pluckt out the sting of David's affliction, when he considered it was in very faithfulness that God had afflicted him, Psal. cxix. 89, 90. But more particularly, let us behold with delight the faithfulness of God, making good six sorts of promises to his people, in the days of their affliction and trouble, viz.

1. The promises of preservation.
2. The promises of support.
3. The promises of direction.
4. The promises of provision.
5. The promises of deliverance.
6. The promises of ordering and directing the event to their advantage.

1. There are promises in the word for your preservation from ruin, and what you read in those promises, you daily see the same fulfilled in your own experiences. You have a promise in Psal. lvii. 3. "He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and truth." Say now, have you not found it so? When hell hath sent forth its temptations to defile you, the world its persecutions to destroy you, your own heart its unbelieving fears to distract and sink you, hath not your God sent forth all his mercy and his truth to save you? Hath not his truth been your shield and buckler? Psal. xci. 4. May you not say with the church, it is of his mercy you are not consumed, his mercies are new every morning, and great is his faithfulness, Lam. iii. 23.

2. As you have seen it actually fulfilling the promises for your preservation, so you may see it making good all the promises in his word for your support in troubles. That is a sweet promise, Psal. xci. 15. "I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him." You have also a very supporting promise in Isa. xli. 10. "Fear not thou, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Oh! how evidently hath the faithfulness of God shone forth in the performance of his word to you in this respect? you are his witnesses, you would have sunk in the deep waters of trouble if it had not been so. So speaks David, Psal. lxxiii. 26. "My heart and my flesh faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my por-

“tion for ever.” Have you not found it so with you as it is in 2 Cor. xii. 10. “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong.” God’s strength hath been made perfect in your weakness, by this you have been carried through all your troubles: hitherto hath he helped you.

3. As you have seen it faithfully fulfilling the promises for your preservation and support; so you have seen it in the direction of your ways. So runs that promise, Psal. xxxii. 8. “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.” Certain it is “that the way of man is not in himself,” Jer. x. 23. O how faithfully hath your God guided you, and stood by you in all the difficult cases of your life! Is not that promise, Heb. xiii. 5. faithfully fulfilled to a tittle, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee?” Surely you can set your seal to that in John xvii. 17. “Thy word is truth;” had you been left to your own counsels you had certainly perished; as it is said of them in Psal. lxxxii. 12. “I gave them up unto their own hearts lusts: and they walked in their own counsels.”

4. As there are promises in the word for your preservation, support, and direction; so in the fourth place, there are promises for your provision, as in Psal. xxxiv. 9. the Lord hath promised that *they that fear him shall not want*. When they are driven to extremity, he will provide, Isa. xli. 17. “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, when their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” And is not this faithfully performed? “He hath given meat unto them that fear him; he will ever be mindful of his covenant,” Psal. cxi. 5. In all the exigencies of your lives you have found him faithful to this day; you are his witnesses that his providences never failed you, his care hath been renewed every morning for you; how great is his faithfulness!

5. You also find in the word some reviving promises for your deliverances. You have a very sweet promise in Psal. xci. 14. “Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him:” and again, Psal. l. 15. “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee:” you have done so, and he hath made a way to escape. Our lives are so many monuments of mercy; we have lived among lions, yet preserved, Psal. lvii. 4. The burning bush was an emblem of the church miraculously preserved.

6. There are promises in the world for the ordering and directing all the occurrences of providence to your great advantage; so it is promised, Rom. viii. 28. “That all things shall work together for good to them that love God.” Fear not, Christians, however

you find it now ; whilst you are tossing to and fro upon the unstable waves of this world ; you shall find, to be sure, when you come to heaven, that all the troubles of your lives were guided as steadily by this promise as ever any ship at sea was directed to its port, by the compass or north-star.

And now what remains but that I press you as before,

1. To enter into this chamber of Divine faithfulness.

2. To shut the door after you.

3. And then to live comfortably on it in evil days.

1. Enter into this chamber of God's faithfulness by faith, and hide yourselves there. Every man is a lie, but God is true, eternally and unchangeably faithful. Oh ! exercise your faith upon it, be at rest in it.

Now there are two great and weighty arguments to press you to enter into this chamber of Divine faithfulness.

*Arg.* 1. Is fetched from the nature of God, who cannot lie, Tit. i. 2. " He is not a man, that he should lie." Numb. xxiii. 19. " Neither the son of man that he should repent : hath he said, " and shall he not do it ? or hath he spoken, and shall he not " make it good ? " Remember upon what everlasting, steady grounds the faithfulness of God is built. These are immutable things, Heb. vi. 18. This Abraham built upon, Rom. iv. 21. " being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able " also to perform." He accounted him faithful that promised. What would you expect or require in the person that you are to trust ? You would,

1. Expect a clear promise ; and lo ! you have a thousand all the scripture over, fitted to all the cases of your souls and bodies. Thus you may plead with God, as David, Psal. cxix. 49. " Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast " caused me to hope." So Jacob pleaded, Gen. xxxii. 12. " Thou " saidst I will surely do thee good." These are God's bonds and obligations.

2. You would expect sufficient power to make good what he promiseth. This is in God as a fair foundation of faith, Is. xxvi. 4. " Trust ye in the Lord for ever ; for in the Lord Jehovah is " everlasting strength : " Because of thy strength we will wait upon thee : creatures cannot, but God can do what he will.

3. You would expect infinite goodness and mercy inclining him to help and save you. Why, so it is here, Psal. cxxx. 7. " Let " Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and " with him is plenteous redemption." So Moses, Exod. xxxiii. 18. " I beseech thee shew me thy glory." The request was, a view of God's glory : The answer is, *my goodness shall pass before thee* ; which hints to us, that though all God's attributes be glo-

rious, yet that which he most glories in, is his goodness. And then,

4. You would expect that none of his promises were ever blotted or stained by his unfaithfulness at any time; and so it is here, Josh. xxiii. 14. *Not one thing hath failed: all are come to pass, all ages have sealed this conclusion, Thy word is truth, thy word is truth.*

*Arg. 2.* Besides all this, you have the encouragement of all former experiences, both of others and of your own, as a second argument to press you to enter into this chamber of safety, the faithfulness of God.

1. You have the experiences of others. Saints have reckoned the experiences of others that lived a thousand years before them, as excellent arguments to quicken their faith: So Hos. xii. 4. he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us. Remember there was a Joseph with us in prison, a Jeremiah in the dungeon, a Daniel in the den, a Peter in chains, an Hezekiah upon the brink of the grave; and they all found the help of God most faithfully protecting them, and saving them in all their troubles. Suitable to this is that in Psal. xxii. 4, 5. "Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou deliveredst them; they cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded."

2. Your own experiences may encourage your faith: So David's did, 1 Sam. xvii. 37. "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." So did Paul's experience encourage his faith, in 2 Cor. i. 10. "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." Thus enter into the faithfulness of God by faith.

2. Let me beg you to be sure to shut the doors after you, against all unbelieving doubts, jealousies, and suspicions of the faithfulness of God; the best men may find temptations of that nature; so did good Asaph, though an eminent saint, Psal. lxxvii. 78. "Will the Lord cast off for ever: and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore?" These jealousies are apt to creep in upon the minds of men, especially when,

1. God delays to answer our prayers as soon as we expect the return of them; we are all in haste for a speedy answer, forgetting that seasons of prayer are our seed-times; and when we have sown that precious seed, we must wait for the harvest as the husbandman doth. Even a precious Heman may find a faint qualm of unbelief and despondency seizing him by the long suspension of God's answers, Psal. lxxxviii. 9, 10, 11.

2. It will be hard to shut the door upon unbelief, when all things in the eye of our sense and reason seem to work against the promise; it will require an Abraham's faith at such a time to glorify God by believing in hope against hope, Rom. iv. 18. If ever thou hopest to enjoy the sweet repose and rest of a Christian in evil times, thou must resolve, whatever thine eyes do see, or thy senses report, to hold fast this as a most sure conclusion; God is faithful and his word is sure; and that although "clouds and darkness be round about him, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne," Psal. xcvi. 2.

Oh! that you would once learn firmly to depend on God's faithfulness, and fetch your daily reliefs and supports thence, whensoever you are oppressed and assaulted, either,

1. By spiritual troubles. When you walk in darkness and have no light, then you are to live by acts of trust and recumbency upon the most faithful one, Isa. l. 10. Or,

2. By temporal distresses; so did the people of God of old, Heb. iii. 17, 18. He lived by faith on this attribute, when all visible comforts and supplies were out of sight.

But especially, let me warn and caution you against five principal enemies to your repose upon the faithfulness of God, viz.

1. Distracting cares, which divide the mind, and eat out the peace and comfort of the heart, and which is worst of all, they reflect very dishonourably upon God who hath pledged his faithfulness and truth for our security; against which, I pray you bar the door by those two scriptures, Phil. iv. 6. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." And that in 1 Pet. v. 7. "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you."

2. Bar the door against unchristian despondency, another enemy to the sweet repose of your souls in this comfortable and quiet chamber of Divine faithfulness: you will find this unbecoming and uncomfortable distemper of mind insinuating and creeping in upon you, except you believe and reason it out, as David did, Psal. xlii. 11. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him."

3. Bar the door of your heart against carnal policies and sinful shifts, which war against your own faith, and God's faithfulness, as much as any other enemy whatsoever. This was the fault of good David in a day of trouble, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. "And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul; there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines." Alas, poor David! nothing

better than this? Time was when thou couldst think on a better way, when thou couldst say, *at what time I am afraid I will trust in thee.* How dost thou forget thyself in this strait! doth thy old refuge in God fail thee now? can the Philistines secure thee better than the promises? wilt thou fly from thy best friend to thy worst enemies? but what need we wonder at David, who find the same distemper almost unavoidable to ourselves in like cases.

4. Shut the door against discontents at, and murmurings against the dispositions of providence, whatever you feel or fear: I persuade you not to a stoical apathy, and senselessness of the evils of the times; that would preclude the exercise of patience. If the martyrs had all had the dead palsy before they came to the fire, their faith and patience had not triumphed so gloriously as they did; but on the contrary, beware of grudgings against the ways and will of God, than which, nothing militates more against your faith, and the peace and quietness of your hearts.

5. To conclude, shut the door against all suspicions and jealousies of the firmness and stability of the promises, when you find all sensible comforts shaking and trembling under your feet; have a care of such dangerous questions as that, Psal. lxxvii. 8. *Doth his promise fail?* These are the things which undermine the foundation both of your faith and comfort.

6. In a word, having sheltered your souls in this chamber of rest, and thus shut the doors behind you, all that you have to do is to take your rest in God, and enjoy the pleasure of a soul resigned into the hands of a faithful Creator, by opposing the faithfulness of God to all the fickleness and unfaithfulness you will daily find in men, Micah vii. 6, 7. yea, to the weakness and fading of your own natural strength and ability; Psal. lxxiii. 26. "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." And so much of the third chamber prepared for believers in the name of their God.

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## CHAP. IX.

*Opening to believers the unchangeableness of God, as a fourth chamber of refuge and rest in times of trouble.*

Sect. I. **I**T is said, Prov. ix. 1. *Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars,* i. e. She hath raised her whole building upon solid and stable foundations; for, indeed, the strength of every building is according to the ground-work upon

which it is erected. *Debile fundamentum fallit opus.* The wisdom and love of God have built an house for a refuge and sanctuary to believers in tempestuous and evil times, containing many pleasant and comfortable chambers prepared for their lodgings, till the calamities be over-past; three of them have been already opened, viz. the power, wisdom, and faithfulness of God.

The last of which leads into a fourth, much like unto it, namely, the unchangeableness of God; wherein his people may find as much rest and comfort amidst the vicissitudes of this unstable world, as in any of the former. This world is compared, Rev. xv. 2. to a *sea of glass mingled with fire.* A sea for its turbulency and instability; a sea of glass for the brittleness and frailty of every thing in it; and a sea of glass mingled with fire, to represent the sharp sufferings and fiery trials with which the saints are exercised here below. The only support and comfort we have against the fickleness and instability of the creature, is the unchangeableness of God.

There is a twofold changeableness in the creature;

1. Natural, the effect of sin.
2. Sinful in its own nature.

1. Natural, let in by the fall upon all the creation, by reason whereof the sweetest creature is but a fading flower, Psal. cii. 26. Time, like a moth, frets out the best wrought garment with which we clothe and deck ourselves in this world, *temporalia rapit tempus.* Our most pleasant enjoyments, wives, children, estates, like the gourd in which Jonas so delighted himself, may wither in a night; sin rings these changes all the world over.

2. Sinful, from the falseness, inconstancy, and deceitfulness of the creature: Solomon puts a hard question which may pose the whole world to answer it, Prov. xx. 6. *A faithful man who can find?* The meaning is, a man of perfect and universal faithfulness is a *phœnix*, seldom or never to be found in this world; for when a question in scripture is moved and let fall again without any answer, then the sense is negative; but though the believer despair of finding an unchangeable man, it is his happiness and comfort to find an unchangeable God.

The unchangeableness of God will appear three ways.

1. By scripture emblems.
2. By scripture assertions.
3. By convincing arguments.

1. By scripture emblems. Remarkable to this purpose is that place, Jam. i. 17. where God is called "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning;" no variableness. The word is, *παραλλαγή*, an astronomical term commonly applied to the heavenly bodies, which have their parallaxes, i. e.

their declinations, revolutions, vicissitudes, eclipses, increases and decreases : but God is a Sun that never rises nor sets, but is everlastingly and unchangeably one and the same ; with him is no variability nor shadow of turning, *τροπῆς ἀποστίασμα*. The sun in its zenith casts no shadow, it is the tropic or turning of its course that causes the shadow ; the very substance of turning is with man ; but not the least shadow of turning with God. And in Deut. xxxii. 4. Moses tells us, *God is a rock, and his work is perfect*. And indeed perfect working necessarily follows a perfect being. Now there is nothing found in nature more solid, fixed, and immutable than a rock ; the firmest buildings will decay ; a few ages will make them a ruinous heap ; but though one age pass away, and another come, the rocks abide where, and what they were ; *Our God is the rock of ages* ; and yet one step higher, in Zech. vi. 1. his decrees and purposes are called mountains of brass, that is, most firm, durable, and unchangeable purposes. Thus the immutability of God is shadowed forth to us in scripture emblems.

2. The same also you will find in plain, positive scripture assertions : such as these that follow, Mal. iii. 6. "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." And Job xxiii. 13. "He is in one mind, and who can turn him ?" Men are in one mind to-day, and another to-morrow ; the winds are not more variable than the minds of men ; but God is in one mind, the purposes of his heart never change. *Thou art the same*, or as some translate, *Thou art thyself for ever*, Psal. cii. 27. Thus when Moses desired to know his name, that he might tell Pharaoh from whom he came ; the answer is, *I AM hath sent me*, Exod. iii. 14. not I was, or I will be, but *I AM THAT I AM*, noting the absolute unchangeableness of his nature.

3. The unchangeableness of God is fully proved by convincing arguments which Divines commonly draw from such *topics* as these, viz.

1. The perfection of his goodness.
2. The purity of his nature.
3. The glory of his name.

*Arg.* 1. From the perfection of his goodness and blessedness ; God is *optimus maximus*, the best and chiefest good, and in that sense, "There is none good but one, which is God," Mark x. 18. From whence it is thus argued, If there be any change in God, that change must either be for the better, or for the worse, or into a state equal with that he possessed before.

But not for the better, for then he could not be the chief good ; nor for the worse, for then he must cease to be God, the perfection of whose nature is perfectly exclusive of all defects ; nor into an equal state of goodness with that he possessed before ; that notion

would involve *Polytheism*, and suppose two first and equal beings; besides the vanity of such a change would be absolutely repugnant to the wisdom of God.

Therefore with the Father of lights can be no variableness nor shadow of turning.

*Arg. 2.* The unchangeableness of God may be evinced from the purity, sincerity, and uncompoundedness of his being, in which there neither is, nor can be the least mixture, he being a pure act. From whence it is thus argued;

If there be any change in God, that change must be made either by something without himself, or by something within himself, or by both together.

But it cannot be by any thing without himself; for in him all created dependent beings live and move, and enjoy the beings they have; and all the changes that are among them, are from the pleasure of this unchangeable Being, he changeth them, but it is not possible for him, upon whose pleasure they so entirely and absolutely depend, both as to their beings and workings, to suffer any changes himself from, or by them.

Nor can any such change be made upon God by any thing within himself: for that would suppose action and passion, *movens et motum*, a mixture and composition in his nature, which is absolutely rejected and excluded by the simplicity and purity thereof; seeing therefore it can neither be from any power without him, nor any mixture within him, there can be no change at all made on him.

*Arg. 3.* That is by no means to be ascribed to God, which at once eclipses the glory of his name, and overthrows the hopes and comforts of all his people.

But so would the supposition of mutability in God do, this would level him with the vain changeable creature; whereas it is a principal part of his glory, that "He is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent," Numb. xxiii. 19. This also would overthrow the hopes and comforts of all his people, which are built upon this attribute as upon their stable and solid foundation: Among divers others we find three principal privileges of the people of God, built upon his immutability, viz.

1. Their perseverance in grace.
2. Their comfort in the promises.
3. Their hopes of eternal life.

1. Their perseverance in grace is built upon the foundation of God's unchangeableness; one main reason why Christians never repent of their choice of Christ, and the ways of godliness, is, because the gifts and callings of God are without repentance, Rom.

xi. 29. Should God but once repent of the gifts of his grace he hath bestowed on us, and alter in his love towards us, how soon would our love to God, and delight in God vanish, as the image in the glass doth, when the man that looked upon it hath once turned away his face?

2. All their comfort in the promises is built upon God's unchangeableness. The promises are the springs of consolation; should they fail and dry up, the whole world could not afford them one drop of spiritual comfort to refresh their thirsty souls; the strength of our consolation immediately results from the stability and firmness of the scripture promises, Heb. vi. 18.

3. Their hope of eternal life depends upon the unchangeableness of God that hath promised, Tit. i. 2. "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began." Take away the immutability of God, and you at once darken and eclipse his glory, and overturn the perseverance, consolations, and hopes of all his people; but blessed be God, these things are built upon firm foundations.

1. His nature is unchangeable, "Thou art the same for ever." Psal. cii. 27. The heavens, though they be the purest, and therefore the most durable and unchangeable part of the creation, yet they shall perish and wax old, and be changed as a vesture; but our God is the same for ever.

2. His power is unchangeable; Isa. lix. 1. "The Lord's hand is not shortened." Time will enfeeble the strongest creature, and cut short the power of the hands of the mighty, they cannot do in their decrepit age as they were wont to do in their youthful and vigorous age; but the Lord's hand never is, nor can be shortened.

3. The counsels and purposes of his heart are unchangeable, Psal. xxxiii. 11. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."

4. The goodness, truth, and mercy of God are unchangeable, Psal. c. 5. "The Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations."

5. The word of God is unchangeable. Though all flesh be as grass, and the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field, yet the word of our God shall stand for ever; all the promises contained therein are sure and stedfast: Not yea and nay, but yea and Amen for ever, 2 Cor i. 20.

6. The love of God is an unchangeable love, Jer. xxxi. 3. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

7. In a word, all the gracious pardons of God are unchangeable; as they are full without exceptions, so they are final pardons without any revocation. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness,

“and their iniquities and sins will I remember no more,” Heb. viii. 12. And thus much briefly of God's unchangeableness absolutely considered in itself.

*Sect. II.* Let us next consider, and briefly view the unchangeableness of God in its respect and relation,

1. To his promises,
2. To his providences.

1. The immutability of God gives down its comforts to believers through the promises, there is no other way by which they can have a comfortable admission into this chamber or attribute of God; and there are six sorts of promises in the word, by which it is highly improveable to their support and comfort in an evil day. For,

1. The unchangeable God hath engaged himself by promise to be with his people at all times and in all straits, Heb. xiii. 5. “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” The life, joy, and comfort of a believer lies in the bosom of that promise, the conclusion of faith from thence is sweet and sure: If I shall never be forsaken of my God, let hell and earth do their worst, I can never be miserable.

2. The unchangeable God hath promised to maintain their graces, and thereby his interest in them for ever, Jer. xxxii. 40. “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good: But I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not turn away from me.” Where the Lord undertakes for both parts in the covenant, his own and theirs: *I will not turn away from them*; Oh inexpressible mercy! Yea, but Lord, may the poor believer say, that is not so much my fear, as that my treacherous heart will turn away from thee. No, saith God, I will take care for that also: I will put my fear into thy heart, and thou shalt never depart from me.

3. The unchangeable God hath promised to establish the covenant with them for ever; so that those who are once taken into that gracious covenant shall never be turned out of it again, Isa. liv. 10. “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”

4. The unchangeable God hath secured his loving kindness to his people, by promise, under all the trials and smarting rods of affliction with which he chastens them in this world; he hath reserved to himself the liberty of afflicting them, but bound himself by promise never to remove his favour from them, Psal. lxxxix. 33, 34. “I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their

“ iniquity with stripes, nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.”

5. The promises of a joyful resurrection from the dead are grounded upon the immutability of God, Matt. xxii. 32. “ I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.” Death hath made a great change upon them, but none upon their God; though they be not, he is still the same: therefore they are not lost in death, but shall assuredly be found again in the resurrection.

6. To conclude, the promises of the saints' eternal happiness with God in heaven are founded on his immutability, 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. Tit. i. 2. By all which you see what a pleasant lodging is prepared for the saints in the unchangeable promises of God, amidst all the changes and alterations here below.

2. Once more let us view the unchangeableness of God in his providence towards his people, whatever changes it makes upon us, or whatever changes we seem to discern in it, nothing is more certain than this, that it holds one and the same tenor, pursues one and the same design, in all that it doth upon us, or about us. Providences indeed are very variable, but the designs and ends of God in them all, are invariable, and the same for ever. It is noted in Ezek. i. 12. “ That the wheels went straight forward; whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went.” As it is in nature, so in providence, you have one day fair, halcyon, and bright, another dark and full of storms; one season hot, another cold; but all these serve to one and the same end and design to make the earth fruitful; and the end of all providences is to make you holy and happy. That is a sweet promise, Rom. viii. 28. “ All things shall work together for good to them that love God.” This is the compass by which all providences steer their course, as a ship at sea doth by the chart: but more particularly let us note the unchangeableness of God in his providences of all kinds, effective and permissive, and see in them all his unchangeable righteousness and goodness.

1. It must needs be so, considering the unchangeableness of his decree, 2 Tim. ii. 19. “ The foundation of God standeth sure.” Providences serve, but never frustrate; execute, but cannot make void the decree; so that you may say of the most afflicting providences, as David doth of the stormy winds, Psal. cxlviii. 8. *They all fulfil his word.*

2. The wisdom of God proves it; he will not suffer his works or permissions to clash with his designs and purposes: Divine wisdom shews itself in the steady direction of all things to their ultimate end. To open this in some particulars, consider,

1. Doth the Lord permit wicked men to rage and insult, persecute and vex his people? Yet all this while providence is in its right way, it walks in as direct a line to your good, as when it is in a more pleasant path of peace, Jer. xxiv. 5. "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good." Israel was sent to Babylon for their good. This improves your faith and patience, Rev. xiii. 10. Here is the patience and faith of the saints. So Rom. v. 2, 3. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience." By this you are weaned from, and mortified to this world.

2. Doth the Lord in his providence order many and frequent, close and smarting afflictions for you? Why, lo! here is the same design managing as effectually, as if all the peace and prosperity in the world were ordered for you; the face of providence indeed is not the same, but the love of God is still the same; he loves you as much when he smites, as when he smiles on you: for what are his ends in afflicting you, and what the sanctified fruits of your afflictions? Is it not,

1. To purge your iniquities? Isa. xxvii. 9. "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin."

2. To reduce your hearts to God? Psal. cxix. 67. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word."

3. To quicken you to your duties? Let the best man be without afflictions, and he will quickly grow dull in the way of his duty.

3. Doth God let loose the chain of Satan to tempt and buffet you! Yet is he still the same God to you as before; for do but observe his ends in that permission, and you will find, that, by these things, the Lord is leading you towards that desired assurance of his love which your souls long after. Few Christians attain to any considerable settlement of soul, but by such shakings and combats, the end of these permissions is to put you to your knees, and blow up a greater flame and fervour of spirit in prayer, 2 Cor. xii. 8. So that, eventually, these permissions of providence prove singular advantages and blessings to you.

*Sect. III.* What remains then, seeing God is unchangeable in his love to his people, pursuing the great ends of all his gracious promises in a steady course of providence, wherein he will never effect, or permit any thing that is really repugnant to his own glory, or their good; but that we enter also into this chamber of rest, shut the doors about us, and comfortably improve the un-

changeableness of God, while we see nothing but changes and troubles here below.

(1.) Enter into God's unchangeableness by faith, take up your lodging in this sweet attribute also; and to encourage your faith thereunto, seriously consider a few particulars.

1. Consider how constant, firm, and unchangeable God hath been to his people in all times and straits; not one among the many thousands of his people, that are passed on before you, but by frequent and certain experience have found him so. What a singular encouragement is this to our faith in the case before us? Psal. ix. 13. "They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee, for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." So Isa. xxv. 4. "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as the storm against the wall." Neither is there any thing in your experience contradictory to the encouraging reports others have made of God: you must acknowledge, that notwithstanding your own changeableness, who have hardly been able to maintain your hearts in any spiritual frame towards God for one day together, yet his mercies towards you have been new every morning, and great hath been his faithfulness. You have often turned aside from the way of your duty, and have not followed God in a steady course of obedience; and yet, for all that, his goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life, as it is Psal. xxiii. 6.

2. Consider how often you have doubted and mistrusted the unchangeableness of God, and been forced with shame and sorrow, to retract your folly therein; God hath many times convinced you, that his love to you is an unchangeable love, how many changes soever, in the course of his providence, have passed over you; consult Isa. xlix. 14. and Psal. lxxvii. 78. and see how the cases are parallel, both in respect of God's constancy to them and you, and the inconstancy of his people's faith then, and yours now; your fears and doubts are the same with theirs, though his goodness and love have been as unchangeable to you as ever they were to them.

3. Consider the advocateship and intercession of Jesus Christ in heaven for you, by virtue whereof the favour and love of God become unalterable towards his people. If any thing can be supposed to cool or quench the love of God towards you, nothing in the world is more like to do it than your sin; and this, indeed, is that which you fear will estrange and alienate the heart of your God from you. But, reader, if thou be one that sincerely mournest for all the grief and dishonour of God by thy sin, appliest the blood

of sprinkling to thy soul by faith, and makest mortification and watchfulness thy daily business; comfort thyself against that fear from that singular encouragement given thee in this case, 1 John ii. 1, 2. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not; and if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our sins." Look as the death of Christ healed the great breach betwixt God and the soul, by thy reconciliation at first; so the powerful intercession of Christ in heaven effectually prevents all new breaches betwixt God and thy soul afterwards, so that he will never totally and finally cast thee off again.

(2.) Shut the door behind you against all objections, scruples, and questionings of God's immutability, and, by a resolved and steady faith, maintain the honour of God in this point, by thy constant adherence to it, and dependence upon it: and especially see that you give him the glory of his unchangeableness.

1. When thou shalt see the greatest alterations and changes made by his providence in the world. What though thou shouldst live to see all things turned upside down, the foundations out of course, all things drawing into a sea of confusion and trouble? yet in the midst of those public distractions and distress of nations, encourage thou thyself in this: Thy God, and his love to his people, are the same for ever. Psal. xli. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea: God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved."

2. Live by faith upon God's unchangeableness under the greatest changes of your own condition in this world. Providence may make great alterations upon all your outward comforts: it may cast you down, how dear soever you be to God, from riches into poverty, from health into sickness, from honour into reproach, from liberty into bondage; thou mayest overlive all thy comfortable relations, and of a Naomi become a Marah. *Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down*, said as good a man as you, Psal. ciii. 10. Yet still it is your duty, and will be your great privilege in the midst of all these changes, to act your faith upon the never-changing God, as that holy man did, Hab. iii. 17. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail; and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation;" q. d. Suppose a thousand disappointments of my earthly hopes, yet will I maintain my hope in God. O Christian!

with how many yet, notwithstanding, and nevertheless, must thy faith bear up in times of trouble, or thou wilt sink.

3. See thou live upon God's unchangeableness, when age and sickness shall inform thee that thy great change is at hand; though thy heart and thy flesh fail, comfort thyself with this, thy God will never fail thee, Psal. lxxiii. 16. "O God (saith David) thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works, now also when I am old and gray-headed, forsake me not," Psal. lxxi. 17, 18.

4. Live upon the unchangeableness of God under the greatest and saddest changes of your spiritual condition; God may cloud the light of his countenance over thy soul, he may fill thee with fears and troubles, and the Comforter that should relieve thee may seem to be far off; yet still maintain thy faith in the unchangeableness of his love; trust in the name of the Lord, stay thyself upon thy God, when thou walkest in darkness, and hast no light, Isa. l. 10. Thus shut thy door.

(3.) Improve the unchangeableness of God to thy best advantage in the worst times, by drawing thence such comfortable conclusions as these.

1. If God be an unchangeable God in his promises, and in his love to his people, what should hinder but the people of God may live happily and comfortably in the saddest times, and greatest troubles upon earth. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing, yet possessing all things," 2 Cor. vi. 10. "Certainly nothing ought to quench a Christian's mirth, that is not able to separate him from the love of Christ," Rom. viii. 35.

2. If God be an unchangeable God in his love to his people, then it becomes all that have special interest in this God, to be unchangeable and immoveable in the ways of their obedience towards him: God will not cast you off, see that you cast not off your duties, no, not when they are surrounded with difficulties; he loves you, though you often grieve him by sin; see that you still love him, though he often grieve and burden you by affliction: he will own you for his people under the greatest contempts and reproaches of the world; see that you own and honour his ways and truths when you are under most reproach from a vile world.

## CHAP. X.

*Opening the care of God for his people in times of trouble, as the fifth chamber of rest to believers.*

*Sect. I.* CARE, in the general notion of it, as it is applied to the creature, imports the studiousness and solicitousness of our thoughts, for the safety and welfare of ourselves, or those we love and highly value. Now, though there be no such thing properly in God, at whose dispose and pleasure all events are, and to whose counsels and appointments all difficulties must give way; yet he is pleased to accommodate himself to our weakness, and express his regard and love to his people, by such things as one creature doth to another, to which it is endeared by relation or affection. To this purpose we may find many significant synonymous expressions in scripture, all importing the care of God over his people, in a pleasant variety of notion and expression, as Nah. i. 7. "The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him."

He knoweth them, i. e. he hath a special, tender, and careful eye upon them, to see their wants supplied, and to protect them in all their dangers; for in the common and general sense he knoweth them that trust not in him, as well as those that do; and farther to clear this sense of the place, it is said, Psal. xl. 17. "The Lord thinketh on them." Importing not only simple cogitation, but the immoration or abiding of his thoughts upon them, as our thoughts are wont to do upon that which we highly esteem, especially when any danger is near it. And yet farther, to clear this sense, it is said, John xxxvi. 7. "He withdraweth not his eye from the righteous." As when Moses was exposed in the ark of bulrushes, where his life was in imminent hazard by the waters of Nilus on one side, and the Egyptian cut-throats on the other: his sister Miriam kept watch at a distance, to see what would be done to him. Her eye was never off that ark wherein her dear brother lay; fear and care engaged her eye to keep a true watch for him. Thus the Lord withdraweth not his eye from the righteous. To the same purpose is that expression, Deut. xxxiii. 3. "Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand." That which we dearly love and prize above ordinary, we keep in our own hands for its security, as not thinking it safe enough in any other hand or place. And once more, Isa. xlix. 16. God is said to engrave them upon the palms of his hands, alluding to what is customary among men, who, when they would charge their memories with something of special concernment, use to change a ring, or

bind a thread about the finger, to put them in mind of it. Thus is the care of our God expressed to us in scripture-notions. The amount of all which is given to us in that one proper and full expression of the apostle, 1 Pet. i. 7. *He careth for you.* To open this chamber of Divine care as a place of sweetest rest to our anxious and perplexed minds, in times of difficulty and hazard, it will be necessary that you seriously ponder,

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|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. The grounds and reasons | } of the care of God. |
| 2. The extent and compass  |                       |
| 3. The lovely properties   |                       |

(1.) The grounds and reasons of God's care for his people, which are,

1. The strict and dear relations in which he is pleased to own them. Believers are his children, and you know how naturally children engage and draw forth the father's care for them. This is the argument Christ uses, Mat. vi. 31, 32. "Therefore, take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all those things." Children, especially when young, disquiet not themselves about provision for back or belly, but leave that to the care of their parents, from whom, by the tie and bonds of nature and love, they expect provision for all those wants: Every one takes care for his own; much more doth God for his own children; and, indeed, he expects his children should live upon his care as our children in their minority do upon ours.

2. God's precious estimation and value of them engage his constant care for them. Believers are his jewels, Mal. iii. 17. his peculiar people, 1 Pet. ii. 6. his special portion or treasure in this world, Deut. xxxii. 9. and as such he prizes and esteems them above all the people of the earth, and accordingly exercised his special care in all the dangers they are exposed to. Special love engageth peculiar care.

3. The dangers and fears of the people of God in this world are many and great; and were it not for the Lord's assiduous and tender care over them, they must necessarily be ruined both in soul and body by them. The church is God's vineyard, its enemies as so many wild boars to root it up: Upon this account he saith, Isa. xxvii. 3. "I the Lord do keep it; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." And, indeed, it is well for Israel that he who keepeth it, never slumbereth nor sleepeth, Psal. cxxi. 4. That our houses are in peace, that we and our dear relations fall not as a prey into cruel and bloody hands skilful to destroy, that we find any rest and comfort in so evil and dangerous a world, is wholly and only to be ascribed to the care of God over us and ours.

4. Jesus Christ hath solemnly recommended all the people of God to his particular care. It was one of the last expressions of Christ's love to them at the parting hour, John xvii. 11. "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world; and I come to thee: Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." q. d. While I have been personally present with them, I took the same care of them as a shepherd doth of his flock, or a tender father of his children: but now I must leave them in the world, and in the midst of a world of dangers, fears, and troubles, against which they can make no provision or defence themselves. Father, remember them, look after them when I shall be removed from them, they are thine as well as mine; and I recommend them, with my last breath, to thy care and protection. This is a special ground also, of God's care for them.

5. Believers daily cast themselves upon the care of God, and resign themselves unto it in their daily prayers, and by their often-renewed acts of faith, than which no act is found more engaging from the creature upon its God; though there be nothing of merit, yet there is much engaging efficacy in it, Isa. xxvi. 3. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." We find it so among ourselves, the more firmly and entirely any one trusteth in us, and dependeth upon us, the more he engageth us to protect and relieve him. Now this is the daily work of Christians to trust God over all, and put all their concernments into his hand, which very trust and dependence draw forth the care of God for them.

6. In a word, the many promises God hath made to his people to preserve, support, and supply them in all the times of need, engage the care of God for them, as often as such wants or dangers befall them; for indeed, herein he at once takes care for their necessity, and for his own honour and glory. They trust to his word, and rely upon his promises, which therefore he will be careful to make good. This was the argument which the church pleaded in the time of imminent danger to engage the care of God for them, Psal. lxxiv. 20. *Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty,* q. d. O Lord, thy people are in the midst of cruel enemies, take care for their protection, and though there be no worth in them to which thou shouldest have respect, yet have respect unto thine own covenant: let the glory of thy name draw forth thy care to thy people.

*Sect. II.* We have seen the grounds and reasons of God's care over his people, let us next view (2.) The extent and compass of this divine care; and here methinks the Lord saith to his people as he said to Abraham, Gen. xiii. 14, 15. *Lift up now thine eyes from*

*the place where thou art, northward and southward, and eastward and westward, for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed for ever.* So here, poor timorous, dejected believer, lift up thine eyes from the place where thou art, and take a view of all the promises in the scriptures of truth; promises of supports under all burthens, supplies of all wants, deliverances out of all dangers, assistances in all distresses; to thee have I given them all as a portion for ever. This care of God walks around, and encompasseth the souls and bodies of them that fear him day and night. There is no interest or concern of either found without the line of his all-surrounding care, and every one of his children are enfolded in his fatherly arms, Deut. xxxiii. 3. *All his saints are in thy hand.* All, and every one of their wants and straits are observed by this care, in order to their supply, Phil. iv. 19. *My God shall supply all your need.*

1. Great is the care of God over the bodies of his people, and all the dangers and necessities of them as they daily grow; your meat and drink are daily provided for you by your Father's care, Psal. cxi. 24. *He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will be ever mindful of his covenant.* It is from this care of thy heavenly Father, that necessary provisions have been made for thee, of which, it may be, thou hast had no foresight: this is the God that hath fed thee all thy life long, Gen. xlviii. 15. It is from the same care thy body hath been clothed, Matth. vi. 28. *How much more shall he clothe you, O ye of little faith?* It is through this care you sleep in peace, and your rest is made sweet unto you, Prov. iii. 24. 'When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.' In a word, thou owest all thy recoveries from dangerous diseases, and narrow escapes from the grave, to this care of thy God over thee, *He is the Lord that healeth thee*, Exod. xv. 26. That the incensed humours of thy body had not overflowed their banks, like an inundation of the sea, when they raged in thy dangerous diseases, is only because thy God took the care of thee, and set them their bounds.

2. Divine care extends itself to the souls of all that fear God, and to all the concernments of their souls; and manifestly discovers itself in all the gracious provisions it hath made for them. More particularly, it is from this tender, fatherly care that,

1. A Saviour was provided to redeem them, when they were ruined and lost by sin, John iii. 16. Rom. viii. 32.

2. That spiritual cordials are provided to refresh them in all their sinking sorrows and inward distresses, Psal. xciv. 19.

3. That a door of deliverance is opened to them, when they are

sorely pressed upon by temptations, and ready to be overwhelmed, 1 Cor. x. 13.

4. That a strength above their own comes seasonably to support them, when they are almost over-weighed with inward troubles; when great weights are upon them, the everlasting arms are underneath them, Psal. cxxxviii. 3. Isa. lvii. 16.

5. That their ruin is prevented, when they are upon the dangerous and slippery brink of temptations, and their feet almost gone, Psal. lxxiii. 2. Hos. ii. 6. 2 Cor. xii. 7.

6. That they are recovered again after dangerous falls by sin, and not left a prey and trophy to their enemy, Hos. xiv. 4.

7. That they are guided and directed in the right way, when they are at a loss, and know not what course to take, Psal. xvi. 11. lxxiii. 24.

8. That they are established and confirmed in Christ, in the most shaking and overturning times of trouble and persecution; so that neither their hearts turn back, nor their steps decline from his ways, Jer. xxxii. 40. John iv. 14.

9. That they are upheld under spiritual desertions, and recovered again out of that dismal darkness, into the cheerful light of God's countenance, Isa. lvii. 16.

10. That they are at last brought safe to heaven, through the innumerable hazards and dangers all along their way thither, Heb. xi. 19. In all these things the care of their God eminently discovers itself for their souls.

(3.) Once more let us consider the care of God for his people in the lovely properties thereof. As,

1. It is a fatherly care, than which none is greater or more tender, Matth. vii. 8. "Your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." And indeed the greatest and tenderest care of an earthly father is but a faint shadow of that tender care which is in the heart of God over his children; for to that end we find them compared, Matth. vii. 11. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them which ask him." The care of parents is carelessness itself, compared with that care which God takes of his.

2. The care of God is an universal care, watching over all his people, in all ages, places, and dangers, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth, to shew himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him." This was applied by way of reproof to Asa, who out of a sinful distrust of the care of God, relied upon the help of Syria, as if there had not been a God in heaven to take care of him and the people.

3. God's care over his, is assiduous and continual; "his mercies are new every morning, great is his faithfulness," Lam. iii. 22, 23. "He keeps his people night and day," Isa. xxvii. 3. Could Satan, or his instruments find such an hour, wherein the seven eyes of providence should be all asleep, that would be the fatal hour to our souls and bodies; but he that keepeth Israel slumbereth not.

4. God's care over his, is exceeding tender, far beyond the tenderness that the most affectionate mother ever felt in her heart towards the child that hanged on her breast, Isa. xlix. 15. "Can a mother forget her sucking child, &c. they may, yet will not I forget thee." The birds of the air are not so tender of their young in the nest, as God is of his people in the world, Isa. xxxi. 5. Mercy fills the heart of God, yea, tender mercy, yea, multitudes of tender mercies, Psal. li. 1.

5. The care of God is a seasonable care, which is always sure to take the opportunity and proper season of relieving his people; in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen; the beauty of providence is much seen in this thing, wherever you feel a want, this care finds a supply; and thus much briefly of the care of God absolutely considered in itself.

*Sect. III.* It remains that we also consider the care of God in its twofold respect, viz.

1. To his promises.
2. To his providences.

(1.) There are multitudes of promises found in the scriptures, exactly fitted as so many keys to open the door of this comfortable chamber, to receive and secure all that fear God, whatever their wants, fears, or distresses are. These are reducible into two classes, or ranks, viz.

1. More general and comprehensive.
2. More particular promises.

The general and more comprehensive promises are found in the general expression of the covenant, as that to Abraham, Gen. xvii.

1. "I am God Almighty, walk thou before me, and be perfect." q. d. Let it be thy care to walk exactly in the paths of obedience before me, and I will take care to supply all thy wants from the never-failing fountain of my all-sufficiency; and of the same tenor is that, 2 Cor. vi. 18. "I will be to them a Father, and they shall be my sons and daughters," i. e. Expect your provisions and protections from my care, as children do from their father. More particularly, there are six sorts of promises wherein the care of God is particularly made over to his people in the greatest hazards and difficulties in this life, viz.

1. It is assigned and made over to them to supply all their needs, so far as the glory of God, and the advancement of their spiritual and eternal good shall require it, Psal. xxxiv. 9. "They that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing." All your livelihood is in that promise; thence comes your daily bread; your own and your family's meat is contained therein.

2. It is made over to the church and people of God for their defence against all dangers, Isa. liv. 17. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." This promise wards off all the deadly blows, and puts by all the mortal thrusts that are made at you; here the care of God forms itself into a shield for your defence.

3. The care of God is engaged by promise for the moderation and mitigation of your afflictions, that they may not exceed your abilities to bear them, Isa. xxvii. 8, 9. "In measure when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it; he stayed the rough wind in the day of the east wind." If the wind blow from a cold corner, this promise moderates it, that it blow not a storm; all the sparing mercies and sweetening circumstances, which gracious souls thankfully note, in the sharpest trials, come from this promise, wherein the care of God is engaged for that purpose.

4. Divine care is put under the bond of a promise, for the direction and guidance of all their troubles and trials to an happy issue, Rom. viii. 28. "All things shall work together for good." From what quarter soever the wind bloweth, God will take care that it shall be useful to drive you to your port; the very providences that cast you down, by virtue of this promise, prove as serviceable and beneficial as those that lift you up.

5. The care of God stands engaged in the promise, for the help and aid of his people in all the extremities and exigencies of their lives, Psal. xlv. 1. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Never is the care of God more visible and conspicuous, than in such times of need.

6. Lastly, The care of God is engaged to carry his people safe through all the dangers of the way, and bring them all home to glory at last, John x. 28. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." This care of God, thus engaged for you, is your convoy to accompany and secure you, till it set you safe into your harbour of eternal rest.

(2.) You have heard how the care of God is engaged for you by promise; now see how it actuates and exerts itself for the people of God in the various methods of providence; and here, O here is the sweetest pleasure of the Christian life, a delight far transcending all the delights of this life. Sit down Christian in

this chamber also, and make but such observations upon the care of thy God as follow; and then tell me whether the world, with all its pleasures and delights, can give thee such another entertainment.

1. Reflect upon the constant, sweet, and suitable provisions, that from time to time have been prepared for thee and thine, by this care of thy God; for whensoever thy wants did come, I am sure from hence came thy supplies, it hath enabled thee to return the same answer the disciples did to that question, Luke xxii. 35. "Lacked ye any thing?" And they said, Nothing.

2. Reflect with admiration upon the various difficulties of your lives, wherein your thoughts have been entangled, and out of which you have been extricated and delivered by the care of God over you; how oft have your thoughts been like a ravelled skaine of silk, so entangled and perplexed with the difficulties and fears before you, that you could find no end, but the longer you thought, the more you were puzzled, till you have left thinking and fell to praying; and there you have found the right end to wind up all your thoughts upon the bottom of peace and sweet contentment, according to that direction, Psal. xxxvii. 5. "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."

3. Observe with a melting heart, how the care of thy God hath disposed and directed thy way to unforeseen advantages: Had he not ordered thy steps when, and as he did, thou hadst not been in possession of those temporal and spiritual mercies that sweeten thy life at this day. Surely the steps of good men are ordered by the Lord: and as for thee, Christian, what reason hast thou, with an heart overflowing with love and thankfulness, to look up and say, *My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?* It is sweet to live by faith upon Divine care. O what a serene life might we live, careful for nothing, but making known our requests unto God in every thing, Phil. iv. 6. casting all our care on him that careth for us, 1 Pet. v. 7. perplexing our thoughts about nothing, but rolling every burden upon God by faith. Thus lived holy Musculus, when reduced to extreme poverty, and danger at the same time; then it was that he solaced his soul with that comfortable distich, a good lesson for others;

*Est Deus in cælis, qui providus omnia curat,  
Credentes nusquam deseruisse potest.*

That is, There is a God above, who, as he provides for, and takes care of all, can never forsake those that believe in him.

The provident care of his heavenly Father made his heart as quiet as the child at the breast. Christian, thou knowest not what distressful days are coming upon the earth, nor what per-

sonal trials shall befall thee in this world ; but I advise thee, as thou valuest the tranquillity and comfort of thy life, shut up thyself by faith in this chamber of Divine care ; it is thy best security in this world : Reflect frequently and thankfully upon the manifold supports, supplies, and salvations thou hast already had from this fountain of mercies, and be not discouraged at new difficulties. When an eminent Christian was told of some that way-laid him to destroy him, his answer was, *Si Deus mei curam non habet, quid vivo?* In like manner thou mayest say, if God had not taken care for thee ; how couldst thou have lived till now ? how couldst thou have over-lived so many troubles, fears, and dangers as thou hast done ?



## CHAP. XI.

*Opening the sixth and last chamber, viz. The love of God, as a resting-place to believing souls in evil times.*

**Sect. I.** **T**HOUGH all the attributes in the name or chambers of this house of God are glorious and excellent, yet this of love is transcendently glorious : Of this room it may be said as it was of Solomon's royal chariot, Cant. iii. 10. "The midst thereof is paved with love." In this attribute the glory of God is signally and eminently manifested, 1 John iv. 9, 10. And upon this foundation the hopes and comforts of all believers are built and founded, Rom. viii. 35. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall "tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or "peril, or sword ?" He defies and despises them all, because neither of them alone, nor altogether by their united strength, can unclasp the arms of Divine love, in which believers are safely enfolded. In this attribute God's people, by faith, entrench themselves, and of it a believer saith, *Hic murus aheneus esto*, this shall be my stronghold and fortress in the day of trouble. And well may we so esteem and reckon it, if we consider,

1. That wherever the special love of God goes, there the special presence of God goes also, John xiv. 23. "He shall be loved of my "Father, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with "him." And O how secure and safe must those be (however times govern) with whom God himself maketh his abode ? For as the Psalmist speaks, Psal. xci. 1. "He that dwells in the secret "place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the "Almighty." And he that is over-shadowed by an Almighty

power, need not fear how many mighty enemies combine against him.

2. Wherever the special love of God is placed, that person becomes precious and highly valuable in the eyes of God; he appreciates and estimates such a man as his peculiar treasure, which naturally and necessarily draws and spreads the wing of Divine care over him for his protection, Deut. xxiii. 12. "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him, and the Lord shall cover him all the day long." Things of greatest value are always kept in safest custody.

3. Upon whomsoever the special love of God is set, there all events and issues of troubles are sure to be over-ruled to the eternal advantage of that soul, Rom. viii. 28. Which consideration alone is sufficient to unstring all the troubles in the world, and make the beloved of the Lord shout and triumph in the midst of tribulations.

But let us enter yet farther into this glorious chamber of Divine love, and more particularly view the admirable properties thereof; though, when all is done, it will be found a love passing knowledge; our thoughts may admire, but can never measure it.

1. And first, you will find it an ancient love whose spring is in eternity itself. Believer, God is thine ancient friend, who foresaw and loved thee before thou wast, yea, before this world was in being; the fruits and effects thereof thou gatherest in time, but the root that produces them was before all time, Prov. viii. 22, 23. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." Thus was the love of God contriving, and providing the best of mercies in Christ for us; while, as yet, there were no such creatures in the world, nor a world prepared to receive us.

2. The love of God to his people is a free, and altogether undeserved love. It must needs be so, seeing it preceded our very being; which had it not done, yet no motives had been found in us to allure it to us more than others, Deut. vii. 7. "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor chuse you, because ye were more in number than any people (for ye were the fewest of all people) but because the Lord loved you." So that we cannot find one stone of our merit in the foundation of this love; for those whom it embraces in its arms are *immerentes*, & *male merentes*, ill-deserving, as well as undeserving. We were loved of God before we were lovely in ourselves; it was freely pitched upon us, not purchased by us, Isa. xliii. 24.

3. The love of God to believers is a bountiful love, streaming

forth continually mercies both innumerable and invaluable to their souls and bodies, 2 Pet. i. 3. Christian, it would quickly weary thine arm, yea, let me say, the arm of an angel, but to write down the thousandth part of the mercies which have already flowed out of this precious fountain to thee; though all thou hast received or shalt receive in this world, are but the beginnings of mercy, and first-fruits of the love of God to thee: it is the love of God which daily loads thee with benefits, as the expression is, Psal. lxxviii. 19. And if thou art daily loaded with mercies, what an heap of mercies will the mercies of thy whole life be?

4. The love of God to believers is a distinguishing love; not the portion of all, no, nor yet of many besides thee, 1 Cor. i. 26. The generality of the world dwell in the room of common providence, not in the chamber of special love, into which God hath admitted thee: this consideration should make thee break out in admiration, as it is, John xix. 22. "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to me, and not to the world?"

5. The love of God to believers is a love transcendent to all creature-love; it moves in an higher sphere than the love of any creature doth, Rom. v. 6, 7, 8. We read of Jacob's love to Rachel, which is so celebrated in the sacred story for the fervour of it; and yet all that it enabled him to suffer was but the summer's heat and the winter's cold; a trifle to what the love of Christ engaged, and enabled him to suffer for thy sake. We read also of the love of David to Absalom, which made him wish, Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! This love was only manifested in a wish, which, haply might have been retracted too, had there been an exchange to be made indeed: but the life of Christ, worth millions of his life, was actually and willingly staked down for thy soul. We read of the love of one disciple manifested to another disciple in a cup of cold water; but Christ hath manifested his love to thee in pouring out his warmest heart-blood for thy redemption. O what a transcendent love is the Divine love!

6. To conclude, (though alas, little is said of the love of God) it is an everlasting and unchangeable love. Hills and mountains shall sooner start from their basis, than his loving-kindness depart from his people, Isa. liv. 10. Though he afflict us, still he loves us, Psal. lxxxix. 32, 33. Nay, though we grieve him, yet still he loves us, Mark xvi. 7. *Tell the disciples, and tell Peter.* Peter had grieved Christ, denied Christ, yet will he not renounce nor cast off Peter.

*Sect. II.* Well then, if God hath opened to your souls such a chamber of love, where your souls may be ravished with daily delights, as well as secured from danger and ruin; O that you would enter into it by faith, and dwell for ever in the love of God! I

mean, clear up your interest in it, and then solace your souls in the delights of it. Need I to use an argument, or spend one motive to press you to enter into such an heaven upon earth? If the deadness of thy heart doth need it, take into consideration, reader, these few that follow.

*Motive 1.* Ponder with thyself how sad and miserable the case will be with thee in the days of calamity and distress, if the love of God shall be clouded to thy soul. In those days such as love thee, will either be absent from thee, or impotent to help thee; all thy friends and familiars may be removed far off, and whither then wilt thou turn, should God be far off too? This was that evil which Jeremiah so vehemently deprecated, chap. xvii. ver. 17. *Be not a terror unto me, thou art my hope in the day of evil*; q. d. O Lord, my soul depends upon refreshment and comfort from thee, when all the springs of earthly comfort are dried up. Shouldst thou be a terror to me in the day of evil, it will be the most terrible disappointment that ever befel my soul; if thou be kind, I care not who be cruel; if I have the love of God, I value not the hatred of men; but if God be a terror, who, or what can be a comforter? The love of God is the alone refuge to which the gracious soul retreats, upon all creature disappointments and failings. This, therefore, is the main thing to be feared against the evil day.

*Motive 2.* The knowledge and assurance of the love of God is a mercy attainable by a gracious soul, notwithstanding the imperfections of grace. Peter had his falls and failings as well as other Christians, yet when Christ puts the question home to him, John xxi. 15. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" he was able to return a clear positive answer, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Study thy heart, Christian, and study the scriptures; if thou canst find the sincere love of God in thy heart, that scripture will clear the love of God to thy soul, John iv. 19. "We love him, because he first loved us." If thou lay thine hand upon a stone-wall, and feel it warm, thou mayest conclude the sun-beams have shone upon it; for warmth is not naturally in dead stones. Our love to God is but a reflex beam of his love to us; and we know there can be no reflex without a direct beam. Thousands of Christians do, at this day, actually possess the ravishing sense of Divine love, whose fears and complaints have been the same that thine now are; that God who indulged this favour to them, can do as much for thee.

*Motive 3.* Think how well thou wilt be provided for the worst and difficultest times, when the love of God shall be well secured to thy soul; when the love of God, i. e. the sense of his love, is once shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, which for that

end, among others, is given unto us; we shall then be able to glory in tribulation, Rom. v. 3, 5. We may then bid defiance to all the adverse powers of hell and earth, and say, now do your worst; we are out of your reach, and above all your terrors and affrights. Be advised then to sit close to this work; clear but this point once, and the worst is past. Oh lie at the feet of God night and day, give him no rest, take no denial from him, fill thy mouth with pleas and arguments: Tell him, Lord, it is neither for corn, nor wine, that I seek thee, but only for thy love; bestow any other gifts upon whom thou wilt, only seal up thy love to my soul.

And, Lastly, I advise thee, reader, to be exceeding careful, when God admits thee into the sense of his love, to shut the door behind thee, lest thy soul be soon expelled thence by the subtilty of Satan, who envies nothing more, than such an happiness as this: That envious spirit totally despairs of the least drop of such a mercy, and therefore swells with envy at thy enjoyment of it. But if ever thou fasten thy hand of faith upon this mercy, loose not thy hold by every objection with which he will rap thy fingers.

1. If he object the many sharp afflictions, and manifold rods of God upon thee, call not the love of God in question for that; but remember what he saith, Heb. xii. 6. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Fatherly corrections are so far from being inconsistent with the love of God, that his love is rather questionable without them, than for them; they are love tokens, not marks of hatred.

2. Yield not up thy claim and title to the love of God, because he sometimes hides his face from thee; thou knowest the sun is up, and going on in its regular course, in the darkest and closest day. *My God, my God*, saith Christ himself, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* Believe he is still thy God, and his love is immutable, when the sense and manifestations thereof do fail.

3. Call not the love of God in question, because of thy great vileness and unworthiness. Say not, when thou most loathest thyself, God must needs loath thee too; he can love where thou loathest. "Return, return, O Shulamite, return, return, that we may look upon thee: What will ye see in the Shulamite? as it were the company of two armies." The spouse was exceeding beautiful in the eyes of others, when most base and vile in her own: What would you see in the Shulamite? Alas, there is nothing in me, at the best, but conflicts and wars betwixt grace and corruption, as it were betwixt two armies, Cant. vi. 13.

3. Quit not thy claim to the love of God, because he seems to shut out thy prayers, and delays to answer thy long continued desires and importunities of thy soul in some cases. David would

neither censure his God, no, nor call in question his interest in him, because of such a delay and silence, Psal. xxii. 1, 2. *My God, my God*, The claim is doubled, ver. 1. and yet in the next breath he saith, "I cry in the day time but thou hearest not; and in the "night-season, and am not silent."

Thus I have offered you some advice and assistance, how to secure yourselves in these Divine attributes, viz. the power, wisdom, faithfulness, unchangeableness, care, and love of God, as in so many sanctuaries, and comfortable refuges in the days of common calamity. It is noted, even of the Egyptians, when the storm of hail was coming upon the land, Exod. ix. 20. "He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh, made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses." Let not an Egyptian take more care of his beasts than Christians of their souls. Stormy days are coming, God hath provided you a refuge, and given you seasonable premonitions, and calls from heaven, to hasten into them before the times of desolations come. The Lord help us to hear his calls and comply with them, which will be as much our privilege, as it is our duty. And so much for the fifth proposition, viz. That God's attributes, promises, and providences are prepared for the security of his people in the greatest distresses that befall them in the world.



### PROPOSITION VI.

*That none but God's own people are taken into these chambers of security, or can expect his special protection in evil times.*

*Sect. I.* **T**HIS proposition describes and clears the qualified subject of this privilege. God's own people, and none but such, can warrantably claim special protection in evil times, and this is consonant to the current account of scripture, Isa. iii. 10, 11. "Say ye unto the righteous, it shall be well with him. Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him." He speaks concerning the day of Jerusalem's ruin, and Judah's fall, as appears ver. 8. So great a difference will God make, even in this world, betwixt the righteous and the wicked. In Nah. i. you have also a terrible day described, wherein Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon, the most pleasant and fruitful places of the land shall languish, ver. 4. The mountains shall quake, the hills melt, the earth, and those that dwell therein, burnt up, ver. 5. The indignation and fury of God poured out like fire, ver. 6. The privileged people in this

terrible day are God's own people, they only are taken into security, ver. 7. The Lord is good, a strong-hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him, i. e. he so knoweth them, as to care and provide for them in that evil day; and so throughout the whole scripture, you shall find the promises of protection still made to the people of God. When the Chaldean army, like a devouring fire, was ready to seize upon the land, the sinners in Zion were afraid, fearfulness surprized the hypocrites; for who among us (say they) shall dwell with devouring fire, and everlasting burnings? Yes, saith God, some there are that shall abide that day, viz. "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks;" i. e. God will be a sanctuary to them, when others shall be as stubble before the flames, Isa. xxxiii. 14, 15, 16.

But for the right stating of this proposition, three things must be heedfully regarded.

1. That all good men are not always exempted from the stroke of outward calamities. In that sense the righteous may perish, and merciful men be taken away; yea, they may perish in love, and be taken away in mercy from the evil to come, Isa. lvii. 1, 2. Micah vii. 1, 2.

2. That all wicked men are not always exposed to eternal miseries; but "a just man may perish in his righteousness, and a wicked man prolong his life in his wickedness," Eccles. vii. 15.

3. But in this sense we are to understand the proposition, That none but the people of God have right, by promise, to his special protection in evil days, that all such shall either be preserved from the stroke of calamities, or from the deadly sting, namely, eternal ruin by them: though they should fall by the hands of enemies, yet they die as Josiah did, in peace, 2 Kings xxii. 19, 20. If they be taken away, it is but out of the way of greater mischiefs: Death doth but lay the saints in their beds of rest, when it hurries away others into everlasting miseries: If they be not excused from troubles, yet their troubles are sure to be sanctified to their eternal good, Rom. viii. 28. And the Lord will be with them in their troubles, Psal. xci. 15. Isa. xli. 10.

Two things remain to be considered, before we finish this last proposition: viz.

1. Who the people of God are?

2. Why this privilege is peculiar to them?

1. Who are the people of God? the scripture describes them two ways; negatively and positively. Negatively, in opposition to those who are not the people of God, but are, (1.) The ser-

vants of sin, obeying it in the lusts of it, which the people of God neither are, nor dare to do, Rom. vi. 11, 12, &c. (2.) The men of this world have their portion in this life, savouring and minding the things of the world only, whereas the people of God are called out of the world, John xvii. 16. and principally study and labour after the higher concerns of the world to come, Rom. viii. 5. (3.) The vassals of Satan, do his lusts, and are in subjection to his power, Acts xxvi. 18. Eph. ii. 2. from which bondage the people of God are made free. (4.) Nor yet are they their own, living wholly to themselves, and seeking only their own ends, as others do, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. These, all these are not the people of God, God will not own them for such; they but deceive themselves in thinking and calling themselves so. But then positively, they are (1.) A people regenerated, and born again, John i. 13. Their regeneration gives them both the essence and denomination of the people of God: It is as impossible to be the children of God without regeneration, as it is to be the children of men without generation. (2.) They are a people in covenant with God, Ezek. xvi. 8. "I entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine." For in this covenant they give themselves to the Lord, 2 Cor. viii. 5. They avouch the Lord to be their God, and make over themselves to him to be his people, Jer. xxxi. 33. devoting unto God all that they are, their souls and bodies, with every faculty and member inclusively, Rom. xii. 1. Luke x. 27. All that they have, Rom. xi. 36. all is dedicated and devoted to the Lord's use and service, and these only are the people of God.

2. The last thing to be cleared is, Why the people of God, and none beside them, have this peculiar privilege of an hiding place in the day of trouble, and the grounds of it are,

1. Because they only have special interest in God, and propriety is the ground on which they claim and expect protection: I am thine, save me, Psal. cxix. 94. Upon this very ground it was that David encouraged himself in one of his greatest plunges and distresses of his whole life, 1 Sam. xxx. 6. "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

2. The people of God only are at peace with God; and where there is no peace there can be no protection: The harbours and garrisons of one kingdom never receive into their protection the subjects of another kingdom that are in open hostility against them, Now there is open war betwixt God and the wicked, Psal. vii. 11. Zech. xi. 8. Till they have peace with God they can claim no protection from God.

3. The promises of protection are made only to God's people; and where there is no promise, there can be no warrantable claim

to protection, 2 Cor. i. 20. 2 Pet. i. 4. Common providences may shelter them for a time, but the saints only have the keys of the promises, which open the chambers or attributes of God to them.

4. None but the people of God walk in the ways of God, and none but those that walk in his way can, groundedly, expect his protection; for so runs the promise, 2 Chron. xv. 2. "I am with you whilst you are with me," i. e. I am with you, by way of protection, direction, support, and salvation, whilst you are with me in the duties of obedience, and exercises of your graces; see that you love, fear, and obey me, and then, depend upon it, I will look after and take care of you.

5. To conclude, The people of God only flee to God for sanctuary, and cast themselves upon him for protection, Psal. lvi. 3. "At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." Psal. xviii. 2. "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." This their confidence in God, and reliance upon him, engage him to protect them in their dangers, Isa. xxvi. 3. All others put themselves out of God's protection by making flesh their arm, and so giving the honour of God to the creature, Jer. xvii. 5. And thus much for clearing this last proposition also. All that remains will be dispatched in a brief and close application of the point thus opened and confirmed.



## CHAP. XII.

*Containing the first use of the point in several informing consecutaries and deductions of truth from it.*

*Consect. I.* **F**ROM the whole of this discourse we may be informed what a miserable and shiftless people all those will be in times of trouble who have no special interest in God, or the promises. Sad and lamentable was the case of Saul, as it is by himself expressed, 1 Sam. xxviii. 15. "I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more." It is a wonderful and unaccountable thing, how carnal men and women subsist and bear up, when their earthly props and hopes sink under and fail them; so long as any creature-comfort is left, thither they will retreat for relief and succour: but if all fail, as quickly they may, whither will they turn for comfort, having not a God nor a pro-

mise to flee to? which the people of God can do when all things else fail them, Heb. iii. 17. Their different conditions in the day of trouble is clearly expressed in Zeph. ii. 3, 4. "Seek ye the Lord" "all ye meek of the earth which have wrought his judgment, seek" "righteousness, seek meekness, it may be ye shall be hid in the" "day of the Lord's anger." There is God's *may-be*, which is better security than man's *shall-be*, for their temporal deliverance: But what shall become of others that have no refuge but in the creature? Why, the misery and shiftlessness of their condition follows in the next words: "Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation; they shall drive out Ashdod at noon-day, and Ekron shall be rooted up;" i. e. All their earthly securities shall fail them; their strong-holds shall not secure them; they shall find no shelter in the scorching heat of the day of trouble. Moab, Ashdod, and Ekron have no more benefit by the promises made to Zion, than the inhabitants of Rome can claim by the charter of London. If a wicked or hypocritical person cry to God in his distress, he will not hear him, Prov. i. 25, 26. Job xxvii. 9. but will bid him go to his earthly refuges which he hath chosen. If he go to the promises, knock at those doors of hope, they cannot relieve him, being all made in Christ to believers; if to the name and attributes of God all the doors are shut against them, Psal. xxxiv. 16. There are seven dreadful aggravations of a wicked man's troubles.

(1.) When troubles come upon him, the curse of God follows him into his carnal refuges; Jer. xvii. 5. "Cursed be the man" "that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart" "departeth from the Lord." Trouble is the arrow, and this curse the venom of the arrow, which makes the wound incurable.

(2.) When troubles fall upon him from without, a guilty conscience will terrify him from within; so that the mind can give no relief to the body, but both sink under their own weights. It is not so with the people of God, they have inward relief under outward pressures, 2 Cor. iv. 16.

(3.) The gusts and storms of wicked men's troubles may blow them into hell, and hurry them into eternal destruction: if death march towards them upon the pale horse, hell always follows him, Rev. vi. 8.

(4.) If troubles and distresses overwhelm their hearts, they can give them no vent or ease by prayer, faith, and resignation to God, as his people use to do, 1 Sam. i. 18.

(5.) When their troubles and distresses come, then come the hour and power of their temptations; and, to shun sorrow, they will fall into sin, having no promise to be kept in the hour of temptation, as the saints have, Rev. iii. 10.

(6.) When their troubles come, they will be left alone in the midst of them: these are their burdens, and they alone must bear them. God's gracious, comfortable, supporting presence is only with his own people.

(7.) If trouble or death come upon them as a storm, they have no anchor of hope to drop in the storm; *the wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death*, Prov. xiv. 32. By all which it appears, that a christless person is a most helpless and shiftless creature in the day of trouble.

*Consect. 2.* Secondly, Hence it follows, *That Christians ought not to drop like other men in the day of trouble.* A wicked man's boldness, and a Christian's cowardliness, in times of affliction, are alike ungrounded and uncomely. Why should thy heart, Christian, despond and sink at this rate, upon the prospect of approaching troubles? Are there not safe and comfortable chambers taken up, and provided for thee against that day? Is not the name of the Lord a strong tower, into which thou mayest run and be safe? The heart of a good man, saith Chrysostom, should at all times be like the higher heavens, serene, tranquil, and clear, whatever thunders and lightnings, storms and tempests trouble and terrify the lower world. If a man have a good roof over his head, where he can sit dry and warm, what need he trouble himself to hear the winds roar, see the lightnings flash, and the rains pour down without doors? Why this is thy privilege, Christian; "A man (to wit the man Christ Jesus) shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," Isa. xxxii. 2. Art thou in Christ, and in the covenant? give me then one good reason for thy dejections in a day of trouble; or if thou hast none to give, hearken to these reasons against it.

1. If thou be in Christ, thy sins are forgiven thee; and why should not a pardoned soul be a cheerful soul in adversity? Afflictions may buz and hum about thee, like bees that have lost their sting, but they can never hurt thee.

2. If thou be in Christ, thy God is with thee in all thy troubles; and how can thy heart sink or faint in such a presence? Let them that are alone in troubles fail under them: but do not thou do so, who art surrounded with Almighty power, grace, and love, Isa. xliii. 1, 2.

3. If thou be in Christ, thy greatest afflictions shall prove thy best friends and benefactors, Rom. viii. 28. Sure then thou art more afraid than hurt; thou mistakest thy best friends for thy worst enemies; thou and thy afflictions shall part more comfortably than you met.

4. If thou be in Christ, thy treasure is safe, thy eternal hap-

piness is out of the reach of all thine enemies, Luke xii. 4. Luke x. 42. And if that be safe, thou hast no cause to be sad; to droop and tremble at the hazard of earthly comforts, whilst heavenly and eternal things are safe, is as if a man that had gotten his pardon from the king, and had it safe in his bosom, should be found weeping upon the way home, because he hath lost his staff or glove. These reasons are strong against the dejections of God's people under outward troubles; but yet I am sensible that all the reasoning in the world will not prevent their dejections, except they will take pains to clear up their interest in God against such a day, Psal. xviii. 2. and will act their faith by way of adherence and dependence upon God, in the want of former light and evidence, Isa. l. 10. And lastly, that they keep their consciences pure and inviolate, which will be a spring of comfort in the midst of troubles, 2 Cor. i. 12.

3. *Consect.* Thirdly, *It hence appears to be the greatest folly and vanity in the world, to make any thing but God our refuge in the day of trouble.* This practice, as you heard but now, is under God's curse; and that which is cursed of God can never be comfortable to us. It is an honour peculiar to God, the right of heaven, and therefore cursed sacrilege to bestow it on the creature. We read of some that make lies their refuge, and hide themselves under falsehood, thinking when the overflowing scourge comes, it shall not come nigh unto them, Isa. xxviii. 15. They will trust to their wits and policies, they will fawn and flatter, lie and dissemble, cast themselves into a thousand shapes and forms to save themselves; but all in vain; the flood shall sweep away their refuge of lies. Others make riches their trust and confidence, Prov. x. 15. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city." If enemies come, their money shall be their ransom: But oh! what a poor refuge will this be! it may betray, but cannot secure them. "Behold, saith God, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it," Isa. xiii. 17. Riches profit not in the day of wrath, Prov. xi. 4. Job blessed God in the day of his adversity, that he had not made gold his hope, or the fine gold his confidence, Job xxxi. 24. Bless not thou thyself, that thou hast such things to bestow thy hope and trust upon. Others make men their refuge, especially great and powerful men: But to how little purpose is it! "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help," Psal. cxlvi. 3, 4. They cannot keep their crowns upon their heads, no, nor their heads upon their shoulders; the greatest men are but dust, and what can dust do to dust? Three things aggravate their misery, who misplace their confidence by bestowing it on any creature, (1.) That creature will certainly deceive

them; men are deceitful men, Psal. lxxii. 9. Riches are deceitful riches, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Every thing you lean on beside God will start aside like a deceitful bow, Psal. lxxviii. 57. (2.) The disappointment of your hopes from the creature will enflame your affliction, and greatly aggravate your sorrow, 2 Kings xviii. 21. The broken reeds of Egypt will not only fail, but pierce you. (3.) In a word, God will take none into his protection, who make any thing besides himself their hope and confidence; if we fly from God to the creature, God will say, To the creature thou shalt go; except I have thy dependence, thou shalt never have my protection; where I have no honour, thou shalt have no comfort.

*Consect. 4.* Fourthly, The former discourse yields us also this comfortable conclusion, *That whatever confusions, desolations and troubles be in the earth, the church and people of God can never be wholly exterminated and destroyed, seeing such a secure refuge is prepared for them of God*, Psal. cii. 28. "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee." Which is assigned as the true reason of its perpetuity and safety, Psal. xlviii. 3. "God is known in her palaces for a refuge." The church's enemies have tried the utmost of their policies and powers in all ages against it, but to no purpose: whilst they have been plotting and persecuting, the preserved remnant have been singing their songs upon Alamoth, even praises to their great Preserver; though they have no external, visible defence, yet are they as safe as salvation itself can make them, "for salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks," Isa. xxvi. 1, 2. Four things are exceeding remarkable in the church's preservation: (1.) No people were ever so fiercely opposed by the powers of this world, "The kings of the earth have set themselves, and the rulers have taken counsel together," Psal. ii. 2. All methods and artifices have been tried, sometimes to jeer and scoff them out of their religion, so did the apostate Julian; and sometimes by cruel tortures to affright them from their religion; the variety, and more than barbarous inhumanity whereof the church-histories gives us a sad and amazing account. (2.) Under these cruel persecutions they have seemed to be utterly lost, to the eye of sense and reason; "I am left alone, said Elijah, and they seek my life," 1 Kings xix. 10. "By whom, Lord, shall Jacob arise, (said Amos) for he is very small?" Amos vii. 2. (3.) Notwithstanding all which, the church hath out-lived all its dangers; it is the true *Phoenix* which hath out-lived the deluge. (4.) Such deliverances are proper and peculiar to the church alone; no people, besides the people of God, have such salvations upon record. The great and famous monarchies of the world have dashed one another to

pieces, like earthen potsheards\*. And all this by virtue of that promise, Jer. xxx. 11. "For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee; though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee."

*Consect. 5.* Fifthly, to conclude, If this be so, then it is a deep and dangerous policy of Satan to shut up our refuge in God against us, as much as may be, in times of trouble. Satan, like a cunning fowler, despairs of getting the birds in his net, except he can beat them out of their coverts; it is therefore his great design, to estrange and alienate the saints from their God, as much as he can, thereby to cut off their retreat to him in times of trouble; a mischief which the people of God have always vehemently deprecated, Psal. cii. 2. Jer. xvii. 17. and oh that we would beware of it, and shun this mischief by our seasonable preventing watchfulness. There are, among others, three special projects of Satan, whereby he manages this mischievous design against the people of God.

1. By drawing their consciences under guilt, on purpose to destroy the liberty, freedom, and child-like confidence of their souls in their addresses to God. This, if any thing in the world, will do it, Job xi. 14, 15. What a loss will that poor soul be at, in times of trouble, whose grumbling and condemning conscience will not suffer him to look up cheerfully and believingly in the face of its God and father, having lost its ancient freedom at the throne of grace?

2. By prevailing with them to neglect and intermit the course of their daily duties, and thereby to let down their communion with God, and, in a great measure, lose their acquaintance with him. This is a dangerous policy of the devil, and an unspeakable prejudice to the soul. Oh Christian! take heed of a lazy, slothful spirit, or a vain and earthly heart, which will easily suffer the duties of religion to be jostled aside and put by for every trivial occasion; especially beware of slight, formal, and dead-hearted performances of duty, which is little better than the intermission of them; it may, indeed, prevent the scandal, but can never give thee the comfort of religion.

3. By beclouding their interest in God, and darkening their titles and evidences, by thick clouds of doubts and fears. This is the sad case of many a poor Christian in a day of trouble; without are fightings, and within are fears. Brethren, I beseech you,

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\* ——— *Sic Medus ademit*

*Assyrio, Syroque tulit moderamina Perses.*  
Assyria's empire thus the Mede did shake,  
The Persian next the pride of Medea brake.

think often what those things are, which usually put men into such frights and straits, when imminent dangers stare them in the face; what it is that daunts and damps the hearts of Christians at such times; and as you value the peace and freedom of your souls with God, give not matter for your consciences to reproach you of mis-spent time, indulged sins, neglected duties, formality or hypocrisy in duties, sinister and by-ends in your transactions with God or man: preserve the purity and peace of your consciences, as you would preserve your two eyes; if by such wiles the devil cannot bar you from your God, or shut up your refuge in him, your outward troubles can do you no hurt.

*The second use, of direction and advice.*

*Sect. II.* The providences of God, in these days, giving us such loud warnings of approaching judgment; how are all that are wise in heart, and understanding of the times, now more especially concerned to clear their interest in these blessed attributes of God, which have here been opened, as their only refuge in the evil day. Let me therefore persuade and press you to betake yourselves to God, your refuge and strong-hold in trouble, and that more especially in these two great duties, viz.

1. Of fervent supplication.

2. Of universal resignation.

1. Betake yourselves to God by fervent prayer and supplication. Let me say of these times, as holy Mr. Perkins did of his\*; “These are no times for Christians to contend and strive one with another, but with their united cries to strive with God;” and among other requests, strongly to enforce and follow home that of David, Psal. lxxi. 2, 3. “Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape; incline thine ear unto me, and save me; be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort.” That is a true and weighty observation of Austin†, “A refuge is not to be found in trouble, except it be provided before-hand in peace.” “For this (saith the Psalmist) shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found; surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him,” Psal. xxii. 6. Had not Noah prepared and secured himself in the ark, before the floods of great waters came, he had not sat, as he did, *mediis tranquillis in undis*; sleeping quietly, when others were perishing in the waters. Gather yourselves therefore together, before the decree bring forth; seek the Lord, all ye meek of the earth; be more frequent and more

\* *Non sunt ista litigandi, sed orandi tempora.*

† *Non facile inveniuntur prasidia in adversitate, quæ non fuerint in pace quæsitæ.*

fervent in prayer, now than ever; you have all the encouragements in the world to incite you to this duty: the nature of your God is exceeding pitiful, tender, and compassionate, James v. 11. The endeared relations betwixt God and you give singular encouragement of success: shall not God hear his own elect, which cry unto him day and night? Luke xviii. 7. The sweet returns and answers of former prayers are so many motives and encouragements to follow close that profitable duty, Psal. li. 1, 2, 3. And above all, your prevalent Advocate in the heavens should encourage you to come frequently and boldly to the throne of grace, "that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need," Heb. iv. 16. In two things I shall briefly offer a few directions here, viz.

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| 1. As to the matter | } of prayer. |
| 2. As to the manner |              |

1. As to the matter of prayer, I mean such as the state and condition of the times, now more especially, suggest.

(1.) Unite your prayers, and cry mightily to the Lord, that if it be his good pleasure, this cup of wrath, which seems to be mingled and prepared, may pass from his people. Now cry to God, as they are directed to do, Joel ii. 17. "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them, wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God, O pray, that England may not be delivered into the hands of blood-thirsty Papists, that the golden candlestick may not be removed, that idolatry may not return into those places where God hath been so sweetly worshipped; that a land so peculiarly blessed with gospel-light, wherein so many thousand sons and daughters have been born to God, may not, at last, become an Aceldama, a great shambles, to quarter out the limbs of his dear saints: that the pleasant plant of reformation, planted with his own right-hand, and watered with so many tears, yea, with so much blood, may not, at last, be rooted up by the wild boar of the forest!

(2.) Pray indefinitely, that you may be kept from the sins and temptations of the times. *O watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation*; if you cannot prevail with God to turn away his anger, yet be importunate with him that you may be kept from sin; that if you lose your outward peace, you may be able to keep inward peace; that you may never sacrifice your consciences, to save your flesh; that you may never fall under the displeasure of God, to avoid the rage of men. Ah friends! we little think what a fearful havock an hour of temptation will make in such a professing nation as this is; then shall many be offended, Mat. xxiv. 10. O pray, that you may never give offence to others, by scan-

dal, or take offence yourselves at the ways of God, whatever sufferings and sharp trials shall come.

(3.) Pray earnestly for the sanctification of all your troubles to your eternal good; an unsanctified comfort never did any man good, and a sanctified trouble never did any man hurt; be more earnest therefore with God, rather to have your troubles sanctified than prevented; to get the blessing than to avoid the smart of them; if they cannot be turned away from you, pray they may be turned to your salvation.

2. Betake yourselves to God, your refuge, by faith, resigning and committing all into his hands, "Now the just shall live by faith," Heb. x. 38. The more you can trust God, the more you secure yourselves from danger; he that can live by faith shall never die by fear; and be sure to inform yourselves well in two things, viz.

1. What it is to trust God over all.

2. What grounds you have so to do.

1. Be well instructed in the nature of this duty; there are six things imported in such acts of resignation.

1. An awakened sense of our dangers and hazards. "At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee," Psal. lvi. 3. Suffering times are resigning times, 1 Pet. iv. 19. "Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." And the greater and nearer our dangers are, the more frequent and vigorous should the actings of our faith this way be: Be not far from me, for trouble is near.

2. Resignation to God necessarily implies our renunciation and disclaiming of all other refuges. "Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods, for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy," Hos. xiv. 3. He that relies upon God must cease from man; resignation to God excludes not the use of lawful means, but it doth exclude dependence upon them.

3. Resignation to God is always grounded upon an interest in God; we have no warrant nor encouragement to expect protection from him in time of trouble, except we can come to him as children to a father: It is the filial relation that gives encouragement to this fiducial resignation; and the clearer that relation and interest is, the more bold and confident those acts of faith will be; Psal. lxxxvi. 2. "Preserve my soul, for I am holy: O thou, my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee." And again, Psal. cxix. 94. "I am thine, save me." I speak not here of the first act of faith which flows not from an interest, but gives the soul an interest in God. Nor do I say, that poor, doubting, and timorous

believers, whose interest in him is dark and dubious, have no warrant to resign themselves and their concernments into his hands; for it is both their right and duty to do it: but certainly the clearer our interest is, the more facile and comfortable will those acts be.

4. The committing acts of faith imply a full acknowledgment and owning of God's power to protect us, be the danger never so imminent; Psal. xxxi. 15. "My times are in thy hand, deliver me from the hands of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me;" q. d. O Lord, I am fully satisfied, my life is not at the disposal of mine enemies; it is not in their hands, but in thine; all the traps and snares they lay for it shall not shorten one minute of my time; I know thine hand is fully able to protect me, and therefore into thine hands I resign myself and all I have.

5. Resignation involves in it an expectation of help and safety from God, when we see no way of security from men. "O Lord, saith Jehoshaphat, We have no might, nor strength, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are unto thee," 2 Chron. xx. 12. So David, Psal. lxii. 5, 6. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him: he only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be moved."

6. Resignation to God implies the leaving of ourselves, and our concernments with him, to be disposed of according to his good pleasure; the resigning soul desires the Lord to do with him what he will, and is content to take what lot Divine pleasure shall cast for him: 2 Sam. xv. 25. "And the king said unto Zadok, carry back the ark of God into the city; if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation; but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." And so much of the nature of this duty, that we may understand what to do.

2. Next, let me shew you what encouragements you that are the people of God have to this duty; and they will appear to be great and many.

1. The sovereignty and absolute dominion of God over all creatures is a singular encouragement to commit ourselves into his hands, and trust him over all, Psal. lix. 9. "Because of his strength will I wait upon thee; for God is my defence." If a man were in danger amidst a great army of rude and insolent soldiers, and were to put himself under the protection of any one, it would be his wisdom to chuse to do it under the general, who had all the soldiers of his army at his beck. Christian, thy God, into whose hands thou committest thyself is Lord-general of all the hosts and

armies in heaven and earth; how safe must thou then be in his hands?

2. The unsearchable and perfect wisdom of God is a mighty encouragement to commit ourselves into his hands; *With him is plentiful redemption*, Psal. cxxx. ult. i. e. Choice and variety of ways and methods to save his people; we are, but God never is, at a loss to find a door for our escape, 2 Pet. ii. 9. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation."

3. The infinite tenderness and compassionateness of our God, is a sweet encouragement to resign and commit ourselves and all we have into his hands; his mercy is incomparably tender towards his people, infinitely beyond whatever any creature felt stirring in its own bowels towards another that came out of its bowels, Isa. xlix. 15. This compassion of God engageth the two fore-mentioned attributes, viz. his power and wisdom for the preservation and relief of his people, as often as distresses befall them. Yea,

4. The very distresses his people are in, do, as it were, awake the Almighty power of God for their defence and rescue; our distresses are not only proper seasons, but powerful motives to his saving power, Deut. xxxii. 36. "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left." God makes it an argument to himself, and his people plead it as an argument with him, "be not far from me, for trouble is near, for there is none to help."

5. We have already committed greater and weightier concerns into his hand than the dearest interest we have in this world; we have entrusted our souls with him, 1 Pet. iv. 19. 2 Tim. i. 12. Well therefore may we commit the lesser, who have entrusted the greater with him: What are our lives, liberties, estates, and relations, compared with our souls, and the eternal safety and happiness of them!

6. The committing act of faith is the great and only expedient to procure and secure the peace and tranquillity of our minds, amidst all the distractions and troubles of the present world; the greatest part of our affliction and trouble in such days is from the working of our own thoughts; these torments from within are worse than any from without; and the resignation of all to God by faith is their best and only cure, Prov. xvi. 3. "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established." A blessed calmness of mind, a sweet tranquillity and settlement of thoughts follow immediately hereupon, Psal. xciv. 19. Oh then leave all with God, and quietly expect a comfortable issue: and for the better settlement and security of thy peace in times of distrac-

tion and trouble, I beseech thee, reader, carefully to watch and guard against these two evils.

*Caution 1.* Beware of infidelity or distrustfulness of God and his promises which secretly lurks in thy heart, and is very apt to bewry itself when great distresses and troubles befall thee. Thou wilt know it by such symptoms as these: 1. In an over-hasty and eager desire after present deliverance, Isa. li. 14. "The captive "exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die "in the pit, nor that his bread should fail." The less faith, always the more impatience; and the more ability to believe, the more patience to wait. 2. It will discover itself in our readiness to close with, and catch at sinful mediums and methods of deliverance, Isa. xxx. 15, 16. And this is the handle of temptation, and occasion of apostasy. *But he that believeth will not make haste*, Isa. xxvi. 18. No more haste than good speed. 3. It will shew itself in distracting cares and fears about events, which will rack the mind with various and endless tortures.

*Caution 2.* Beware of dejection and despondency of mind in evil times; take heed of a poor low spirit that will presently sink and give up its hope upon every appearance and face of trouble; it is a promise made unto the righteous, Psal. cxii. 7. "He shall not be "afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." The trusting of God fixes the heart, and the fixing of the heart fortifies it against fear: But I know what many poor Christians will say in this case; their timorousness and despondency arise not so much from the greatness of outward evils, as from the darkness and doubtfulness of their spiritual and inward condition, which, doubtless, is the very truth of the case; which brings me to the last use of this point.

#### *Use the third.*

Search and examine your hearts, Christians, whether those graces and qualifications, to which God hath promised protection in evil times, may not be found upon an impartial search in your hearts; amongst which, I will single out three principal ones, as the proper matters of your self-examination, *viz.*

1. Uprightness of heart and way.
2. Humiliation for your own and other's sins.
3. Righteousness in doing, and meekness in suffering the will of God.

1. Uprightness and integrity of heart and way. To this qualification belong many sweet promises of protection; such is that, Prov. ii. 7. "He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly," Psal. vii. 10. "My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in "heart." If your hearts be true to God, these promises shall be

truly performed to you? but beware you deceive not yourselves in so great a point as this is. Thy heart cannot be an upright heart, except, (1.) It be a renewed heart; the natural heart is always a false heart; it is only regeneration that gives the heart a right temper and frame; all the duties and labours in the world can never keep the heart right in its course, which is not first set right for God, by a principle of renovation. (2.) We cannot judge ourselves upright, except uprightness be the settled frame and standing bent of our hearts, Psal. cxix. 112, 117. It is not our integrity in one or two single actions, but in the general course, and complex frame of our lives and ways, that will prove our integrity to God. (3.) Then may we reckon ourselves upright, when the dread and awe of God's all-seeing eye keeps our hearts and steps from turning aside to iniquity, Gen. xxxix. 9. 2 Chron. ii. 17. That is a sincere and upright heart indeed, that finds itself at all times, and in all places, overawed from sin, by the eye of God upon him. (4.) That man's heart also is upright with God, who purely aims at, and designs the glory of God, as the scope and end of his life and actions, who lives not up to himself, neither acts ultimately and principally for himself, but lives to God, as a person dedicated and devoted to him, Rom. xiv. 7. (5.) That heart also is upright with God, which governs itself, and its ways, by the directions and rules of the word, Psal. cxix. 11, 24, 133. Happy is that soul that finds such evidences of integrity in itself, when it is brought to the trial of it at the bar of the word, Heb. iv. 12. at the bar of conscience, 2 Cor. i. 12. at the bar of affliction, Psal. cxix. 87. and at the bar of strong temptations, Gen. xxxix. 9. The eyes of the Lord shall run to and fro through the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of such whose hearts are thus perfect towards him.

2. Another gracious qualification, clearing the soul's title to God's special protection in the worst and most dangerous times, is true humiliation for our own and other men's sins: "Go, set a mark, saith God, upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof," Ezek. ix. 4. These that thus mourn, when others laugh, shall laugh when others mourn. Lot was the only mourner in Sodom, and he was the only person exempted from destruction in the ruin and overthrow thereof. 2 Pet. ii. 7. That is a sweet and blessed privilege mentioned in Isa. lxvi. 10. "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her; rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her; that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations, that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory." Be contented, Christians, to bear your part in Sion's groans and sorrows; you

may live to bear your part in her triumphs and songs of deliverance : It is an argument of the true publicness and tenderness of your spirits for the present, and as sweet a sign as can appear upon your souls, that you are reserved for better days.

3. Righteousness in doing, and meekness in suffering the will of God, is another mark or note, distinguishing and describing those persons whom God will preserve in the evil day. You have both these together in Zeph. ii. 3. "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgments; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers, 1 Pet. iii. 12. If righteousness brings you into danger, the righteous God will take care of you in that danger, and bring you out of it. Oh! it is a singular comfort, when a man can say, It was not my sin, but my duty, that brought me into trouble; this affliction met me in the path and way of my duty; it is for thy sake, O Lord, that I am in trouble; as the martyr that held up the bible at the stake, saying, *This hath brought me hither.*

To conclude: Manage all your sufferings for Christ, with christian meekness: As righteousness must bring you into them, so meekness must carry you through them; if you avenge yourselves, you take the cause out of God's hand into your own; but the meek Christian leaves it to the Lord, and shall never have cause to repent of his so doing. If thou have an upright heart with God, a tender and mournful heart for sin, and thou suffer with meekness for righteousness sake, thou art one of those souls to whom that sweet voice is directed in my text,—

*Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.*



Π Λ Α Ν Η Λ Ο Γ Ι Α .

A succinct and seasonable Discourse of the Occasions, Causes, Nature, Rise, Growth, and Remedies of MENTAL ERRORS.

**T**HE reverend author of the ensuing treatises, having in them explained and defended several gospel-truths, unto which divers things in the writings of the reverend Dr. Crisp, deceased, do

seem very opposite ; whereas some of us, who subscribed a paper, the design whereof was only to testify, that we believed certain writings of the doctor's *never before published*, were faithfully transcribed by his son, the publisher of them, which paper is now, by the bookseller, prefixed to the whole volume ; containing a large preface which we never saw till after the publication, together with all the doctor's former works that were *published many years before* ; and are hereupon by some weak people misunderstood, as if, by that certificate, we intended an approbation of all that is contained in that volume. We declare we had no such intention : As the paper we subscribed hath no word in it that gives any such intimation : But we are well pleased these later writings are published (in reference whereto we only certified our belief, which we fixedly retain of the publisher's fidelity) as they contain many passages in them that may, in some measure, remedy the hard and hurtful construction that many expressions were more liable to *in the former* ; whereof the doctor seemed apprehensive himself, when, in the beginning of his discourse on Tit. ii. 11, 12. he speaks thus : " [Beloved, I am jealous of you with an holy jealousy," 1 Cor. xi. 2, 3. " Lest after the first wooing of you in Christ's name, that ye might be espoused unto him ; I say, I am jealous, and fear, lest as the serpent beguiled Eve, through his subtilty, namely, bewitching her to a presumptuous, licentious adventuring on God's gentleness, while she tasted the forbidden fruit ; so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in him, namely, by presuming too much upon him, and adventuring to continue in sin, in hope that grace may abound. For the preventing of which dangerous miscarriage, which hath been the dangerous lot of many thousands, I thought good to step in with this text, which I am persuaded will prove a seasonable warning to some at least." ] And this pious caution of the author herein, lest he should be misunderstood, gives us some grounds to believe that he intended them not in the more exceptionable sense. It is best if an unwary reader receives hurt, that he receives his healing also from the same hand. And whereas a paper was printed upon this occasion soon after the publication of the doctor's works, we willingly adopt so much of it as is requisite to our present purpose ; which is to this effect :

' Some who subscribed this certificate, saw only the paper itself, to which subscription was desired ; never having perused the works of Dr. Crisp. The certificate only concerned the son, not the father ; and certified only concerning the son, That they who should subscribe it, believed him in this to deal truly ; that he was not a Falsarius ; that he would not say that was his fa-

‘ther’s, which was not so ; a paper so sober, so modest, was (*taken by itself*) scarce refusable by a friend.

‘The son’s preface, some that subscribed this certificate saw not, nor had any notice, or the least imagination of its contents ; otherwise, the part of a friend had certainly been done as well in advising against much of the preface, as in subscribing the certificate.

‘For the works of this reverend person themselves, as it no way concerned the subscribing this certificate, to know what they were ; so from the opinion that went of the author among many good men, that he was a learned, pious, good man, it was supposed they were likely to have in them, many good and useful things ; to which it was only needful to think them *his*, not to think them *perfect*.

‘We may, in some respect, judge of books as of men ; i. e. reckon, that though divers very valuable men have had remarkable failings, yet that, upon the whole, it is better they have lived, and been known in the world, than that they should not have lived, or have lived obscure.

‘The truth is (which we have often considered) that though the great doctrines of the christian religion do make a most coherent, comely scheme, which every one should labour to comprehend and digest in his mind ; yet when the gospel first becomes effectual for the changing men’s hearts, it is by God’s blessing this or that passage which drops : The most discern not the series and connection of truths at first, and too little afterwards.

‘Upon that view of Dr. Crisp’s writings we have had since the publication, we find there are many things said in them, with that good savour, quickness, and spirit, as to be very apt to make good impressions upon men’s hearts ; and do judge, that being greatly affected with the grace of God to sinners himself, his sermons did thereupon run much in that strain. All our minds are little and incomprehensive ; we cannot receive the weight and impression of all necessary things at once, but with some inequality ; so that when the seal goes deeper in some part, it is shallower in some others.

‘If some parts of Dr. Crisp’s works be more liable to exception, the danger of hurt thereby seems, in some measure, obviated in some other : As when he says, Pag. 46. Vol. I. *Sanctification of life, is an inseparable companion with the justification of a person by the free grace of Christ.* And Vol. IV. p. 93. *That in respect of the rules of righteousness, or the matter of obedience, we are under the law still ; or else we are lawless, to live every man as seems good in his own eyes, which I know no true Christian does so much as think.*

‘ In like manner, whereas, in Vol. II. Serm. 15. *and perhaps elsewhere, the doctor seems to be against evidencing our justification and union to Christ, by our sanctification and new obedience; we have the truth of God in this matter plainly delivered by him, Vol. IV. p. 36. when he teacheth, that our obedience is a comfortable evidence of our being in Christ; and on that, as well as on many accounts, necessary.*

‘ The difference between him, and other good men, seems to lie not so much *in the things* which the one or the other of them believe, as about *their order and reference to one another*; where, it is true, there may be very *material difference*: But we reckon, that notwithstanding what is more controvertible in these writings, there are much more *material things*, wherein they cannot but agree, and would have come much nearer each other, even in these things, if they did take some words or terms which come into use on the one or the other hand, *in the same sense*; but when one uses a word in *one sense*, another uses the same word (or understands it, being used) in quite *another sense*, here seems a vast disagreement, which proves, at length, to be verbal only, and really none at all: As let by *condition*, be meant a *deserving cause*, (in which case it is well known *civilians* are wont to take it) and the one side would never use it, concerning any good act that can be done by us, or good habit that is wrought in us, in order to our present acceptance with God, or final salvation. Let be meant by it somewhat, that, by the constitution of the gospel-covenant, and in the nature of the thing, is *requisite* to our present and eternal well-being, without the least notion of the desert, but utmost abhorrence of any such notion in this case; and the other side would as little refuse it. But what need is there for contending at all about a *law-term*, about the proper or present use whereof, there is so little agreement between *them it seems best to serve*, and *them it offends*. Let it go, and they will well enough understand one another. Again, let *justification* be taken for that which is complete, entire, and full, as it results at last from all its causes and concurrents; and, on the one hand, it would never be denied, that Christ’s righteousness justifies us at the bar of God in the day of judgment, *as the only deserving cause*; or affirmed, that our faith, repentance, sincerity, do justify us there, *as any cause at all*. Let justification be meant only of being justified in *this or that particular respect*; as for instance, against *this particular accusation*, of never having been a believer: And the honest mistaken *prefacer* would never have said, O horrid! upon its being said, Christ’s righteousness doth not justify us in this case: For he very well knows, Christ’s righteousness will justify no man that *never was a believer*. But that which must immediately justify him *against this particular accusation*, must

‘ be proving, that he did sincerely believe; which shews his interest  
 ‘ in Christ’s righteousness, which then is the only deserving cause  
 ‘ of his full and entire justification.

‘ There is an expression in Vol. I. p. 46. *That salvation is not  
 ‘ the end of any good work we do*, which is like that of another; *we  
 ‘ are to act from life, not for life*. Neither of which are to be  
 ‘ rigidly taken, as it is likely they were never meant in the strict  
 ‘ sense. For the former, this reverend author gives us himself the  
 ‘ handle for a gentle interpretation, in what he presently subjoins;  
 ‘ where he makes the *end of our good works to be the manifestation  
 ‘ of our obedience and subjection; the setting forth the praise of the  
 ‘ glory of the grace of God*; which seem to imply, that he meant  
 ‘ the foregoing negation in a comparative, not in an absolute sense;  
 ‘ understanding the glory of God to be *more principal*; and so,  
 ‘ that by *end*, he meant the very *ultimate end*: So for the other, it  
 ‘ is likely it was meant, that we should not act or work *for life only*,  
 ‘ without aiming and endeavouring that we might come to work  
 ‘ *from life also*.

‘ For it is not with any tolerable charity supposable, that one  
 ‘ would *deliberately say the one or the other* of these in the rigid  
 ‘ sense of the words; or that he would not, upon consideration,  
 ‘ presently ussay it, being calmly reasoned with. For it were, in  
 ‘ effect to *abandon human nature*, and to sin against a very funda-  
 ‘ mental law of our creation, not to intend our own felicity: it were  
 ‘ to make our first and most deeply fundamental duty, in one great  
 ‘ essential branch of it, our sin, viz. *To take the Lord for our God*:  
 ‘ For *to take him for our God* most *essentially* includes our taking  
 ‘ him for our *supreme good*; which we all know is included in the  
 ‘ notion of the *last end*; it were to make it unlawful to strive against  
 ‘ all sin, and particularly against sinful aversion from God; wherein  
 ‘ lies the very death of the soul, or the sum of its misery; or to  
 ‘ strive after perfect conformity to God in holiness, and the full  
 ‘ fruition of him; wherein its final blessedness doth principally  
 ‘ consist.

‘ It were to teach us to violate the great precepts of the gospel;  
 ‘ *Repent that your sins may be blotted out.—Strive to enter in at the  
 ‘ strait gate.—Work out your salvation with fear and trembling*:  
 ‘ To obliterate the patterns and precedents set before us in the  
 ‘ gospel. *We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be jus-  
 ‘ tified.—I bear down my body, lest I should be a cast-away.—That  
 ‘ thou mayest save thyself, and them that hear thee*.

‘ It were to suppose us bound to do more for the salvation of  
 ‘ others, than our own salvation. We are required to save others  
 ‘ with fear, plucking them out of the fire. Nay, we were not  
 ‘ (by this rule strictly understood) so much as to pray for our own

‘ salvation ; ( which is a doing of somewhat ) when no doubt, we are  
 ‘ to pray for the success of the gospel, to this purpose, on behalf of  
 ‘ other men.

‘ It were to make all the threatenings of eternal death, and pro-  
 ‘ mises of eternal life we find in the gospel of our blessed Lord,  
 ‘ useless ; as motives to shun the one, and obtain the other : for  
 ‘ they can be motives no way, but as the escaping of the former,  
 ‘ and the attainment of the other, have, with us, the place and con-  
 ‘ sideration of an end.

‘ It makes what is mentioned in the scripture, as the character  
 ‘ and commendation of the most eminent saints, a fault ; as of  
 ‘ Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, &c. That *they sought the better and*  
 ‘ *heavenly country ; and declared plainly*, that they did so ; which  
 ‘ necessarily implies their making it their end.

‘ But let none be so harsh as to think of any good man, that he  
 ‘ intended any thing of all this ; if every passage that falls from us  
 ‘ be stretched and tortured with the utmost severity, we shall find  
 ‘ little to do besides accusing others, and defending ourselves, as  
 ‘ long as we live.’

A spirit of meekness and love will do more to our common peace,  
 than all the disputations in the world.

Upon the whole, we are so well assured of the peaceful, healing  
 temper of the present author of these treatises, that we are per-  
 suaded he designed such a course of managing the controversies  
 wherein he hath concerned himself, as to prevent, on the one hand  
 injury to the memory of the dead ; and on the other, any hurt or  
 danger to the living.

Nor do we say thus much of him, as if he sought, or did need  
 any letters of recommendation from us ; but as counting this testi-  
 mony to truth, and this expression of respect to him, a debt ; to  
 the spontaneous payment whereof, nothing more was requisite, be-  
 sides such a fair occasion as the providence of God hath now laid  
 before us, inviting us hereunto.

*John Howe,*  
*Vin. Alsop,*  
*Nath. Mather,*  
*Increase Mather,*

*John Turner,*  
*Rich. Bures,*  
*Tho. Powel.*

## AN EPISTLE TO THE READER.

CANDID READER,

**CENSURE** not this treatise of errors, as an error in my prudentials, in sending it forth at such an improper time as this. I should never spontaneously have awakened sleeping controversies, after God's severe castigation of his people for them, and in the most proper and hopeful season for their redintegration.

And beside what I have formerly said, I think fit here to add, That if the attack had been general, and not so immediately and particularly upon that post or quarter I was set to defend, I should, with Elihu, have modestly waited till some abler and more skilful hand had undertaken the defence of this cause.

If ever I felt a temptation to envy the happiness of my brethren, it hath been whilst I saw them quietly feeding their flocks, and myself forced to spend some part of my precious and most useful time (devoted to the same service) in combating with unquiet and erring brethren; but I see I must not be my own chuser. Notwithstanding I hope, and am in some measure persuaded, that public benefit will redound to the church from this irksome labour of mine. And that this strife will spread no farther, but the malady be cured by an antidote growing in the very place where it began: and that the Christian camp will not take a general alarm from such a single duel.

The book now in thy hands consisteth of four parts, viz. 1. A general discourse of *the causes and cures of errors*, very necessary at all times (especially at this time) for the reduction and establishment of seduced and staggering Christians; and nothing of that nature having occurred to my observation among the manifold polemical tracts that are extant, I thought it might be of some use to the churches of Christ, in such a virtiginous age as we live in, if the blessing of the Lord go forth with it for benefit and establishment.

2. Next, thou hast here the controversies moved by my antagonist; *first*, about the *Mosaic law*, complexly taken, which he boldly pronounces to be an Adam's covenant of works: And *secondly*, about God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. which he also makes the same with that which God made with Adam in paradise; and affirms circumcision (expressly called a seal of the righteousness of faith) to be the seal of the said covenant of works first made with Adam.

3. Finding my adversary, in the pursuit of his design, running into many Antinomian delirations, to the reproach and damage

of the cause he contends for, I thought it necessary to take the principal errors of Antinomianism into examination, especially at such a time as this, when they seem to spring afresh, to the hazard of God's truth, and the church's peace; wherein I have dealt with becoming modesty and plainness, if happily I might be any way instrumental in my plain and home-way of argumentation, to detect the falsity and dangerous nature of those notions which some good men have vented, and preserve the sounder part of the church from so dangerous a contagion.

4. In the next place, I think it necessary to advertise the reader, That whereas, in my first appendix under that head of the conditionality of the new covenant, I have asserted faith to be the condition of it, and do acknowledge, that the word *condition* is variously used among Jurists; yet I do not use it in any sense, which implies or insinuates, that there is any such condition in the new covenant, as that in Adam's covenant was, consisting in perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience; or any thing in its own nature, meritorious of the benefits promised, or capable to be performed by us in our own strength; but plainly, that it be an act of ours (though done in God's strength) which must be necessarily done before we can be actually justified or saved; and so there is found in it the true suspending nature of a condition; which is the thing I contend for, when I affirm, faith is the condition of the new covenant\*.

How many senses soever may be given of this word *condition*, this is the determinate sense in which I use it throughout this controversy. And whosoever denies the suspending nature of faith, with respect to actual justification, pleads (according to my understanding) for the actual justification of infidels. And thus I find a condition defined by *Navar. Johan. Baptist. Petrus de Perus, &c. Conditio est suspensio alicujus dispositionis tantisper dum aliquid futurum fiat.* Condition is the suspension of a grant until something future be done. And again, *Conditio est quidam futurus eventus, in quem dispositio suspenditur.* A condition is some future event in which the fulfilling of a grant is suspended.

Once more, my reader possibly may be stumbled at my calling faith sometimes the instrument, and sometimes the condition of our justification, when there is so go great a controversy depending among learned men, with respect to the use of both those terms.

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\* It seems to be more proper, as well as more safe, to use the term *instrument*. Faith is unquestionably the appropriate *mean* by which the sinner becomes interested in the covenant of grace; but when the *date*, the parties, and the stipulations in that covenant are duly considered, it appears absurd in the extreme to assign to that heavenly grace the honour of being the condition of that eternal transaction. The righteousness of its Divine Surety alone deserves and challenges that dignity as its own.  
*Editor.*

I therefore desire the reader to take notice, that I dive not into that controversy here, much less presume to determine it; but finding both these notions equally opposed by our Antinomians, who reject our actual justification by faith either way, and allow to faith no other use in our actual justification, but only to manifest to us what was done from eternity; I do therefore use both those terms, viz. the conditionality and instrumentality of faith, with respect unto our justification, and shew in what sense those terms are useful in this controversy, and are accommodate enough to the design and purpose for which I use them; how repugnant soever they are in that particular, wherein the learned contend about the use and application of them.

To be plain, when I say faith justifieth us as an *organ* or *instrument*; my only meaning is, that it receives, or apprehends the righteousness of Christ, by which we are justified; and so speaking to the *quomodo*, or manner of our justification, I say, with the general suffrage of Divines, we are justified instrumentally by faith.

But in our controversy with the Antinomians where another different question is moved about the *quando*, or time of our actual justification; there I affirm that we are actually justified at the time of our believing, and not before; and this being the act upon which our justification is suspended, I call *faith* the *condition* of our justification.

This I desire may be observed, lest, in my use of both these terms, my reader should think either that I am not aware of the controversy depending about those terms; or, that I do herein manifest the vacillancy of my judgment, as if I leaned sometimes to one side and sometime to another. I speak not here *ad idem*, as they do in that contest; but when I call it a *condition* of justification, my meaning is, that no man is justified until he believe. And when I call it an *instrument*, my meaning is, that it is the righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith, which doth justify us when we believe. And so I find the generality of our divines calling *faith* sometimes a *condition*, and sometimes an *instrument* of our justification, as here I do.

And if there be any expression my reader shall meet with, which is less accurate, and may be capable of another sense, I crave that candour from him, that he interpret it according to this my declared intention.

5. *Lastly*, I have added to the former a short, plain, practical sermon, to promote the peace and unity of the churches of Christ, and to prevent their relapse into past follies.

In all the parts of this discourse, I have sincerely aimed at the purity and peace of the church of God; and he greatly mistakes

that takes me for a man of contention. It is true, I am here contending with my brethren, but pure necessity brought me in, and an displeasing irksomeness hath attended me through it, and an hearty desire and serious motion for peace amongst all the professed members of Christ, shall close and finish it. Let all litigations of this nature (at least in this critical juncture) be suspended by common consent, since they waste our time, hinder our communion, imbitter our spirits, impoverish practical godliness, grieve the Spirit of God and good men, make sport for our common enemies, who warm their own fingers at the fire of our contentions; and place more trust in our dividing lusts than they do in their own feeble arguments, or castrated penal laws to effect our ruin.

It is my grief (the Lord knows) to see the delightful communion the saints once enjoyed, whilst they walked together under the same ordinances of God, now dissolved in such a sad and scandalous degree, by the impressions of erroneous opinions, made both upon their heads and hearts. I do therefore heartily join with Budæus in his pious wish \*, “That God would give his people as much constancy in retaining the truths they once received, as they had joy and comfort at their first reception of them.” I must, on this occasion, declare my just jealousy that the non-improvement of our baptismal covenant unto the great and solemn ends thereof, in our mortification, vivification, and regular communion with the church of Christ, into which society we are matriculated by it, is, at this day, punished upon professors in those fiery heats and fierce oppositions, unto which God seemeth to have penally delivered us at this day.

For my own part, it is my fixed resolution to provoke no good man if I can help it. But if their own intemperate zeal shall provoke them in pursuit of their errors, to destroy the very nature of God’s covenant of grace with Abraham and his seed, and I have a plain call (as here I had) at once to defend God’s truths, and my people’s souls against them, I will earnestly contend in the cause of truth, whilst I can move my tongue, or make use of the pen of the scribe.

Reader, I shall appeal to thee, if thou be wise and impartial, Whether any man that understands the covenant of God renewed with Abraham, (which is the grand charter, by which we and our children hold and enjoy the most invaluable privileges) can endure to see it dissolved and utterly destroyed, by making it an abolished Adam’s covenant of works; and stand by as an unconcerned

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\* *Utinam tam consertis manibus compertam comprehensamque veritatem semel retinere possemus quam protinus agnitam festivis oculis hilares exosculabamur.*

ed spectator, when challenged and provoked to speak in defence thereof.

Is there any thing found in God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. to make it an abolished covenant of works, which doth not as injuriously bear upon, and strike at the very life of the covenant of grace, in the last and best edition of it, under which the whole church of God now stands? What is that thing (I would fain know) in God's covenant with Abraham? Is it the promissory part of it, "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee?" Gen. xvii. 7. God forbid: for the essential and sweetest part of the new covenant is contained in that promise, Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. 10. Yet thou wilt find my Antagonist here forced to assert, God may become a people's God in a special manner, by virtue of the abolished covenant of works; and such he makes this covenant to be.

Or does the restipulation Abraham and his were here required to make unto God, even *to walk before him, and be perfect*; doth this make it an Adam's covenant of works? Surely, no. For as God there requires perfection of Abraham, so Christ requires the same perfection of all new-covenant federates now, Matth. v. 48. "Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" which is altogether as much as ever God required of Abraham and his, in Gen. xvii. 1. Take perfection in what sense you will, either for a *positive* perfection, consisting in truth and sincerity; or a *comparative* perfection, consisting in the growth and more eminent degrees of grace; or a *superlative* perfection, which all new-covenant federates strive after here, Phil. iii. 12, 13. and shall certainly attain in heaven, Heb. xii. 23. In this also the covenant with Abraham, and with us, are truly and substantially one and the same.

Or doth my mistaken friend imagine, that God required this perfection of Abraham and his, as in the first covenant he required it from Adam and all his? *viz.* to be performed and maintained in his own strength, under penalty of the curse. But now, though Christ command perfection, yet what duty lies in any command, answerable strength for it lies in the promise? Very well, and was it not so then? Compare the command, Deut. x. 16. "Circumcise therefore the fore-skins of your hearts," with the answerable gracious promise to enable them so to do, Deut. xxx. 6. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God."

Or lastly, Did circumcision, the sign and seal added to Abraham's covenant, make it an Adam's covenant of works? That is equally impossible with the former: for no man but such a daring man as I am concerned with, will dare to say, that *a seal of the*

*righteousness of faith* (as circumcision was, Rom. iv. 11.) can make the covenant to which it is affixed (and which I have shewn in all the other substantial parts, the very same with that we are now under) to become an Adam's covenant of works.

These things I have here super-added, to leave as little as possible behind me to be an occasion of further trouble and contention. Let all strife therefore, in so plain a case, be ended: contentious spirits are not the most excellent spirits among Christians. Fire (and so contention) is more apt to catch in low-built thatcht cottages, than in high-built castles and princely palaces: the higher we go, still the more peace. The highest region is most sedate and calm. Stars have the strongest influence when in conjunction. Angels (though legions) have no wars among them; and as willingly go down as up the ladder without justling each other. And the most high God is the God of peace; let us also be the children of peace. And I do assure the persons with whom I contend, that whilst they hold the Head, and are tender of the church's peace, I can live in charity with them here, and hope to live in glory with them hereafter.

*I remain, reader, thine and*

*the truth's friend,*

JOHN FLAVEL.

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## THE INTRODUCTION.

**F**INDING, by sad experience, what I before justly feared, that *errors* would be apt to spring up with liberty, (though the restraint of just liberty being a practical error in rulers, can never be the cure of *mental errors* in the subjects;) I judged it necessary, at this season, to give a succinct account of the rise, causes, and remedies of several mistakes and errors, under which, even the reformed churches among us, as well as others, do groan at this day.

I will not stay my reader long upon the etymology and derivations of the word. We all know that etymologies are no definitions: yet because they cast some light upon the nature of the thing we enquire after, it will not be lost labour to observe, that this word **ERROR** derives itself from three roots in the Hebrew language.

(1.) The first \* “ word primitively signifies to deviate or decline

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\* כטת *Chatah*, a *Scopo aberravit*.

“from the true scope or path,” as unskilful marksmen, or ignorant and inadvertent travellers use to do. The least variation or turning aside from the true rule and line, though it be but an hair’s breadth, presently becomes an error. We read, Judg. xx. 16. of seven hundred Benjamites, who could every one sling *stones* at an hair’s breadth, and not miss, וְלֹא יָדָטָ Heb. *and not err*. This, by a *metaphor*, is applied to the mind or judgment of man; and denotes the warpings thereof from the straight, perfect, divine law or rule, and is usually translated by the word *sin*.

(2.) It is derived from another word also, which signifies to wander in variable and uncertain motions: You find it \* in the title of the 7th Psalm, Shiggaion of David, a wandering song, or a song of variable notes and tunes, higher and lower, sharper and flatter. In both the former derivations it seems to note simple error, through mere weakness and ignorance. But then,

(3.) In its derivation from a third root †, it signifies not only to err, but to cause others to err also; and so signifies a seducer, or one that is active in leading others into a wrong way; and is applied in that sense to the prophets in Israel, who seduced the people, Ezek. xiii. 10. The Greek verb *πλαναω*, takes in both these senses, both to go astray, and, when put transitively, to lead or cause others to go astray with us. Hence is the word *πλανηται*, planets, or wandering stars; the title given by the apostle Jude, ver. 13. to the false teachers and seducers of his time.

An error then is any departure or deviation in our opinions or judgments from the perfect rule of the Divine law; and to this, all men, by nature, are not only liable, but inclinable. Indeed man, by nature, can do nothing else but err; Psal. lvii. 3. *He goeth astray as soon as born*; makes not one true step till renewed by grace, and many false ones after his renovation. The life of the holiest man is a book with many errata’s; but the whole edition of a wicked man’s life, is but one continued error; he that thinks he cannot err, manifestly errs in so thinking. The Pope’s supposed and pretended infallibility hath made him the great deceiver of the world. A good man may err, but is willing to know his error; and will not obstinately maintain it, when he once plainly discerns it.

Error and heresy, among other things differ in this: heresy is accompanied with pertinacy, and therefore the heretic is *αυτοκατακριτος*, self-condemned; his own conscience condemns him, whilst men labour in vain to convince him. He doth not formally, and in terms, condemn himself; but he doth so equivalently, whilst he continues to own and maintain doctrines and opinions which he

\* שגה *Shagah*.

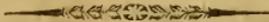
† טעה *Tagnah* in Hiph.

finds himself unable to defend against the evidence of truth. Human frailty may lead a man into the first, but devilish pride fixes him in the last.

The word of God, which is our rule, must therefore be the only test and touchstone to try and discover errors; for *regula est index sui & obliqui*. It is not enough to convince a man of error, that his judgment differs from other men's; you must bring it to the word, and try how it agrees or disagrees therewith; else he that charges another with error, may be found in as great or greater an error himself. None are more disposed easily to receive, and tenaciously to defend errors, than those who are the *Antesignani*, heads or leaders of erroneous sects; especially after they have fought in the defence of bad causes, and deeply engaged their reputation.

The following discourse justly entitles itself, A BLOW AT THE ROOT. And though you will here find the roots of many errors laid bare and open, which, comparatively, are of far different degrees of danger and malignity; which I here mention together, many of them springing from the same root: Yet I am far from censuring them alike; nor would I have any that are concerned in lesser errors to be exasperated, because their lesser mistakes are mentioned with greater and more pernicious ones; this candour I not only intreat, but justly challenge from my reader.

And because there are many general and very useful observations about errors, which will not so conveniently come under the laws of that method which governs the main part of this discourse, viz. CAUSES and CURES of error: I have therefore sorted them by themselves, and premised them to the following part in twenty observations next ensuing.



## Twenty general OBSERVATIONS about the Rise and Increase of the ERRORS of the Times.

### *First Observation.*

**T**RUTH is the proper object, the natural and pleasant food of the understanding, Job xii. 11. *Doth not the ear (that is, the understanding by the ear) try words, as the mouth tasteth meat?* Knowledge is the assimilation of the understanding to the truths received by it. Nothing is more natural to man, than a desire to know: knowledge never cloyes the mind, as food doth the natural appetite; but as the one increaseth, the other is proportionably sharpened and provoked. The minds of all (that are not wholly

immersed in sensuality) spend their strength in the laborious search and pursuit of truth: sometimes climbing up from the effects to the causes, and then descending again from the causes to the effects; and all to discover truth. Fervent prayer, sedulous study, fixed meditations, are the labours of inquisitive souls after truth. All the objections and counter-arguments the mind meets in its way, are but the pauses and hesitations of a bivious soul, not able to determine whether truth lies upon this side, or upon that.

Answerable to the sharpness of the mind's appetite, is the fine edge of pleasure and delight it feels in the discovery and acquisition of truth. When it hath racked and tortured itself upon knotty problems, and at last discovered the truth it sought for, with what joy doth the soul dilate itself, and run (as it were with open arms) to clasp and welcome it?

The understanding of man, at first, was perspicacious and clear; all truths lay obvious in their comely order and ravishing beauty before it: *God made man upright*, Eccl. vii. 29. This rectitude of his mind consisted in light and knowledge, as appears by the prescribed method of his recovery, Col. iii. 10. *Renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.* Truth in the mind, or the mind's union with truth, being part of the Divine image in man, discovers to us the sin and mischief of error, which is a defacing (so far as it prevails) of the image of God.

No sooner was man created but by the exercise of knowledge he soon discovered God's image in him; and by his ambition after more, lost what he had. So that now there is an haziness or cloud spread over truth by ignorance and error, the sad effects of the fall.

*Observ. 2.* Of knowledge there are divers sorts and kinds: some is *human* and some *divine*; some *speculative*, and some *practical*; some *ingrafted* as the notions of *morality*, and some *acquired* by painful search and study: but of all knowledge, none like that Divine and supernatural knowledge of saving truths revealed by Christ in the scriptures. Hence ariseth the different degrees both of the sinfulness and danger of errors, those errors being always the worst, which are committed against the most important truths revealed in the gospel.

These truths lie enfolded either in the plain words, or in the evident and necessary consequences from the words of the Holy Scripture; scripture-consequences are of great use for the refutation of errors: it was by a scripture-consequence that Christ successfully proved the resurrection against the Sadducees, Mat. xxii. The Arians, and other heretics, rejected consequential proofs, and required the express words of Scripture only; hoping that way to defend and

secure their errors against the arguments and assaults of the orthodox.

Some think that reason and natural light is abundantly sufficient for the direction of life; but certainly nothing is more necessary to us for that end than the written word; for though the remains of natural light have their place and use in directing us about natural and earthly things, yet they are utterly insufficient to guide us in spiritual and heavenly things, 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man receiveth not the things of God," &c. Eph. v. 8. "Once were ye darkness, *ἦν δὲ φῶς ἐν καρδίᾳ*, now are ye light in the Lord;" i. e. by a beam of heavenly light shining from the Spirit of Christ through the written word, into your minds or understandings.

It is the written word which shines upon the path of our duty, Psal. cxix. 105. The scriptures of the Old and New Testament do jointly make the solid foundation of a Christian's faith. Hence, Eph. ii. 20. we are said to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. We are bound therefore to honour Old-Testament scriptures as well as New, they being part of the Divine canon; and must not scruple to admit them as sufficient and authentic proofs for the confirmation of truths, and refutation of errors. Christ referred the people to them, John v. 39. and Paul preached and disputed from them, Acts xxvi. 22.

*Observ. 3. Unto the attainment of Divine knowledge out of the scriptures, some things are naturally, yet less principally requisite in the subject; and something absolutely and principally necessary.*

The natural qualifications desirable in the subject are clearness of apprehension, solidity of judgment, and fidelity of retention. These are desirable requisites to make the understanding susceptible of knowledge; but the irradiation of the mind, by the Spirit of God, is principally necessary, John xvi. 13. "He shall guide you into all truth:" The clearest and most comfortable light he giveth to men is in the way of sanctification, called the teachings of the anointing, 1 John ii. 27.

When this spiritual sanctifying light shines upon a mind, naturally enriched and qualified with the three fore-mentioned requisites, that mind excels others in the riches of knowledge. And yet the teachings of the Spirit, in the way of sanctification, do very much supply and recompense the defects and weaknesses of the fore-mentioned qualifications. Whence two things are highly remarkable:

1. That men of great abilities of nature, clear apprehensions in natural things, strong judgments and tenacious memories, do not only frequently fall into gross errors and damnable *heresies* them-

selves, but become *Heresiarchs*, or heads of erroneous factions, drawing multitudes into the same sin and misery with themselves; as Arius, Socinus, Pelagius, Bellarmine, and multitudes of others have done.

And secondly, It is no less remarkable, that men of weaker parts, but babes in comparison, through the sanctification and direction of the Spirit, for which they have humbly waited at his feet in prayer, have not only been directed and guided by him into the truth, but so confirmed and fixed therein, that they have been kept sound in their judgments in times of abounding errors; and firm in their adherence to it in days of fiercest persecution. How men of excellent natural parts have been blinded, and men of weak natural parts illuminated; see 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. Mat. xi. 25.

Observ. 4. *Among the manifold impediments to the obtaining of true knowledge, and settling the mind in the truth and faith of the gospel, these three are of special remark and consideration; viz. ignorance, curiosity, and error.*

*Ignorance* slights it, or despairs of attaining it. Truth falls into contempt among the ignorant, from sluggishness and apprehension of the difficulties that lie in the way to it, Prov. xxiv. 7. *Wisdom is too high for a fool.* Curiosity runs beside or beyond it. This pride and wantonness of the mind puffs it up with a vain conceit, that it is not only able to penetrate the deepest mysteries revealed in the scriptures, but even unrevealed secrets also; Col. ii. 18. "Intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." But error militates directly against it, contradicts and opposeth truth, especially when an error is maintained by pride against inward convictions, or means of better information. It is bad to maintain an error for want of light; but abundantly worse to maintain it against light. This is such an affront to the Spirit of God as he usually punishes with penal ignorance, and gives them up to a spirit of error.

Observ. 5. *Error is binding upon the conscience as well as truth; and altogether as much, and sometimes more influential upon the affections and passions as truth is:*

For it presents not itself to the soul in its own name and nature as error; but in the name and dress of truth, and under that notion binds the conscience, and vigorously influences the passions and affections; and then being more indulgent to lust than truth is, it is, for that, so much the more embraced and hugged by the

deceived soul, Acts xxii. 4, 5. The heat that error puts the soul into differs from religious zeal, as a feverish doth from a natural heat; which is not indeed so benign and agreeable, but much more fervent and scorching. A mind under the power of error is restless and impatient to propagate its errors to others, and these heats prey upon, and eat up the vital spirits and powers of religion.

Observ. 6. *It is exceeding difficult to get out error, when once it is imbibed, and hath rooted itself by an open profession.*

Errors, like some sorts of weeds, having once seeded in a field or garden, it is scarce possible to subdue and destroy them; especially if they be hereditary errors, or have grown up with us from our youth; *a teneris assuescere multum est*, saith Seneca; it is a great advantage to truth or error to have an early and long possession of the mind. The Pharisees held many erroneous opinions about the law, as appears by their corruptive commentaries upon it, refuted by Christ, Mat. 5. But did he root them out of their heads and hearts thereby? No, no; they sooner rid him out of the world. The Sadducees held a most dangerous error about the resurrection; Christ disputed with them to the admiration of others, and proved it clearly against them; and yet we find the error remaining long after Christ's death, 2 Tim. ii. 18. The apostles themselves had their minds tinctured with this error, that Christ should be outwardly great and magnificent in the world, and raise his followers to great honours and preferments amongst men. Christ plainly told them it was their mistake and error; "for the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; yet this did not rid their minds of the error; it stuck fast in them, even till his ascension to heaven. O how hard is it to clear the heart of a good man once leavened with error! and much more hard to separate it from a wicked man\*.

Some have chosen rather to die than to part with their darling errors and soul-damning heresies. I have read (saith Mr. Bridges) of a great Atheist who was burnt at Paris for blaspheming Christ, held fast his atheistical opinions till he came to the very stake; boasted to the priests and friars that followed him, how much more confidently he went to sacrifice his life in the strength of reason, under which he suffered, than Christ himself did; but when he

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\* I am persuaded (saith Mr. Gurnal) some men take more pains to furnish themselves with arguments to defend some error they have taken up, than they do for the most saving truths in the Bible. Austin said, when he was a Manichæan, *Non tu eras, sed error meus erat Deus meus*: Thou, O Lord, wert not, but my error was my God. *Gurnal's Christian Armour, part 2. p. 56.*

began to feel torments indeed, then he roared and raged to the purpose. *Vidi ego hominem*, saith the author : In his life he was loose, in his imprisonments sullen ; and at his death mad with the horrors of conscience.

Some, indeed, have recovered the soundness of their judgments after deep corruptions by dangerous errors. Austin was a Manichee, and fully recovered from it. So have many more ; and yet multitudes hold them fast even to death, and nothing but the fire can reveal their work, and discover what is gold, and what is straw and stubble.

Observ. 7. It deserves a remark, *That men are not so circumspect and jealous of the corruption of their minds by errors, as they are of their bodies in times of contagion ; or of their lives with respect to gross immoralities.*

Spiritual dangers affect us less than corporal ; and intellectual evils less than moral. Whether this be the effect of hypocrisy, the errors of the mind being more secret and invisible than those of the conversation, God only knows, man cannot positively determine.

Or whether it be the effect of ignorance, that men think there is less sin and danger in the one than in the other ; not considering that an apoplexy seizing the head, is every way as mortal as a sword piercing the body : And that a vertigo will as much unfit a man for service as an ague or fever. The apostle, in 2 Pet. ii. 1. calls them *αιρεσεις απωλειας*, damnable heresies, or heresies of destruction. An error in the mind may be as damning and destructive to the soul as an error of immorality or profaneness in the life.

Or whether it may come to pass from some remains of fear and tenderness in the conscience, which forbid men to reduce their erroneous principles into practice ; there lying under many confident errors in the mind, a secret jealousy, which we call *formido oppositi*, which will not suffer them to act to the full height of their professed opinions. Austin gives this character even of Pelagius himself, *Retract. lib. II. cap. 33. Nomen Pelagii non sine laude aliqua posui, quia vita ejus a multis prædicabatur* : I have not mentioned (saith he) the name of that man without some praise, because his life was famed by many. And of Swinkfeldius it is said, *Caput regulatum illi diffuit, cor bonum non defuit* : His heart was much more regular than his head. Yet this falls out but rarely in the world ; for loose principles naturally run into loose practices ; and the errors of the head into the immoralities of life.

Observ. 8. *It is a great judgment of God to be given over to an erroneous mind.*

For the understanding being the leading faculty, as that guides, the other powers and affections of the soul follow, as horses in a team follow the fore-horse. Now, how sad and dangerous a thing is this, for Satan to ride the fore-horse, and guide that which is to guide the life of man? That is a dreadful, spiritual, judicial stroke of God which we read of, Rom. i. 26. *παρεδωκεν αυτους ο Θεος εις παθη ατιμιας*: God, by a penal tradition, suffered them to run into the dregs of immorality, and pollutions of life; and that, because they abused their light, and became vain in their imaginations, ver. 21.

Wild whimsies and fancies in the head usually mislead men into the puddle and mire of profaneness, and then it is commonly observed God sets some visible mark of his displeasure upon them; especially the Heresiarchs, or ring-leaders in error. Nestorius' tongue was consumed by worms. Cerenthus' brains knocked out by the fall of an house. Montanus hanged himself: It were easy to instance in multitudes of others, whom the visible hand of God hath marked for a warning to others; but usually the spiritual errors of the mind are followed with a consumption and decay of religion in the soul. If grace be in the heart, where error sways its sceptre in the head, yet usually there it languishes and withers. They may mistake their dropsy for growth and flourishing; and think themselves to be more spiritual, because more airy and notional; but if men would judge themselves impartially, they will certainly find that the seeds of grace thrive not in the heart, when shaded and over-dropt by an erroneous head.

Observ. 9. *It is a pernicious evil, to advance a mere opinion into the place and seat of an article of faith; and to lay as great a stress upon it, as they ought to do upon the most clear and fundamental point. To be as much concerned for a tile upon the roof, as for the corner-stone, which unites the walls, and sustains the building.*

Opinion (as one truly saith) is but reason's projector, and the spy of truth; it makes, in its fullest discovery, no more than the dawning and twilight of knowledge; and yet I know not how it comes to pass, but so it is, that this idol of the mind holds such a sway and empire over all we hold, as if it were all the day we had. Matters of mere opinion, are every way cried up by some errorists, for mathematical demonstration, and articles of faith written with a sun-beam; worshipping the fancies and creatures of

their own minds, more than God; and putting more trust in their ill founded opinions, than in the surer word of prophecy. Much like the Humorist that would not trust day-light, but kept his candle still burning by him; because, saith he, this is not subject to eclipses, as the sun is.

And what more frequent, when controversies grow fervent, than for those that maintain the error, to boast every silly argument to be a demonstration; to upbraid and pity the blindness and dulness of their opposers as men that shut their eyes against sun-beams; yea, sometimes, to draw their presumptuous censures through the very hearts of their opposers, and to insinuate, that they must needs hold the truths of God in unrighteousness, sin against their knowledge, and that nothing keeps them from coming over to them, but pride, shame, or some worldly interest? What a complicated evil is here! Here is a proud exalting of our own opinions, and an immodest imposing on the minds of others, more clear and sound than our own, and a dangerous usurpation of God's prerogative in judging the hearts and ends of our brethren.

*Observ. 10. Error being conscious to itself of its own weakness, and the strong assaults that will be made upon it, evermore labours to defend and secure itself under the wings of antiquity, reason, scripture, and high pretensions to reformation and piety.*

*Antiquity* is a venerable word, but ill used, when made a cloak for error. Truth must needs be elder than error; as the rule must necessarily be, before the aberration from it. The grey hairs of opinions are then only beauty, and a crown, when found in the way of righteousness. *Copper* (saith learned Du Moulin) will never become gold by age. A lie will be a lie, let it be never so ancient. We dispute not by years, but by reasons drawn from scripture. That which is now called an ancient opinion, if it be not a true opinion, was once but a new error. When you can tell us how many years are required to turn an error into truth, then we will give more heed to antiquity, when pressed into the service of error, than we now think due to it.

If antiquity will not do, reason shall be pressed to serve error's turn at a dead-lift; and, indeed, the pencil of reason can lay curious colours upon rotten timber, and varnish over erroneous principles with fair and plausible pretences. What expert artists have the Socinians proved themselves in this matter? But because men are bound to submit human authority and reason to Divine revelation, both must give way, and strike sail to the written Word.

Hence it comes to pass, that the great patrons and factors for error, do above all things labour to gain countenance to their errors from the written word; and, to this end, they manifestly wrest and rack the scriptures to make them subservient to their opinions; not impartially studying the scriptures first, and forming their notions and opinions according to them. But they bring their erroneous opinions to the scriptures, and then, with all imaginable art and sophistry, wire-draw and force the scriptures to countenance and legitimate their opinions\*.

But because pretences of piety and reformation † are the strokes that gave life to the face of this idol, and gave it the nearest resemblance unto truth, these therefore never fail to be made use of, and zealously professed in the favour of error, though there be little of either many times to be found in their persons, and nothing at all in the doctrines that lay claim to it.

Observ. 11. *God, in all ages, in his tender care for his churches and truths, hath still qualified and excited his servants for the defence of his precious truths, against the errors and heresies that have successively assaulted them.*

As Providence is observed in every climate and island of the world to have provided antidotes against the poisonous plants and animals of the country, and the one is never far from the other: So is the care of his providence much more conspicuous in the case now before us. When, or wheresoever, venomous errors, and deadly heresies do arise, he hath his servants at hand with antidotes against them.

When Arius, that cunning and deadly enemy to the Deity of Christ, struck at the very heart of our religion, faith, and comfort; a man of subtle parts and blameless life, which made his heresy much the more spreading and taking; the Lord had his well-furnished Athanasius in a readiness to resist and confound him. And as he had his Athanasius to defend the Deity of Christ, so he wanted not his Basil to defend the doctrine of the Holy Spirit against Macedonius.

So when Pelagius was busily advancing *free-will*, into the throne of *free-grace*, providence wanted not its mallet in learned and in-

\* Every heresy has the devil for the parent of its invention, and is obnoxious to the shame of so odious a name. It professes the Saviour's name, which is most excellent and transcends all, and is disguised under scripture expressions. *Athanasius against Arius.*

† Take heed, saith one, that when zeal for reformation knocks at the door, some new errors step not in with it, which will as much need an after-reformation.

genious Augustine, to break him and his idol to pieces. And it is highly remarkable, (as the learned Dr. Hill observes) that Augustine was born in Africa, the same day that Pelagius was born in Britain.

When Gotteschalvus published his dangerous doctrine about predestination, the Lord drew forth Hincmarus to detect and confute that error, by evincing clearly, that God's predestination forces no man to sin.

So, from the beginning and first rise of Popery, that centre and sink of errors, we have a large catalogue of the learned and famous witnesses, which, in all ages, have faithfully resisted and opposed it; and, when, notwithstanding all, it had even over-run Europe like a rapid torrent, or rather inundation of the ocean, and Germany was brought to that pass, that if the Pope had but commanded it, they would have eaten grass or hay, *more pecudum*; then did the Lord bring forth invincible Luther, and with him a troop of learned champions, into the field against him; since which time, the cause of Popery is become desperate.

Thus the care of providence, in all ages, hath been as much displayed in protecting the church against the dangers that arose from false brethren within it, as from avowed, persecuting enemies without it; and had it not been so, the rank weeds of heresies and errors had long since over-topt and choaked the corn, and made the church a barren field.

Observ. 12. *The want of a modest suspicion, and just reflection, gives both confidence and growth to erroneous opinions.*

If matters of mere opinion were kept in their proper place, under the careful guard of suspicion, they would not make that bustle and confusion in the churches they have done, and do at this day.

It is confessed, that all truths are not matters of mere opinion; neither are all opinions of equal weight and value; and therefore not to be left hanging in an *equipendious scepticism*. And yet it is as true, that matters of opinion ought carefully to be sorted from matters of faith, and to be kept in their own rank and class, as things doubtful, *quibus potest subesse falsum*: whilst matters of faith clearly revealed, are to stand upon their own sure and firm basis. The former, *viz.* matters of mere opinion, we are so to hold, as upon clearer light to be ready to part with them, and give them up into the hands of truth. The other, *viz.* matters of faith, we are to hold with resolutions to live and die by them.

What is opinion, but the wavering of the understanding betwixt probable arguments, for and against a point of doctrine? So that

it is rather an inclination than an assertion, as being accompanied with fear, floating and inconstancy. In such cases, there should be a due concession and allowance of other men's opinions to them; and why not, whilst they offer as fair for the truth as we? and haply their parts, helps, and industries are not inferior to ours; it may be beyond them; and we may discern in them as much tenderness of conscience, and fear of sin, as in ourselves. In this case, a little more modest suspicion in our opinions, would do the church a great deal of right; and that which should prevail with all modest persons to exercise it, is the just reflection they may make upon their own former confident mistakes.

Observ. 13. *There is a remarkable involution or concatenation of errors, one linking in, and drawing another after it.*

Amongst all erroneous sects, there is still some *πρωτον ψευδος*, some Helena, for whose sake the war against truth is commenced; and the other lesser errors are pressed for the sake and service of this leading darling error. As we see the whole \* troop of *indulgences, bulls, masses, pilgrimages, purgatory*, with multitudes more, flow from, and are pressed into the service of the Pope's supremacy and infallibility; so, in other sects, men are forced to entertain many other errors, which, in themselves considered, they have no great kindness for; but they are necessitated to entertain them in defence of that great, leading, darling opinion they first espoused.

Those that cry up, and trumpet abroad the sovereign power of *free-will*, even without the preventing grace of God, enabling men to supernatural works, as if the *will* alone had escaped all damage by the fall, and Adam had not sinned in that noble virgin-faculty. To defend this idol, which is the *πρωτον ψευδος*, they are forced to oppugn and deny several other great and weighty truths, as particular, eternal election, the certainty of the saints perseverance, the necessity of preventing grace in conversion: which errors are but the out-works raised in defence of that idol.

So in the baptismal controversy, men would never have adventured to deny God's covenant with Abraham, to be a covenant of grace; or to assert the ceremonial law, so full of Christ, to be an Adam's covenant of works; and circumcision, expressly called *the seal of the righteousness of faith*, to be the condition of Adam's covenant. Much less would they place all the elect of God in Israel,

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\* *Πρωτον ψευδος*. The leading error of the church of Rome is, That all things must be subjected to the supreme judgment and tribunal of the church over which the Pope presides. Thence it is concluded, That all the traditions of the Romish church, and all their tenets and decrees, whether of the Popes or their councils, are to be steadfastly maintained. *Fred. Span. Elench. Controv. p. 51.*

at one and the same time, under the severest curse and rigour of the law, and under the pure covenant of grace, were they not forced into these errors and absurdities by dint of argument, in defence of their darling opinion.

Observ. 14. *Errors abound most, and spring fastest, in the times of the church's peace, liberty, and outward prosperity, under indulgent rulers. Arianism sprung up under Constantine's mild government\*.*

Christian, benevolent rulers are choice mercies and blessings to the church. Such as rule over men in the fear of God, are to the church, as well as civil state, "like the light of the morning, "when the sun ariseth; even a morning without clouds, as the "tender grass springeth out of the earth by clear shining after "rain," 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.

But this, as well as other mercies, is liable to abuse; and under the influences of indulgent governors, error, as well as truth, springs up, flowers and seeds. Persecution gives check to the wantonness of men's opinions, and finds them other and better work to do. Caterpillars and locusts are swept away by the bitter east winds, but swarm in *halcyon* days, and fall upon every green thing. So that the church rides, in this respect, more safely in the stormy sea, than in the calm harbour. Peace and prosperity is apt to cast its watchmen into a sleep; and whilst they sleep, the envious *one* soweth tares, Matth. xiii. 25.

It was under Constantine's benign government, that poison was poured out into the churches. The abuse of such an excellent mercy provokes the Lord to cut it short, and cause the clouds to gather again after the rain. We have found it so once and again (alas, that I must say again!) in this wanton and foolish nation. Professors could live quietly together, converse, fast, and pray in a Christian manner together, under common calamities and dangers: differences in opinion are suspended by consent. But no sooner do we feel a warm, sun-blast of liberty and peace, but it revives and heats our dividing lusts and corruptions, instead of our graces. The sheep of Christ fight with each other, though their furious pushing one at another is known to presage a change of weather.

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\* Eusebius records, That Arius Alexandrinus began to vent his distracted heresy at Alexandria, in the year of our Lord 324, and in the fifteenth year of the reign of Constantine.

Observ. 15. *Errors, in the tender bud, and first spring of them, are comparatively shy and modest, to what they prove afterwards, when they have spread and rooted themselves in the minds of multitudes, and when their Authors think it time to set up and juggle for themselves in the world\*.*

They usually begin in modest scruples, conscientious doubts and queries. But having once gotten many abettors, and, amongst them, some that have subtilty and ability to plead and dispute their cause, they ruffle it out at another rate; glory in their numbers, piety and ability of their party; boast and glory in the conceited victories they achieved over their opposers. The mask drops off its face, and it appears with a brow of brass, becomes insolent and turbulent, both in church and state. Of which it is easy to give many pregnant instances, in the Arians of old, and more recent errors, which I shall not at present be concerned with, lest I exasperate, whilst I seek to heal the wound.

† Should a man hear the sermons or private discourses of errorists, whilst the design is but forming and projecting, he should meet with little to raise his jealousy. They speak in generals, and guard their discourses with political reserves. You shall not see, though you seem to see the tendency of their discourses. Hence the apostle saith, 2 Pet. ii. 1. *παρεισαξουσιν, They shall privily [or covertly] bring in damnable heresies*: As the boy in Plutarch, being asked by a stranger, What is that you carry so closely under your cloak? wittily answered, You may well know, that I intend you shall not know it, by my so carrying it.

Observ. 16. *Nothing gives more countenance and increase to error than a weak or feeble defence of the truth against it †.*

The strength of error lies much in the weakness of the advocates

\* Eunomius, by advice of Eudoxus, for some time spread his heresy secretly, intricately, and ambiguously; but at length taking courage, he openly avowed in public assemblies what he heretically maintained. *Theodoret, book 3. c. 29.*

† The Donatists, in Augustine's time, modestly moved, That men might not be compelled to live holy. *Coacta et invita pietas*, they mentioned it with dislike; but when grown in power, *facti insolentes orthodoxis inferebant*, insomuch that Dulcitus the tribune was fain to defend the orthodox against them with an army.

‡ Some not being sufficiently instructed in heavenly knowledge could not answer the opposers of truth, who objected, that it is a thing either impossible or incongruous that God should inclose himself within the womb of a woman, &c. by all which things, when they had not sufficient capacity or learning to defend truth and refute error, (for they had not thorough insight into the import and reason of such things) they were misled from the right way, corrupted heavenly knowledge, and composed to themselves a new system of doctrine, that had no root or stability. *Lactan. book 4. chap. 50. concerning Heresies.*

and defendants of truth. Every friend of truth is not fit to make a champion for it. Many love it, and pray for it, that cannot defend and dispute for it. *I can die for the truth, (saith the martyr) but I cannot dispute for it.* Zuinglius blamed Carolostadius for undertaking the controversy of that age, because (said he) *non habuit satis humerorum,—his shoulders were too weak for the burthen.*

It can be said of few, as Cicero speaks of one, *Nullam unquam in disputationibus rem defendit, quam non probarit? nullum oppugnavit, quem non everterit;* i. e. He undertook no cause in disputation, which he could not defend; he opposed no adversary, whom he could not overthrow. He is a rare and happy disputant, who can clear and carry every point of truth, of which he undertakes the defence. It were happy for the church, if the abilities and prudence of all her friends were commensurate and equal to their love and zeal. Every little foil, every weak or impertinent answer of a friend to truth, is quickly turned into a weapon to wound it the deeper.

Observ. 17. *Errors of judgment are not cured by compulsion and external force, but by rational conviction, and proper spiritual remedies.*

Bodily sufferings rather spread than cure intellectual errors. I deny not but fundamental heresies, breaking forth into open blasphemies against God, and seditions in the civil state, ought to be restrained. It is no way fit men should be permitted to go up and down the world with plague-sores running upon them. Nor do I understand why men should be more cautious to preserve their bodies than their souls. But I speak here of such errors as may consist with the foundations of the Christian faith, and are not destructive of civil government. They take the ready way to spread and perpetuate them that think to root them out of the world by such improper and unwarrantable means as external force and violence. The wind never causes an earthquake till it be pent in and restrained from motion.

We neither find, nor can imagine, that those church or state Exorcists should ever be able to affect their end, who think to confine all the spirits of error within the circle of a severe uniformity. Fires, prisons, pillories, stigmatizings, mutilations, whippings, banishments, &c. are the Popish *topics* to confute errors. It is highly remarkable that the world, long ago, consented for the avoiding of dissent in judgment, to enslave themselves and their posterity to the most fatal and destructive heresy that ever it groaned under.

It is a rational and proper observation, long since made by Lac-

tantius, *Quis mihi imponat necessitatem credendi quod nolim, vel non credendi, quod velim?* i. e. Who can force me to believe what I will not, or not to believe what I will? The rational and gentle spirit of the gospel is the only proper and effectual method to cure the diseases of the mind.

Observ. 18. *Erroneous doctrines producing divisions and fierce contentions amongst Christians, prove a fatal stumbling-block to the world, fix their prejudices, and obstruct their conversion to Christ\*.*

They dissolve the lovely union of the saints, and thereby scare off the world from coming into the church. This is evidently implied in that prayer of Christ, John xvii. "That all his people might be one, that the world might believe the Father had sent him." There is indeed no just cause for any to take offence at the Christian reformed religion, because so many errors and heresies spring up among the professors of it, and divide them into so many sects and parties; for, in all this we find no more than what was predicted from the beginning, 1 Cor. xi. 18, 19. "I hear there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it: for there must be also heresies among you," &c. And again, Acts xx. 30. "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them †."

The very same things strongly confirm the Christian religion, which wicked men improve to the reproach and prejudice of it. When Celsus objected to the Christians the variety and contrariety of their opinions, saying, *Were we willing to turn Christians, we know not of what party to be, seeing you all pretend to Christ, and yet differ so much from one another.* Tertullian, the Christian Apologist, made him this wise and pertinent reply, "We are not troubled that heresies are come, seeing it was predicted that they must come ‡" These things destroy not the credibility of the Christian religion, but increase and confirm it, by evidencing to the world the truth and certainty of Christ's predictions (which were quite beyond all human foresight) that as soon as his doctrine should be propagated, and a church raised by it, errors and here-

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\* Many enemies to Christianity, from hatred to the Christians for their abolishing the Gentile superstition, flocked to the Nicene synod that they might find some whom they might mock. *Say the Centurists.*

† Above all things it is proper for us to know that Christ himself and his ambassadors have foretold that many sects and heresies should arise, which would break the peace of his sacred body, and have admonished us to watch with the greatest prudence, lest at any time we should fall into the nets and snares of that adversary of ours, with whom God requires us to contend. *Lactan. book 4. chap. 50.*

‡ *Hereses non dolemus venisse, quia novimus esse prædictas.*

sies should spring up among them, for the trial of their faith and constancy.

Nevertheless, this no way excuses the sinfulness of errors and divisions in the church. Christ's prediction neither infuses nor excuses the evil predicted by him: for what he elsewhere speaks of scandals is as true in this case of errors; "These things must come to pass, but wo be to that man by whom they come."

Observ. 19. *How specious and taking soever the pretences of error be, and how long soever they maintain themselves in esteem among men, they are sure to end in the loss and shame of their authors and abettors at last\*.*

Truth is a rock that the waves of error dash against, and evermore return in froth and foam: Yea, they foam out their own shame, saith the apostle, Jude 13. What Tacitus spake of crafty counsels I may as truly apply to crafty errors: "They are pleasant in their beginning, difficult in their management, and sad in their event and issue †."

Suppose a man have union with Christ, yet his errors are but as so much hay, wood, straw, stubble, built, or rather endeavoured to be built upon a foundation of gold; this the fiery trial burns up; the author of them suffers loss; and though himself may be saved, yet so as by fire, 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13, 14, 15. the meaning is, he makes a narrow escape. As a man that leaps out of an house on fire from a window or battlement, with great difficulty saves his life; just so *errorists* shall be glad to quit their erroneous opinions which they have taken so much pains to build, and draw others into: and then, O what a shame must it be for a good man to think how many days and nights have I worse than wasted to defend and propagate an error, which might have been employed in a closer study of Christ, and mine own heart! Keckerman relates a story of a *vocal statue*, which was thirty years a making by a cunning artist, which by the motion of its tongue with little wheels, wires, &c. could articulate the sound, and pronounce an entire sentence. This *statue* saluting Aquinas, surprized him, and at one stroke he utterly destroyed the curious *machine*, which exceedingly troubled the fond owner of it, and made him say with much concernment, "Thou hast at one stroke destroyed the study and labour of thirty years ‡."

\* Athanasius writes, that after the shameful death of Arius, very many of those who had been deceived by him returned to soundness in the faith.

† *Consilia callida prima specie læta, tractatu dura, eventu tristia.*

‡ Keck. Phys. p. 16. Albertus Magnus. *Uno ictu opus triginta annorum destruxisti.*

Beside, what shame and trouble must it be to the zealous promoters of errors, not only to cast away so vainly and unprofitably their own time and strength, which is bad enough, but also to ensnare and allure the souls of others into the same, or worse mischief: for though God may save and recover you, those that have been misled by you may perish.

Observ. 20. *If ever errors be cured, and the peace and unity of the church established, men must be convinced of, and acquainted with the occasions and causes both within and without themselves, from whence their errors do proceed; and must both know and apply the proper rules and remedies for the prevention or cure of them.*

There is much difference betwixt an occasion and a proper cause; these two are heedfully to be distinguished. Critical and exact historians, as Polybius and Tacitus, distinguish betwixt the *αρχη*, and the *αιτια*, the *beginning occasions* and the *real causes* of a war: and so we ought, in this case of errors, carefully to distinguish them. The most excellent and innocent things in the world, such as the Scriptures of truth, the liberty of Christians, the tranquillity and peace of the church (as you will hear anon) may, by the subtilty of Satan working in conjunction with the corruptions of men's hearts, become the *occasions*, but can never be the proper culpable *causes* of errors.

Accordingly, having made these twenty remarks upon the nature and growth of errors (which cannot so well be brought within the following rules of method) I shall, in the next place, proceed in the discovery both of the mere occasions, as also the proper culpable causes of errors, together with the proper preventives, and the most effectual remedies, placed together in the following order.

*The occasion.* The holy God, who is a God of truth, Deut. xxxii. 4. and hateth errors, Rev. ii. 6. the God of order, and hates confusions and schisms in his church, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. is yet pleased to permit errors and heresies to arise, without whose permission they could never spring. And this he doth for the trial of his people's faith and constancy, and for a spiritual punishment upon some men for the abuse of his known truths; and by the permission of these evils, he advanceth his own glory, and the good of his church and people. Augustine answers that question, Why doth not God, since he hates errors, sweep them out of the world? Because (saith he) it is an act of greater power to bring good out of evil, than not to suffer evils to be at all.

Satan's design in errors, is to cloud and darken God's name and

precious truths; to destroy the beauty, strength, and order of the church. But God's ends in permitting and sending errors, are, (1.) To plague and punish men for their abuse of light, 2 Thes. ii. 11. "For this cause shall God send them strong delusions," &c. (2.) To prove and try the sincerity and constancy of our hearts, Deut. xiii. 1, 3. 1 Cor. xi. 19. and lastly, By these things the saints are awakened to a more diligent search of the Scriptures, which are the more critically read and examined upon the trial of spirits and doctrines by them, 1 John iv. 1. "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits." And Rev. ii. 2. "Thou hast tried them that say they are apostles," &c.

*The prevention.* Though heresies and errors must (for the reasons assigned) break forth into the world, and God will turn them eventually unto his own glory, and the benefit of his church; yet it is a dreadful judgment to be delivered over to a spirit of error, to be the authors and abettors of them. This is a judicial stroke of God, and as ever we hope to escape, and stand clear out of the way of it, let us carefully shun these three following causes and provocations thereof.

(1.) Want of love to the truth, which God hath made to shine about us in the means, or into us, by actual illumination, under the means of knowledge. 2 Thes. ii. 10, 11. "Because they received not the love of the truth, God gave them up to strong delusions." They are justly plagued with error, that slight truth. False doctrines are fit plagues for false hearts.

(2.) Beware of pride and wantonness of mind. It is not so much the weakness as the wantonness of the mind, which provokes God to inflict this judgment. None likelier to make seducers than boasters, Jude 16. Arius gloried, that God had revealed some things to him which were hidden from the apostles themselves. Simon Magus boasted himself to be the mighty power of God. The erroneous Pharisees loved the praises of men. When the Papist reproached Luther that he affected to have his disciples called Lutherans, he replied\*, "He disdained that the children of Christ should be called by so vile a name as his."

(3.) Beware you neglect not prayer, to be kept sound in your judgments, and guided by the Spirit into all truth, Psal. cxix. 10. "With my whole heart have I sought thee; O let me not wander, or err, from thy commandments." This do, and you are safe from such a judicial tradition.

*The first cause.* We shall next speak of the causes of error found in the evil dispositions of the subjects, which prepare and incline them to receive erroneous doctrines and opinions, and even catch

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\* Luther said, Not so, O fool, not so, for I desire that my name be concealed.

at the occasions, and least sparks of temptation, as dry tinder: and amongst these is found,

(1.) A perverse wrangling humour at the pretended *obscurity* of the Scriptures. The Romish party snatch at this occasion, and make it the proper cause, when, indeed, it is but a picked occasion of the errors and mistakes among men. They tell us, the Scriptures are so difficult, obscure, and perplexed, that if private men will trust to them as their only guide, they will inevitably run into errors, and their only relief is to give up their souls to the conduct of their church; whereas, indeed, the true cause of error is not so much in the obscurity of the word, as in the corruption of the mind, 1 Tim. vi. 5. 2 Tim. iii. 8.

We do acknowledge there are in the Scriptures, *τινα δυσνοητα, και τινα δυσεξημενευτα*, some things hard to be understood, 2 Pet. iii. 16. the sublime and mysterious nature of the matter rendering it so; and some things hard to be interpreted, from the manner of expression: as indeed all mystical parts of Scripture, and prophetic predictions are and ought to be delivered. The Spirit of God this way designedly casts a veil over them, till the proper season of their revelation and accomplishment be come. Besides (as the learned Glassius observes) in Paul's style, there are found some peculiar words, and forms of speech, of which ordinary rules of grammar take no notice, nor give any parallel examples of: as *to be buried with Christ; to be baptized into his death; to which I may add, to be circumcised in him, &c.* There are also multitudes of words found in Scripture, of various and vastly different significations: and accordingly there is a diversity, and sometimes a contrariety of senses, given of them by expositors; which to an humourist, or quarrelsome wit, give an occasion to vent his errors with a plausible appearance of Scripture-consent. And indeed Tertullian saith \* "The Scriptures are so disposed that heretics "may pick occasions;" and those that will not be satisfied may be hardened. See Mark iv. 11, 12.

But all this notwithstanding, the great and necessary things to our salvation are so perspicuously and plainly revealed in the Scriptures, that even babes in Christ do apprehend and understand them, Matth. xi. 25. 1 Cor. i. 27, 28, 29. And though there be difficulties in other points more remote from the foundation; yet the Spirit of God is not to be accused, but rather his wisdom to be admired herein. For (1.) this serves to excite our most intense study and diligence, which, by this difficulty is made necessary, Prov. ii. 3, 4, 5. The very prophets, yea, the very an-

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\* *Non periculor dicere ipsas scripturas ita dispositas esse, ut materiam subministarent hæreticis.*

gels search into these things, 1 Pet. i. 11, 12. (2.) Hereby a standing ministry in the church is made necessary, Neh. viii. 8. Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. So that to pretend obscurity of Scripture to be the culpable cause of error, (when, indeed, the fault is in ourselves) this is too much like our father Adam, who would implicitly accuse God, to excuse himself; he laid it upon the woman which God gave him, and we upon the Scriptures which God hath given us.

### *The Remedies.*

The proper *remedies* and *preventives* in this case, are an heedful attendance to, and practice of these *rules*.

*Rule I.* Let all obscure and difficult texts of Scripture be constantly examined and expounded according to the analogy or proportion of faith, which is St. Paul's own rule, Rom. xii. 6. "Let him that prophesieth (i. e. expoundeth the Scriptures in the church) do it according to the proportion of faith." The analogy or proportion of faith, is what is taught plainly and uniformly in the whole Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as the rule of our faith and obedience. Whilst we carefully and sincerely attend hereunto, we are secured from sinfully corrupting the word of God. Admit of no sense which interfereth with this proportion of faith. If men have no regard to this, but take liberty to rend off a single text from the body of truth to which it belongs, and put a peculiar interpretation upon it, which is absonous and discordant to other Scriptures, what woful work will they quickly make?

Give but a Papist liberty to take that scripture, James ii. 24. out of the frame of scripture, "A man is justified by works, and not by faith only;" and expound it without regard to the tenor of the gospel-doctrine of justification in Paul's epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and a gross error starts up immediately. Give but a Socinian the like liberty to practise upon, John xiv. 28. and a gross heresy shall presently look with an orthodox face.

*Rule II.* Never put a new sense upon words of scripture, in favour of your pre-conceived notions and opinions, nor wrest it from its general and common use and sense. This is not to interpret, but to rack the scriptures, as that word  $\epsilon\rho\epsilon\lambda\sigma\iota\nu$  signifies, 2 Pet. iii. 16. as \* Hieron against Ruff speaks. We are not to make the scripture speak what we think, but what the prophet or apostle thought, whom we interpret. In 1 Cor. v. 11, 14. we meet with

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\* It is the part of an interpreter to explain what the author thought whom he interprets, and not what he himself thinks.

the word [*holy*] applied to the children of believers: That word is above five hundred times used for a state of separation to God; therefore to make it signify, in that place, nothing but legitimacy, is a bold and daring practising upon the scripture.

*Rule III.* Whenever you meet with an obscure place of scripture, let the context of that scripture be diligently and thoroughly searched; for it is usual with God to set up some light there, to guide us through the obscurity of a particular text. And there is much truth in the observation of the Rabbins \*, “There is no scruple” or objection in the law, but it hath a solution at the side of it.”

*Rule IV.* Let one Testament freely cast its light upon the other; and let not men undervalue or reject an Old-Testament text, as no way useful to clear and establish a New-Testament point of faith or duty. Each Testament reflects light upon the other. The Jews reject the New Testament, and many among us sinfully slight the Old: but without the help of both, we can never understand the mind of God in either. It is a good rule in the Civil Law, † “We must inspect the whole law, to know the sense of any particular law.”

*Rule V.* Have a due regard to that sense given of obscure places of scripture, which hath not only the current sense of learned expositors, but also naturally agrees with the scope of the place. A careless neglect and disregard to this, is justly blamed by the apostle, 1 Tim. i. 7.

*Cause 2.* A second evil temper in the subject, disposing and inclining men to receive and suck in erroneous doctrines and opinions, is the abuse of that just and due *Christian Liberty* ‡ allowed by Christ to all his people, to read, examine, and judge the sense of scriptures with a private judgment of discretion.

This is a glorious acquisition, and blessed fruit of reformation, to vindicate and recover that just right, and gracious grant made to us by Christ and the apostles, out of the injurious hands of our Popish enemies, who had usurped and invaded it. The exercise of this *liberty*, is, at once, a duty commanded by Christ, and commended in scripture. It is commanded by Christ, John v. 39. *Search the scriptures*, saith Christ to the people, 1 Cor. x. 15. “I speak as to wise men; judge you what I say.” And the exercise of this private judgment of discretion by the people is highly commended by St. Paul in the Bereans, Acts xvii. 11. “These were

\* *Nulla est objectio in lege, quæ non habet solutionem in latere.*

† *Turpe est de lege judicare, tota lege nondum inspecta.*

‡ The Anabaptist controversy sprung up in the last age in many places in Europe, from Montzero a Saxon with his followers in the year 1521, through occasion of a book wrote by Luther on Christian Liberty. *Fred. Spanh. Elench. Contr. p. 95.*

“ more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” This liberty is not allowed in that latitude in any religion, as it is in the Christian religion; nor enjoyed in its fulness as it is in the reformed religion; whose glory it is, that it allows its principles and doctrines to be critically examined and tried of all men, by the rule of the word, as well-knowing, the more it is sifted and searched by its professors, the more they will be still confirmed and satisfied in the truth of it.

But yet this gracious and just liberty of Christians suffers a double abuse; one from the Popish enemies, who injuriously restrain and deny it to the people: Another by Protestants themselves, who sinfully stretch and extend it beyond the just degree and measure in which Christ allows it to them.

The Pope injuriously restrains it, discerning the danger that must necessarily follow the concession of such a liberty to the people, to compare his superstitious and erroneous doctrines with the rule of the word.

St. Peter, in 2 Pet. i. 19. tells the people they have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto they do well that they take heed. Certainly the Pope forgot either that he was Peter's successor, or that ever St. Peter told the people they did well to make use of that liberty which he denies them. Mr. Pool tells us of a Spaniard who used this expression to an English merchant, *You people of England (saith he) are happy; you have liberty to see with your own eyes, and to examine the doctrines delivered to you, upon which your everlasting life depends; but we dare not say our souls are our own, but are commanded to believe whatever our teachers tell us, be it never so unreasonable or ridiculous.* This is a most injurious and sinful restraint upon it on the one side:

And then Secondly, It is too frequently abused, by stretching it beyond Christ's allowance and intendment upon the other side; when every ignorant and confident person shall, under pretence of liberty granted by Christ, rudely break in upon the sacred text, distort, violate, and abuse the scriptures at pleasure, by putting such strange and foreign senses upon them, as the Spirit of God never meant or intended\*.

How often have I heard that scripture, Micah iv. 10. “ They shall be brought even to Babylon,” confidently interpreted for almost, but not full home to *Babylon*, against the very grammar of the text, and the truth of the history? And so again, that place, Isa. lviii. 8. “ The glory of the Lord shall be thy rere-ward,”

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\* Prov. viii. 22. Which words, Epiphanius writes, gave the first occasion to Arius to form his heresy against the Son of God.

through ignorance of the word, read *re-reward*, that is, a double reward to his people? But these are small matters, compared with those grosser abuses of scripture by the ignorant and unlearned, which prejudice truth, and too much countenance Popish reproaches.

### *The Remedies.*

The proper way to prevent and remedy this mischief, is not by depriving any man of his just liberty, either to read or judge for himself what God speaks in his word, and think that way to cure errors; that were the same thing as to cut off the head to cure an head-ach. Leave that sinful policy with the false religion; let those only that know they do evil be afraid of coming to the light: But the proper course of preventing the mischiefs that come this way, is by labouring to bound and contain Christians within those limits Christ himself hath set unto this liberty which he hath granted them. And these are such as follow.

*Limitation I.* Though Christ hath indulged to the meanest and weakest Christian, a liberty to read and judge of the scriptures for himself; yet he hath neither thereby nor therewith granted him a liberty publicly to expound and preach the word to others: That is quite another thing.

Every man that can read the scriptures, and judge of their sense, is not thereby presently made Christ's commission-officer, publicly and authoritatively to preach and inculcate the same to others: Two things are requisite to such an employment, *viz. Proper qualifications*, 2 Tim. iii. *And a solemn call or designation*, Rom. x. 14, 15. The ministry is a distinct office, Acts xx. 17, 28. 1 Thess. v. 12. and none but qualified and ordained persons can authoritatively preach the word, 2 Tim. i. 6. 1 Tim. iv. 14. and v. 22.

Christians may privately edify one another by reading the scriptures, communicating their sense one to another of them, admonishing, counselling, reproving one another in a private, fraternal way, at seasons wherein they interfere not with more public duties: But for every one that hath confidence enough (and the ignorant usually are best stocked with it) to assume a liberty without due qualification or call to expound and give the sense of scripture, and pour forth his crude and unstudied notions, as the pure sense and meaning of God's spirit in the scriptures; this is what Christ never allowed, and through this flood-gate errors have broken in, and over-flowed the church of God, to the great scandal of religion, and confirmation of Popish enemies.

*Limitation II.* Though there be no part of scripture shut up or restrained from the knowledge or use of any Christian, yet Jesus

Christ hath recommended to Christians of different abilities, the study of some parts of scripture rather than others, as more proper and agreeable to their age and stature in religion.

Christians are by the apostle ranked into three classes, *fathers, young men, and little children*, 1 John ii. 13. and accordingly the wisdom of Christ hath directed to that sort of food which is proper for either: For there is in the word all sorts of food suitable to all ages in Christ; there is both *milk* for *babes*, and *strong meat* for *grown Christians*, Heb. v. 13, 14. Those that are unskilful in the word of righteousness, should feed upon *milk*, that is, the easy, plain, but most nutritive and pleasant practical doctrines of the gospel. But *strong meat* (saith he) that is, the more abstruse, deep, and mysterious truths belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil; that is, *truth* and *error*. To the same purpose he speaks, 1 Cor. iii. 2. "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it."

Art thou a weak unstudied Christian? a babe in Christ? Then the easier and more nutritive milk of plain gospel doctrine is fitter for thee, and will do thee more good than the stronger meat of profound and more mysterious points; or the bones of controversy, which are too hard for thee to deal with.

God hath blessed this age with great variety of sound and allowed expositors in our own language, by the diligent study of which, and prayer for the illumination and guidance of the Spirit, you may not only attain unto the true sense and meaning of the more plain and obvious, but also unto greater knowledge and clearer insight into the more obscure and controverted parts of scripture.

*Cause III.* There is also another evil disposition in the subject, rendering it easily receptive of errors, and that is spiritual *slothfulness* and carelessness in a due and serious search of the whole scripture, with a sedate and rational consideration of every part and particle therein; which may give us any, though the least light, to understand the mind of God in those obscure and difficult points we search after the knowledge of.

Truth lies deep, as the rich veins of gold do, Prov. ii. If we will get the treasure, we must not only *beg*, as he directs, ver. 3. but *dig* also, ver. 4. else, as he speaks, Prov. xiv. 23. "The talk of the lips tends only to poverty." We are not to take up with that which lies uppermost, and next at hand upon the surface of the text; but to search with the most sedate and considerative mind into all parts of the written word, examining every text which hath any respect to the truth we are searching for, heedfully to observe the scope, antecedents, and consequents, and to value every *apex*,

*tittle*, and *iota*; for each of these are of Divine authority, Matth. v. 18. and sometimes greater weight is laid upon a small word, yea upon the addition or change of a letter in a word, as appears in the names Abram and Sarai.

It will require some strength of mind, and great sedulity to lay all parts of scripture before us, and to compare words with words and things with things, as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. ii. 13. "Comparing spiritual things with spiritual." And though it be true that some important doctrines, as that of justification by faith, are methodically disposed, and thoroughly cleared and settled in one and the same context; yet it is as true that very many other points of faith and duty are not so digested, but are delivered *sparsim*, here a little, and there a little, as he speaks, Isa. xxviii. 10. You must not think to find all that belongs to one head or point of faith, or duty, laid together in a system or common place in scripture; but scattered abroad in several places, some in the Old Testament, and some in the New, at a great distance from one another.

Now, in our searches and enquiries after the full and satisfying knowledge of the will of God in such points, it is necessary that the whole word of God be thoroughly searched, and all those parcels brought together to an interview. *Ex. Gr.*

If a man would see the entire discovery that was made of Christ to the fathers under the Old Testament, he shall not find it laid together in any one prophet; but shall find that one speaks to one part of it, and another to another.

Moses gives the first general hint of it, Gen. iii. 15. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." But then, if you would know more particularly of whose seed, according to the flesh, he should come, you must turn to Gen. xxii. 18. "In thy seed (saith God to Abraham) shall all nations of the earth be blessed." And if you yet doubt what seed God means there, you must go the apostle, Gal. iii. 16. *To thy seed*, which is Christ. If you would further know the place of his nativity, the prophet Micah must inform you of that, Mic. v. 2. it should be Bethlehem Ephrata. If you enquire of the quality of his parent, another prophet gives you that, Isa. vii. 14. "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel." If the time of his birth be inquired after, Moses and Daniel must inform you of that, Gen. xlix. 10. Dan. iv. 24.

So under the New Testament, If a man enquire about the change of the sabbath, he must not expect to find a formal repeal of the seventh day, and an express institution of the first day in its room; but he is to consider,

*First*, What the Evangelist speaks, Mark ii. 28. That Christ is

Lord of the Sabbath, and so had power not only to dispense with it, but to change it.

*Secondly*, That on the first day of the week Christ rose from the dead, Mat. xxviii. 1, 2. And that this is that great day, foretold to be the day to be solemnized upon that account, P'sal. cxviii. 24.

*Thirdly*, That, accordingly, the first day of the week is emphatically stiled the Lord's day, Rev. i. 10. where you find his own name written upon it.

*Fourthly*, You shall find this was the day on which the apostles and primitive Christians assembled together for the stated and solemn performance of public worship, John xx. 19. and other public church-acts and duties, 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. And so by putting together, and considering all these particulars, we draw a just conclusion, That it is the will of God, that since the resurrection of Christ, the first day of the week should be observed as the Christian-sabbath.

In like manner, as for the baptizing of believers' infants; we are not to expect it in the express words of a New-Testament institution or command, that infants, under the gospel, should be baptized; but God hath left us to gather satisfaction about his will and our duty in that point, by comparing and considering the several scriptures of the Old and New Testament which relate to that matter; which, if we be impartial and considerative, we may do,

*First*, By considering, that by God's express command, Gen. xvii. 9, 10. the infant-seed of his people were taken into covenant with their parents, and the then sign of that covenant commanded to be applied to them.

*Secondly*, That though the sign be altered, the promise and covenant is still the same, and runs as it did before to believers and their children, Acts ii. 38, 39.

*Thirdly*, That the fœderal holiness of our children is plainly asserted under the New Testament, 1 Cor. vii. 14. Rom. xi. 16.

*Fourthly*, We shall further find, that baptism succeeds in the room of circumcision; and that, by an argument drawn from the completeness of our privileges under the New Testament no way inferior, but rather more extensive than those of the Jews, Col. ii. 10, 11, 12.

*Fifthly*, We shall find that upon the conversion of any master or parent, the whole household were baptized. By putting all these things, with some others together, we may arrive to the desired satisfaction about the will of God in this matter.

But some men want abilities, and others are too sluggish and lazy to gather together, compare and weigh all these, and many

more hints and discoveries of the mind of God, which would give much light unto this point; but they take an easier and cheaper way to satisfy themselves with what lies uppermost upon the surface of scripture, and so as it were by consent, let go and lose their own, and their children's blessed and invaluable privileges, for want of a little labour and patience to search the scriptures: A folly which few would be guilty of, if but a small earthly inheritance were concerned therein.

### *The Remedies.*

To cure this spiritual sluggishness, and awaken us to the most serious and diligent search after the will of God in such controversial and doubtful points, that we may not neglect the smallest hint given us about it, the following considerations will be found of great use and weight.

*Consideration 1.* The most sedate, impartial, and diligent inquiries after the will of God revealed in his word, is a duty expressly enjoined by his sovereign command, which immediately and indispensibly binds the conscience of every Christian to the practice of it.

Remarkable is that text to this purpose, Rom. xii. 2. "And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Here you find this duty, not only associated with, but made the very end of our non-conformity to the world, and renovation of our minds, the very things which constitute a Christian.

And to sweeten our pains in this work, that will of God, for the discovery whereof we search, is presented to us under three illustrious and alluring properties: viz. *good, acceptable, and perfect.* *Good* it must needs be, because the will and essence of God, the chief good, are not two things, but one and the same. And *perfect* it must needs be, because it is the beam and standard by which the actions of all reasonable creatures ought to be weighed and tried as to the moral good and evil of them. And being both good and perfect, how can it chuse but, upon both accounts, be highly *acceptable* and grateful to an upright soul, as that *epithet εναρετων*, there imports. *Search the scriptures*, saith Christ, John v. 39. *To the law, and to the testimony*, saith the prophet, Isa. viii. 20. This is not matter of mere Christian liberty, but commanded duty; and at our peril be it, if we neglect it.

*Consider. 2.* No acts of ours can be good and acceptable to the Lord, further than it is agreeable to his will revealed in the word.

No man can be a rule to himself. He can be no more his own

rule than his own end. One man cannot be a rule to another. The best of men, and their actions and examples, are only so far a rule of imitation to us, as they themselves are ruled by the Divine revealed will, 1 Cor. xi. 1. uncommanded acts of worship are abominable to God, and highly dangerous to ourselves; they kindle the fire of his jealousy, to the ruin and destruction of the presumptuous sinner, Lev. x. 1, 2. So that if the beauty and excellency of the will of God be not enough to allure us, the danger of acting without the knowledge of it, may justly terrify us.

*Consid. 3.* In this duty we tread in the footsteps of the wisest and holiest men that ever went to heaven before us.

It is not only the characteristic note of a good man, Psal. i. 2. but it has been the constant practice of the most eminent believers in all ages. The greatest prophets, who had this advantage of us, that they were the organs, or inspired instruments of discovering the will of God to others, yet were not excused from, neither did they neglect to search it diligently themselves, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. Daniel, that great favourite of heaven, who had the visions and revelations of God; yet he himself diligently searched the written word, in order to the discovery of the mind of God, Dan. ix. 2.

*Consid. 4.* Every discovery of the will of God by fervent prayer, diligent, and impartial search of the scriptures, and all other allowed helps, gives the highest pleasure the mind of man is capable of in this world.

If Archimedes, upon the discovery of a mathematical truth was so transported and ravished, that he cried out, *εὕρηκα, εὕρηκα, I have found it, I have found it*; what pleasure then must the investigation and discovery of a Divine truth give to a sanctified soul! "Thy words were found of me (saith Jeremiah) and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart," Jer. xv. 16. as pleasant food to a famishing man; for now conscience is quieted, comforted, and cheered in the way of duty. A man walks not at adventure with God, as that word signifies, Lev. xxvi. 40, 41. but hath the pleasant directive light of the word and will of God, shining sweetly upon the path of his duty.

*Consid. 5.* By this means you shall find your faith greatly confirmed in the truth of the scriptures.

The sweet consent and beautiful harmony of all the parts of the written word is a great argument of its Divinity; and this you will clearly discern, when by a due search, you shall find things that lie at the remotest distance, to conspire and consent in one, and one part casting light, as well as adding strength to another.

Thus you shall find, *Vetus testamentum in novo revelatum, et novum in vetere velatum*; the New Testament veiled in the Old, and the Old revealed in the New: and that such a consent of things, so distant in time and place, can never be the project and invention of man.

*Consid.* 6. The diligent and impartial search and inquiry after the will of God, out of no other design than to please him in the whole course of our duties, will turn to us for a testimony of the integrity and sincerity of our hearts.

*Thy word* (said David) *have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.* And God will not hide his will from those that thus seek to know it. If men would apply themselves to search the word by frequent prayer and fixed meditations, upon so pure a design, not bringing their prejudiced or prepossessed minds unto it; the Spirit of the Lord would guide them into all truth, and keep them out of dangerous and destructive errors.

*Cause* 4. Besides the slothfulness of the mind, there is found in many persons another evil disposition preparing them easily to receive erroneous impressions; namely, the INSTABILITY and fickleness of the judgment, and unsettledness of mind about the truth of the gospel.

Of this the apostle warns us, Eph. iv. 14. "That we henceforth be  
" no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every  
" wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness  
" whereby they lie in wait to deceive." None are so constant and steady in the profession of the truth, as those that are fully convinced of, and well satisfied with the grounds of it. Every professor, like every ship at sea, should have an *ιδία ενεπισμυς*, a ballast and steadiness of his own, 2 Pet. iii. 17. ready, and prepared to render a reason of the hope that is in him, 1 Pet. iii. 15. able upon all occasions to give an account of those inward motives which constrained his assent to the truth.

He that professeth a truth ignorantly, cannot be rationally supposed to adhere to it constantly. He that is but half convinced of a truth, when he engages in the profession of it, must needs be *διψυχος ανηρ*, a double-minded man, as the apostle calls him, James i. 8. half the mind hangs one way, and half another, and so it is easily moveable this way or that, with the least breath of temptation. And hence it comes to pass they are so often at a loss about their duty and their practice; for, *Animi volutatio pendentem reddit vitam*; i. e. a doubtful mind must needs make a staggering and uncertain practice.

Erroneous teachers are called wandering *stars*, Jude 13. which keep no certain course, as the fixed *stars* do, but are sometimes nearer, and sometimes remoter one from another. Thus *errorists*,

first imbibe unsettled opinions, and then discover them in their inconstant practices. Bertius wrote a book, *de Apostasia Sanctorum*, and soon after turned Papist. The Socinians and Libertines teach, that a man of any persuasion in religion, may be saved, so that he walk not contrary to his own light: such doctrine directly tends to scepticism in religion.

And this instability of the judgment proceeds either from *hypocrisy* or *weakness*. Sometimes from *hypocrisy*: All hypocrites are double-minded men. James iv. 8. "The double-minded man" (that is, the *hypocrite*) is unstable in all his ways:" one of that number was not ashamed to say, *Se duas habere animas in eodem corpore, unam Deo dicatam, alteram unicuique qui illam vellet*; i. e. That he had two souls in one body, one for God, and another for whosoever would have it.

Sometimes instability of the mind is the effect only of weakness in the judgment, proceeding merely from want of age and growth in Christ, not having as yet attained senses exercised to discern both good and evil, Heb. v. 14. they are but children in Christ, and children are easy and credulous creatures, Eph. iv. 14. presently taken with a new toy, and as soon weary of it; such a wavering and unstable temper invites temptation, and falls an easy prey into its hands.

I confess some cases may happen where the pretences on both sides may be so fair as to put a judicious Christian to a stand what to choose; but then their deliberation will be answerable, and then they will not change their opinions every month as Sceptics do. Wherever error finds such a mutable disposition, its work is half done before it makes one assault. How many wavering professors at this day lie in temptation's way? and how great a harvest have errorists and heretics had among them? There is not a *mountebank* comes upon the stage, but he shall find ten times more customers for his *drugs* than the most learned and experienced *physician*. The giddy-headed multitude have more regard to novelty than truth.

### *The remedies.*

How necessary and desirable are some effectual *rules* and *remedies* in this case! O what a mercy would it be to the professors of these days to have their minds fixed, and their judgments settled in the truths of Christ? Happy is that man whose judgment is so guarded, that no dangerous error or heresy can commit a rape upon it. To this end I shall here commend the four following *rules*, to prevent this vertiginous malady in the heads of Christians.

*Rule 1.* Look warily to it, that you get a real inward implantation into Christ, and lay the foundation deep and firm in a due

and serious deliberation of religion, whenever you engage in the public profession of it.

To this sense are the apostle's words, Col. ii. 6, 7. "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught." *Fertility and stability* in Christ, a pair of inestimable blessings, depend upon a good rooting of the soul in him at first. He that thrusts a dead stick into the ground may easily pull it up again, but so he cannot do by a well-rooted tree. A colour raised by violent action, or a great fire, soon dies away; but that which is natural or constitutional will hold: every thing is as its foundation is; it was want of a good root, and due depth of earth, which soon turned the green corn into dry stubble, Matth. xiii. 21.

*Rule 2.* Labour after an inward, experimental taste of all those truths which you profess.

This will preserve your minds from wavering and hesitation about the certainty and reality of them. We will not easily part with those truths, which have sensibly shed down those sweet influences upon our hearts, Heb. x. 34. No sophister can easily persuade a man that hath tasted the sweetness of honey, that it is a bitter and unpleasant thing; *Non est disputandum de gusti*: You cannot easily persuade a man out of his senses.

*Rule 3.* Study hard and pray earnestly for satisfaction in the present truths, 2 Pet. i. 12. "That you may be established *εν τη παραση αληθεια*, in the truth that now is under opposition and "controversy." Be not ignorant of the truths that lie in present hazard.

Antiquated opinions that are more abstracted from our present interest are no trials of the soundness of our judgments and integrity of our hearts, as the controversies and conflicts of the present times are. Every truth hath its time to come upon the stage, and enter the lists; some in one age, and some in another; but Providence seems to have cast the lot of your nativity for the honour and defence of those truths with which error is struggling and conflicting in your time.

*Rule 4.* Lastly, Be thoroughly sensible of the benefit and good of establishment, and of the evil and danger of a wavering mind and judgment.

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, (saith "the apostle,) for it is a good thing that the heart be established," &c. Heb. xiii. 9. Established souls are the honour of the truth. It was the honour of religion in the primitive days, that when the Heathens would proverbially express an impossibility, they used to say, You may as soon turn a Christian from Christ as do it.

The sickness of professors is a stumbling-block to the world. They will say as Cato of the civil wars betwixt Cæsar and Pompey, *Quem fugiam, video, quem sequar, non video*: they know whom to avoid, but not whom to follow. And as the honour of truth, so the flourishing of your own souls depend upon it. A tree, often removed from one soil to another, can never be expected to be fruitful; it is well if it makes a shift to live.

*Cause 5.* Another inward cause, disposing men to receive erroneous impressions, is an unreasonable eagerness to snatch at any doctrine or opinion that promiseth ease to an anxious conscience.

Men that are under the frights and terrors of conscience are willing to listen to any thing that offers present relief. Of all the troubles in the world those of the mind and conscience are most intolerable: and those that are in pain are glad of ease, and readily catch at any thing that seems to offer it.

This seems to be the thing which led those poor distressed wretches, intimated Micah vi. 6. into their gross mistakes and errors about the method of the remission of their sins. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" They were ready to purchase inward peace, and buy out their pardon at any rate. Nothing but the twinges of conscience could have extorted these things from them. Great is the efficacy and torment of a guilty conscience.

Satan, who feels more of this in himself than any other creature in the world, and knows how ready poor ignorant, but distressed sinners are to catch at any thing that looks like ease or comfort, and being jealous what these troubles of conscience may issue into, prepares for them such erroneous doctrines and opinions, under the names of *anodines* and quieting *recipies*, by swallowing of which they feel some present ease; but their disease is thereby made so much the more incurable.

\* It is upon this account he hath found such vent in the world for his *penances*, *pilgrimages*, and *indulgences* among the Papists. But seeing this ware will not go off among the reformed and more enlightened professors of Christianity, he changeth his hand, and fitteth other doses under other names to quiet sick and distressed souls, before ever their frights of conscience come to settle into true

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\* Mr. Gataker, in his book against Saltmarsh, p. 27. tells us of one that had taken ill courses, and being under much trouble of mind, could not be quiet till he turned Papist, and had been shrived and absolved by a priest.

repentance and faith in the blood of Christ, by dressing up, and presenting to them such opinions as these, viz.

That they may boldly apply to themselves all the promises of pardon and peace, without any respect at all to repentance or faith in themselves; that it is not at all needful, nay, that it is illegal and sinful to have any respect to these things, forasmuch as their sins were pardoned, and they justified from eternity; and that the covenant of grace is in all respects absolute, and is made to sinners as sinners, without any regard to their faith or repentance; and whatever sins there be in them, God sees them not\*.

To such a charm of troubles as this, how earnestly doth the ear of a distressed conscience listen? how greedily doth it suck in such pleasing words? Are all sins that are pardoned, pardoned before they are committed? and, Does the covenant of grace require neither repentance nor faith antecedently to the application of the promises? How groundless then are all my fears and troubles? This, like a dose of opium, quiets, or rather stupifies the raging conscience; for, even an error in judgment, till it be detected and discovered to be so, quiets and comforts the heart as well as principles of truth; but whenever the fallacy shall be detected, whether here or hereafter, the anguish of conscience must be increased, or (which is worse) left desperate.

#### *The remedies.*

To prevent and cure this mistake and error in the soul, by which it is fitted and prepared to catch any erroneous principle (which is but plausible) for its present relief and ease, I shall desire my reader seriously to ponder and consider the following *queries* upon this case.

*Query* 1. Whether by the vote of the whole rational world, a good trouble be not better than a false peace? Present ease is desirable, but eternal safety is much more so: and if these two cannot consist under the present circumstances of the soul, Whether it be not better to endure for a time those painful pangs, than feel more acute and eternal ones, by quieting conscience with false remedies before the time?

It is bad to lie tossing a few days under a laborious fever; but far worse to have that fever turned into a lethargy, or fatal apoplexy. Erroneous principles may rid the soul of its present pain and eternal hopes and safety together. Acute pains are better than a senseless stupidity. Though the present rage of conscience be

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\* Saltmarsh, in the title-page of his book called *Free-grace*, shews you the sovereign virtue of Antinomian principles, to quiet troubles of conscience of twelve years growth.

not a right and kindly conviction, yet it may lead to it, and terminate in faith and union with Christ at last, if Satan do not this way practise upon it, and quench it before its time.

*Query 2.* Bethink yourselves seriously, whether troubles so quieted and laid asleep, will not revive and turn again upon thee with a double force as soon as the virtue of the drug (I mean the erroneous principle) hath spent itself?

The efficacy of truth is eternal, and will maintain the peace it gives for ever; but all delusions must vanish, and the troubles which they danimed up for a time, break out with a greater force. Satan employs two sorts of witches, some to torment the bodies of men with grievous pain and anguish: but then he hath his white witches at hand to relieve and ease them. And have these poor wretches any great cause, think you, to boast of the cure, who are eased of their pains at the price of their souls?

Much like unto this, are the cures of inward troubles by erroneous principles. I lament the case of blinded Papists, who by pilgrimages and offerings to the shrines of titular saints, attempt the cure of a lesser sin by committing a greater; is it because there is not a God in Israel, who is able in due season to pacify conscience with proper and durable gospel-remedies, that we suffer our troubles thus to precipitate us into the snares of Satan, for the sake of present ease?

*Query 3.* Read the scriptures, and enquire, Whether God's people, who have lain long under sharp inward terrors, have not at last found settlement and inward peace, by those very methods which the principles that quiet you do utterly exclude!

If you will fetch your peace from a groundless notion, that your sins were pardoned, and your persons justified from all eternity, and therefore you may apply boldly and confidently to yourselves the choicest promises and privileges in the gospel, without any regard to faith or repentance wrought by the Spirit in your souls. I am sure holy David took another course for the settlement of his conscience, Psal. li. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. And it hath been the constant practice of the saints in all ages, to clear their title to the righteousness of Christ wrought without them, by the works of his Spirit wrought within them.

*Cause 6.* The next evil temper in the subject, preparing and disposing it for error, is an easy CREDULITY, or sequacious humour in men, rendering them apt to receive things upon trust from others, without due and thorough examination of the grounds and reasons of them themselves.

This is a disposition fitted to receive any impression seducers please to make upon them; they are said to deceive the hearts of the simple, *απαθων*, i. e. credulous, but well-meaning people that

suspect no harm. It is said, Prov. xiv. 15. "The simple believeth every word." Through this sluice, or flood-gate, what a multitude of errors in Popery have overflowed the people! They are told, they are not able to judge for themselves, but must take the matters of their salvation upon trust from their spiritual guides; and so the silly people are easily seduced, and made easily receptive of the grossest absurdities their ignorant leaders please to impose upon them.

And it were to be wished, that those two points, viz. *Ministorum muta officia, et populi cæca obsequia*, the dumb services of their ministers, and the blind obedience of the people had staid within the Popish confines. But, alas! how many simple Protestants be there, who may be said to carry their brains in other men's heads; and like silly sheep, follow the next in the track before them; especially if their leaders have but wit and art enough to hide their errors under specious and plausible pretensions. How many poisonous drugs hath Satan put off under the gilded titles of *antiquity, zeal for God, higher attainments in godliness, new lights, &c.* How natural is it for men to follow in the track, and be tenacious of the principles and practices of their progenitors? Multitudes seem to hold their opinions *jure hæreditario*, by an hereditary right, as if their faith descended to them the same way their estates do.

The emperor of Morocco told King John's ambassador, that he had lately read St. Paul's epistles; 'And truly (said he) were I now to chuse my religion, I would embrace Christianity before any religion in the world; but every man ought to die in that religion he received from his ancestors.'

Many honest, well-meaning, but weak Christians, are also easily beguiled by specious pretences of new light, and higher attainments in reformation. This makes the weaker sort of Christians pliable to many dangerous errors, cunningly insinuated under such taking titles. What are most of the erroneous opinions now vogue'd in the world but old errors under new names and titles?

#### *The remedies.*

The remedies and preventions in this case, are such as follow:

*Remedy 1.* It is beneath a man to profess any opinion to be his own, whilst the grounds and reasons of it are in other men's keeping and wholly unknown to himself.

If a man may tell gold after his father, then sure he may, and ought to try and examine doctrines and points of faith after him. We are commanded to be ready to give an account of the hope that is in us, and not to say, This or that is my judgment or opinion, but let others give an account of the ground and reason of it.

I confess, if he that leads me into an error were alone exposed to the hazard, and I quit and free, whatever become of him, it were quite another thing: but when our Saviour tells us, Mat. xv. 14. that *both* (that is, the follower as well as the leader) *fall into the ditch*; at my peril be it, if I follow without eyes of my own: that is but a weak building that is shored up by a prop from a neighbour's wall. How many men have ruined their estates by suretiship for others? but of all suretiship, none so dangerous as spiritual suretiship. 'We neither ought (as a late Worthy speaks) *defy* the judgment of the weakest, nor yet, on the other side, *to defy* the judgment of the strongest Christian.' He that pins his faith upon another man's sleeve, knows not whither he will carry it.

*Remedy 2.* As you ought not to abuse your Christian privilege and liberty, to try all things, 1 Thes. v. 21. so neither on the other side to undervalue or part with it. See the things that so much concern your eternal peace with your own eyes.

I shewed you before, that this liberty is abused by extending it too far; and under the notion of improving all things, many embolden themselves to innovate and entertain any thing? yet, beware of bartering such a precious privilege for the fairest promises others can make in lieu of it. I would not slight nor undervalue the piety and learning of others, nor yet put out my own eyes to see by theirs.

*Remedy 3.* Before you adventure to espouse the opinions of others, diligently observe and mark the fruits and consequences of those opinions in the lives of the zealous abettors and propagators of them: *By their fruits* (saith Christ) *ye shall know them.*

When the opinion or doctrine naturally tends to looseness, or when it sucks and draws away all a man's zeal, to maintain and diffuse it, and practical religion thereby visibly languishes in their conversations, it is time for you to make a pause, before you advance one step farther towards it.

*Cause 7.* The next evil disposition that I shall note in the subject, is a vain CURIOSITY of mind, or an itching desire to pry into things unrevealed, at least, above our ability to search out and discover.

It is an observation, as true as ancient, *Pruritus aurium, scabies ecclesiae*, itching ears come to a scab upon the face of the church. The itch of novelty produceth the scab of error. Of this disease the apostle warns us, 2 Tim. iv. 3. "For the time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching

“ears.” Nothing will please them but new notions, and new modes of language, method, tone and gesture.

Sound doctrine is the only substantial and solid food that nourishes and strengthens the heart of the new creature; but vain Sceptics nauseate and despise this as trite, vulgar, cheap, and low. Nothing humours them but novelties and rarities; their unsettled brains must be wheeled about, *διδασχαις ποικιλαις κ̄ ξεναις*, with *diverse and strange doctrines*, Heb. xiii. 9. Novelty and variety are the only properties that commend doctrines to wanton palates: Hence it is they so boldly intrude into things they have not seen, Col. ii. 18. These Cyril fitly calls *των πολυμηρον κυριστηα*, the domineerings, or darings of bold spirits.

The schoolmen have filled the world with a thousand ungrounded fancies, as the distinct offices and orders of angels; and higher flights of fancy than these, which seem to be invented for no other end or use, but to please the itching ears of the curious.

There is not only a *vesana temeritas Genethliacorum*, a wild and daring rashness of *astrologers*, presuming to foretel futurities, and the fates of kingdoms, as well as particular persons, from the conjunctions and influences of the stars; but there is also found as high a presumption and boldness among men in matters of religion.

Satan is well aware of this humour in men, and how exceeding serviceable it is to his design: and therefore, having the very knack of clawing and pleasing itching ears with taking novelties, he is never wanting to feed their minds with a pleasing variety, and fresh succession of them; new opinions are still invented, and minted, in which the dangerous hooks of error are hid: if men were once cured of this spiritual itch, and their minds reduced to that temper and sobriety, as to be pleased with, and bless God for the plain revealed truths of the gospel, Satan would drive but a poor trade, and find but few customers for his erroneous novelties.

#### *The remedies.*

The proper remedies to cure this itch after novelty, or dangerous curiosity of the mind are,

*Remedy 1.* Due reflection upon the manifold mischiefs that have entered into the world this way.

It was this curiosity and desire to know, that overthrew our first parents, Gen. iii. 6. “When the woman saw that the tree “was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eye, and a “tree to be desired to make one wise; she took of the fruit “thereof.” The very same way by which he let in the first error, he hath let thousands into the world since that day. Nothing is more common in the world, than for an old error to obtain afresh under the name of new light. Satan hath the very art of turning

stale errors after the mode of the present times, and make them current and passable as new discoveries, and rare novelties.

Thus he puts off Libertinism, the old sin of the world, under the title of *Christian Liberty*. What a troop of Pagan idolatrous rites were by this means introduced among the Papists? A great part of popery is but *Ethnicismus redivivus*, Heathenism revived. The Pagans *Pontifex maximus*, was revived under the new title of Pope. The *Gentiles Lustrations* in the Popish *holy water*. Their *novendiale sacrum*, or *sacrifice* nine days after the burial of the party, in the Popish Masses for the dead. Their *Alvarium Fratrum*, in cloisters of Monks and Friars; their *Enchanters*, in Popish Exorcists? their *Asyla*, in Popish Sanctuaries; with multitudes more of Pagan rites, quite out of date in Christendom, introduced again under new names in Popery; as was intimated, Rev. xi. 2. and Rev. xiii. 15.

*Remedy 2.* Be satisfied that God hath not left his people to seek their salvation, or spiritual substance among curious, abstruse and doubtful notions; but in the great, solid, and plainly revealed truths of the gospel\*, John xvii. 3. "This is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." *In facili et absoluto stat æternitas*: the great concerns of our salvation are plain and easy to be understood.

*Remedy 3.* Vain curiosity is a dangerous snare of Satan: By such trifles as these, he devours our time, eats up our strength, and diverts our minds from the necessary and most important business of religion. Whilst we immerse our thoughts in these pleasing, but barren contemplations, heart-work, closet-work, family-work, lie by neglected. Whilst we are employed in garnishing the dish with flowers, and curious figures, the cunning cheat takes away the meat our souls should subsist by.

*Cause 8.* Pride and arrogancy of human reason is another evil disposition, moulding and preparing the mind for errors. When men are once conceited of the strength and prespicacity of their own carnal reasons and apprehensions, nothing is more usual than for such men to run mad with reason into a thousand mistakes and errors. To this cause Ecclesiastical historians ascribe the errors that infest the church †.

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\* What we may be ignorant of without a fault, we should not pry into with danger.

† Philosophy or the wisdom of human reason, which always hath done very much hurt to religion, hath produced of itself not a few Heresies; for at that time philosophical studies chiefly flourished; and men by their own subtilties, or (as they thought) demonstrations, were so confirmed in their opinions, that they thought nothing true which differed from their preconceived opinions. *Magdeb in. Cent. 2. cap. 5. p. 59.*

Reason, indeed, is the highest natural excellency of man; it exalts him above all earthly creatures, and, in its primitive perfection, almost equalized him with angels, Heb. ii. 7. The pleasures which result from its exercises and experiments, transcend all the delights and pleasures of sense. How common is it for men to dote upon their own intellectual beauty, and glory in their victories over weaker understandings? And though the reason of fallen men is greatly wounded and weakened by sin; yet it conceits itself to be as strong and clear as ever; and, with Samson, when his locks were shorn, goes forth as before time; being neither sensible of its own weakness, or of the mysterious and unsearchable depths of scripture.

Reason is our arbiter, and guide, by the institution and law of nature, in civil and natural affairs: It is the beam, and standard, at which we weigh them: It is an home-born judge, and king in the soul: Faith comes in as a stranger to nature, and so it is dealt with, even as an intruder into reason's province, just as the Sodomites dealt with Lot: It refuseth to be an underling to faith. Out of this arrogancy of carnal reason, as from Pandora's Box, swarms of errors are flown abroad into the world.

By this means Socinianism first started, and hath since propagated itself. They look upon it as a ridiculous, and unaccountable thing to reason, that the Son should be co-equal, and co-eternal with the Father: That God should forgive sins freely, and yet forgive none but upon full satisfaction. That Christ should make that satisfaction by his sufferings, and yet be *pars læsa*, the party offended, and so make satisfaction to himself; with many more of the like stamp.

Yea Atheism, as well as Socinianism, are births from this womb. It is proud and carnal reason, which quarrels at the creation of the world, and seems to triumph in its uncontrollable maxim, *Ex nihilo nihil fit: Out of nothing, comes nothing*. It looks upon the doctrine of the resurrection with a deriding smile, as a thing incredible. It thinks it hard and harsh, that God should command men to turn themselves to him, and threaten them with damnation, in case of refusal; and yet, at the same time, man should not have in himself a sufficient power, and a free will to do this, without the supernatural, and preventing grace of God. It thinks it a ridiculous thing for such a great and solemn ordinance of God as baptism is, to pass upon such a subject as an infant of a week old, which is not capable to understand the ends and uses of it. Hence it is, some over-heated zealots have not stuck to say, That we have as good warrant, and reason to \* baptize *cats, dogs,*

and *horses*, as we have to baptize infants. Oh the madness of carnal reason!

*The remedies.*

To take down the arrogance, and prevent the mischief of carnal reasonings, let us be convinced,

*Remedy 1.* That it is the will of God that reason in all believers should resign to faith, and all ratiocination submit to revelation.

Reason is no better than an usurper when it presumes to arbitrate matters belonging to faith and revelation.\* Reason's proper place is to sit at the feet of faith, and instead of searching the secret grounds and reasons, to adore and admire the great and unsearchable mysteries of the gospel. None of God's works are unreasonable, but many of them are above reason. It was as truly, as ingenuously said by one; *Never doth reason shew itself more reasonable than when it ceaseth to reason about things that are above reason.* "Where is the wise? Where is the Scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God; it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe," 1 Cor. i. 20, 21. It is not reason, but faith that must save us.

The wisdom of God in the gospel is wisdom in a mystery, even hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory, 1 Cor. ii. 7. Such wisdom as the most eagle-eyed rationalists, and famed Philosophers of the world understood not. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit, *ibid.* ver. 9, 10.

*Remedy 2.* Be convinced of the weakness and deep corruption of natural reason; and this will restrain its arrogance, and make it modest and wary.

A convinced and renewed soul is conscious to itself of its own weakness and blindness; and therefore dares not pry audaciously into the *arcana cæli*, nor summon the great God to its bar: it finds itself posed by the mysteries of nature, and therefore concludes itself an incompetent judge of the mysteries of faith.

The arrogance of reason is the reigning sin of the unregenerate; though it be a disease with which the regenerate themselves are infected. When conviction shall do its work upon the soul, the

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\* Man having sinned by pride, the wisdom of God humbles him at the very root of the tree of knowledge, and makes him deny his own understanding, and submit to faith; or else for ever to lose his desired felicity. *Laud. against Fisher, p. 5.*

plumes of spiritual pride quickly fall; and it saith with Job, "Once have I spoken, but I will speak no more; yea, twice, but "I will proceed no further," q. d. I have done, father, I have done; "I have uttered things that I understand not," Job xlii. 3. Spiritual illumination cures this ambition.

*Remedy 3.* Consider the manifold mischiefs and evils flowing from the pride of reason.

It doth not only fill the world with errors and distractions, but it also invades the rights of heaven, and casts a vile reflection upon the wisdom, sovereignty, and veracity of God. It lifts up itself against his wisdom, not considering that "the foolishness of God "is wiser than men," 1 Cor. i. 25. It spurns at his glorious sovereignty, not considering that "he giveth no account of his matters," Job xxxiii. 13. It questions his veracity, in saying with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" John iii. 9.

*Cause 9.* The last evil disposition I shall here take notice of in the subject, is rash and ignorant *zeal*; a temper preparing the mind both to propagate furiously, and receive easily, erroneous doctrines and opinions.

When there is in the soul more heat than light, when a fervent spirit is governed by a weak head; such a temper of spirit Satan desires and singles out as fittest for his purpose, especially when the heart is graceless, as well as the understanding weak. A blind horse, of an high mettle, will carry the rider into any pit, and venture over the most dangerous precipices.

Such were the superstitious Jewish Zealots; they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. This *κακοζηλία*, *blind zeal*, St. Paul charges justly upon the *Jewish bigots*, Rom. x. 2. as the proper cause of their dangerous errors about the great point of justification; and surely no man understood the evil of it more than he, who, in his unregenerate state, was transported by it to the most furious persecution of the saints, Acts xxvi. 11. and even to dotage, and extreme fondness upon the erroneous traditions of his fathers, Gal. i. 14.

Blind zeal is a sword in a madman's hand. No persecutor like a conscientious one, whose erroneous conscience offers up the blood of the saints to the glory of God, John xvi. 2. The blind but zealous Pharisees would compass sea and land to make one proselyte, Matt. xxiii. 15. as our modern Pharisees, the Jesuits, have since done, who have mingled themselves with the remotest and most barbarous nations, to draw them to the Romish errors. Of the same temper was the false teachers taxed by the apostle, Gal. iv. 17. they zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you (*viz.* from our society and ordinances) that you might affect them.

And as it is the great instrument by which Satan propagates errors, so it makes a fit temper in the souls of the people to receive them: For, by this means error gains the possession of the affections, without passing a previous and due test by the understanding, and so gains the soul by the advantage of a surprize. Every thing, by how much the more weak and ignoble it is, by so much the more it watcheth upon surprisals and advantages. Error cares not to endure the due examination and test of reason; and therefore seeks to gain by surprisal what it despairs of ever gaining by a plain and fair trial.

There be few Errorists in the world of Alexander's mind, who would *rather lose the day than steal the victory*. Hence it comes to pass, that the greatest number of those they lead captives are silly women, as the apostle speaks, who are the most affectionate, but least judicious sex.

From this blind zeal it is that they cunningly wind their erroneous opinions into all their discourses where they have any hope to prevail. A rational and modest contradiction puts them into a flame, it breaks the nearest bonds of friendship and society.

Rabshakeh in 2 Kings xviii. would not treat with Hezekiah's counsellors of state, but with the common people upon the wall: And error cares not to treat with sound reason, able to sift it through the scripture-search, but with the affections; as well knowing, it is in vain to make war in reason's territories without first gaining a party among the affections.

#### *The remedies.*

The best *defensatives* against erroneous contagions, in this case, are to be found in the following particulars.

*First Defensative.* Reflect seriously and sadly upon the manifold mischiefs occasioned every where, and in all ages of the world, by rash zeal.

Revolve church-histories and you shall find, that scarce any cruel persecution hath flamed in the world, which hath not been kindled by blind zeal. Turn over all the records, both of Pagan and Popish persecutions, and you shall still find these two observations confirmed and verified.

*First,* That ignorant zeal hath kindled the fires of persecution; and, *Secondly,* That the more zealous any have been for the ways of error and falsehood, still the more implacably fierce and cruel they have been to the sincere servants of God. None like a superstitious *devoto* to manage the devil's work of persecution thoroughly, and to purpose. They will rush violently and head-long into the blood of their dearest relations, or most eminent saints, to whose sides the devil sets this sharp spur. Superstitious zeal draws all

the strength and power of the soul into that one design; and wo to him that stands in the way of such a man, if God interpose not betwixt him and the stroke. It was a rational wish of him that said, *Liberet me Deus ab homine unius tantum negotii*, God deliver me from a man of one only design.

Now consider, reader, if thy judgment be weak, and thy affections warm, how much thou liest exposed, not only to errors which may ruin thyself, but also to tongue and hand-persecution, wherein Satan may manage thy zeal for the injury or ruin of those that are better than thyself: And withal, consider how many dreadful threatenings are found in scripture against the instruments of persecution, so employed and managed by Satan.

Certainly, reader, it were better for thee to stand with thy naked breast before the mouth of a discharging cannon, than that thy soul should stand under this guilt, before such a scripture-threatening as that, Psal. vii. 13. "He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors." And none more likely to become such than those of thine own temper and complexion; especially if grace be wanting in the heart, whilst zeal for erroneous principles eats up the affections.

*Second Defensative.* Consider what mischief zeal for an error will do to thine own soul as well as others.

It will wholly ingross thy time, thoughts, and strength: so that if there be any gracious principle in thee, it shall not be able to thrive and prosper. For look as a fever takes off the natural appetite from food, so will erroneous zeal take off thy spiritual appetite from meditation, prayer, heart-examination, and all other the most necessary and nourishing duties of religion, by reason whereof thy grace must languish.

When thy soul, with David's, should be filled and feasted as with marrow and fatness, by delightful meditations of God upon thy bed, thou wilt be rolling in thy mind thy barren and insipid notions which yield no food or spiritual strength to thy soul; thou wilt lie musing how to dissolve the arguments and objections against thine errors, when thou shouldest rather be employed in solving the just and weighty objections that lie against thy sincerity and interest in Christ, which were time far better improved.

*Third Defensative.* Consider how baneful this inordinate zeal hath been to Christian society, lamentably defacing, and almost dissolving it every where, to the unspeakable detriment of the churches.

We read, Mal. iii. 16. of a blessed time, when they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for

them that feared the Lord and thought upon his name. Oh happy time! Halcyon days! I myself remember the time when the zeal of the saints spent itself in provoking one another to love and good works in joint and fervent prayer, in inward, experimental, and edifying communion; my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is cast down within me: for alas! alas! how do I see every where Christian communion turned into vain ganglings? Churches and families into mere cockpits? Men's discoursings falling as naturally into contentions about trifles as they were wont to do into heavenly and experimental subjects, to the unspeakable disgrace and damage of religion.

*Fourth Defensative.* That opinion is justly to be suspected for erroneous which comes in at the postern-door of the affections; and not openly and fairly at the right gate of an enlightened and well-satisfied judgment. It is a thief that cometh in at the back-door, at least strongly to be suspected for one. Truth courts the mistress, makes its first and fairest addresses to the understanding. Error bribes the handmaid, and labours first to win the affections, that by their influence it may corrupt the judgment.

And thus you see, besides the innocent occasion, viz. *God's permission of errors* in the world for the trial of his people, nine proper causes of errors found in the evil dispositions of the minds of men, which prepare them to receive erroneous doctrines and impressions, viz.

1. A wrangling humour, at the pretended obscurity of Scripture.
2. The abuse of that Christian liberty purchased by Christ.
3. Slothfulness in searching the whole word of God.
4. Fickleness and instability of judgment.
5. Eagerness after anodines, to ease a distressed conscience.
6. An easy credulity, in following the judgments and examples of others.
7. Vain curiosity, and prying into unrevealed secrets.
8. The pride and arrogancy of human reason.
9. Blind zeal, which spurs on the soul, and runs it upon dangerous precipices.

We next come to consider the principal, impulsive cause, by which errors are propagated and disseminated in the world.

*Cause 10.* Come next, in the proper order, to consider the principal, impulsive cause of errors; which is SATAN, working upon the pre-disposed matter he finds in the corrupt nature of man.

\* The centurists, speaking of the strange and sudden growth of

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\* Which thing indeed doth abundantly show that the malice of Satan is dread-

errors and heresies immediately after the planting of the gospel by Christ and the apostles, ascribe it to Satan.

Satan was a liar from the beginning, and abode not in the truth : \* He hates it with deadly hatred, and all the children and friends of truth. And this hatred he manifesteth sometimes by raising furious storms of persecution against the sincere professors of it, Rev. iii. 10. and sometimes by clouds of heresies and errors with design to darken it. In the former he acts as a roaring lion ; in the latter as a subtle serpent, 2 Cor. xi. 5. " I fear, lest as the " serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty ; so your minds should " be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

He is exceedingly skilful and dexterous in citing and wrestling the scriptures to serve his vile designs and purposes ; and as impudently daring as he is crafty and cunning ; as appears in the history of Christ's temptation in the desert, Matth. iv. 6. where he cites one part of that promise, Psal. xci. 11. and suppresseth the rest ; shews the encouragement, viz. *He shall give his angels charge over thee* ; but clips off the limitation of it, viz. *to keep thee in all thy ways : In viis, non in precipitiis*, In our lawful ways, not in rash and dangerous precipices ; as Bernard well glosseth.

And it is worth observation, that he introduceth multitudes of errors into the world under the unsuspected notions of admirable prophylactics, and approved preservatives from all mischiefs and dangers from himself. Under this notion he hath neatly and covertly slid into the world, holy-water crossings, reliques of saints, and almost innumerable other superstitious rites.

Erroneous teachers are the ministers of Satan, however they transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, 2 Cor. xi. 15. and the subtle, dangerous errors they broach, are fitly stiled by the Spirit of God, *τα βαθυ του Σαταν*, *the depths of Satan*, Rev. ii. 24. The corrupt teachers, the Gnostics, &c. called them depths, i. e. great mysteries, high and marvellous attainments in knowledge ; but the Spirit of God fits a very proper epithet to them. They are satanical depths and mysteries of iniquity. Now the level and design of Satan herein is double.

*First*, He aims at the ruin and damnation of those that vent and

ful, who being conquered and overthrown by Christ, hath nevertheless attempted to sully, rent, and almost overturn his word and the whole frame of religion by horrible opinions and blasphemies. But we should have in view these monstrous inventions of this malignant spirit, and, as it were, these first springs of many heresies which afterwards increased in a wonderful manner, like rivers receiving others in them, &c. *Hist. Magdeb. cent. 1. lib. 2. cap. 5. p. 568.*

\* When Swinkfield sent his books to Luther, he told the messenger the devil was the author of them : and the Lord rebuke thee, Satan, was the answer he returned to them.

propagate them; upon which account the apostle calls them *αιρεσεις αποδηειας*, 2 Pet. ii. 1. destructive, or (as we render it) damnable heresies. And because God will preserve the souls of his own from this moral contagion, therefore,

*Secondly*, He endeavours, by lessor errors, to busy the minds, and check the growth of grace in the souls of the saints, by employing them about things so foreign to true godliness, and the power thereof, Heb. xiii. 9.

### *The remedies.*

The *rules* for prevention and recovery are these that follow:

*Rule 1.* Pray earnestly, for a thorough change of the state and temper of thy soul, by sound conversion and regeneration.

Conversion turns us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, Acts xxvi. 18. They are his own slaves and vassals that are taken captive by him at his will, 2 Tim. ii. 16. A sanctified heart is a sovereign defensive against erroneous doctrines; it furnishes the soul with spiritual eyes, judicious ears, and a distinguishing taste, by which it may discern both good and evil, truth and error, Heb. v. 14. yea it puts the soul at once under the conduct of the Spirit, and protection of the promise, John xvi. 13. and though this doth not secure a man from all lesser mistakes, yet it effectually secures him from greater ones, which are inconsistent with Christ and salvation.

*Rule 2.* Acquaint yourselves with the wiles and methods of Satan, and be not ignorant of his devices, 2 Cor. ii. 11.

When once you understand the wash and paint with which he sets off the ugly face of error, you will not easily be enamoured with it. Pretences of devotion upon one side, and of purity, zeal, and reformation upon the other; though they be pleasant sounds to both ears, yet the wary soul will examine, before it receive, and admit doctrinal points under these gilded titles. Those that have made their observations upon the stratagems of Satan will heedfully observe both the tendency of doctrines, and the lives of their teachers; and if they find looseness, pride, wantonness in them, it is not a glorious title, or magnificent name that shall charm them. They know Satan can transform himself into an angel of light; and no wonder if his ministers also be transformed into ministers of righteousness, 2 Cor. xi. 14, 15.

*Rule 3.* Resign your minds and judgments in fervent prayer to the government of Christ, and conduct of the Spirit; and in all your addresses to God pray that he would keep them chaste and pure, and not suffer Satan to commit a rape upon them: Plead with

God that part of Christ's prayer, John xvii. 17. "Sanctify them; through thy truth; thy word is truth;"

*Rule 4.* Live in the conscientious and constant practice of all those truths and duties God hath already manifested to you.

This will bring you under that blessed promise of Christ, John vii. 17. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Satan's greatest successes are among idle, notional, and vain professors; not humble, serious, and practical Christians.

*Cause 11.* Having considered and dispatched the several internal causes of error, found in the evil dispositions of the seduced, as also the impulsive cause, viz Satan, who fits suitable baits to all these sinful humours and evil tempers of the heart; we come next to consider the instrumental cause, employed by Satan in this work, viz. the false teacher, whom Satan makes use of as his seeds-man, to disseminate and scatter erroneous doctrines and principles into the minds of men, ploughed up and prepared by those evil tempers before-mentioned, as a fit soil to receive them.

The choice of instruments is a principal part of Satan's policy. Every one is not fit to be employed in such a service as this. All are not fit to be of the council of war, who yet take their places of service in the field. A *rustic* carried out of the field, on board a ship at sea, though he never learned his compass, nor saw a ship before, can, by another's direction, tug lustily at a rope; but he had need be an expert artist that sits at the helm and steers the course. The worst causes need the smoothest orators; and bad ware, a cunning merchant to put it off\*.

Deep-pated men are coveted by Satan, to manage this design: None like an eloquent Tertullus to confront a Paul, Acts xxiv. 1. A subtle Eccius to enter the list, in defence of the Popish cause, against the learned and zealous reformers. When the duke of Buckingham undertook to plead the bad cause of Richard the third, the Londoners said, *They never thought it had been possible for any man to deliver so much bad matter, in such good words and quaint phrases* †.

The first instrument chosen by Satan to deceive man, was the serpent; because that creature was more subtle than any beast of the field. There is not a man of eminent parts, but Satan courts and solicits them for his service. St. Austin told an ingenious, but un-

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\* That the impostures of Montanus were subtle and cunning, and such as might easily impose on some by a fair show, is plain from this, that he admitted almost the whole scripture, and, as Epiphanius writes, taught the same things concerning God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which the church of Christ did teach. *Mogdeb. Cent. 2. cap. 5. p. 77.*

† Continuation of Daniel's History, p. 233.

sanctified scholar, *Cupit abs te ornari diabolus*, The devil courts thy parts to adorn his cause. He surveys the world, and wherever he finds more than ordinary strength of reason, pregnancy of wit, depth of learning, and elegance of language, that is the man he looks for.

These are the men that can almost indiscernably sprinkle their errors among many precious truths, and wrap up their poisonous drugs in leaf-gold or sugar. \* Maresius notes of Crellius and his accomplices, That by the power of their eloquence, and sophistry of their arguments, they were able, artificially, to clothe horrible blasphemies to allure the simple.

And, like the Hyæna, they can counterfeit the voice of the shepherds, to deceive and destroy the sheep. There is (saith a late † Worthy) an *erudita nequitia*, a learned kind of wickedness, a subtle art of deceiving the minds of others. Upon which account the Spirit of God sometimes compares them, 2 Pet. ii. 3. to cunning and cheating *tradesmen*, who have the very art to set a gloss upon their bad wares with fine words, *πλαστοίς λόγοις υμᾶς ἐμπορεύονται*, they buy and sell the people with their ensnaring and feigned words ‡. And sometimes he compares them to cunning *gamesters*, that have the art and sleight of hand, to cog the *die*, to deceive the unskilful, and win their game, Eph. iv. 14. *ἐν τῇ κούρειᾳ*, &c.

And sometimes the Spirit of God compares them to *witches* themselves, Gal. iii. 1. *τῆς υμᾶς ἐξασκάνει*, *Foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?* How many strange fates have been done upon the bodies of men and women, by *witchcraft*? But far more and stranger upon the souls of men, by the *magic of error*. Jannes and Jambres, performed wonderful things in the sight of Pharaoh, by which they deceived and hardened him; and unto these false teachers are compared.

Such a man was Elymas the sorcerer, who laboured to seduce the deputy, Sergius Paulus, though a prudent man, Acts xiii. 7, 8, 9, 10. *Oh full of all subtilty, and all mischief, thou child of the devil!* saith Paul unto him. The art of seduction from the ways of truth and holiness, discovers a man to be both the *child* and *scholar* of the devil.

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\* With the disguise of painted eloquence, with sophistical arguments taken from scripture, perniciously wrested, and with false and deceitful argument, the most horrid blasphemies are artfully dressed up to ensnare the simple. *Pres. to Hyd. Socin.*

† Mr. W. Gurnal, *Christian Armour*, Part 2. p. 33.

‡ There are certain vain talkers and seducers of men's minds, not in reality Christians, but men making a trade and merchandize of Christianity, who so mix the poison of error with some sweetening allurements, as with wine and honey, that he who drinks of that palatable potion, being taken with its sweetness, is unawares betrayed to death, *Ignatius. Epist. to Trallian. p. 68.*



many precious truths of God are this day, and with this design, defamed as legal and carnal doctrines; and those that defend them, as men of an *Old-Testament* spirit?

Humiliation for sin, contrition of spirit, &c. fall under disgrace with many, and indeed all qualifications and pre-requisites unto coming to Christ, as things not only needless, but pernicious unto the souls of men, although they have not the least dependence upon them: yea, faith itself, as a pre-requisite unto justification, as no better than a condition pertaining to *Adam's covenant*.

And so for the persons of orthodox ministers: you see into what contempt the false teachers would have brought both the person and preaching of Paul himself, 2 Cor. x. 10. "His bodily presence (say they) is weak, and his speech contemptible."

*Secondly*, Their other common artifice is, to insinuate their false doctrines among many acknowledged and precious truths, which only serve for a convenient vehicle to them; and besides that, to make their errors as palatable and gustful as they can to the vitiated appetite of corrupt nature. The fore-mentioned worthy\* hath judicially observed how artificially Satan hath blended his baneful doses, to please the palate of *carnal reason*, *spiritual pride*, and the desire of *fleshly liberty*.

*Carnal reason* is that great idol which the more intelligent part of the carnal world worships. And are not the Socinian heresies as pleasant to it, as a well mixt *julep* to a *feverish stomach*.

*Spiritual pride* is another *Diana*, which obtains greatly in the world; and no doctrine like the Pelagian, and Semipelagian errors to gratify it. A doctrine that sets fallen nature upon its legs again, and persuades it, it can go alone to Christ; at least, with a little external help of moral suasion, without any preventing or creating work in the soul. That goes down glib and gratefully.

And then for *fleshly liberty*, How doth those that are fond of it rejoice in that doctrine, or opinion, which looses nature from the yoke of restraint? How does the poor deluded *Papist* hug himself, to think he hath liberty by his religion, to let loose the reins of his lust to all sensualities, and quit himself from all that guilt by *auricular* confession to the priest once a year? How doth the *Familist* smile upon that principle of his, which tells him, the gospel allows more liberty than severe legal teachers think fit to tell them of: they press repentance and faith; but Christ hath done all this to thy hand.

*Cause 12.* Having considered the several causes of errors found in the evil dispositions of the seduced, as also the impulsive and instrumental causes, namely, Satan and false teachers employed by him; I shall now proceed to discover some special and most successful methods frequently used by them, to draw the minds of

men from the truth. Amongst which, that which comes first to consideration, is the great skill they have in representing the abuses of the ordinances of God and duties of religion, by wicked men to scare tender and weak consciences from the due use of them, and all further attendance upon them.

The abuse of Christ's holy appointments is so cunningly improved to serve this design, that the minds of many well-meaning persons receive such deep disgust at them, that they are scarce ever to be reconciled to them again. A strong prejudice is apt to drive men from one extreme upon another, as thinking they can never get far enough off from that which hath been so scaringly represented to them. Thus, making good the old observation, *Dum vitant stulti vitia, in contraria currunt*; they run from the troublesome smoke of superstition into the fire of an irreligious contempt of God's ordinances, split themselves upon Charybdis to avoid Scylla.

*Ex. gr.*

The Papists having deeply abused the ordinance of Baptism by their corruptive mixtures and additions of the superstitious *cross, chrism, &c.* Part whereof is not sufficiently purged to this day by the reformation; and finding also multitudes of carnal Protestants dangerously resting upon their supposed baptismal regeneration to the great hazard of their salvation; which mistake is but too much countenanced by some of its administrators: they take from hence such deep offence at the administration of it to any infants at all, (though the seed of God's covenanted people) that they think they can never be sharp enough in their invectives against it; nor have they patience to hear the most rational defences of that practice.

So, for that scriptural heavenly duty of *singing*: what more commonly alleged against it than the abuse and ill effects of that precious ordinance? How often is the nonsense and error of the common translation, the rudeness and dulness of the metre of some Psalms, as Psal. vii. 13. as also the cold formality with which that ordinance is performed by many who do but parrotize? I say, how often are these things buzzed into the ears of the people to alienate their hearts from so sweet and beneficial a duty?

And very often we find it urged to the same end, how unwarrantable and dangerous a thing it is for carnal and unregenerated persons to appropriate to themselves in singing those praises and experiences which are peculiar to the saints; not understanding or considering that the singing of Psalms is an ordinance of Christ appointed for teaching and admonition, as well as praising, Col. iii. 16. "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and "hymns," &c. \* Thus Antinomianism took, if not its rise, yet

\* The divinity of former ages, saith Mr. Saltmarsh, put but a grain or drachm of

its encouragement from the too rigorous pressing of the law upon convinced sinners.

If Satan can prevail first with wicked men to corrupt and abuse God's ordinances by superstitious mixtures and additions; and then with good men to renounce and slight them for the sake of those abuses; he fully obtains his design, and gives Christ a double wound at once; one by the hands of his avowed enemies, the other by the hands of his friends, no less grievous than the first. First, wicked men corrupt Christ's ordinances, and then good men nauseate them.

### *The remedies.*

The proper remedies against errors, insinuated by the abuses of duties are such as follow:

*Remedy 1.* Let men consider, that there is nothing in religion so great, so sacred and excellent, but some or other have greatly corrupted, or vilely abused them.

What is there in the whole world more precious and excellent than the free-grace of God? and yet you read, Jude 4. of some that turned the grace of our Lord into lasciviousness. What more desirable to Christians than the glorious liberty Christ hath purchased for them by his blood, and settled upon them in the gospel-charter? A liberty from Satan, sin, and the rigour and curse of the law; and yet you read, 1 Pet. ii. 16. of them that used this liberty for a cloak of maliciousness. It is true Christ came to be a sacrifice for sin, but not a cloak for sin; to set us at liberty from the bondage of our lusts, not from the ties and duties of our obedience. Under the pretence of this liberty it was, that the Gnostics, Carpocratians, and the Menandrians of old, did not only connive at, but openly taught and practised all manner of lewdness and uncleanness.

\* St. Augustine, in his book of heresy, makes this sad complaint, "The Menandrians (saith he) do willingly embrace all uncleanness as the fruit of the grace of God towards men." And not only the liberty purchased by Christ, but the very person and gospel of Christ are liable to abuses; and oftentimes, through the corruptions of men's hearts, become stones of stumbling, and rocks of offence. What then? Shall we renounce the grace of God, our Christian liberty, the very gospel, yea, and person of Christ

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gospel to a pound of law, in their receipts for distempered souls. *Vide Saltmarsh of free grace, p. 40.*

\* *Menandriana omnem turpitudinem libenter amplexi sunt, tanquam gratiæ Dei ergo homines fructum.* August. lib. de heres.

himself, because each of them have been thus vilely abused by wicked wretches? At the peril of our eternal damnation be it, if we do so. *Blessed is he* (saith our Lord) *that is not offended in me.* Beware, lest by this means Satan at once wound the Lord Jesus Christ by scandal, and thy soul by prejudice.

*Remedy 2.* Consider also, that it is the nature and temper of a gracious soul to raise his esteem, and heighten his love to those ordinances, which are most abused and disgraced by men.

The more they are abused and opposed by others, the higher they should be valued and honoured by us: Psal. cxix. 126, 127. "It is time for thee, Lord, to work; for they have made void thy law; therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold; q. d. The more they are disgraced and abused by wicked men, the more do I honour and prize them. A like spirit with David's was found in Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 14. "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant; thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword."

A good man will strive to honour and secure those truths and duties most, which he finds under most disgrace or danger: he loves the truth sincerely, who cleaves to it, and stands by it under all opposition. This is a good trial of the soundness of thy heart, and purity of thine ends in religion; such a proof as the honour and reputation of religion in the world can never give thee.

In Solomon's time the Jews were very cautious how they admitted and received proselytes, suspecting that by-ends and worldly respects may draw men to it; but they were not so cautious in times of disgrace and persecution.

*Remedy 3.* Before you part with any ordinance or practice in religion, bethink yourselves whether you never found any spiritual blessings or advantages in that path which you are now tempted to forsake.

Had you never any spiritual meltings of your hearts and affections in that heavenly ordinance of *singing*? And, may there not be now thousands of mercies in your possession, in consequence to, and as the fruit of your solemn dedication to God in baptism, by your covenanted parents? For my own part, I do heartily and solemnly bless God for it upon this account; and so I hope thousands besides myself have cause to do: however, such a practice may by no means be deserted by you, because abused by others.

*Cause 13.* Another method and artifice by which false teachers draw multitudes of disciples after them, is, by granting to their ignorant and ambitious followers the *Liberty of Prophecy*: flattering them into a conceit of their excellent gifts and attainments, when God knows they had more need to be catechised and taught

the principles of Christianity than undertake to expound and apply those profound mysteries unto others.

Satan hath filled the church and world with errors and troubles this way.

\* When ignorant and unexperienced persons begin to think it a low and dull thing to sit from year to year under other men's teachings, and to fancy that they are wiser than their teachers, their pride will quickly tempt them to shew their ignorance, and that mischievous ignorance will prove dangerous to the truth and troublesome to the church. The apostle forbids the ordination of a novice, lest he be puffed up, and fall into the condemnation of the devil; and in 1 Tim. i. 7. he shews us the reason why some swerved and turned aside unto vain janglings: and it was this, that *they desired to be teachers of the law, neither understanding what they said, nor whereof they affirmed*; that is, they affected to be preachers, though not able to speak congruously, with tolerable sense and reason.

I do not here censure and condemn the use and exercise of the gifts of all private Christians. There are to be found amongst them some persons of raised parts, and answerable modesty and humility, who may be very useful when called to service in extraordinary cases by the voice of Providence; or exercise their gifts in a probationary way, or in a due subordination unto Christ's public officers and ordinances, by and with the consent of the pastor and congregation.

But when unqualified and uncalled persons undertake such a work out of the conceit and pride of their own hearts, or are allured to it by the crafty designs of erroneous teachers, partly to overthrow a public, regular, and standing ministry in the church, to which end the scriptures are manifestly abused, such as Jer. xxxi. 34. Rom. xii. 6. 1 Cor. xiv. 1 Pet. iv. 10. with many others: this is the practice I here censure, which, like a Trojan horse, hath sent forth multitudes of erroneous persons into the city of God to infest and defile it.

I cannot doubt but many a sincere Christian may be drawn into such employment, which puts him into a capacity of honouring God in a more eminent way, which is a thing desirable to an honest and zealous heart: and that the temptation may be greatly strengthened upon them by the plausible suggestions of cunning seducers, who tell them, that those ministers who oppose and

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\* Ignorant and wicked men, not minding, that the same inspired writer never advances contrary assertions on one and the same subject; and regarding only the sound of the words, do overlook the sense and scope of them; and observing that there is a diversity or seeming contrariety in the same scripture expressions, they have apostatized into error, not understanding the true meaning of them.

condemn this practice, do it as men concerned for their own interest, as desirous to monopolize the work to themselves, and as envying the Lord's people: and that Christ hath given them a greater liberty in this case, than those men will allow them. By this means they draw many after them, and fix them in their erroneous ways.

I have no mind at all here to expose the follies and mischiefs introduced this way, as neither being willing to grieve the hearts of the sincere on one side, nor gratify scoffing Atheists and profane enemies to religion upon the other side; only this I will, and must say, that by this means the sacred scriptures are most injuriously wrested, the peace and order of the church disturbed, and a great many mistakes and errors introduced.

*The remedies.*

The prevention and cure of errors this way introduced, or likely to be introduced into the church, is by pondering and applying the following *considerations*.

*Consideration 1.* Let all that encourage others, or undertake by others encouragement such a work as this, for which they are not competently qualified, and unto which they are not regularly called, consider seriously with themselves what danger they cast their own and other men's souls upon.

The apostle tells us, 2 Pet. iii. 16. "That the unlearned and unstable do wrest the scriptures to their own destruction." Danger enough, one would think, to scare them from it, did not the same sin of ignorance which makes them wrest the scriptures, cause them also to slight and overlook the danger of so doing\*.

Certainly, my friends, it is a great deal safer and more excusable, to put an ignorant rustic into an apothecary's shop to compound a medicine of drugs and spirits which he understands not, and confidently administer the same to the bodies of men, than for such persons as are led by ignorance and confidence to intermeddle with the ministerial employment; the one perhaps, by mistake, may poison men's bodies; but the other their souls. An ignorant master, or pilot, that never learned the compass, is rather to be trusted among rocks and quicksands than a proud ignorant person with the conduct of souls.

*Consideration 2.* What daring presumption is it to intrude ourselves into so great and weighty an employment, without any call or warrant of Christ? Rom. x. 14. "How shall they call upon him of whom they have not heard? and, how shall they hear with-

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\* Athanasius declares, that the malicious wresting of scripture brings forth errors. *Athanasius against Appolinar.*

“out a preacher; and how shall they preach except they be sent?”

These mysteries must be committed to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others: those abilities must be examined, 1 Tim. iii. x. and the exercise of them warranted by a due and orderly appointment thereunto, 1 Tim. iv. 14. else, (as one well observes) *In tam præpostero discipline ruina tot essent sensuo, quot capita; tot dissensus quot sensus*; we shall have as many senses of scripture as we have preachers, &c.

If every Phæton, that thinks himself able, shall undertake to drive the chariot of the sun, no wonder if the world be set on fire. Gifts and abilities of mind are not of themselves sufficient to make a preacher. Some lawyers at the bar may be as skilful as the judge upon the bench, but without a commission they dare not sit there.

*Consideration 3.* The honour you affect, to vent your unsound notions with liberty, is, in scripture-account, your greatest dishonour.

The scripture reckons false teachers among the basest of the people: *The prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail*, i. e. the basest part of the whole body of the people, Isa. ix. 15. And so far is due gospel-liberty from countenancing such dangerous irregularities, that we find in a clear prophecy of gospel-times, what shame God will pour upon them, Zech xiii. 4, 5. “They shall be brought with shame enough to confess, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.”

*Consideration 4.* How much more safe, regular and advantageous were it for such as you, to fill your own proper places under able and faithful gospel-ministers, and to suck the breasts of fruitful ordinances, than to consume and pine away by sucking your own breasts? I mean, living upon your own weak and insufficient gifts, in the sinful neglect of Christ’s appointments?

*Cause 14.* False teachers also propagate their errors by a spirit of *Enthusiasm*, the usual concomitant of erroneous doctrine; and draw away multitudes after them, by pretending to extraordinary revelations, visions, and voices from heaven, which seem to give great credit to their way and party †.

This was an old trick and practice of deceivers, Deut. xiii. 1. to give signs and wonders in confirmation of their way, which signs

† But some being deceived by the predictions of the false prophets, of whom both God and the true prophets had forewarned them, fell from the word of God, and forsook the true tradition; for all these, being entangled with the snares of the devil, (which they ought to have foreseen and avoided) have profaned the divine Name and worship, through their foolishness. *Lact. book 4. chap. 50. on Heres.*

the Lord may permit to fall out to prove his people, ver. 2, 4. though, for the most part, they are confuted by their unanswerable events.

In the beginning of our *reformation* by Luther, Calvin, &c. there sprang up a generation of men, called Swinkfeldians, great pretenders to revelations and visions, who were always speaking of *deifications*; and an higher strain of language they commonly used among themselves, than other serious Christians understood, and therefore scornfully entitled orthodox and humble Christians, who stuck to the scripture-phrase, and wholesome form of sound words, Grammatists, Vocabulists, Literalists, &c. “These men (as \* “Sculterus in his annals, *ad annum* 1525. observes of them) were “so entangled in certain enthusiastic snares, that they thought it “the highest impiety to renounce them; and they had befooled “multitudes with their magnificent words of *Illumination, Revelation, Deification*.

Much of the same spirit was Thomas Muntzer, John of Leyden, David George, Jacob Behemen, &c. whose cloudy nonsense, enigmatical expressions, and wilful obscurity, drew many into a strange admiration of them; they all pretend to an higher knowledge of mysteries than what the gospel is acquainted with; and yet give us (as Mr. Baxter well observes) neither reasons with Aristotle, nor miracles with Christ and his apostles, to cause us to believe any of their new revelations. *Vide Baxter of the Sin against the Holy Ghost*, p. 148.

Of the same bran were our late Familists in England, of whom Henry Nichols was the chief leader, who decried the written word as a dead letter; and set up their own fond conceits and fancies under the notion of the Spirit, against whom that heavenly and learned man, Mr. Samuel Rutherford, seasonably and successfully appeared: Hacket, Copinger, and Arthington were of the same tribe; who lived a while wrapt up in Antinomian fancies, which at last brake forth into the highest and most horrid blasphemies.

Another art they make use of to seduce the credulous is a pretence unto the spirit of prophecy; and great success they promise themselves this way among the weak, but curious vulgar. And to this end Satan hath inspired and employed some cunninger heads to invent very pleasing predictions and prophecies, in favour of that party whom he designs to deceive. And how catching and bewitching these things are, gaining more respect among these vain spirits, than the divine unquestionable prophecies of scripture, this age hath had full and sad experience.

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\* *Irretiti suis quibusdam Enthusiasticis laqueis, unde se extricari summam putant impietatem: dementabant multos magnificis istis verbis, Illuminatio, Revelatio, Deificatio, &c.*

Now the design of Satan in these things, is to gain credit of those *sects*, as people peculiarly favoured and beloved of God above others; as if they were the particular favourites of heaven, as Daniel was; and so to draw the multitude to admire their persons, and espouse their errors.

### *The Remedies.*

Now the *remedies* in this case are such as follow.

*Remedy 1.* Whatever doctrine or practice seeks credit to itself this way, falls justly thereby under suspicion, that it wants a solid scripture-foundation.

God hath not left his people to seek satisfaction in such uncertain ways as these; but hath given them a surer word of prophecy, to which they do well to take heed, 2 Pet. i. 19. He hath tied us to the standing rule of the word, forbidding us to give heed to any other voice or spirit, leading us another way, Isa. viii. 19. 2 Thes. ii. 1, 2. Gal. i. 8. Scripture-light is a safe and sure light, a pleasant and sufficient light.

The scripture (saith Luther) is so full, that as for visions and revelations, *Nec curo, nec desidero*, I neither regard nor desire them. And when he himself had a vision of Christ, after a day of fasting and prayer, he cried out, *Avoid Satan, I know no image of Christ, but the scriptures.* An hankering mind after these things, speaks a sickly and distempered state of soul, as longing after trash in young distempered persons, doth a distempered state, or ill habit of body.

Mr. William Bridges somewhere tells us of a religious lady of the Empress's bed-chamber, whose name was Gregoria, who being greatly troubled about her salvation, wrote to Gregory, that she would never cease importuning him, till he had sent her word, that he had obtained a revelation from heaven, that she should be saved; to whom he returned this answer; *Rem difficilem postulas et inutilem*, Thou requirest of me that which is difficult to me, and unprofitable for thee.

*Remedy 2.* Consider how often the world hath been abused by the tricks and cheats of that officious spirit, the devil, in such ways as these.

What hath propagated idolatry among Heathens and Christians more than this? *Hinc fluxerunt multæ peregrinationes, monasteria, delubra, dies festi et alia*, saith Lavater, on Job xxxiii. Pilgrimages, monasteries, shrines of saints, holidays, &c. have been introduced by this trick. It were endless to give instances of it in the histories of former ages\*.

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\* Of the prophecies, visions, and pretended inspirations of Storke, Pfeiffer,  
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We have a notable late account of it among ourselves, in a book entitled, [*A discovery of the notorious Fulschood and Dissimulation, contained in a book, stiled, The gospel way confirmed by miracles,*] licensed and published 1649, wherein is laid open to the world, the free confession of Ann Wells, Matthew Hall, &c. deluding the people of Whatfield, in Suffolk, with such pretended voices, visions, prophecies, and revelations, the like have scarcely been heard of in England since the reformation. Multitudes of people were deluded by them.

At length the Lord extorted from this woman a full confession of the notorious falseness of these things, by a terrible vision of hell; her partizans laboured four days to suppress and stifle it, but to no purpose; for the horrors of conscience prevailed with her to confess the notorious dissimulations contained in that book, before the people of Whatfield and a justice of the peace. And thus the Lord out-shot Satan in his own bow.

*Remedy 3.* Consider how difficult, yea, and impossible it is for a man to determine, that such a voice, vision, or revelation, is of God; and that Satan cannot feign or counterfeit it; seeing he hath left no certain marks by which we may distinguish one spirit from another: *an albus? an ater?*

Sure we are, Satan can transform himself into an angel of light; and therefore abandoning all those unsafe and uncertain ways, whereby swarms of errors have been conveyed into the world, let us cleave inseparably to the sure word of prophecy, the rule and standard of our faith and duty.

*Cause 15.* Another way in which false teachers discover their subtilty with great success is, in *timing* their assaults and nicking the proper season, when the minds of men are most apt and easy to be drawn away by their fair and specious pretences.

Such a season as this, they find about the time of men's first conversion, or soon after their implantation into Christ. Now it is that their affections are most lively and vigorous, though their judgments be but weak. They have now such strong and deep apprehensions of the grace and love of Christ, and such transcendent zeal for him, that they easily embrace any thing whereby they conceive he may be honoured and exalted. They have also such deep apprehensions, and powerful aversations as to sin, that they are in danger to fly even from truth and duty itself, when it shall be artificially represented to them as sin. For not only that which is *malum per se*, sin indeed; but that which is *male coloratum*, painted with sin's colours, is apt to scare and fright them.

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Behold, Warendrop, &c. with the efficacy of them on the deluded people, and fatal consequences of them both to the deceived, and deceivers. See *Mr. Samuel Rutherford's Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist*, p. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

Besides, these young converts or novices, have not had time to confirm and root themselves in the truth; and trees newly planted, are much more easily drawn up, than those that have spread and fastened their roots in the earth. It is observable what a swarm of false teachers troubled the churches of Corinth, Galatia, and Philippi, at, and newly after, their first planting: and what danger those young Christians were in, abundantly appears in the apostle's frequent cautions and holy jealousies over them: he bids them "beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the circumcision," Phil. iii. 2. "I fear lest by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ," 2 Cor. xi. 3. he was afraid of the Galatians, lest he had bestowed upon them labour in vain, Gal. iv. 11. he would not give place to false brethren, no, not for an hour, Gal. ii. 5. charges the Romans to receive them that were weak in the faith, but not to doubtful disputations, Rom. xiv. 1. All which, and many more expressions, discover his grounded jealousy, and their extraordinary danger of seduction at their first plantation. A novice in Christianity, is the person Satan seeks for: Strong believers are not in such apparent danger as little ones in Christ, 1 John v. 21. *Little children keep yourselves from idols.*

And the reason is, because keen affections, matched with weak judgments, give a mighty advantage to seducers. Children are apt to be taken with beautiful appearances and fine shews; and erroneous teachers have the very knack to set a gloss of extraordinary sanctity upon their dangerous opinions. Hence those persons that promoted the sect of the Nicolaitans, made use of a cunning woman, who, for her skill in painting errors with the colours of truth, got the name of Jezebel, Rev. ii. 20. That queen was famous for the art of painting, 1 Kings xvi. and so was this false prophetess: Indeed there was scarce any eminent sect of Errorists or Heretics mentioned in church-history, but some curious feminine artist hath been employed to lay the beautiful colours upon it. So we find Simon Magus had his Helena; Corpocrates his Marcellina: Mantanus his Priscilla and Maximilla. And the curious colours of holiness, zeal, and free grace, artificially laid upon the face of error, how wrinkled and ugly soever in itself, sets it off temptingly and takingly to weak and injudicious minds.

Moreover, erroneous teachers are great boasters: They usually give out to the world what extraordinary comforts they meet with in their way, which proves a strong temptation to young converts, who have been so lately in the depths of spiritual trouble, to try at least, if not embrace it, for the expected comfort's sake.

Ah, how many pious ministers in England, upon such grounds and pretences as these, have had their spiritual children rent from them as soon as born? they have travailed as in birth for them; and no sooner did they begin to take comfort in the success of their labours, but to the great grief and discouragement of their hearts, they have been this way bereaved of them. Those that have owned them as their spiritual fathers one month, would scarce vouchsafe to own them when they have met them in the streets another month. Many sad instances I could give of this, and as remarkable as they are fresh and recent; but I silence particulars. Oh! see the advantage Satan and his instruments gain by nicking such a critical season as this is.

*The cure, or remedy.*

The remedies in this case are twofold: the first respects the spiritual father, and the second the spiritual children; both are concerned in the danger, and the Lord help both to attend to their duty.

*Remedy 1.* Let all those whose ministry God blesses with the desirable fruits of conversion, look carefully after the souls of young converts.

No nurse should be more tender and careful of her charge than a minister should be; and unto the care of a tender nurse Paul compareth his care over the young converts in Thessalonica, 1 Thess. ii. 7. for, alas! they lie exposed to all dangers, they are credulous, and seducers cunning; they want judgment to discern truth from error; have not yet attained unto senses exercised, and age in Christ to discern good from evil; when errors are made palatable, children will be hankering after them; and seducers have the very art to make them so\*.

Shepherds, look to your flocks; imitate the great shepherd of the sheep, who gathereth the lambs with his arms, and carries them in his bosom; visit them frequently, exhort and warn them diligently, and use all means to establish them in the present truths.

*Remedy 2.* Let young converts, and weak Christians, look carefully to themselves by an heedful attendance unto the following truths.

*First,* It is not safe to try, nor upon trial likely that you should find Christ in one way, and comfort in another. God doth not

\* — *Veluti pueris absynthia tetra medentes  
Cum dare conantus, prius oras pocula circum  
Contingunt dulci mellis flavoque liquore.*

usually bless those ways to men's comfort and edification, into which they turn aside from that good way wherein they first met with Christ and conversion. The same ministry and ordinances, which are appointed and blessed for the one, are likewise appointed and commonly blessed for the other, Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13.

*Secondly*, It is a manifest snare of the devil (and you may easily discern it) to take you off from the great work you are newly engaged in, by entangling your minds with notions that are foreign to it. Your hearts are now warm with God; Satan labours this way to cool and quench them; the cunning cheat labours to steal away the sweet and nutritive food which is before you, and lay the hard and dry bones of barren controversies, and insipid notions in their room. Your business is not to form syllogisms, or study solutions to cunning arguments about lower and lesser matters, so much as it is by prayer, and self-examination, to clear your interest in Christ, and to solve those doubts that lie with weight upon your spirits, with reference to that great concern.

*Thirdly*, It is a sad thing to grieve the hearts of those faithful ministers, that have travailed in pain for us, and rejoiced in our conversion as the seal of their ministry. Oh! serve not your godly ministers, as the hen is sometimes served, that hath long brooded, brought forth, and with much care and self-denial, nourished up young partridges, which, as soon as fledged, take the wing, and return no more to her.

*Cause 16.* There is yet another artifice of false teachers, to draw men into errors, and that is, by pressing the consciences of those they have made some impressions upon, unto all *haste* and *speed*, openly to declare their new opinions, and avow and own them before the world; as knowing that this will rivet and fix them to all intents and purposes.

When they find men under half convictions and strong inclinations to their way, they are sure then to ply them with a thick succession of motives and arguments, to join themselves by a free and open profession, to that erroneous party, which are headed by themselves.

And the arguments usually pressed to this purpose are,

1. The danger of delay.
2. The comfort of declaring themselves.

1. They press them with the danger of the least delay, by telling them, That now they must live every day and hour in known sin, and hold the truth of God in unrighteousness, the evil whereof they skilfully aggravate; and the more tender and sensible the conscience is, the deeper impressions such discourses make, although the case indeed will not bear the weight they lay upon it, as having not that due allowance God gives of time and means of ful

information in matters of this nature; yea, possibly driving them into as great a snare by precipitation, and too hasty engagements under a doubting conscience.

2. They press them to a quick resolution with the expectations of abundance of comfort, inward peace and joy, which will result from a full engagement of themselves, and open declaration of their judgment; proselyting to a party being the main design they drive at.

This was the very art and method by which Satan prevailed with Eve to swallow the bait, Gen. iii. 5. "For God doth know, that "in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and "ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;" q. d. The sooner thou tastest, the better; for the first taste will give thee a godlike knowledge, and marvellous advancement of thy understanding: didst thou but know the benefit that would accrue to thee hereby, thou wouldst not delay one moment: And thus by setting before her the speedy and immediate benefits of eating he prevailed, and drew her into the fatal snare.

In this, the ministers of Satan imitate the ministers of Christ. As these press men to make haste to Christ, lest by consulting with flesh and blood, and listening to the temptations of Satan, hopeful inclinations should be blasted in the bud; so the others push men on to hasty resolutions, lest by hearkening to the voice of God's Spirit, and their own consciences, the design they have so far advanced, should be lost and disappointed. The ministers of Christ urge men to a speedy change of their company, and to associate themselves with spiritual and profitable Christians, as well knowing of what great use this will be to confirm and strengthen them in the ways of God: So errorists, in like manner, vehemently urge them to associate with their party, as knowing how one wedges in and fixes another in the ways of error; for such causes Satan pushes on half convictions into hasty resolutions, quick dispatch being his great advantage. This the apostle intimates, Gal. i. 6. "I marvel " (saith he) that ye are so soon removed," &c. *ερω τα χεως*, what, so soon! yes, if it had not been so soon, it might never have been at all: for errors (as one ingeniously observes) like fish, must be eaten fresh and new, or they will quickly stink.

#### *The cure, or remedy.*

The *remedies* and *preventatives* in this case are such as follow:

*Remedy* 1. Consider that hasty engagements, in weighty and disputable matters, have cost many souls dear.

As hasty marriages have produced long and late repentance; so hath the clapping up of an hasty match betwixt the mind and error. By entertaining of strange persons, men sometimes entertain angels

unawares; but by entertaining of strange doctrines, many have entertained devils unawares. It is not safe to open the door of the soul, to let in strangers in the night; let them wait till a clear day-light of information shew you what they are.

*Remedy 2.* Weighty actions require answerable deliberations. It was the worthy saying of Augustus Cæsar \*, “That is soon enough, that is well enough.” There be many things to be considered and thoroughly weighed, before a man change his judgment and embrace a new doctrine or opinion. Luther, in his epistle to the ministers of Norimberg, cites an excellent passage out of Basil †, “He that is about to separate himself from the society of his brethren, had need to consider many things even unto anxiety, to beg of God the demonstration of truth, with many tears; and to pass many solitary nights with waking eyes, before he attempt, or put such a matter into execution.” By the vote of the whole rational world, time and consideration ought to be proportionate to the weight of an undertaking.

*Remedy 3.* The only season men have to weigh things judiciously and impartially, is before their affections be too far engaged, and their credit and reputation too much concerned.

Men are better able to weigh doctrines and opinions, whilst they are other men’s, than when they have espoused them, and made them their own. Before an opinion be espoused, the affections do not blind and pervert the judgment, as they do afterward. Self-love pulls down the balance at that end which is next us ‡. If therefore, by hasty resolution, you lose this only proper and advantageous season of deliberation, you are not like to find such another.

*Remedy 4.* Trust not to the clearness of your own unassisted eyes, nor to the strength of your single reason; but consult, in such cases, with others that are pious and judicious, especially your godly and faithful ministers; and hearken to the counsels they give you. Paul justly wondered that the Galatians were so soon removed: and well he might; for, had they not a Paul to consult with, before they gave their consent to false teachers? or, if he was at a distance from them, about the work of the Lord in remote places, had they no godly and judicious friends near them, whose prayers and assistances they might call in, as Daniel did, Dan. ii. 17. Woe unto him that is alone in a time of temptation,

\* *Satis celeriter quicquid commode geritur.*

† *Multa anxie considerare eum portet, et multas noctes absumere insomnes, et cum multis lacrymis petere a Deo veritatis demonstrationem, qui se a fratribus separari vult.*

‡ *Perit omne judicium, cum res transit in affectum, i. e. When the affections are biased, judgment is lost.*

except the Lord be with him by extraordinary assistance and direction.

*Remedy 5. Lastly,* Suspect that opinion (as justly you may) for erroneous, that is too importunate, and pressing upon you, and will not allow you due time of consideration, and means of information: That which is a truth to-day will be a truth to-morrow; but that which looks like a truth to-day, may be detected, and look like itself, an odious error, to-morrow: And this is the reason of that post-haste that Satan and his factors make to gain our present consent, lest a speedy detection frustrate the suit, and spoil the design. The uses follow in six consecutaries.

*Consecutary 1.* From all that hath been said about errors, we see in the first place, the great usefulness and plain necessity of an able, faithful standing ministry in the church.

One special end of the ministry, is the establishment of the people's souls against the errors of the times, Eph. iv. 11, 14. "He gave some apostles, &c. that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men," &c. Ministers are shepherds; and without a shepherd how soon will the flock go astray? Moses was absent but a few days from the Israelites, and at his return found them all run into snares of idolatry. A sheep is *animal sequax*, a creature that follows a leader. One straggler may mislead a whole flock. A minister's work is not only to feed, but defend the flock. "I am set (saith Paul) for the defence of the gospel," Phil. i. 17. An orthodox and faithful minister is a double blessing to the people; but woe to that people, whose ministers, instead of securing them against errors, do cause them to err, Isa. ix. 16. they are the dogs of the flock: Some in scripture are called dumb dogs, who, instead of barking at the thief, bite the children; but faithful ministers give warning of spiritual dangers. So did the worthy ministers of London, Worcestershire, Devon, &c. in their testimonies against errors.

*Consecutary 2.* This discourse shews us also how little quietness and peace the church may expect, till a greater degree of light and unity be poured out upon it; what by persecutions from without it, and troubles from within, little tranquillity is to be expected. It is a note of St. Bernard's, that the church hath sometimes had *pacem a Paganis, sed raro aut nunquam a filiis*, peace sometimes from Pagan persecutors, but seldom or never any peace from her own children.

We read, Zech. xiv. 7. the whole state of the Christian church, from the primitive days to the end of the world, set forth under the notion of one day, and that a strange day too, the light of it shall *neither be clear nor dark, nor day nor night, but an evening-time*

*it shall be light*; i. e. a day full of interchangeable and alternate providences; sometimes persecutions, heresies, and errors prevail, and these make that part of the day dark and gloomy; and then truth and peace break forth again, and clear up the day. Thus it hath been, and thus it will be, until the evening of it, and at evening time it shall be light; then light and love shall get the ascendant of error and divisions. Most of our scuffles and contentions are for want of greater measures of both these.

*Consectary 3.* From the manifold causes and mischiefs of errors before-mentioned, we may also see what a choice mercy it is to be kept sound in judgment, stedfast and unmoveable in the truths and ways of Christ. A sound and stedfast Christian is a blessing in his generation, and a glory to his profession. It was an high encomium of Athanasius, *Sedem maluit nutare, quam syllabam*; i. e. He would rather lose his seat, than a syllable of God's truth. Soundness of judgment must needs be a choice blessing; because the understanding is the *το ηγημονικον*, that leading faculty which directs the will and conscience of man, and they his whole life and practice. How often, and how earnestly doth Christ pray for his people, that they may be kept in the truth? It is true, orthodoxy in itself is not sufficient to any man's salvation; but the conjunction of an orthodox head, with an honest sincere heart, does always constitute an excellent Christian, Phil. i. 10. Happy is the man that hath an head so hearted, and an heart so headed.

*Consectary 4.* By this discourse, we may further discover one great and special cause and reason of the lamentable decay of the spirit and power of religion, amongst the professors of the present age.

It is a complaint more just than common, that *we do all fade as a leaf*. And, what may be the cause? Nothing more probable, than the wasting of our time and spirits in vain janglings and fruitless controversies, which the apostle tells us, Heb. xiii. 9. have not profited, i. e. they have greatly damnified and injured them that have been occupied therein. Many controversies of these times grow up about religion, as suckers from the root and limbs of a fruit-tree, which spend the vital sap that should make it fruitful.

\* It is a great and sad observation made upon the state of England by some judicious persons, That after the greatest increase of religion, both intensively in the power of it, and extensively in the number of converts, what a remarkable decay it suffered both ways,

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\* England in four years became a sink and puddle of all errors and sects; no province since the beginning of the world, in so short a time produced so many heresies as this. *Honor. Reg. de Statu Eccles. Britan. p. 1.*

when, about the year forty-four, controversies and disputations grew fervent among professors. Since that time our strength and glory have very much abated.

*Consectary 5.* From this discourse we may also gather the true grounds and reason of those frequent persecutions which God lets in upon his churches and people: These rank weeds call for snowy and frosty weather to subdue and kill them.

I know the enemies of God's people aim at something else; they strike at profession, yea, at religion itself; and according to their wicked intention, without timely repentance, will their reward be: But, whatever the intention of the agents be, the issues of persecution are, upon this account, greatly beneficial to the church; the wisdom of God makes them excellently useful both to prevent and cure the mischiefs and dangers of errors. If enemies were not, friends and brethren would be injurious to each other. Persecution, if it kills not, yet, at least, it gives check to the rise and growth of errors: And, if it do not perfectly redintegrate and unite the hearts of Christians, yet, to be sure, it cools and allays their sinful heats; and that two ways: (1.) By cutting out for them far better and more necessary work. Now, instead of racking their brains about unnecessary controversies, they find it high time to be searching their hearts, and examining the foundations of their faith and hope, with respect to the other world. (3.) Moreover, such times and straits discover the sincerity, zeal, and constancy of them we were jealous of, or prejudiced against before, because they followed not us.

*Consectary 6. Lastly,* Let us learn hence both the duty and necessity of charity and mutual forbearance; we have all our mistakes and errors one way or other; and therefore must maintain mutual charity under dissents in judgment.

I do not say but an erring brother must be reduced if possible, and that by sharp rebukes too, if gentler essays be ineffectual, Tit. i. 13. and the wounds of a friend have more faithful love to them than the kisses of an enemy; and if God make us instrumental by that, or any other method, to recover a brother from the error of his way, he will have great cause both to bless God, and thank the instrument who thereby saves a soul from death, and hides a multitude of sins, James v. 20. It is our duty if we meet an enemy's ox or ass going astray, to bring him back again, Exod. xxiii. 4. much more the soul of a friend. Indeed we must not make those errors that are none; nor stretch every innocent expression to that purpose; nor yet be too hasty in meddling with contention till we cannot be silent and innocent; and then, whatever the expence be, truth will repay it.

## AN APPENDIX,

Containing a full and modest Reply to Mr. PHILIP CARY'S Rejoinder to my *Vindiciæ Legis et Fœderis*.

*Manifesting the badness of his Cause in the feebleness and impertinency of his Defence; and adding farther Light and Strength to the Arguments formerly produced in Defence of God's gracious Covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. and the Right of Believers' Infants to Baptism grounded thereupon.*

SIR,

**N**EXT to the not deserving a reproof is the due reception and improvement of it. You deserve a sharper reprehension for your temerity and obstinacy than I am willing to give you from the press; yet, in love to the truth and your own soul, reprove you I must, and I hope God will enable me to be both mild in the manner, and convincingly clear in the matter and cause thereof: It is better to lose the smiles than the souls of men. I dare not neglect the duty of a friend for fear of incurring the suspicion of an enemy. Several learned and eminent divines, who hath seen what hath publicly passed betwixt you and me, have returned me their thanks, and think you ought to thank me too for the pains I have taken to set you right, hoping you will evidence your self-denial and repentance by an ingenuous retraction of your errors.

But how will you deceive their expectations, and unbecome the character given you by your friends when they shall find the true measure both of your ability and humility, drawn by your own pen in the following rejoinder!

I have thoroughly considered your reply in the manuscript you sent me, which I hear is now in the press; and in the following sheets have given a full, and (I think) a final answer to whatsoever is material therein: And, it so falling out, that my discourse of *Errors* was just going under the press, whilst your rejoinder was there also, I thought it not convenient to delay my reply any longer, but to have my antidote in as great readiness as might be to meet it.

One inconvenience I easily foresee, that the pages of your manuscript, which I follow, may not throughout exactly answer to the print; but every intelligent reader will easily discern, and rectify

that, if my bookseller save him not that trouble, as I have desired him to do.

As to the controversy about the right of believers' infant-seed to Baptism, you have altogether adventured it the second time with the consent of your partizans, upon the three hypothesis, which (if I mistake not) I have fully confuted and baffled in my first answer: but, if my brevity occasioned any obscurity in that, I hope you shall find it sufficiently done here. Mean time you have given, and I accordingly take it for granted, that our arguments for Infant's Baptism stand in their full strength against you till you can better discharge and free your dangerous assertions from the errors and absurdities in which they are now more involved and intricated than before.

The weaker any thing is the more querulous it is. If scripture argument and clear reason will not support the cause I undertake, I am resolved never to call in passionate invectives and weak evasions for my auxiliaries as you have here done. The Lord give us all clearer light, tenderer consciences, exemplary humility, and ingenuity.

# VINDICIARUM VINDEX :

OR, A

## REFUTATION of the weak and impertinent *Rejoinder* of Mr. PHILIP CARY.

Wherein he vainly attempts the Defence of his absurd THESIS to the great abuse and injury of the Laws and Covenants of God.

AND must I be dipt once more in the water-controvesy? It is time for me to think of undressing myself, and making ready for my approaching rest, and employ those few minutes I have to spend in more practical and beneficial studies for my own and the church's greater advantage. And it is time for Mr. Cary to reflect upon his past follies, which have consumed too much of his own and other's time without any advantage; yea, to the apparent loss and injury of the cause he undertakes to defend.

When I received these sheets from him in vindication of his *Solemn Call*, I was at a stand, in my own resolutions, whether to let it pass (without any animadversions upon it) as a passionate clamour for a desperate cause; or give a short and full answer to his confused and impertinent rejoinder. But considering that I had under hand, at the same time, the foregoing *Treatise of The Causes and Cure of Mental Errors*, and that though my honest neighbour discovers much weakness in his way of argumentation, yet it was like to meet with some interested readers, to whom, for that reason, it would be the more suitable; and how apt such persons are to glory in the last word; but especially considering, that a little time and pains would suffice (as the case stands) to end the unseasonable controversy betwixt us, and both clear and confirm many great and weighty points of religion: I was, upon these considerations, prevailed with against my own inclination, to cast in these few sheets as a Mantissa to the former seasonable and necessary discourse of *errors*, resolving to fill them with what should be worth the reader's time and pains.

As for the rude insults, uncomely reflections, and passionate expressions of my discontented friend, I shall not throw back the dirt upon him, when I wipe it off from myself; I can easily forgive and forget them too: The best men have their passions, James v. 17. even *sweet-briars* and *holy thistles* have their offensive prickles.

I consider my honest neighbour under the strength of a temptation; it disquiets him to see the labours of many years, and the raised expectations of so great a conquest and triumph over men of renown all frustrated by his friend and neighbour, who had done his utmost to prevent it, and often foretold him of the folly and vanity of his attempt. Every thing will live as long as it can, and *natura vexata prodit seipsam*. But certainly it had been more for truth's honour and Mr. C—'s comfort to have confessed his follies humbly to God, and have laid his hand upon his mouth.

The things in controversy betwixt us are great and weighty, viz. the true nature of the Sinai laws in their complex body: the quality of God's covenant with Abraham; and the dispensation of the New Covenant we are now under. These are things of great weight in themselves, and their due resolutions are at this time somewhat the more weighty, because my Antagonist hath adventured the whole controversy of infants baptism upon them.

I have, in my *Vindiciæ Legis*, &c. stated the several questions clearly and distinctly; shewn Mr. C. what is no part of the controversy, and what is the very hinge upon which it turns; desired him, if he made any reply, to keep close to the just and necessary rules of disputation, by distinguishing, limiting, or denying any of my propositions; that the matters in controversy might be put to a fair and speedy issue. But, instead of that, I meet with a flood of words rolling sometimes to this part, and then to another part of my answer, and so back again, without the steady direction of art or reason. There may, for ought I know, be some things of weight in Mr. Cary's reply, if a man could see them for words; but, without scoff or vanity, I must say of the rational part of it as the poet said of the over-dressed woman,—*Pars minima est ipsa puella sui*, it is the least part of it. To follow him in his irregular and extravagant way of writing, were to make myself guilty of the same folly I blame him for: I am therefore necessitated to perstringe them, and reduce all I have to say under three general heads.

I. I shall clearly evince to the world that Mr. Cary hath not been able to discharge and free his own *thesis* from the horrid consequences and gross absurdities which I have laid to their charge in my first reply; but, instead thereof, in this feeble and unsuccessful attempt to free the former, he hath entangled himself in more and greater ones.

II. That he hath left my *arguments* standing in their full strength against him.

III. And then I shall confirm and strengthen my three *positions*,

which destroy the cause he manages by some farther additions of scripture, reason, and authorities, which, I hope, will fully end this matter betwixt us.

But, before I touch the particulars, two things must be premised for the reader's due information.

1. That the controversy about the true nature of the Sinai laws, both moral and ceremonial, complexly considered, is not that very hinge upon which the right of believers' infants to baptism depends; that stands as it did before, be the Sinai laws what they will: we do not derive the right of infants from any other law or covenant, but that gracious covenant which God made with Abraham, which was in being 430 years before Moses's law; and was no way injured, much less disannulled, by the addition of it, Gal. iii. 17. If Abraham's covenant be the same covenant of grace we are now under, the right of believers' infants to baptism is secured, whatever the Sinai covenant prove to be: which I speak not out of the least jealousy that Mr. Cary hath, or ever shall be able to prove it to be a pure Adam's covenant of works; but to prevent mistakes in the reader,

2. It must be heedfully observed also, that how free, gracious, and absolute soever the New Covenant be, (for God forbid that I should go about to eclipse the glory of free grace, on which my soul depends for salvation) yet that will never prove Abraham's covenant to be an abolished Adam's covenant of works, unless two things more be proved, which I never expect to see, viz.

*First,* That Abraham and his believing posterity, were bound, by the very nature and act of circumcision, to keep the whole law in their own persons, in order to their justification and salvation, as perfectly and perpetually, and under the same penalty for the least failure, as Adam was to keep the law in paradise.

*Secondly,* It must be further proved, That Abraham and all his believing offspring, who stood with him under that covenant, whereof circumcision was the initiating sign, were all saved in a different way from that in which believers are now saved under the gospel; for so it must be, if the addition of circumcision made it unto them an Adam's covenant of works. But this would be a direct contradiction to the words of the apostle, speaking of them who were under the covenant of circumcision, Acts xv. 11. "But we believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they." If he say, they stood, indeed, under that covenant, as a pure covenant of works, but were saved by another covenant; and so for many ages, the church of God stood absolutely under the covenant of works, and, at the same time, under the pure covenant of grace; the one altogether absolute and

free, the other wholly conditional: and though these two be, in their own natures, inconsistent and destructive of each other, yet so it was, that all the saints, for many ages, were absolutely under the one, and yet purely under the other: shall I then be censured for saying he speaks pure contradiction?

Possibly my reader will be tempted to think I abuse him, and that no man of common sense can be guilty of such an horrid absurdity: I must, whatever respect I have for Mr. C. once more tell him, before the world, that this is not only his own doctrine, but that very doctrine upon which he hath adventured the whole cause and controversy of infants baptism, which I therefore say is hereby become a desperate cause.

And this brings me to my first general head, viz.

1. First, *That Mr. Cary hath not been able to free his thesis from this horrid absurdity; but by struggling to do it, hath (according to the nature of errors) entangled himself in more and greater ones.*

Mr. Cary, in p. 174, 175. of his *Solemn Call*, was by me reduced to this absurdity, which he there owns, in express words, 'That Moses, and the whole body of the children of Israel, were absolutely under (without the exception of any) the severest penalties of a dreadful curse; and that the Sinai covenant could be no other than a covenant of works, a ministration of death and condemnation, and yet, at the same time, both Moses and all the elect, were under a pure covenant of gospel-grace: and if these were two contrary covenants in themselves, and just opposite the one to the other, as, indeed, they were, we have nothing to say, but, with the apostle, *O the depth*, &c.

This reader, is the position which must be made good by Mr. Cary, or his cause is lost; deformed issues do not look as if they had beautiful truth for their mother; no false or absurd conclusion can regularly follow from true premises. But hence naturally and necessarily follows this.

*Absurdity 1.* That Abraham, Moses, and all the believers under the Old Testament, by standing absolutely under Adam's covenant of works, as a ministration of death and condemnation; and, at the same time, purely under the covenant of grace, (as Mr. C. affirms they did) must necessarily during their lives, hang in the midway between life and death, justification and condemnation; and after death, in the midway between heaven and hell. During life, they could neither be justified nor condemned; justified they could not be, for justification is the soul's passing from death to life, 1 John iii. 14. John v. 24. Upon a man's justification his covenant, and state are changed: but the covenant and state of no man can be so changed, as long as he remains absolutely under the

severest penalties' and condemnation of the law, as Mr. C. affirms they did.

Again, condemned they could not be, seeing all that are under the pure covenant of grace (as he saith they were at the same time) are certainly in Christ, and to such there is no condemnation, Rom. viii. 1. nor ever shall be. John v. 24. "He that believeth, shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." What remains then, but that during life they could neither be perfectly justified, nor perfectly condemned; and yet, being absolutely under the severest penalties of Adam's covenant, they were perfectly condemned; and again, being under the pure covenant of grace, they must be perfectly justified?

And then, after death, they must neither go to heaven nor hell; but either be annihilated, or stick midway in *Limbo Patrum*, (as the Papists fancy) betwixt both. No condemned person goes to heaven, nor any justified person to hell. His position, therefore, which necessarily infers this gross absurdity, is justly renounced and detested by learned and orthodox divines.

The learned and acute \* Turretine, the late famous professor of divinity at Geneva, proving that the *Sinai law* could not be a pure covenant of works; brings this very *medium* to prove it, as a known truth, allowed by all men: 'The Israelites (saith he) with whom God covenanted, were already under Abraham's covenant, which was a covenant of grace, and were saved in Christ by it; therefore they could not be under the legal covenant. *Nemo enim simul potest duobus fœderibus tota specie distinctis subsse*: because no man can be under two covenants, specifically different, at the same time, as these two are.'

That great and renowned divine, Mr. William Strong †, gives four irrefragable arguments to prove that no man can stand under both these covenants at the same time, which in co-ordination, actually destroy and make void each other. 'If the first covenant stand, there is no place for the second; and if the second stand, the first is made void. And this, saith he, will fully appear, if we consider the direct contrariety in the terms of those two covenants. For, (1.) The righteousness of the first covenant is in ourselves, but the righteousness of the second is the righteousness of another, 1 John v. 11, 12. (2.) In the covenant of works, acceptance is first of the work, and afterwards of the person, Gen. iv. 7. but in the covenant of grace, the acceptance is first of the person, and then of the work, Gen. iv. 4. (3.) The first covenant was a covenant without a *priest*, but the second is

\* Turret, part 2. p. 290.

† Mr. Strong on the Covenant, p. 65, 67.

‘ a covenant with a *priest*. (4.) In the first covenant there is matter of glorying, but in the second there is none, Rom. iii. 27. So that these two can never consist, except you can compound, or reconcile these four opposites in the justification of the same person.’

To the same purpose, saith the excellent Mr. Samuel Bolton \*. If the law were a covenant of works, then were the Jews under a different covenant from us, and so none of them were saved, which the apostle gainsays, Acts xv. 11. or else they were both under a covenant of works, and a covenant of grace; but that they could not be; they are utterly inconsistent,’ *Ergo*. And thus all sound divines speak. I may therefore say of Mr. Cary’s position, as Ruveus before me did; *omnem absurditatem excedere videtur*, it seemeth to exceed all absurdities. A man may more rationally suppose two natures, and essential forms, in one body, and place the same thing under divers *species*, in the predicament of substance; yea, it were more tolerable to affirm, that *ex duobus entibus per se fit unum ens per se*, than to place any (as Mr. C. places all) of God’s people under two opposite covenants. If Mr. C. were absolutely under the condemnation of the law, would he not be purely justified, think you? Yet he places Abraham, Moses, and all believers with them, absolutely under the severest condemnation of the law, and the pure gospel-covenant at once.

But, to cover the shame and nakedness of his assertion, which places believers absolutely under Adam’s covenant, he is fain to make use of two *fig-leaves*, as Adam did.

(1.) And the first attempt he now makes, p. 4, 5, 6, 7. of his reply, is by way of retortion, by telling us, ‘ That the same pretended absurdities do fall as heavily, and a great deal more, on our doctrine, who affirm the Sinai law (complexly taken) to be a covenant of faith, or grace, than upon his, who makes them two essentially different covenants: because we are forced to comprize perfect doing, with the curse for non-performance, under the same covenant with believing; and that it cannot be denied, but that all the people of God were absolutely under the Sinai covenant, Gal. iii. 23. and Gal. iv. 4, 5. and consequently under the curse, Gal. iii. 10.’ This is the sum and substance of his first answer.

*Reply.* I will not be tempted to expose my neighbour to derision for this his strange answer; but rather propound two sober queries to him, and the reader, *viz.* (1.) What orthodox divines he ever met with, and what are their names, who are forced to comprize perfect doing, with the curse for non-performance, under the same

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\* Bolton’s Bounds, p. 133.

covenant with believing; and so make the two opposite covenants to be specifically one and the same? Name your men, with their books and pages; or retract, with shame and sorrow, what you have here abusively affirmed of them. Cameron, indeed, makes it a subservient covenant; the most a true, though obscure covenant of grace; but none comprize Adam's covenant with its curse in the new covenant. (2.) Whether it be imaginable, That the same absurdity can follow from their doctrine, that make the whole complex body of the Sinai law a covenant of grace, though more obscure, and so place all the people of God in those ages under it; as does necessarily follow his doctrine, who makes it a pure Adam's covenant of works, and places the church of God absolutely under the curse of it, and also under the pure covenant of grace at the same time? If grace and grace (how different soever in degrees of manifestation) be as opposite and repugnant, as grace and works, as justification and condemnation are, it is time for me to lay down my pen, for I have certainly lost my understanding to guide it any further.

But Mr. Cary will say, If you do not, yet Mr. Roberts doth comprize both in one covenant. I say you abuse Mr. Roberts \* in so affirming; for he saith, in that very place you refer to, that believing in Christ was ultimately and chiefly intended in the Sinai covenant; and perfect doing was only urged upon Israel in subordination, and tendency to that believing. And upon that ground it is he affirms that covenant to be a covenant of faith, and so denominates it from the chief scope and intent of it. He sets not *doing* and *believing*, in co-ordination, or places the church under two opposite covenants, as you do; but places the law where it ought to be placed, in subordination to faith and Christ? and therefore you have abused that good man as well as me, and yourself most of all, in this your first impertinent and silly answer.

(2.) But you have one evasion more, p. 7. where you say, 'That how harsh and dreadful soever the terms, or conditions, of the legal covenant were to those that were under it, as Moses, and the whole body of the Israelites, then were; yet the grace of the gospel covenant far superseded, and was by far more victorious, powerful, and efficacious,' Rom. v. 17, 20.

*Reply.* Worse, and worse; your discourse mends like sour ale in summer. Here you fancy the two covenants (under which you place the whole church of God) to be in a conflict one with the other; condemnation and justification, struggling one with another

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\* Roberts on the Covenant, p. 775, 776, 777.

as I told you before they would : but, however, the grace of the new covenant prevails at last, and gets the victory over the covenant of works. Very good ; but then pray, Sir, if you please, answer me a plain question, or two, at your leisure.

*First*, How far did the covenant of grace prevail against the covenant of works ? Was it so far prevalent and victorious, as utterly to vanquish and disannul it, as a covenant of works to them ? Or was it not ? Was the victory, you speak of, a complete or a partial one ? If you say it was incomplete and partial, then you leave them (as I told you before you must) partly under the promise, and partly under the curse ; justified in part, and condemned in part. But if you say it was a complete and perfect victory, then it utterly dissolved its obligation as a covenant of works ; then they did not remain under two opposite covenants, as you affirmed they did ; but, on their believing, changed their state with their covenant, as we affirm they did.

*Secondly*, If you say it did not totally free them from the curse of the covenant of works, but, however, prevailed so far, that they were not actually damned by virtue of the curse ; then be pleased to answer me one question more, *How was it possible for them to be absolutely under the curse of the law, (as you affirmed they were) and yet that curse to be superseded by the covenant of grace, as here you speak ?*

*To supersede the curse* (though it be a phrase I never met with before) if it signify any thing it must signify this ; That the covenant of grace caused the law to omit, forbear, or give over to curse that people any more. But did, or can the law forbear, or cease to curse those that are absolutely under it, as a ministration of death and condemnation ? Pray consult Rom. iii. 19. and Gal. iii. 10. Are you aware what you say when you place believers absolutely under the curse of the law, and then talk of the new covenant's victory over it ; and, after all this, leave them as you do, absolutely under the cursing power of the one, and still under the victorious grace of the other ? For shame, my friend, give up your absurd notion, and repent of this folly ; I would not willingly shame you before the world ; I did all that in me lay to prevent it : but however, *Pudor est medicina pudoris*, the only way you have left me to prevent your glorying in your shame, is this way, to make you ashamed of your vain-glory. As for that scripture you allege to countenance your fancy, Rom. v. 17, .20. you might to as good purpose have opened your Bible, and have taken the first scripture that came to hand, and it would have done your *position* less harm ; for the apostle's scope there is to demonstrate the perfection of the abounding righteousness of Christ, for the full discharge of believers from the guilt of sin and curse of Adam's cove-

nant; and cuts the throat of your *position*, which it is alleged to prove.

I have stood the longer upon the clearing of this first point; because this being fully cleared, it runs through and clears the whole controversy betwixt us. For now it will be evident to all, that neither Abraham's, nor Moses's covenant (complexly taken, as Mr. Cary takes it) could possibly be, for this reason, an Adam's covenant of works; and if not a covenant of works, then, how dark or legal soever the dispensations of them were, they must needs be the same covenant of grace for substance, under which we are, and so the main controversy betwixt us is hereby at an end.

I know not how many covenants of works, or how many of grace Mr. C. fancies there are; but orthodox divines constantly affirm, \* That, as there were never but two ways of life to mankind, the one before the fall, by perfect doing; the other after the fall, by sincere believing: so answerably, there can be but two covenants betwixt God and mankind, viz. the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. The last of which hath indeed been more obscurely administered, and in that respect is called the old covenant; yet that and the new are essentially but one covenant; and the church of God, which for many ages stood under that old covenant, did not stand under it as an Adam's covenant, or the first covenant of works, for the undeniable reasons above given: and therefore Abraham's covenant, from whence we derive our children's title to Baptism, must of necessity be the very same covenant for substance with this new covenant, which all Abraham's believing offspring and their infant-seed, are now under. And in proving this one point, I have sufficiently confuted both Mr. C's *solemn call*, and this his feeble vindication of it together.

But, lest he should take this for the only absurdity proved upon him, though it be tiresome to me, and must be ungrateful to him, give me leave to touch one more among many; and that the rather because I make great use of it in this controversy, and Mr. Cary both yields and denies it. If his own words be the messengers of his meaning, either he or I must mistake their errand.

I had in my Prolegomena, distinguished of the law, as strictly taken for the ten commandments; and more largely and complexly taken, as including the ceremonial law: The former I considered according to God's intention and design in the promulgation of it, which was to add it as an *appendix* to the promise, Gal. iii. 19. And the carnal Jews mistaking and perverting the end of the law, and making it to themselves a covenant of works, by making it the

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\* Vide Bolton's *Bounds*, p. 148.

very rule and reason of their justification before God, Rom. ix. 31, 32, 33. and x. 3. I told him that the controversy depended upon this double sense of the law; for that it ought not to be denominated from the abused and mistaken end of it, but from God's chief scope and design in the promulgation of it; which was to add it as an *appendix* to the promise, as the word  $\pi\rho\sigma\sigma\epsilon\tau\epsilon\lambda\theta\eta$  there imports; and so must be published with evangelical purposes. Let us now hear Mr. C's sense of this matter.

In his Call, p. 131. he yields the distinction in these words:

“The Jews were right enough in reference to the true nature of the law, That it was a covenant of works, &c. though they were out in respect of its proper use and intention which was not that any should attain unto life and righteousness thereby; but to shew them the nature of sin, and the holiness and righteousness of God, to convince them of their sin and misery without Christ, and their necessity of a Saviour; which they being ignorant of, and still going about to establish their own righteousness, which was of the law, and refusing to submit themselves unto the righteousness of God, &c. they stumbled at that stumbling-stone, and were accordingly broken, snared, and taken, Rom. ix. 31, 32, 33. Rom. x. 3. And this (saith he) was the true ground of dispute between the apostle and them.” This was orthodoxly spoken, and would end the controversy would he stand to it. But,

In his reply, p. 43. proving the

law to be a covenant of works, from Rom. x. 15. he saith,

“This was the nature of it in the first sanction of it, as the fruit of God's special designation and appointment; and that it is the greatest violation and perverting of scripture that can lightly be met with, to affirm that this is uttered and declared by Paul, &c. only because the Jews had perverted it, and reduced it (as they thought) to its primitive intention. And again, p. 44. he saith, he hath proved that it was the same with Adam's covenant in both respects, that is intentionally as well as materially considered.” And once more, p. 20. he expressly denies that the law was added as an appendix to the promise; calls that a crude assertion of mine, and asks me, “Why it might not be added as an appendix rather to the first covenant of works, to reinforce that?” And after all, gushes out many slighting and opprobrious terms upon me, which I will not throw back again, but rather leave him to reconcile himself with himself.

I shall only ask Mr. C. a sober question or two, instead of re-  
riminations, and rendering reviling for reviling.

*First*, How were the Jews right enough in reference to the na-

ture of the law, as it was a covenant of works, and yet *out* in respect of its proper use and intention, which was not that any should attain unto life and righteousness by it, but to convince them of sin, and of the necessity of a Saviour; and yet the law be a covenant of works, intentionally, as well as materially considered: and that in respect of God's special designation and appointment? If God designed and appointed it in his Sinai dispensation, to be to them an Adam's covenant of works, then certainly they were not out (as you say they were) when they sought righteousness by the works of it; nor could that mistake of theirs be the ground of the controversy betwixt the apostle and them; for it seems it was no mistake, being, by God's intention, as well as its own primitive nature, promulgated at Sinai, as a true Adam's covenant.

*Secondly*, You deny the law was added to the promise, and ask me why it might not be added to the first covenant to reinforce that, I answer, Because the scope of the place will not bear it, nor any good expositor countenance such a fancy\*. You make the Sinai law to be the same with that first covenant, and by so expounding the apostle, you make him say, either that the same thing was added to itself, (which must, in your own phrase, be by a *correspondency of identity*) or else that there are two distinct covenants of works (when indeed there is but one) and that the latter was added to the former. This is your way of expounding scripture when driven to a strait by dint of argument: nothing beside such a pure necessity could drive you upon such an absurdity.

It was added to the promise, (saith Dr. Reynolds †) by way of subserviency and attendance, the better to advance and make effectual the covenant itself. Mr. Strong, upon the two covenants, saith, the apostle's meaning is, that the law was added as an appendix to the promise; but it may be you had rather hear Dr. Crisp's exposition ‡ than his: for you say had it been added to the promise, it would have given life. The doctor will at once give you the true sense of the text, and with it a full answer to your objection. *Though life*, (saith he) *be not the end of the law, yet there are other sufficient uses of it, requiring the promulgation thereof: it was published to be an appendix to the gospel, Gal. iii. 19. And this supposes, 1. The priority of the gospel to the law. 2. The principality of the promise of life by Christ above the law. 3. The consistence of the law and gospel. They may well stand one by another as an house and the addition to it may.* That it was with such an intention added to the promise, I have met with no man that had front enough to deny or scruple

\* Προσβεβηθη posita, pro apposita, hoc est, Promissioni adjecta. Beza.

† Vide Dr. Reynold's Use of the law, p. 278. full up to my sense, and p. 371.

‡ Dr. Crisp, lib. 4. serm. 9.

it before you ; and that the Jews did mistake its chief scope and use, from whence we denominate it a covenant of grace, the generality of godly and learned divines constantly affirm. See Mr. Anth. Burg. *de lege*, p. 227. Bolton's Bounds, p. 160, 161. Mr. Samuel Mather on the types, p. 11. with multitudes more, whose citations would even weary the reader. And what you urge from Mr. Pool's Annotations on 2 Cor. iii. 6, 7. it makes nothing at all to your purpose ; for it is manifest, the annotator there takes the moral law in itself, strictly taken, and as set in opposition to the gospel, which it never was since the fall, but by the ignorance and infidelity of unregenerate men.

You also labour to shelter your erroneous fancy under the authority of Dr. Owen ; but you manifestly abuse him in your citation ; for in that very place you refer to, he speaks strictly of the covenant of works made with Adam in paradise, and plainly distinguishes it from the Sinai covenant, which sufficiently shews his judgment in the point. For these are his own words which you suppressed in the citation, ‘ \* As to the Sinai covenant, and the ‘ New Testament, with their privileges thence emerging, they belong not to our present argument.’ This paragraph you wilfully omit, that you might include that which his words plainly exclude. In the same place he tells you, that David's and Abraham's covenant, was for essence the covenant of grace, notwithstanding the variations made in it : But you take and leave as best suits your design †.

Once more, in p. 16, 17, &c. of my *Vindiciæ legis*, you find yourself pinched with another dilemma, from Lev. xxvi. 40, 41, 46. whence I plainly proved, that there is a promise of pardon found in the Sinai dispensation, to penitent sinners. That this promise was given at mount Sinai, by the hand of Moses, is undeniable, from ver. 46. That it contained the relief of a gracious remission to penitent sinners, is as undeniable from ver. 40, 41. If you say, this promise belongs to Moses's dispensation, (as ver. 46. tells you it did) then, there is remission of sins found in the Sinai laws. If you say it only refers to Abraham's covenant of

\* Dr. Owen of Justification, p. 596, 597, vindicated from Mr. C's gross misrepresentations.

† But if you see the Doctor's judgment, in concurrence with all his brethren, you have it in these very words : Although this covenant hath been variously administered in respect of ordinances and institutions, in the time of the law, and since the coming of Christ in the flesh ; yet, for the substance and efficacy of it, to all its spiritual and saving ends, it is one and the same ; upon account of which various dispensations, it is called the Old and New Testament. *Vide Declaration of the faith, and order of the congregational churches in England*, p. 16, at the Savoy. Oct. 12, 1658.

grace; then that covenant of grace appears to be conditional, which you utterly deny.

Now what is your reply to this? (1.) You object my own words in the Method of Grace, p. 326. as if you had never read the just and fair vindication I had before given you of them, p. 134, 135. of my first reply to you. At this rate men may continue controversies to the world's end. Sir, there are many witnesses, that you are very well acquainted with my Method of Grace. (2.) You say, p. 31. of your reply, that that covenant could not be conditional, *because a condition implies merit, either of congruity or condignity.* 'This is a further discovery of your ignorance of the nature of conditions, as well as covenants; but that point belonging to the last head of controversy between us, I shall refer it thither.

It were easy for me to instance in many more absurdities which Mr. C. cannot elucidate, and to prove them upon him as easily as to name them; but I will not press him too far; what hath been named and proved already, is more than enough to convince the reader that my first argument is left standing in its full force and strength against him, viz.

*Argument 1.* That proposition can never be true, which necessarily draws many horrid and gross absurdities after it, by just consequence. But so doth this: *Ergo.*

*Arg. 2.* My next argument, *Vindiciæ*, &c. p. 27. is as secure as the first. It was this: If Adam's covenant had one end, namely, the happiness and justification of men by their own obedience; and the law at Sinai had quite another end, namely, to bring sinners to Christ, by faith, for their righteousness; the one to keep him within himself, the other to take him quite out of himself; then the Sinai law cannot possibly be the same with Adam's covenant of works in paradise.

But so stands the case, Rom. x. 4. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Therefore they cannot be the same, but two different covenants:

All that touches this argument, is but three lines in the 49th page of your reply; where you say you have sufficiently answered and cleared this, in p. 169, 172. of your former discourse, from the corrupt interpretation by me fastened thereon.

Now if the reader will give himself the trouble to examine those pages, he shall find that Mr. C. there allows that very interpretation which he here calls corrupt; and saith it comes all to one reckoning with his own. If this will overthrow my second argument, it is gone.

*Arg. 3.* My third argument was drawn from Acts vii. 38. in this form:

If Christ himself were the angel by whom the laws were delivered to Moses, which are there called *the lively oracles of God*; then the law cannot be a pure Adam's covenant of works: for it is never to be imagined that ever Jesus Christ himself should deliver to Moses such a covenant, directly opposite to all the ends of his future incarnation.

But it is more than probable, from that text, that it was Christ which delivered the law to Moses on the mount. *Ergo.*

To this argument he saith not one word, in p. 49. of his reply, where he cites a part of it, nibbling a little at that expression, [*The lively oracles of God,*] thinking it unimaginable the Sinai law should be such; when as the apostle Paul, Rom. vii. 10. found the commandment to be unto death; and the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 6, 7. calls it a *ministration of death*. I must therefore leave Mr. C. to reconcile those two scriptures. And withal, I must tell him, that Spanhemius\* gives the same sense I do of Acts vii. 38. as the current judgment of Christians against the Jews, that it was not a created angel, but Christ himself.

*Arg.* 4. The last argument I urged, was from Rom. ix. 4. and thus it may run.

No such covenant as by the fall had utterly lost all its promises, privileges, and blessings, and could retain nothing but curses and punishments, could possibly be numbered among the chief privileges in which God's Israel gloried.

But the law given at Sinai was numbered among their chief privileges, Rom. ix. 4. *Ergo.*

To this he only saith, p. 57. of his reply, 'That the law, even as it was a covenant of works, was a privilege inestimable, beyond what all others enjoyed; because the very curses and punishments annexed thereunto, in case of the least failure, were of excellent use to convince them of their sin and misery without Christ, and their necessity therefore of a Saviour; which was the proper work of the law, as a covenant of works; which advantage all other nations wanting, it might well be numbered among the chief privileges they were invested with.'

But (1.) If the law were intended by God, to be an Adam's covenant to them, (as Mr. C. saith it was) where then is the privilege of God's Israel above other nations? (2.) If their privilege consisted in the subserviency of that law to Christ (as he here intimates it did) then he yields the thing I contend for. For this being its chief scope and end, we do hence justly denominaté it a covenant of grace, though more obscure and legally administered. And in this judgment most of our solid divines concur. Mr. Char-

\* Fran. Spanhem. Elench. Controv. p. 552.

noek on the *Attributes*, p. 390. is clear and judicious in the point. \* Mr. Samuel Bolton, in that excellent book called, *The Bounds of Christian Liberty*, gives nine solid arguments to prove the law was not set up at Sinai as a covenant of works. † Mr. Anth. Burgess gives us six arguments to prove the same conclusion. ‡ Mr. Greenhill on Ezek. xvi. gives us demonstration from that context, that since it was a marriage-covenant, as it appears to be ver. 8. it cannot possibly be a distinct covenant from the covenant of grace. The incomparable § Turretine, learnedly and judiciously states this controversy; and both positively asserts, and by many arguments fully proves, that the Sinai law cannot be a pure covenant of works, or a covenant specifically distinct from the covenant of grace. It were easy to fill pages with allegations of this kind; but I hope what hath been said, may suffice for this point.

But still Mr. Cary complains, that I have all this while but threatened his arguments to prove them fallacious, or to have four terms in them; and therefore he hath drawn out some select arguments, as he calls them, p. 37. to try my skill upon. I will neither tire my reader in a foolish chase of such weak and impertinent arguments as he there produceth, nor yet wholly neglect them, lest he glory in them as unanswerable. And therefore to shew him the fate of the rest, I will only touch his first argument, which being his *argumentum palmurium*, deservedly leads the van to all the rest. And thus it runs upon all four.

That covenant that is not of faith, must needs be a covenant of works, yea, the very same for substance with that made with Adam.

But the scripture is express, that the law is not of faith, Gal. iii. 12. *Ergo*.

The law is considered two ways in scripture. (1.) Largely, for the whole *Mosaical Oeconomy*, comprehensive of the ceremonial as well as moral precepts; and that law is of faith, as the learned Turretine || hath proved by four scripture arguments, *part second*, p. 292, 293. Because it contained Christ the object of faith, &c. Because it compelled men to seek Christ by faith. Because it required that God be worshipped, which he cannot rightly be with-

\* Bolton's *Bounds*, p. 130, &c.

† Burgess, *de Lege*, p. 225.

‡ Greenhill, *in Loc*.

§ Turretine, *part 2*. p. 288, 289.

|| The law is said not to be of faith, Gal. iii. 12. Not as it is taken in a large sense, to denote the Mosaic Oeconomy, but strictly, as when it is taken for the moral law abstractly, and separate from the promises of grace; as the self-justiciaries did understand it who sought life from it; for it is proved that faith was also commanded in the Sinaitic covenant, &c.

out faith. And because Paul describes the righteousness of faith in those very words whereby Moses had declared the precepts of the law, Deut. xxx. 11, 12, 13. Again, the law in scripture is taken strictly for the *moral law* only, considered abstractly from the promises of grace, as the legal justiciaries understood it. These are two far different senses and acceptations of the law. Your *major proposition* takes the law in its large complex body, as appears by your 3d page. Your *minor proposition*, which you would confirm by Gal. iii. 12. takes the law strictly and abstractly, as it is set disjunctly from, yea, in opposition to faith and the promises; and so there are two sorts of law in your argument, and consequently your argument is fallacious, as all its fellows be, and runs, (as I told you before) *upon all-four*.

I hope this may suffice, with respect to the Sinai covenant, controverted betwixt me and my neighbour, to evince that it cannot be what he asserts it to be, even an Adam's covenant of works: And that I have discharged what I undertook to prove, with respect to this covenant, namely, That Mr. C. cannot free his position from the gross absurdities with which I loaded it, but endeavouring to do that, hath incurred many more: that his reply hath left my arguments standing in their full strength against him, and that the position I have set up against him, is well founded in scripture; and hath the general concurrence and consent of learned, holy, and orthodox divines.

To conclude, Let the grave and learned Dr. Edw. Reynolds, in his excellent treatise of *the Use of the Law*, determine this controversy betwixt us, p. 371, &c. where designedly handling this doctrine from Rom. vii. 13. 'That the law was revived and promulgated anew on mount Sinai, by the ministry of Moses, with no other than evangelical and merciful purposes,' he abundantly confirms my sense and arguments, and saves me the labour of refuting the principal, and most of yours: where carrying before him the whole context of Gal. iii. from the 15th to the 23d, he clearly carries his doctrine with it, proving from ver. 15. 'That God's covenant with Abraham was perpetual and immutable, and therefore all other subsequent acts of God (such as the giving of

P. 376. 'the law was) do some way or other refer unto it. (2.)

'From v. 16. he further proves, That as God's covenant with Abraham is most constant, in regard of the wisdom and unvariableness of him that made it; so it can never expire for

P. 377. 'want of a seed to whom it is made. (3.) From ver. 17. he proves, That if another law be made after the promise, which, *prima specie*, and, in strict construction, doth imply a contradiction in the terms, and nature of the former law; then it is certain, that this latter law must be understood

‘ in some other sense, and admit of some other subordinate use,  
 ‘ which may well consist with the being and force of the former co-  
 ‘ venant. (4.) From ver. 18. he proves, that the coming of the  
 ‘ law hath not voided the promise, and that the law is not of force  
 ‘ (as you vainly dream) towards the seed to whom the promise is  
 ‘ made; and therefore if it be not to stand in a contradiction, it  
 ‘ follows that it must stand in subordination to the gospel; and so  
 ‘ tend to evangelical purposes.’ (5.) He further proves his con-  
 ‘ clusion from ver. 19. which shews for what end the law was added,  
 προσετιθη. ‘ It was not (saith he) set up alone, as a thing in gross  
 ‘ by itself; as an adequate, complete, solid rule of righteousness,  
 ‘ as it was given to Adam in Paradise: much less was it published  
 ‘ to void and disannul any precedent covenant; but so far was it  
 ‘ from abrogating, that it was *added to the promise* by way of sub-  
 ‘ serviency, and attendance; the better to advance and make effec-  
 ‘ tual the covenant itself, and that until the seed should come,  
 ‘ which, whether it respect Christ personal, or mystical, in either  
 ‘ sense (saith he) it confirms the point we are upon, *viz. That the*  
 ‘ *law hath evangelical purposes.* If the seed be understood of the  
 ‘ person of Christ, then this shews that the law was put to the  
 ‘ promise, the better to raise and stir up in men the expectations  
 ‘ of Christ, the promised seed. But if we understand by seed, the  
 ‘ *faithful* (which I rather approve;) then the apostle’s meaning  
 P. 379. ‘ is this, That as long as any are either to come into  
 ‘ the unity of Christ’s body, and have the covenant of  
 ‘ grace applied to them, &c. so long there will be use of the law,  
 ‘ both to the unregenerate, to make them fly to Christ, and those  
 ‘ that are already called, that they may learn to cast all their faith,  
 ‘ hope, and expectation of righteousness upon him still. This then  
 ‘ manifestly shews, that there was no other intention in publishing  
 ‘ the law, but with reference to the seed: that is, with P. 380.  
 ‘ evangelical purposes to shew mercy: not with reference  
 ‘ to those that perish, who would have had condemnation enough  
 ‘ without the law.’ And further strengthens his conclusion from  
 the last words of ver. 19. ‘ That it was ordained by *angels* in the  
 ‘ hands of a Mediator. This (saith he) evidently declares, That  
 ‘ the law was published in mercy and pacification, not in fury or  
 ‘ revenge; (for the work of a Mediator is to negotiate peace, and  
 ‘ treat of reconcilment betwixt parties offended) whereas, if the  
 ‘ Lord had intended death in the publishing of the law, he would  
 ‘ not have proclaimed it in the hand of a Mediator, but of an exe-  
 ‘ cutioner. (6.) From ver. 20. Those words (saith he)  
 ‘ shew why the law was published in the hand of a Me- P. 381.  
 ‘ diator, *viz.* that they should not despair and sink under  
 ‘ the fear of his wrath. For as he made a covenant of promise to

‘ Abraham, and his seed ; so he is the same God still, one in his  
 ‘ grace and mercy towards sinners. *God is one*, i. e. in sending  
 ‘ this Mediator, he doth declare to mankind, that he is at peace  
 ‘ and unity with them again. Moses was the representative, and  
 ‘ Christ the substantial and real Mediator. *God is one*,  
 ‘ i. e. he carries the same purpose and intention both in P. 382.  
 ‘ the law and in the gospel ; namely, benevolence, and  
 ‘ desire of reconcilment with men. (7.) To sum up all P. 384.  
 ‘ that hath been spoken touching the use of the law in a  
 ‘ plain similitude ; Suppose we a prince should proclaim a pardon  
 ‘ to all traitors, if they should come in and plead it ; and after  
 ‘ this should send forth his officers to attack, and imprison,  
 ‘ examine, convince, arraign, threaten, and condemn them : Is  
 ‘ he now contrary to himself ? Hath he repented of his mercy ?  
 ‘ No, but he is unwilling to lose his mercy, desirous to have the  
 ‘ honour of his mercy acknowledged unto him. The same is the  
 ‘ case between God and us. To Abraham he made a promise of  
 ‘ mercy and blessedness to all that would plead interest in it for the  
 ‘ remission of their sins ; but men were secure and heedless of their  
 ‘ state, &c. Hereupon the Lord published by Moses a P. 385.  
 ‘ severe and terrible law ; yet in all this God doth but  
 ‘ pursue his first purpose of mercy, and take a course to make his  
 ‘ gospel accounted worthy of all acceptation ; which clears the  
 ‘ general point, *That God in the publication of the law by Moses,*  
 ‘ *on mount Sinai, had none but merciful and evangelical intentions.*  
 ‘ And once more, The law was not published by Moses  
 P. 386. ‘ on mount Sinai, as it was given to Adam in Paradise,  
 ‘ to justify or to save men. And p. 385. it is not given,  
 ‘ *ex primaria intentione*, to condemn men. In consequence to all  
 ‘ which he saith, p. 388, 389. that to preach the law alone by  
 ‘ itself, is to prevent the use of it ; neither have we any power or  
 ‘ commission so to do. It was published as an *appendant* to the  
 ‘ gospel, and so must it be preached. It was published in the  
 ‘ hand of a Mediator, and must be preached in the hand of a Me-  
 ‘ diator. It was published evangelically, and it must be so  
 ‘ preached.’

See how this agrees now with p. 173. of your *call*, and how the  
 several parts of discourse of this sound and eminent doctor (which  
 I have been forced to sum up and contract) do abundantly confute  
 your vain notions of the law, and cut the very nerves of your best  
 arguments, if they had any nerves in them : for indeed it is *moles*  
*absque nervis*.

It were easy for me to represent the sense of many other eminent  
 divines in perfect harmony with the doctrine of this great and ex-

cellent divine, who have substantially proved the point I defend against you: But it is enough.

II. Let us next examine what execution his *reply* hath done upon my second *position*, set up in direct opposition to him; namely, *That God's covenant with Abraham, \* Gen. xvii. Unto which circumcision was annexed, is for its substance, the self-same covenant of grace with that which the Gentile-believers, and their Infant-seed, are now under.*

Here I have abundant cause again to complain, that Mr. C. hath so formed his answers, as if he had never read the book he undertakes to reply to. And I do verily believe, the greatest part of his reply was made at random, before ever my printed book was in his hands. For he hath not at all considered the state of the question, as I there gave it him; nor kept himself to the just and necessary rules of disputation, as I earnestly desired he would. However, it is not complaints, but confirmation and vindication of my arguments, which is my proper work. I shall therefore recite them briefly, and vindicate and confirm them strongly; contracting all into as few words as can express the sense and argument of the point before me.

*Argum. 1.* If circumcision be a part of the ceremonial law, and the ceremonial law was dedicated by blood; whatsoever is so dedicated, is by you confessed to be no part of the covenant of works; then circumcision can be no part of the covenant of works, even by your own confession. *Vindiciæ legis, &c. p. 42.*

But it is so. *Ergo.*

*Reply.* To this Mr. C. returns a *tragical complaint*, instead of a *rational answer*. *Insinuates my false and gross abuse of him. Appeals to his reader. Tells him I have taken a liberty to say what I please, as if there were no future judgment to be regarded. And that I can expect no comfort another day, without repentance now. For those things that have thus passed betwixt him and me shall again be revised and set in order before me. That he is weary of noting my miscarriages of this kind. That there is hardly a page or paragraph in my whole reply but abounds with transgressions of this nature. He begs the Lord to forgive me; and wishes he could say, Father forgive him, for he knoweth not what he doth: as if my sin were greater than the sin of those that stoned Stephen, or crucified Christ.* p. 98.

*Reply.* Either I am guilty or innocent in the matter here charged upon me by Mr. C. If guilty, I promise him an ingenuous acknowledgment. If innocent (as both my conscience and his own book will prove me to be) then I shall only say, *He knoweth not what spirit he is of.* The case must be tried by his own book,

\* Abraham's covenant; Gen. xvii. the covenant of grace.

and it will quickly be decided. These are the very words in his *Solemn call*, p. 148. ‘He (that is, Mr. Sedgwick) makes no distinction betwixt the ceremonial covenant that was dedicated with blood, and the law written in stones that was not so dedicated. How strangely doth he confound and obscure the word and truth of God, which ought to have been cleared, and distinctly declared to those he had preached or written to?’ With much more, p. 149, 150, 151. where he saith, ‘It is plain, that the law written in stones, and the book wherein the statutes and judgments were contained, were two distinct covenants, and delivered at distinct seasons, and in a distinct method; the one with, the other without a Mediator; the one dedicated with blood and sprinkling, the other (that we read of) not so dedicated.’

Now let the reader judge whether I have deserved such tragical complaints and dreadful charges for inferring from these words, That the ceremonial law being by him pronounced a distinct covenant from the moral law, which he makes all one with Adam’s covenant; delivered at a distinct season, and in a distinct method; the ceremonial law with a *Mediator*, the moral law without a *Mediator*; the ceremonial law dedicated with blood and sprinkling, the moral law not so dedicated: let him judge, I say, whether I have wronged him in saying, that by his own confession, circumcision being a part of this ceremonial law, it can therefore be no part of the covenant of works.

*Exception.* But Mr. Cary hath two things to say for himself, (1.) That in the same place he makes the ceremonial law no other than a *covenant of works*: And the wrong I have done him is not distinguishing, as he did, betwixt a *covenant of works*, and the *covenant of works*. Here, it seems, lies my guilt, upon which this dreadful outcry against me is made.

*Reply.* But if I should chance to prove, that there never was, is, or can be any more than one covenant of works; and that any one covenant which is distinguished from it (as he confesses the ceremonial law was) by a Mediator, and the blood of sprinkling, can be no part of that covenant of works; what then will become of Mr. C’s distinction of a *covenant of works*, and the *covenant of works*? Now the matter is plain and evident, That as there never were, are, or can be more than two common heads appointed by God, namely, *Adam* and *Christ*, 1 Cor. xv. 45, 46, 47, 48. Rom. v. 15, 17, 18, 19. so it is impossible there should be more than two covenants, under which mankind stands, under these two common heads. And the first covenant once broken, it is utterly impossible that fallen man should ever attain life that way, or that ever God should set it up again with such an intention and scope, ‘unless (as

‘ Mr. Charnock speaks \*) he had reduced man’s body to the dust and his soul to nothing, and framed another man to have governed him by a covenant of works; but that had not been the same man that had revolted, and upon his revolt was stained and disabled.’ If Mr. C. therefore be not able to prove more covenants of works with mankind than one, let him rather blush at his silly distinction betwixt *a* covenant of works, and *the* covenant of works. For indeed he makes at least four distinct covenants of works, one with Adam, two with Moses; one moral, the other ceremonial; and a fourth with Abraham at the institution of circumcision, Gen. xvii.

(2.) If it appear (as it clearly doth) that as there never was, is, or can be any more than one covenant of works, so whatsoever covenant is distinguished from it by a Mediator, and dedication by the sprinkling of blood (as he saith the ceremonial law was) cannot possibly, for the reasons he gives, be any part or member of Adam’s covenant of works; then, I hope, I have done Mr. C. no wrong in my assumption from his own words, for which he so reviles and abuses me. But this will appear as clear as the noon-day light: For a covenant with a Mediator, and dedicated by sprinkling of blood, doth, and necessarily must, essentially difference such a covenant from that covenant that had no Mediator, nor dedication by blood. To deny this, were to confound law and gospel, Adam’s and Christ’s covenant; but the distinction betwixt them is his own, therefore my assumption was just. That this blood was typically the blood of Christ, and that the Holy Ghost signified the one by the other, is plain from Heb. ix. 7, 8. And I never met with that man that scrupled it before Mr. Cary. So then my first argument to prove Abraham’s covenant of circumcision to be the covenant of grace, and not an Adam’s covenant, or any part thereof, stands firm after Mr. C’s passionate reply, which I hope the Lord will pardon to him, though he had scarce charity enough left to desire a pardon for his friend, who had neither wronged the truth nor him.

*Arg. 2.* My second argument was this. If circumcision was the seal of the righteousness of faith, it did not pertain to the covenant of works, for the righteousness of faith and works are opposite.

But circumcision was the seal of the righteousness of faith, Rom. iv. 11. *Ergo.*

The sum of what he answers to this, p. 72, 73, &c. (as far as I can pick his true sense out of a multitude of needless words) is this, ‘ He confesses this argument seems very plausible; but, however, ‘ Abraham was a believer before circumcision; and though indeed

\* Charnock on the Attributes, p. 590.

‘ it sealed the righteousness of faith to him, yet it sealed it to him  
 ‘ only as the father of believers; and denies that ever Jacob, or  
 ‘ Isaac, or any other enrolled in that covenant were sealed by it;  
 ‘ but to all the rest, beside Abraham, it was rather a token of ser-  
 ‘ vitude and bondage.’ This is the sum and substance of his reply.

*Reply.* But, Sir, let me ask you two or three plain questions.  
 (1.) What is the reason you silently slide over the question I asked  
 you, p. 41. of my *Vindiciæ*, &c. Did you find it an hot iron which  
 you durst not touch? It is like you did. My question was this:  
*Had Adam’s covenant a seal of the righteousness of faith annexed  
 to it, as this had, Rom. iv. 11. The righteousness of faith is evan-  
 gelical righteousness, and this circumcision sealed. Say not it was  
 to Abraham only that it sealed it, for it is an injurious restriction  
 put upon the seal of a covenant which extended to the fathers as well  
 as to Abraham: however, you admit that it sealed evangelical  
 righteousness to Abraham, but I hope you will not say, that a seal  
 of the covenant of works (for so you made circumcision to be) ever  
 did, or could seal evangelical righteousness to any individual person  
 in the world.*

I find you a man of great confidence, but certainly here it failed  
 you; not one word in reply to this. (2.) ‘ I told you your dis-  
 ‘ tinction was invented by Bellarmine, and shewed you where it  
 ‘ was confuted by Dr. Ames: but not a word to that.’ (3.) I shew-  
 ‘ ed, ‘ That the extending of that seal to all believers, as well as  
 ‘ Abraham, is most agreeable to the drift and scope of the apostle’s  
 ‘ argument, which is to prove, that both Jews and Gentiles are  
 ‘ justified by faith, as Abraham was: and that the ground of justi-  
 ‘ fication is common to both: and that how great soever Abraham  
 ‘ was, yet in this case he hath found nothing whereof to glory. And  
 ‘ is not your exposition a notable one, to prove the community of  
 ‘ the privilege of justification, because the seal of it was peculiar to  
 ‘ Abraham alone?’ p. 47, 48.

Sir, you have spent words enough upon this head to tire your  
 reader. But why can I not meet with one word among them that  
 fairly advances to my argument? or answer the important *questions*  
 before you, upon which the matter depends? If this be all you have  
 to say, I must tell you, you are but a weak manager of a bad cause,  
 which is the less hazard to truth.

*Arg. 3.* In the covenant of circumcision, Gen. xvii. God makes  
 over himself to Abraham and his seed, *to be their God*, or gives  
 them a special interest in himself.

But, in the covenant of works, God doth not, since the fall,  
 make over himself to any to be their God, by way of special interest.

Therefore the covenant of circumcision cannot be the covenant  
 of works.

The sum of your *reply*, in p. 76. is under two heads.

(1.) You boldly tell me, That ‘ God doth in the covenant of works make over himself to sinners to be their God by way of special interest; but it being upon such hard terms that it is utterly impossible for sinners that way to attain unto life, he hath therefore been pleased to abolish that, and make a new covenant;’ and bring Exod. xx. 1. to prove it.

*Reply.* This is new and strange divinity with me, (1.) That God should become a people’s God by way of special interest, by virtue of the broken covenant of works; this wholly alters the nature of that covenant: for then it was a law that could give life, contrary to Gal. iii. 21. unless you can suppose a soul that is totally dead in sin to have a special interest in God, as his God. (2.) This answer of yours yields the controversy about the nature of the Sinai law; for this very concession of yours is the *medium* by which our divines prove it to be a covenant of grace. (3.) This concession of yours confounds the two covenants, by communicating the essential property and prime privilege of the covenant of grace to Adam’s covenant of works. Either, therefore, expunge Jer. xxxi. 33. as a covenant of grace, “ I will be their God, and they shall be my people;” or allow that in Gen. xvii. 7. to be specifically the same; and that Exod. xx. though more obscurely delivered. (4.) You assert, ‘ That God may actually become a people’s God by way of special interest, and yet the salvation of that people be suspended upon impossible terms.’ You sent them before into *purgatory*, but by this you must send them directly to hell: for if the salvation of God’s peculiar people be upon impossible terms, it is certain they cannot be saved. And, lastly, it is an horrid reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of God, who never did, or will make any covenant wherein he takes fallen men to be his peculiar people, and make over himself to be their God; and yet not make provision for their salvation in the same covenant, but leave their salvation for many ages, upon hard and impossible terms, i. e. leave them under damnation.

(2.) I told you in my *Vindicia*, &c. p. 49. that you were fain to cut Abraham’s covenant, Gen. xvii. into two parts; and make the first to be the pure covenant of grace, which is the promissory part to the 9th verse, and the restipulation, as you call it, p. 205, to be as pure a covenant of works, which I truly said was a *bold action*; and in so calling it, I gave it a softer name than the nature of it deserved.

The sum of what you reply to this is, 1. By denying the matter of fact, and charging me with misrepresentation; \* and in the next

\* *Mr. C’s Defence*, p. 79.

page confessing the whole charge, saying, Though the promise and the restipulation mentioned, ver. 7, 8, 9. make but one and the same covenant of circumcision; yet there are two covenants mentioned in that context, the first between God and Abraham himself, ver. 2, 4. the other between God and Abraham, and his natural posterity also, ver. 7, 8, 9, 10. the former you call a covenant of grace, the latter a covenant of works. And p. 81. you affirm that after God had entered the covenant of grace with Abraham, verses 2, 4. page 81. that Abraham himself was required to be circumcised by the command of God, as a token of the covenant of works. And then, after some unbecoming scoffs for misplacing ver. 7, 8. where ver. 9, 10. should be; as also of Gen. xii. for Gen. xvii. (whether by the scribe, myself, or the press, I cannot say; but in each place sufficient light is given to set you right in the scope and argument of my discourse) you tell us, That *how harsh and unlikely soever it may seem to man's carnal reason, that the latter, to wit, the covenant of works made with Abraham, ver. 9, 10. must needs make void the covenant of grace made with him, ver. 2, 4. yet the apostle gives a quite contrary resolution of it, Gal. iii. 17.* And after all, p. 79. in return to my argument, That the circumcision of Abraham and his seed, ver. 9, 10. could not possibly be a condition of Adam's covenant of works from the nature of the act: because Paul himself circumcised Timothy, Acts xvi. 2, 3. and asserts it to be a part of his liberty, Gal. ii. 3, 4. which could never be, if in the very nature of the act it hath bound Timothy to keep the law for justification; and had been contrary to the whole scope of the apostle's doctrine: but it became an obligation only from the intention of the agent. All that you say to this, p. 95. is, 'That as for Paul's compliance with the Jews, however the case stood in that respect, this is certain, That the blessed apostle would never have expressed himself with that vehemency he doth, Gal. v. 2, 3. if this had been only the sense of the Jewish teachers, or that circumcision in its own nature did not oblige to the keeping of the whole law; and that this is only my corrupt gloss upon the text.'

*Reply.* If there be but one covenant made betwixt God and Abraham in that 17th of Genesis, and you make two, not only *numerically*, but *specifically* distinct, yea, opposite covenants of it, then you boldly cut God's covenant with Abraham in two, and are guilty of an insufferable abuse of the covenant of God: But the former is true; therefore so is the latter. You say, p. 223, 224. of your call, 'That at the second and fourth verses God made a covenant with Abraham himself alone, but at ver. 7. he makes the covenant of circumcision betwixt himself and Abraham, and his natural seed also; and saith, ver. 7. *And, or according to the*

‘old translation, *moreover*; as proceeding to speak of another ‘covenant than what he had been before insisting on.’

Now I would soberly ask, (1.) What vouchers you have amongst expositors for this your rash and daring assertion? I find not a man that hath trod this path before you, and I hope none will be hardy enough to follow: you certainly stand alone, and it is pity but you should. (2.) Where do you find the just parts of the new covenant in the 2d and 4th verses? Is it not altogether promissory, on God’s part, without any restipulation on Abraham’s? For you have excluded ver. 1, 7, 10. from that which you call God’s covenant of grace with him. And then for your covenant of works, ver. 7, 8, 9, 10. you make this to be the promissory part of that covenant, “to be a God unto thee, and to thy “seed after thee;” and again, ver. 8. “I will be their God.” Was ever such a promise as this found in a covenant of works? Tell me whatever God said more in the new covenant, than he saith here? O blessed covenant of work, if this be such! (3.) Tell me whether you can satisfy your own conscience with the answers you have given to my first argument against your paradoxical, yea, heterodoxical exposition? I told you, That if ver. 7, 8, 9, 10. contain another covenant, viz. of works, entered by God with Abraham and his seed, it must needs make void the former covenant, ver. 2, 4. for wherever the covenant of works takes place, the covenant of grace gives place; they cannot consist, as I have abundantly proved before. Do you verily think those words of the apostle, Gal. iii. 17. which you bring as a foundation to support your singular and sinful exposition, viz. *And this I say, That the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect*; do you think, I say, that in that, or any other text, the apostle opposes the two covenants made (as you fancy) with Abraham, Gen. xvii. Or doth he not there speak of God’s covenant with Abraham, as distinguished from the law made 430 years afterward? (4.) Have you satisfied your own judgment and conscience in the reply you made to that unanswerable objection from Paul’s circumcising of Timothy, Acts xvi. 2, 3. where you have the plain matter of fact before you, that he was circumcised by Paul; and this fact of his justified as a part of the liberty he had in Christ, Gal. ii. 3, 4. \* from whence it evidently appears, That circumcision, in its own nature, did not simply and absolutely

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\* He is bound not simply and absolutely from the nature of the work itself, (*viz.* Circumcision) but in regard of the intention of him who performs it; and such an opinion being supported, &c. Pool on the place.

oblige men to the keeping of Moses's law for righteousness, but only for the intention or opinion of the person. And though you call this my corrupt gloss upon the text, therein you grossly abuse me: the gloss is neither corrupt nor my own; but the unanimous judgment of all sound expositors of the text, as you might see, were you capable of seeing it, in a collection of their judgments upon that text, Gal. v. 2, 3, 4. in Mr. Pool's Synopsis. And though Estius thinks the act of circumcision might be obligatory to the Gentiles, to whom the law was not given; yet it was not so to the Jews that believed, and such was Timothy. But why do I refer you to the judgment of *commentators*? The very reason of it may convince you. For,

If the very act of circumcision did, in its own nature, oblige all on whom it passed, to keep the whole law for their righteousness, then Paul so obliged Timothy, and all others on whom he passed it, to keep the law for their righteousness.

But Paul did not oblige Timothy, or any other on whom he passed it, by the very act of circumcision so to keep the law.

Therefore the very act of circumcision, in its own nature, did not oblige all on whom it passed, to keep the whole law for righteousness.

You may ponder this *argument* at your leisure, and not think to refute it at so cheap a rate, as by calling it a corrupt gloss of my own. And thus I hope I have sufficiently fortified and confirmed my third argument, to prove Abraham's covenant to be a covenant of grace. My fourth was this:

*Arg.* 4. That which in its direct and primary end, teacheth man the corruption of his nature by sin, and the mortification of sin by the Spirit of Christ, cannot be a condition of the covenant of works.

But so did circumcision in the very direct and primary end of it; therefore, &c.

Your reply to this, is, '*That when I have substantially proved that the Sinai covenant, as it contained the passover, sacrifices, types, and appendages, under which were veiled many spiritual mysteries relating to Christ, and mortification of sin by his grace and Spirit, to be no covenant of works, but a gospel covenant; you will then grant, with me, that the present argument is convincing;*' p. 66, 67. of your reply.

*Reply.* Sir, I take you for an honest man, and every honest man will be as good as his word; either I have fully proved against you, that the Sinai law (taken in that latitude you here express it) is not an Adam's covenant of works, or I have not. If I have not, doubtless you have reserved your more pertinent and strong replies in your own breast, and trust not to those weak and silly

ones, which you see here baffled, and have only served to involve you in greater absurdities than before. But if you have brought forth all your strength, (as in such a desperate strait no man can imagine but you would) then I have fully proved the point against you; and if I have, I expect you to be ingenuous and candid, in making good your word, that you will then grant, with me, that this *argument* is convincing, to the end for which it was designed. And so I hope we have fully issued the controversy between us, relating to God's covenant with Abraham. You have indeed four *arguments* p. 59, 60, 61, 62. of your Reply, to prove Abraham's covenant a covenant of works, of the same nature with Adam's covenant.

(1.) Because as life was implicitly promised to Adam upon his obedience, and death explicitly threatened in case of his disobedience, which made that properly a covenant of works; so it was in the covenant of circumcision, Gen. xvii. 7, 8. compared with ver. 10, 14.

*Reply.* This argument or reason can never conclude; because as God never required of Abraham and his children, personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience to the whole law for life, as he did of Adam; so the death, or cutting off, spoken of here, seems to be another thing from that threatened to Adam. Circumcision, as I told you before, was appointed to be the discriminating sign betwixt Abraham's seed and the Heathen world; and the wilful neglect thereof is here threatened with the cutting off by civil, or ecclesiastical excommunication from the commonwealth and church of Israel, as Luther, Calvin, Paræus, Musculus, &c. expound; not by the death of body and soul, as was threatened to Adam, without place for repentance, or hope of mercy.

(2.) You say Abraham's covenant could not be a covenant of faith, because faith was not reckoned to Abraham for righteousness in circumcision, but in uncircumcision, Rom. iv. 9, 10.

*Reply.* This is weak reasoning; circumcision could not belong to a gospel-covenant, because Abraham was a believer before he was circumcised. You may as well deny the Lord's Supper to be the seal of a gospel-covenant, because the partakers of it, are believers before they partake of it. Beside, you cannot deny but it sealed the righteousness of faith to Abraham: and I desired you before, to prove that a seal of the covenant of works is capable of being applied to such an use and service, which you have not done, nor ever will be able to do; but politically slid by it.

(3.) You say it cannot be a covenant of grace, because it is contra-distinguished to the righteousness of faith, Rom. iv. 13.

*Reply.* The law in that place is put strictly for the pure law of nature, and *metaleptically* signifies the works of the law, which is

a far different thing from the law, taken in that latitude wherein you take it. And, is not this a pretty argument, that because the promise to Abraham and his seed, was not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith; therefore the covenant God made with Abraham and his seed, Gen. xvii. cannot be a gracious, but a legal covenant? This promise, mentioned Rom. iv. 13. was made to Abraham long before the law was given by Moses; and free grace, not Abraham's legal righteousness, was the impulsive cause moving God to make that promise to Abraham and to his seed; and their enjoyment of the mercies promised, was not to be through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. By what rule of art this scripture is alleged to prove God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. to be a covenant of works, I am utterly to seek: if it be only because circumcision was added to it, that is answered over and over before, and you neither have, nor can reply to it.

(4.) Lastly, It cannot (say you) be a covenant of grace, because it is represented to us, in scripture, as a bondage covenant, Acts xv. 10, &c. Gal. v. 1.

*Reply.* It is time, I see, to make an end; your discourse runs low and dreggy. Do you think it is one and the same thing to say, That the ceremonial law was a yoke of bondage to them that were under it, and to say it was an Adam's covenant? Are these two parallel distinctions in your *logic*? Alas! Sir, there is a wide difference; the difficulty, variety, and chargeableness of those ceremonies, made them, indeed, burthensome and tiresome to that people; but they did not make the covenant to which they were annexed, to become an Adam's covenant of works; for in the very next breath, ver. 11. the apostle will tell you, *they were saved*; yea, and tells us, that *we shall be saved, even as they*. So that either they that were saved under this yoke, were saved by faith in the way of free grace, as we now are: or we must be saved in the way of legal obedience, as they were. Take which you please, for one of them you must take. *We shall be saved even as they*, Acts xv. 10, 11.

If you can make no stronger opposition to my arguments than such as you have here made, your cause is lost, though your confidence and obstinacy remain: it were easy for me to fill more paper than I have written on this subject, with names of principal note in the church of God, who, with one voice, decry your groundless position, and constantly affirm, 'That the law in the complex sense you take it, as it comprehends the ceremonial rites and ordinances wherunto circumcision pertains, is, and can be no other than the covenant of grace, though more obscurely administered. But because Latin authors are of little use to you, and

among English ones, the judgment of Dr. Crisp\*, I suppose, will be *instar omnium* with you; I will recite it faithfully out of his sermon upon the two covenants, where he makes the old and new covenant to be, indeed, two distinct covenants of grace, (for which I see no reason at all) but proves the former to be so in these words:

‘ It is granted of all men, that in the covenant of works there is no remission of sin, there is no notice of Christ; but the whole business or employment of the priests of the old law was altogether about remission of sins, and the exhibiting and holding forth of Christ in their fashion unto the people. In the 15th of Numbers, ver. 28. (I will give you but one instance) there you shall plainly see, that the administration of the priestly office had remission of sins, as the main end of that administration. *If a soul sin through ignorance, he shall bring a she-goat unto the priest, and he shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, and it shall be forgiven him*: See the main end is administering forgiveness of sins.

‘ And that Christ was the main subject of that their ministry is plain; because the apostle saith, in the verse before my text, that all that administration was but a shadow of Christ, and a figure, for the present, to represent him, as he doth express in the ninth chapter of this *epistle*. And the truth is, the usual general gospel that all the Jews had, was in their sacrifices, and priestly observations.—

‘ So that it is plain, the administration of their covenant was an administration of grace, and absolutely distinct from the administration of the covenant of works.’ And what can be said more absolutely, and directly contradictory to your *position* than this is? And yet again, p. 250. speaking to that scripture, Heb. viii. 8. where the apostle distinguishes of a *better* and a *faulty*, of first and second; he saith, (finding fault with them) “The days come when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant I made with their fathers, when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt;” and (as Jeremiah adds it, for the apostle takes all this out of Jer. xxxi. 31. (*although I was an husband to them, and in the close of all, your sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*—Here are two covenants, a *new covenant*, and the *covenant he made with their fathers*. Some may think it was the covenant of works at the promulgation of the moral law; but mark well that expression of Jeremiah, and you shall see it was the covenant of grace. “For, saith he, not according to the covenant I made with their fathers, although I was an husband unto them.” *How can God be considered as a husband to a people*

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\* Vol. II. Sermon. 2. pag. 237, 248, 250.

‘under the covenant of works which was broken by man in innocency, and so become disannulled, or impossible, by the breach of it? The covenant of works run thus: Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law; and in the day thou sinnest thou shalt die the death. Man had sinned before God took him by the hand, to lead him out of the land of Egypt, and sin had separated man from God: How then can God be called an husband in the covenant of works? The covenant, therefore, was not a covenant of works, but such a covenant as the Lord became an husband in, and that must be a covenant of grace,’ &c.

How the doctor makes good his two distinct covenants of grace, I see not, nor expect ever to see proved, and is not my present concernment to enquire; but once it is evident, by what he hath here said, that the ceremonial law, whereof circumcision is a branch, can be no other than the covenant of grace. And nothing is more common among our divines, than to prove not only the Sinai law, but God’s covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. to be the covenant of grace, by this *medium*, *That God having entered into a covenant of grace with Abraham before, would never bring him under a covenant of works afterwards, which must nullify and void the former.* And, besides, such a covenant of works as you make this was never heard of in the world, wherein God promises to be a God to Abraham and his seed in their generations, upon the rigorous and impossible terms of Adam’s covenant.

By this time I presume you must feel the force of those arguments produced against your vain and groundless notions; and how little you are able to deliver your *thesis* from them, but the more you struggle, the more still you are entangled. Go which way you will, your absurdities follow you as your shadow,——*hæret lateri lethalis arundo.* Leaving, therefore, all your absurdities upon you till God shall give you more illumination and ingenuity to discern and acknowledge them, I shall pass on to the examination of your third position, which led you into these gross mistakes; and if God shall convince you of your error in this point, I hope it may prove a means of recovering you out of the rest; which, in love to your soul, I heartily desire.

3. Your third position is, *That God’s covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. can be no other than the covenant of works, because circumcision was the condition of it: For (say you) the new covenant is altogether absolute and unconditional.*

#### *Of the Conditionality of the New Covenant.*

This question, Whether the covenant of grace be conditional

or absolute, was moved (as a learned man observes) in the former age, by occasion of the controversy about justification, betwixt the Protestants and Papists. Among the Protestants some denied, and others affirmed the conditionality of the gospel-covenant: Those that denied it did so for fear of mingling law and gospel, Christ's righteousness and man's, as the Papists had wickedly done before. Those that affirmed it did so out of fear also; lest the necessity of faith and holiness, being relaxed, Libertinism should be that way introduced. But if the question were duly stated, and the sense of its terms agreed upon, the gospel-covenant may be affirmed to be conditional, to secure the people of God from Libertinism, without the least diminution of the righteousness of Christ, or clouding the free grace of God.

I did, in my first answer to your *call*, endeavour to prevent the needless trouble you have here given yourself by a succinct state of the question; telling you the controversy betwixt us, is not, (1.) Whether the gospel-covenant requires no duties at all of them that are under it? Nor, (2.) Whether it requires any such conditions as were in Adam's covenant, namely, perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience, under the penalty of the curse, and admitting no place of repentance? Nor, (3.) Whether any condition required by it on our part have any thing in its own nature meritorious of the benefits promised? Nor, (4.) Whether we be able in our own strength, and by the power of our free will, without the preventing, as well as the assisting grace of God, to perform any such work or duty as we call a condition? These things I told you were to be excluded out of this controversy. But the only question betwixt us is, *Whether in the new covenant, some act of ours, (though it have no merit in it, nor can be done in our own single strength) be not required to be performed by us untecedently to a blessing or privilege consequent by virtue of a promise? and whether such an act or duty, being of a suspending nature to the blessing promised, it have not the true and proper nature of a gospel-condition?*

In your *reply*, (contrary to all rule and reason) you include, and chiefly argue against the very particulars by me there excluded; and scarcely, if at all, touch the true question as it was stated, and by you ought accordingly to have been considered. I might therefore justly think myself discharged from any further concernment with you about it; for if you will include what I plainly exclude, you argue not against mine, but another man's position, which I am not concerned to defend. You here dispute against meritorious conditions, which I explode and abhor as much as yourself. You say, p. 34. of your *reply*, that a condition plainly implies something of merit, by way of condignity or congruity; which is false, and

turns the question from me to Papists. And were it not more for the clearing up of so great a point for the instruction and satisfaction of others, than any hope you give me of convincing you, I should not have touched this question again, unless I had found your replies more distinct and pertinent. But finding the point in controversy of great weight, I will once more tell you,

1. What the word [*condition*] signifies.
2. In what sense it is by us used in this controversy.
3. Establish my arguments for the conditionality of the new covenant.

And first, we grant, That neither our word [*condition*] nor your term [*absolute,*] are either of them found in scripture, with respect to God's covenanting with man; so that we contend not about the signification of a scripture term. But though the word *conditional* be not there, yet the thing being found there, that brings the word *conditional* into use in this controversy. For we know not how to express those sacred particles, εἰ, οὐκ, εἰ μὴ, μόνον, εἰ καὶ, &c. *if, if not, unless, but if, except, only,* and the like, which are frequently used to limit and restrain the grants and privileges of the new covenant, Rom. x. 9. Matth. xviii. 3. Mark v. 36. Mark xi. 26. Rom. iv. 24. I say, we know not how to express the true sense and force of these particles in this controversy by any other word so fit and full as the word *conditional* is. Now this word *condition*, being a law term, is variously used among the Jurists; and the various use of the word occasions that confusion which is found in this controversy. He, therefore, that shall clearly distinguish the various senses and uses of the word, is most likely to labour with success in this controversy. I shall, therefore, briefly note the principal senses and uses of the terms, and shew in what sense we here take it. Of conditions there be two sorts,

1. Antecedent.
2. Consequent conditions.

As to the latter, namely, *consequent conditions*, you yourself acknowledge, p. 100. 'That in the outward dispensation of the covenant many things are required of us, in order unto the participation or enjoyment of the full end of the covenant in glory.'

So then the covenant is acknowledged to be consequently conditional\*, which is no more than to say with the apostle, "Without holiness no man shall see God;" or that, "If any man draw back, his soul shall have no pleasure in him, &c. Our contro-

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\* If the promises of the covenant concerning the end, as distinct from the means of salvation, are the promises meant, then no body can deny that these are conditional, because they are always made on condition of faith and repentance. *Turretine.*

versy therefore is not about consequent conditions, laid by God upon believers, after they are in Christ and the covenant; the covenant, so considered, *a posteriori*, will not be denied to be conditional. The only question is about antecedent conditions, and of these we are here to consider,

1. Such as respect the first sanction of the covenant in Christ.

2. Such as respect the application of the benefits of the covenant unto men\*.

As to the first sanction of the covenant in Christ, we freely acknowledge it hath no previous condition on man's part, but depends purely and only upon the grace of God, and merit of Christ: So that our question proceeds about such antecedent conditions only, as respect the application of the benefits of the covenant unto men; and of these antecedent conditions, there are likewise two sorts which must be carefully distinguished.

1. Such antecedent conditions which have the force of a meritorious and impulsive cause, which being performed by the proper strength of nature, or, at most, by the help of common, assisting grace, do give a man a right to the reward or blessings of the covenant. And in this sense we utterly disclaim antecedent conditions, as I plainly told you, p. 61. of my *Vindiciæ*, &c. Or,

2. An antecedent condition signifying no more than an act of ours, which, though it be neither perfect in every degree, nor in the least meritorious of the benefit conferred, nor performed in our natural strength: yet, according to the constitution of the covenant, is required of us, in order to the blessings consequent thereupon, by virtue of the promise: And, consequently the benefits and mercies granted in the promise, in this order are, and must be, suspended by the donor or disposer of them, until it be performed. Such a condition we affirm faith to be. But here again, faith, in this sense, the condition of the new covenant is considered,

1. Essentially; or,

2. Organically and instrumentally.

In the first consideration of faith, according to its essence, it is

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\* If the covenant is viewed in respect of its being first set on foot, and established in Christ, it has no previous condition, but is founded only on God's free favour, and Christ's merit; but if it is viewed as to the acceptance and application in the believer, it has for its condition, faith, which unites a man to Christ, and so instates him in the fellowship and joint participation of the covenant. *Turret. Vol. 2. p. 203.*

contained under obedience, and in that respect we exclude it from justifying our persons, or entitling us to the saving mercies of the new covenant, as it is a work of ours; and so I excluded it p. 133. of my *Method of Grace*, which you ignorantly or wilfully mistake, when, in your reply, p. 88, 89. you object against me: Faith, considered in this sense, is not the condition of the covenant, nor can pretend to be so, more than any other grace. But,

We consider it organically, relatively, and (as most speak) instrumentally, as it receives Christ, John i. 12. and so gives us power to become the sons of God; it being impossible for any man to partake of the saving benefits of the covenant, but as he is united to Christ. "For all the promises of God are in him yea, and in "him amen," 2 Cor. i. 20. And united to Christ no man can be, before he be a believer; for Christ dwelleth in our hearts by faith, Eph. iii. 17. Upon which scriptural grounds and reasons it is, that we affirm faith to be an antecedent condition, or *causa sine qua non*, to the saving benefits of the new covenant; and that it must go before them, at least in order of nature, which is that we mean, when we say faith is the antecedent condition of the new covenant. And those that deny it to be so, (as the Antinomians do, who talk of actual and personal justification from eternity, or at least from the death of Christ) must consequently assert the actual justification of infidels; and not only disturb, but destroy the whole order of the gospel, and open the sluices and flood-gates to all manner of licentiousness.

And thus our pious and learned divines generally affirm faith to be the condition of the covenant. So \* Mr. Jeremiah Burroughs, ' Faith, (saith he) hath the honour above all other graces, to be ' the condition of the second covenant; therefore it is certainly ' some great matter that faith enables us to do. Whatsoever keeps ' covenant with God, brings strength, though itself be never so ' weak; as Samson's hair. What is weaker than a little hair? ' yet, because the keeping that, was keeping covenant with God; ' therefore even a little hair was so great strength to Samson. Faith ' then, that is the condition of the covenant, in which all grace and ' mercy is contained, if it be kept, it will cause strength indeed to ' do great things.'

And as this excellent man, Mr. Burroughs, is in this sense for the conditionality of the new covenant, so are the most learned and eminent of our own divines. Dr. Edward Reynolds †, assigning the differences betwixt the two covenants, gives this for one: ' They differ in the condition (saith he); there legal obedience,

\* Moses's Self-denial, p. 288.

† Dr. Reynold's Life of Christ, p. 512.

‘ here only faith; and the certain consequent thereof, repentance. ‘ There is difference likewise in the manner of performing these ‘ conditions: For now God himself begins first to work upon us, ‘ and in us, before we move or stir towards him. He doth not ‘ only command us, and leave us to our created strength to obey ‘ the command; but he furnisheth us with his own grace and Spi- ‘ rit to obey the command.’

Of the same judgment is Dr. Owen \*. ‘ Are we able (saith he) ‘ of ourselves to fulfil the condition of the new Covenant? Is it ‘ not as easy for a man by his own strength to fulfil the whole law, ‘ as to repent and believe the promise of the gospel? This then is ‘ one main difference of these two covenants, That the Lord did in ‘ the Old only require the condition; now in the New, he also ‘ effects it in all the fœderates, to whom the covenant is extended.’ This is the man you pretended to be against conditions.

Mr. William Pemble †, opening the nature of the two covenants, saith, ‘ The law offers life unto man upon condition of perfect ‘ obedience; the gospel offers life unto man upon another condi- ‘ tion, to wit, of repentance and faith in Christ.’ And after his proofs for it, saith, ‘ From whence we conclude firmly, That the ‘ difference between the law and the gospel, assigned by our di- ‘ vines, is most certain and agreeable to the scriptures, viz. That ‘ the law gives life unto the just, upon condition of perfect obedi- ‘ ence in all things; the gospel gives life unto sinners, upon con- ‘ dition they repent, and believe in Christ Jesus.’

Learned and judicious Mr. William Perkins ‡ thus, ‘ The cove- ‘ nant of grace is that, whereby God freely promising Christ and ‘ his benefits, exacts again of man, that he would by faith receive ‘ Christ. And again, in the covenant of grace two things must be ‘ considered, the substance thereof, and the condition. The sub- ‘ stance of the covenant is, That righteousness and life everlasting, ‘ is given to God’s church and people by Christ §. The condition ‘ is, That we, for our part, are by faith to receive the aforesaid ‘ benefits; and this condition is by grace, as well as the sub- ‘ stance.’

That learned, humble, and painful minister of Christ, Mr. John Ball ||, stating the difference betwixt the two covenants, shews that in the covenant at Sinai, in the covenant with Abraham, and that

\* Dr. Owen’s Treatise of Redemption, book 3. chap. i. p. 103, 104. And in his Tract of Justification, p. 299, &c.

† Pemble of Justification, sect. 4. chap. i. p. 214, 215, 216, 217.

‡ Perkins’ Order of Causes, chap. xxxi. p. 17.

§ Reformed Catholic of Justification, p. 570.

|| Mr. J. Ball, of the covenant of grace, chap. i. Of the New Covenant, p. 198.

with David, that in all these covenant-expressures, there are for substance the same evangelical conditions of faith and sincerity.

Dr. Davenant \* thus: ' In the covenant of the gospel it is otherwise; for in this covenant, to the obtainment of reconciliation, justification, and life eternal, there is no other condition required than of true and lively faith, John iii. 16. ' Therefore justification, and the right to eternal life doth depend on the condition of faith alone.'

Dr. Downname † harmonizeth with the rest in these words: ' That which is the only condition of the covenant of grace, by that alone we are justified: But faith is the condition of the covenant of grace, which is therefore called *lex fidei*. Our writers, saith he, distinguishing the two covenants of God, that is, the law and the gospel, whereof one is the covenant of works, the other the covenant of grace, do teach, That the law of works is that which to justification requireth works as the condition thereof: the law of faith that which to justification requireth faith as the condition thereof. The former saith this, *Do this, and thou shalt live*; the latter, *Believe in Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*'

But what stand I upon particular, though renowned names? You may see a whole constellation of our sound and famous divines in the assembly, thus expressing themselves about this point. ' The grace of God, say they, is manifested in the second covenant, in that he freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by him, and requiring faith as the condition to interest them in him, promiseth and giveth his Holy Spirit to all his elect, to work in them that faith with all other saving graces, and to enable them to all holy obedience, as the evidence of the truth of their faith,' &c. ‡

I could even tire the reader with the testimonies of eminent foreign Divines, as *Cameron. de triplici fœdere*, Thes. 82. *Ursinus et Paræus, explicato Catech. Quest. 18. de fœdere*. *Wendeline Christian Theology, lib. 1. cap. 19. thes. 9. Poliander, Rivet, Wallæus, and Thysius*, the four learned professors at Leyden, *Synops. Dis. 23. sect. 27. &c.* And as for those ancient and modern Divines whom the Antinomians have corrupted and misrepresented, the reader may see them all vindicated, and their concurrence with those I have named evidenced by that learned and pious Mr. John Craile, in his *Modest vindication of the doctrine of conditions in the covenant of grace*, from p. 58. onward; a man whose name and memory is precious with me, not only upon the account of that excellent sermon he preached, and those fervent prayers he poured out many

\* *Davenant de justific. Act. cap. 30.*

† *Tract. 1. of justification, b. 6. chap. 8. sect. 10. and b. 7. chap. 2. sect. 6.*

‡ *Larger catechis. 4to. London 1648, p. 8.*

years since at my ordination; but for that learned and judicious treatise of his against Mr. Eyre, wherein he hath cast great light upon this controversy, as excellent Mr. Baxter and Mr. Woodbridge have also done. But, alas! what evidence is sufficient to satisfy ignorant and obstinate men!

Sir, It pities me to see the lamentable confusion you are in; you are forced, by the evidence of truth, to yield and own the substance of what I contend for: you have yielded the covenant to be consequently conditional, in p. 84. of your Reply; you have also as plainly yielded that the *application of pardoning mercy unto our souls is in order of nature, consequent unto believing*, p. 31. of your Reply. From both which concessions, in your own words recited, this conclusion is evident and unavoidable, viz.

That no adult person, notwithstanding God's eternal election, and Christ's meritorious death and satisfaction, according to the constitution and order of the new covenant, can either be justified in this world, or saved in the world to come, unless he first believe.

For if the application of pardoning mercy unto our souls is in order of nature, consequent unto believing, (as you truly affirm it to be) then, according to the constitution and order of the new covenant, no application of pardoning mercy can be made to our souls before we believe. And if it be evident (as you say it is, p. 84.) *that unto a full and complete enjoyment of all the promises of the covenant, faith on our part is required*; then, as no man can be actually justified in this world, so neither can he be saved before, or without faith, in the world to come. And if you did but see the true suspending nature of faith, which you plainly yield, in these two concessions; you would quickly grant the conditional nature of it: for what is the proper nature and true notion of a condition but to suspend the benefits and grants of that covenant in which it is so inserted? And thus the controversy betwixt us is fairly issued. But I doubt you understand not what you have here written, or are troubled with a very bad memory; because I find you in a far different note from this, in p. 103. of your Reply, where you say, 'That if Jesus Christ fulfilled the law, and purchased heaven and happiness for men, (as all true Protestants hitherto have taught) then nothing can remain, but to declare this to them to incline them to believe and accept it; and to prescribe in what way and by what means they shall finally come to inherit eternal life. To affirm, therefore, that faith and repentance are the conditions of the new covenant required of us in point of duty, antecedent to the benefit of the promise, doth necessarily suppose, that Christ hath not done all for us, nor purchased a right to life for any; but only made way that they might have it upon certain terms,

‘ or, as some say, he hath merited that we might merit: but the conditions of the covenant are not to be performed by the head and members both, Gal. iv. 4. Christ, therefore, having in our stead performed the conditions of life, there remains nothing but a promise and the obedience of children as the fruit and effect thereof to them that believe in him, together with means of obtaining the full possession which here we want.’

*Reply.* Either these passages I have here cited and compared were fetched at a great distance of time, out of authors differing as much in judgment as you and I do, and so the dissonancy of them is the mere effect of oblivion and incogitancy; or else your intellectuals are more confused and weak than I am willing to suspect them to be. For if the application of pardoning mercy to our souls is in order of nature, consequent to believing, as you truly say it was, then, certainly, notwithstanding Christ’s fulfilling the law, and purchasing heaven and happiness for men, something else must remain to be done, besides declaring this to them, to incline them to believe and accept it, or prescribing to them in what way they shall finally come to inherit eternal life. For, besides those declarations and prescriptions you talk of, faith itself must be wrought in the souls of men, or else pardoning mercy is not in order of nature, consequent unto believing, as you said it was: for all the external declarations and prescriptions in the world are not faith itself, but only the means to beget it; which may, or may not become effectual to that end.

*Secondly,* Whereas you say, this (senseless notion) is consequent upon the doctrine of all true Protestants; you grossly abuse them, and make all the true Protestants in the world guilty of worse than Arminian, or Antinomian dotage. The Antinomian, indeed, makes our actual justification to be nothing else but the manifestation or declaration of our justification from eternity, or the time of Christ’s death. And the Arminian tells us, that the declaration of the gospel to men is sufficient to bring them to faith by the assisting grace of the Spirit. But your notion is worse than the very dregs of both, and yet you tack it as a just consequent to the doctrine of all true Protestants.

*Reply, Thirdly,* You say, *That to affirm faith and repentance to be the conditions of the new covenant required of us in point of duty, antecedent to the benefit of the promise, doth necessarily suppose that Christ hath not done all for us, nor purchased a right to life for any; but only made way that they might have it upon certain terms, or merited that we might merit.* Here, sir, you vilely abuse all those worthy divines before-mentioned, who have made faith the condition of the new covenant, pinning upon them both Popery and Judaism. Popery, yea, the dregs of Popery,

in supposing their doctrine necessarily implies that *Christ hath merited that we might merit*. And Judaism to the height in saying, *their doctrine necessarily supposes that Christ hath not purchased a right of life to any*. What can a Jew say more? Ah, Mr. C. can you read the words I have here recited out of blessed Burroughs, Owen, Pemble, Perkins, Davenant, Downname, yea, the whole assembly of reverend and holy divines, with multitudes more, (who have all with one mouth asserted faith to be the condition of the new covenant required on man's part in point of duty; and that men must believe before they can be justified; which is the very same thing with what I say, that it is an antecedent to the benefit of the promise) and not tremble to think of the direful charges you here draw against them? The Lord forgive your rash presumption.

*Fourthly*, Whereas you say, Christ hath, in our stead, performed the conditions of life, and that there remains nothing but a promise, &c. you therein speak in the highest dialect of \* Antinomianism. Hath not Christ, by his life and death performed the conditions of life in our stead? Yet you yourself confess, that pardoning mercy is, in order of nature, consequent to our believing; certainly then there is something more to be done beside the mere making or being of a promise: there must be the effects of the promise in our hearts, yea, the effects of those absolute promises of the first grace, Ezek. xxxvi. Jer. xxxii. Or else, notwithstanding Christ's performance of redemption on his part, we can neither be justified nor saved. For I do not think you intend to lay the condition of repentance, or believing upon Christ, who, in the new covenant, hath laid them upon us, though, in the same covenant, he graciously undertakes to work them in us: and yet your words sound in that wild Antinomian note.

*Objection*, But, I suppose, you take my notion to be as self-repugnant as your own, when I say faith is an antecedent condition to justification; because I also say, this grace is also supernaturally wrought in us, and is not of ourselves. This staggers you, and is the very stone you stumble at all along this controversy: for in your sense, p. 34. every condition is meritorious, by condignity, or congruity.

*Reply, First*, What do I say more in all this than what those worthies before-mentioned, do expressly affirm? Doth not Dr. Owen (the man whom you deservedly value) make conditions both in Adam's covenant and the new, with this difference, that Adam's covenant required them, but the new covenant effects them in all the fœderates? Sir, We take it for no contradiction to assert, That the planting of the principle, and the assisting and exciting of

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\* Saltmarsh of free grace, p. 126, 127.

the acts of faith, are the proper works of the Spirit of God, and are also contained in the absolute promises of the new covenant, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. And yet faith, notwithstanding this, is truly and properly our work and duty; and that upon our believing or not believing, we have, or have not, an actual interest in Christ, righteousness, and life. For though the author of faith be the Spirit of God, yet believing, is properly our act, and an act required of us by a plain command; 1 John iii. 23. *This is the command of God, That ye believe.* And if its being wrought in God's strength makes it cease to be our work, I would fain know what exposition you would give of that place, Phil. ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own salvation, &c. for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.* And as this faith is truly and properly our work, though wrought in God's strength (for it is not God, but we that do believe) so it is wrought in us by him (by our own confession) before the application of pardoning mercy, which is consequent in order of nature thereunto: and therefore hath the true nature of an antecedent condition, which is that I contend for; and did you but understand your own words, you would not contend against it.

*Object. 2.* Oh, but say you, p. 34. every condition is meritorious, either by way of *congruity*, or *condignity*.

*Reply,* This is your ignorance of the nature of a condition, with which I find you as unacquainted, as with the nature of a covenant. A condition, whilst unperformed, only suspends the act of the law, or testament; it being the will of the *testator*, *legislator*, or *donor*, that his law, or testament, should act, or effect, when the condition is performed, and not before: But it is not essential to a condition, to be a meritorious, or impulsive cause, moving him to bestow the benefit for the sake thereof. A man freely gives another, out of his love and bounty, such an estate, or sum of money, which he shall enjoy, if he live to such a year, or day, and not before; is this *quando dies veniet*, this appointed time the meritorious, or impulsive cause of the gift? Surely no man will say it; but that it is a *causa sine qua non*, or a condition suspending the enjoyment of the gift, no man will deny, that knows what the nature of a condition is. An act meritorious, by way of *congruity*, is that to which a reward is not due, out of strict justice, but out of decency, or some kind of meetness. Merit of *condignity* is a voluntary action, for which a reward is due to a man, out of justice, and cannot be denied him, without injustice; our faith is truly the condition of the new covenant, and yet we detest the meritoriousness of it, in either sense.

*Object. 3.* But you object my words to me, in my *Method of Grace*, where I assert the impossibility of believing without the efficacy of supernatural grace, p. 102, 103.

*Reply.* Sir, I own the words you quote, and am bold to challenge the most envious eye that shall read those lines, to shew me the least repugnancy betwixt what I said there, and what I have said in my *Vindiciæ Legis*, &c. p. 9. of the *Prolegomena*, and p. 61. of that book. You shew your good-will to make an advantageous thrust, but your weapon is too short, and can draw no blood. But leaving these weak and impertinent cavils, let us come to your solution of my arguments, p. 98. by which I proved the conditionality of the new covenant. My first argument was this :

*Argum.* 1. If we cannot be justified, or saved, till we believe, and are justified when we believe; then faith is the condition on which those subsequent benefits are suspended, &c.

*Answer.* The sum of your answer (without denying, distinguishing, or limiting one proposition) is this, That 'here faith is 'properly put into the room of perfect obedience, and is to do 'what perfect obedience was to do under the law: Whereas (say 'you) faith is only appointed as an instrument to receive and apply 'the righteousness of Christ, which is the alone matter of our 'justification before God; and faith itself is not our righteousness, 'as it would be, if it were a condition,' p. 105, 106.

*Reply.* Not to note the weakness and impertinence of this answer, I shall only take notice of what you here allow, and grant, That *faith is appointed as an instrument to receive, and apply the righteousness of Christ, which is the alone matter of our justification before God.* Whence I infer three conclusions.

*First,* That we cannot be justified before God till we believe, except you can prove, that the unaccepted and unapplied righteousness of Christ, doth actually justify our persons before God.

*Secondly,* That the justification of our persons before God, is and must be suspended (as by a non-performed condition) until we actually believe. Which two conclusions yield up your cause to my argument, which you here seem to oppose.

*Thirdly,* That hereby you perfectly renounce, and destroy your Antinomian fancy before-mentioned, That *if Christ have fulfilled the law, and purchased heaven for men, nothing can remain but to declare this to them, &c.* for it seems by this, they must receive, and apply Christ's righteousness by faith, or they cannot be justified (you say not declaratively in their own consciences, but) before God. And thus, instead of answering, you have confirmed, and yielded my first argument, and only oppose your own mistakes, not the sense, or force of my arguments, in all that you say to it, or the scriptures produced to prove it.

*Arg.* 2. To my second argument, recited p. 94. where I argued from God's covenant with Abraham, and proved it to be conditional;

and yet by you acknowledged to be a pure gospel covenant: all that you say, is, That you have dispatched that before, in your discourse about the *covenant of circumcision*, and therefore will say nothing to it here.

*Reply.* In saying nothing to it here, you have said as much as you did before, in the place you refer to; and therefore finding nothing said here, or there, I conclude you can say nothing to it at all.

*Arg. 3.* My third *argument* was this: if all the promises of the gospel be absolute and unconditional, then they do not properly belong to the new covenant. That cannot properly and strictly be a covenant, which is not a mutual compact, and in which there is no restipulation, nor re-obligation: it is a naked promise, not a covenant.

To this you answer three things. In the first branch of your answer, you impudently beg the question, by saying, That you have proved already, *Answer.* p. 113, 114. in your replies to my former arguments, that the new covenant is wholly free and absolute. Upon this absurd *Petitio principii*, you make bold to invert my argument thus, in your second reply: ‘If all the promises of the gospel be wholly absolute and unconditional, they do properly and truly belong to the new covenant; but so they are: therefore, &c.’ O rare disputant! In the last place, in opposition to the sequel of my major proposition, you tell me, You will oppose the judgment of Dr. Owen on Heb. viii. 10. where he saith, ‘That a covenant properly is a compact, or agreement, on certain terms, stipulated by two or more parties, &c. and that the word *διαθήκη*, there used, signifies a covenant improperly, &c.

*Reply.* If you call this an opposition to the sequel of my major, either your brains or mine do want Hellebore. Doth he not say the very same thing I do, That there must be a restipulation in a proper covenant? And as for the word *διαθήκη*, which, he saith, signifieth a covenant improperly, but properly is a testamentary disposition, I fully concur with him therein; but I hope a testamentary disposition may have a condition in it; to be sure such a one as I assert faith here to be, which is the free gift of God: and in this sense I shewed you before, where the *Doctor* yields faith to be the condition of the new covenant.

*Arg. 4.* My fourth argument was this, If all the promises of the new covenant be absolute and unconditional, and have no respect nor relation to any grace wrought in us, or duty done by us; then the trial of our interest in Christ by marks and signs of grace, is not our duty, nor can we take comfort in sanctification, as it is an evidence of our justification, &c.

Your answer, p. 120. is, That ‘at this rate I may prove *quidlibet a quolibet*; for it doth not follow, that, because the new covenant is absolute, therefore it hath no respect nor relation to any grace wrought in us, nor duty done by us, or that we may not justly take comfort in sanctification, as an evidence of our justification.

*Reply.* If I had a mind to learn the art of proving *quidlibet a quolibet*, and make myself ridiculous to others, by such foolish attempts, I know no book in the world fitter to instruct me therein than yours. Certainly you have the knack of it, and give us an instance of it but now, in confuting the sequel of my *major*, by an allegation out of Dr. Owen, which expressly confirms and establishes it. But to the point; I would willingly know how it is possible for sanctification to be a true and certain mark and sign of justification, when (according to the Antinomian principle, which you here too much comprobate and espouse) a man may be justified before he believe, yea, before he is a man, even from the time of Christ’s death, and (as others of them speak) from eternity. A true mark and sign must be proper to, and inseparable from that which it signifies. Now, if that be true which you said before, That *after Christ’s fulfilling of the law in his own person, &c. nothing can remain, but to declare this to men to incline them to believe and accept it, and to prescribe in what way they shall come to inherit eternal life.* If this be all that can remain to us, then nothing but the declarations and prescriptions of the gospel, which are things without us, can remain to be marks and signs of justification to us: and consequently all those to whom those declarations and prescriptions are made and given, have therein the marks and evidences of their justification. But I am truly weary of such stuff, I am sure the apostle places *vocation* before *justification*. Rom. viii. 30. “Whom he called, them he justified.” And without an immediate testimony from heaven, I know not how to evidence and prove my justification, but from, and by my faith, and other parts of sanctification; whereby I apprehend and apply the righteousness of Christ: if you can prove it from the declarations and prescriptions of the gospel, I cannot.

*Arg. 5.* My fifth and last argument, ran thus: If the covenant of grace be altogether absolute and unconditional, requiring nothing to be done on our part to entitle us to its benefits, then it cannot be man’s duty, in entering covenant with God, to deliberate the terms, count the cost, or give his consent by word or writing, to the terms of this covenant: for where there are no terms at all, (as in absolute promises there are none) there can be none to deliberate. But I shewed you, this is man’s duty, from clear and undeniable scriptures, &c.

You say, by way of answer hereunto, that ‘ You must tell me, that the scriptures do make a plain distinction between the new and everlasting covenant, which God hath been pleased to make with sinners in Jesus Christ; and the return of that sincere and dutiful obedience which he requires of us, by way of answer thereunto. (2.) You say, there are many things, which though promised in the covenant, and wrought in us by the grace of God; are yet duties indispensably required of us in order to the participation of the full end of the covenant in glory: and in respect hereof, we are indeed to deliberate the terms, count the cost, and give up ourselves solemnly to him, with sincere resolutions, &c. But then you thought I had understood there had been a vast difference betwixt God’s covenant with us, and our covenant with God, citing Ezek. xvi. 59, 60, 61. where God promiseth to “ give them their sisters for daughters, but not by their covenant.” And with this you compare Psal. lxxxix. “ My covenant will I not break;” where (you say) we find a plain distinction betwixt God’s covenant with them, and their duty to God. And lastly, you say, p. 105. that the want of a due observation of this plain scripture-distinction, betwixt God’s free and absolute covenant made with sinners in Christ, and our covenants with God by way of return thereunto, is the true reason of all our mistakes about the true nature of the gospel covenant, whilst we jumble and confound together that which the scriptures do so plainly distinguish.’

*Reply.* To your first answer, I say; it is true, the scriptures do distinguish betwixt covenant and covenant; that of works, and that of grace. It also distinguishes the same covenant of grace for substance, according to its various administrations into the old and new covenant. It also distinguishes betwixt the *promissory* part of the same covenant of grace, and the *restipulatory* part; not as two opposite covenants, (as you distinguish them, Gen. xvii.) but as the just and necessary parts of one and the same covenant. It also distinguishes betwixt vows made by men to God in some particular cases, and the covenant of grace betwixt God and them. But what is all this to your purpose? Or in what point doth it touch my argument? You desire me to cast mine eye upon Ezek. xvi. and Psal. lxxxix. I have done so, and that impartially; and do assure you, I admire why you produce them against my argument. That in Ezek. speaks of the enlargement of the church by the accession of the Gentiles to it; and the sense of those words seems to me to be this: That this enlargement of the church is a gracious addition, or something beyond what God had ever done in his former dispensations of the covenant to that people. And for Psal. lxxxix.

I know not what you mean to produce it for, unless it be to prove what I never denied, That notwithstanding our failures in duty towards God, God will still keep his covenant with us; though he will visit the iniquities of his covenant-people with a rod.

To your second answer, That we are to deliberate the terms and count the cost, with respect to those duties, which are in order to the participation of the full end of the covenant in glory: by which I suppose you mean self-denial, perseverance, &c. I have no controversy with you about that. Our question is, Whether there be no deliberations required of, or to be performed by men who are not yet in Christ by justifying faith, but under some preparatory works towards faith? And whether at the very time of their closing with Christ, there be not a consent of the will unto those terms required of them? If you say there be, (as by the places I alleged it evidently appears there are) then you yield the point I contend for. If you say they are not before, or at the time of believing, to consider any terms, or give their consent to them by word or writing; such an answer would fly in the very face of those scriptures I produced: for then a man may be in covenant without his own consent; he that deliberates not, consents not; *non consentit, qui non sentit*. And therefore you durst not speak it out (for which modesty I commend you) and so leave me with half an answer, not touching that part, viz. Antecedent deliberations, which were concerned in this argument. And now let your most partial friends judge, whether from this performance of yours, you have any just ground for that vain boast which concludes your answer, viz. 'That the covenants themselves, which those privileges are bottomed on; are now repealed, and that there is no room left for any other argument to infer the baptism of infants: at least, I shall willingly commit it to the judgment of all intelligent and impartial readers, Whether Mr. Cary hath any real ground in this performance of his, for such a thrasonical conclusion, such a vain and fulsome boast?

I find that with like confidence he hath also attempted a reply to Mr. Joseph Whiston, a reverend, learned, and aged divine, who hath accurately and successfully defended God's covenant with Abraham against Mr. Cox, and doubt not, if Mr. Cary and his party have but confidence enough to expose it to the public view, and to adventure the cause of infant-baptism upon it, the world would quickly see an end of this long-continued and unhappy controversy, which hath vexed the church of God, and alienated the affections of good men; and that the wisdom of Providence hath permitted and over-ruled this last attempt to the singular advantage of the truths of God, and the tranquillity of good men, whose concernment (at this time especially) is rather to strengthen their

faith and heighen their encouragements from God's gracious covenant, than to undermine it when all things beside it are shaking and tottering round about them.

And now, Sir, for a *coronis* to all those things that have been controverted betwixt us about the covenants of God, and the right of believers' infants to baptism, resulting from one of them which I have asserted and argued against you in my first answer, and you have silently and wholly passed over in your reply, hoping to destroy them all at once, by proving God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. to be a pure Adam's covenant of works; I judge it necessary, as matters now lie between us, to give the reader the grounds and reasons of my faith and practice with respect unto the ordinance of infant baptisin, and that as succinctly and clearly as I can in the following *Thesis*; which being laid together by an unprejudiced and considerative reader, will, I think, amount to more than a strong probability, *That it is the will of God that the infant seed of believers ought now to be baptized.*

P. 61, 62. But here I must remind the reader, and beg him to review what I have said before in the third *Cause of errors*, That to arrive to satisfaction in this point, requires a due and serious search of the whole word of God; with a sedate, rational, and impartial mind; comparing one thing with another, though they lie scattered at a distance in the scriptures; some in the *Old Testament* and some in the *New*. Bring but these things to an interview, as we do in discovering the change of the sabbath, and we may arrive unto a due satisfaction of the will of God herein. This I confess, calls for strength of mind, great sedulity, attention, and impartiality; and yet what man would think all this too much, if it were but to clear his children's title unto a small earthly inheritance? I intend not to give the reader here an account of all the arguments drawn from several scripture-topics by the strenuous defenders of infant's baptism; but to keep only to the arguments drawn from God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. which is the scripture mainly controverted betwixt us: You affirming boldly and dangerously that covenant to be no other than an Adam's covenant of works; and I justly denying and abhorring your position upon the grounds and reasons before given, which you neither have, nor ever will be able to destroy. Now that the reader, who hath neither time nor ability to read the larger and more elaborate treatises on this subject, may, *ως εν τυπω*, in one short view, see the deduction of believers' infants right to baptism from this gospel covenant of God with Abraham, I shall gather the substance of what I contend for, and lay it as clearly as I can before the eyes of my reader in the following *Thesis*; which being distinctly considered as to the evident truth of each, and then rationally compared one with the

other, he will see how each fortifies another, and how all together do strongly confirm this conclusion, That the infants of believers under the gospel, as they naturally descend from Abraham's spiritual seed, are therefore partakers at least of the external privileges of the visible church, and therefore ought now to be baptized.

*Thesis 1. It hath pleased God, in all ages of the world, since man was created, to deal with his church and people by way of covenant, and in the same way he will still deal with them unto the end of the world.*

God might have dealt with us in a supreme way of mere sovereignty and dominion, commanding what duties he pleased, and establishing his commands by what penalties he pleased, and never have brought himself under the tie and obligation of a covenant to his own creatures: but he chuses to deal familiarly with his people by way of covenanting, being a familiar way, 2 Sam. vii. 19. *Is this the manner of men, O Lord God, or, (as Junius renders it) and that after the manner of men, O Lord God!* it is a way full of condescending grace and goodness: he is willing hereby his people should know what they may certainly expect from their God, as well as what their God requires of them. Hereby also he will furnish them with mighty pleas and arguments in prayer, succour their faith against temptations, strengthen their hands in duties of obedience, sweeten their obedience to them, and discriminate his own people from the world.

As soon therefore as man was created and placed in paradise, being made upright and thoroughly furnished with abilities perfectly and completely to obey all the commands of his Maker, the Lord immediately entered into the covenant of works with him, and all his natural posterity in him: And in this covenant his standing or falling was according to the perfection and constancy of his personal obedience, Gen. ii. 17. Gal. iii. 10. But in this first covenant of works no provision at all was made for his recovery (in case of the least failure) by his repentance or better obedience; but the curse immediately seized both soul and body: and sin, by the fall entering into man's nature, totally disabled him to the perfect performance of any one duty, as that covenant required it to be done, Rom. viii. 3. nor would God accept any repentance or after-endeavours in lieu of that perfect obedience due by law. So that from the fall of Adam to the end of the world this covenant ceaseth as a covenant of life, or a covenant able to give righteousness and life unto all mankind for evermore, Rom. iii. 20. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Gal. ii. 16. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Gal. iii. 11. "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, is evident." And it being so evident, that righteousness and life being for ever impossible to be

obtained upon the terms of Adam's covenant, it must therefore be a self-evident truth, That *since the fall God never did, and to the end of the world he never will open that way or door to life (thus blocked up by an absolute impossibility) for the justification and salvation of any man.*

*Thesis. 2.* Soon after the violation and cessation of this first covenant, as a covenant of life, it pleased the Lord to open and publish the second covenant of grace by Jesus Christ, the first dawning whereof we find in Gen. iii. 15. where the seed is promised which shall bruise the serpent's head. And though this be but a very short, and somewhat obscure discovery of man's remedy and salvation by Christ; yet was it a joyful sound to the ears of God's people, it was even life from the dead to the believers of those times. For we may rationally conclude, That that space of time betwixt the breaking of the first and making \* of the second covenant was the most dismal period of time that ever the world did or shall see. This covenant of grace now took place of the covenant of works, and comprehended all believers in the bosom of it. The covenant of works took place from the time it was made until the fall of Adam, and then was abolished as a life-giving covenant. The second covenant took place from the time it was made soon after the fall, and is to continue to the end of the world. And these only are the two covenants God hath made with men; the latter succeeding the former, and commencing from its expiration; but both cannot possibly be in force together at the same time, and upon the same persons, as co-ordinate covenants of life and salvation. For in co-ordination they expel and destroy each other, Gal. v. 4. "Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." The first covenant was a covenant without a mediator; the second is a covenant with a mediator. Place a believer under both at once, or put these two covenants in co-ordination, and that which results will be a pure contradiction, viz. That a man is saved without a mediator, and yet by a mediator. Moreover, if there be a way to life without a mediator, there was no need to make a covenant in and with a mediator; nor can those words of Christ be true, John iv. 6. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me."

The righteousness of the first covenant was within man himself; the righteousness of the second covenant is without man in Christ. Put these two in co-ordination, and that which results is as pure a contradiction as the former, viz. That a man is justified by a righteousness within him, and yet is justified by a righteousness without him, expressly contrary to the apostle's conclusion, Rom. iii. 20.

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\* That is, the revelation. Editor.

“ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.” It is therefore an intolerable absurdity to place believers under both these covenants at the same time; under the curse of the first, and blessing of the second. For whensoever the state of any person is changed by justification, his covenant is changed with his state, Col. i. 13. It is as unimaginable that a believer should thus stand under both covenants, as it is to imagine a man may be born of two mothers, Gal. iv. 22, 23, 24, 25. or a woman lawfully married to two husbands, Rom. vii. 1, 2, 3, 4. and more absurd (if it be possible any thing can be more absurd) to attribute the most glorious privilege of the covenant of grace, (*viz.* “ I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee,” Gen. xvii. 7.) to the impotent and abolished covenant of works; both which absurdities are asserted in defence of *Antipædo-baptism*.

And though it be true, that after the first edition of the covenant of grace, the matter of the first covenant was represented to the Israelites in the moral law; yet that representation was intended and designed to be subservient, and added to the promise, Gal. iii. 19. and so (as an acute and learned divine \* speaks) the very decalogue or *moral law* itself pertained to the covenant of grace; yea, in some sort flowed out of this covenant, as it was promulged by the counsel of God to be serviceable to it; both antecedently to lead men by the conviction of sin, fear of wrath, and self-despair, to the covenant of grace; and also consequently as it is a pattern of obedience and rule of holiness. For had it been published as a covenant designed intentionally to its primitive use and end, it had totally frustrated the covenant of grace.

*Thesis 3. Though the primordial light or first glimmerings of this covenant of grace, were comparatively weak and obscure; yet from the first publication of it to Adam, God in all ages hath been amplifying the privileges, and heightening the glory of this second covenant in all the after expressures and editions of it unto this day, and will more and more amplify and illustrate it to the end of the world.*

That first promise, Gen. iii. 15. is like the first small spring or head of a great river, which the farther it runs, the bigger it grows by the accession of more waters to it. Or like the sun in the heavens, which the higher it mounts, the more bright and glorious the day still grows.

In that period of time, betwixt Adam and Abraham, we find no token of God's covenant ordered therein to be applied to the infant seed of believers. But in that second edition of the covenant to Abraham, the privileges of the covenant were amplified, and his infant-seed not only taken into the covenant (as they were

\* *Turretini Pars 2da loc. 12. p. 243.*

before) but also added to the visible church, by receiving the token of the covenant, which then was circumcision; and so here is a great addition made to the visible church, even the whole infant off-spring of adult believers.

From that period, until the coming of the Messiah in the flesh, the Jewish church, and their infant-seed, except only some few proselytes out of the Gentile nations, made up the visible church of God, and the poor Gentiles were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, Eph. ii. 12. but in this glorious third period the covenant again enlarges itself more than before, and the privileges of it are no longer limited, and restrained to the Jewish believers, and their infant-seed; but the Gentiles also are taken into the covenant, and the door of faith was opened unto them, Acts xiv. 27. the partition-wall was now broken down, which separated the church from the Gentile world, Eph. ii. 14. This was a glorious enlargement of the covenant, and many glorious prophecies and promises were fulfilled in it; such as those, Isa. xi. 10. and xlii. 1, 6. xlix. 22. liv. 3. lx. 3, 5, 11, 16. lxii. 2, &c.

And though the covenant, as to its external part, seems to have lost ground in the breaking off of the Jewish nation from the church; yet, like the sea, what it loses in one place, it gains with advantage upon another: The addition of many Gentile nations to the church, more than recompenses for the present breaking off of that one nation of the Jews. And indeed they are broken off but for a time, for God shall graff them in again, Rom. xi. 23. This therefore being the design of God, and steady course of his covenant of grace, more and more to enlarge itself in all ages; nothing can be more opposite to the nature of this covenant, than to narrow and contract its privileges in its farther progress, and cut off a whole species from it, which it formerly took in.

*Thesis 4.* It is past all doubt and contradiction, that the infant-seed of Abraham, under the second edition of the covenant of grace, were taken with their believing parents into God's gracious covenant, had the seal of that covenant applied to them, and were thereby added to the visible church, Gen. xvii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. which was a gracious privilege of the covenant superadded to all the former, and such as sweeps away all the frivolous and groundless cavils and exceptions of those that object the incapacity of infants to enter into covenant with God, or receive benefit from the external privileges of the visible church. Nor can the subtlest enemy to infant-baptism give us a convincing reason why the infants of Gentile believers are not equally capable of the same benefits that the infants of Jewish believers were, if they still stand

under the same covenant that the former stood under; and God hath no where repealed the gracious grant formerly made to the infant-seed of his covenant-people.

*Thesis 5.* It is to me clear, beyond all contradiction, from Rom. xi. 17. "If some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in amongst them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree:" I say I can scarce desire a clearer scripture-light than this text gives, to satisfy my understanding in this case, that when God brake off the unbelieving Jews from the church, both parents and children together, the believing Gentiles, which are as truly Abraham's seed as they were, Gal. iii. 29. yea, the more excellent seed of Abraham, were implanted or ingrafted in their room, and do as amply enjoy the privileges of that covenant, both internal and external, for themselves and for their infant-seed, as ever any members of the Jewish church did or could do.

Our adversaries in this controversy do pitifully and apparently shuffle here, and invent many strange and unintelligible distinctions to becloud the light of this famous text. What they are, and how they are baffled, the reader will easily discern from what hath already past betwixt my antagonist and me, in p. 108, &c. of my *Vindiciæ Legis et Fœderis*. It is plain that Abraham is the root; the olive-tree, the visible church; the sap and fatness of the olive, are church-ordinances and covenant-privileges; the Gentile believers, who are Abraham's seed according to promise, are the ingrafted branches standing in the place of the natural branches, and with them, or in like manner as they did, partaking of the root and fatness of the olive-tree, that is, as really and amply enjoying all the immunities, benefits, and privileges of the church and covenant (among which the initiating sign was one, and a chief one too) as ever the natural branches that were broken off, that is, the Jewish parents and their children, did or might have done. And to deny this, (as before was noted) is to straiten covenant-privileges in their farther progress.

*Thesis 6.* Suitable hereunto we find, that no sooner was the Christian church constituted, and the believing Gentiles by faith added to it, but the children of such believing parents are declared to be fœderally holy, 1 Cor. vii. 14. and the unbelieving Jews, who were superstitiously fond of circumcision, and prejudiced against baptism as an injurious innovation, are by the apostle persuaded to submit themselves to it, Acts ii. 38, 39. assuring them that the same promise, viz. *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee*, is now as effectually sealed to them and their children by baptism, as it was in the former age by circumcision: And that the Gentiles, which are yet afar off, whenever God shall call them,

shall equally enjoy the same privilege, both for themselves and for their children also.

We also find a commission given by Christ to the disciples, Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. *To disciple all nations, baptizing them, &c.* from which discipleship, infants ought not to be excluded, Acts xv. 10. Yea, we find, that as at the institution of circumcision, Abraham, the father and master of the family, was first circumcised in his own person, and then his whole household, Gen. xvii. 23, 24. answerably, as soon as any person by conversion or public profession of faith became a visible child of Abraham, that person was first baptized, and the whole household with him or her, Acts xvi. 15, 33. It is unreasonable to put us upon the proof, that there were infants in those houses; it being more than probable that in such frequent baptizing of households belonging to believers, there were some infants; but if there were none, it is enough for us to prove from their fœderal holiness, 1 Cor. vii. 14. and the extent of God's promises to them, Acts ii. 38, 39. if there had been never so many infants in those households, they might and ought to have been baptized. How the true sense and scope of the two last mentioned scriptures are maintained and vindicated against Mr. Cary's corrupt glosses and interpretations, see my *Vindiciæ Legis et Fœderis*, p. 90, 91. We do not lay the stress of infant-baptism upon such strictures as the baptizings of the household's of believers, or Christ's taking up in his arms, and blessing the little ones that were brought to him. These and many other such things found in the history of *Christ*, and *Acts of the apostles*, have their use and service to fortify that doctrine. But if we can produce no example of any believer's infant baptized, the merit of the cause lies not in the matter of fact, but covenant-right. For our adversaries themselves, if we go to the matter of fact, will be hard put to it to produce us one instance out of the New Testament of any child of a believing Christian whose baptism was deferred, or by Christ or his apostles ordered to be deferred, until he attained the years of maturity, and made a personal profession of faith himself.

*Thesis 7. The change of the token and seal of the covenant from circumcision to baptism, will by no means infer the change or diversity of the covenants, especially when the latter comes into the place, and serves to the same use and end with the former, as it is manifest baptism doth, from Col. ii. 11, 12. as hath been, I think, sufficiently argued against Mr. Cary's glosses and exceptions, p. 100, 101. of my Vindicia Legis et Fœderis.* The covenant is still the same covenant of grace, though the external initiating sign be changed. For what is the substantial part of the covenant of grace now, but the same it was to Abraham and his seed before? Is not this our covenant of grace, Heb. viii. 10. "I will be to them a God, and they

shall be to me “a people?” And in what words was Abraham’s covenant expressed, Gen. xvii. 7. “I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” This makes Abraham’s covenant, sealed to him and his seed, as truly and properly the *covenant of grace*, as that which baptism now seals to believers and their seed. The rash ignorance of those that affirm, God may become a people’s God in the way of special interest, by virtue of the broken and abolished *covenant of works*, rather deserves sharp reprehension and sad lamentation, than a confutation; which, nevertheless out of respect to my friend Mr. Cary, I have given it in its proper place in this rejoinder.

I hope by this time I have made it evident, that the defenders of infant-baptism, as it is established upon God’s covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. have not so mistaken their ground, as Mr. Cary hath, by his endeavours to carry that covenant as an Adam’s *covenant of works*, through such a multitude of other errors and absurdities, as he draws along with it in his way of reasoning.



## A POSTSCRIPT TO MR. CARY.

SIR,

**I** RESOLVED not to disturb my mind with your passionate provoking language, at least whilst I was busily employed in searching for reason and argument (two scarce commodities) amongst heaps of vain and fulsome words: Nor will I now imitate your folly and rudeness, lest I become an *offender*, whilst I am to act the part of a *reprover*. When I read your title, *A just and sober Reply*, and presently fell in among rude insults, silly evasions, and such inartificial discourses as follow in your book, I began to challenge you in my thoughts for matching such bad stuff with so fair and lovely a title: But a second thought quickly corrected the former; for I considered, no man living could justly forbid the marriage betwixt your book and its title, since there is not the least kindred or relation between them.

Had your answers been just, you would have observed the rules of a respondent, which you have not done; and if they had been sober, you had never been so free in your reproaches, and sparing in your arguments, as you have been. Is this the man, of whom it is said in the Epistle to his *Solemn Call*, That *his lines are free from reflection and reproach towards those of the persuasion he contends with?* Is this my old friendly neighbour? It calls to my mind

the Italian proverb, *God keep us from our friends, and we will do what we can to keep ourselves from our enemies.* And though you act the part of an enemy, you shall be my friend whether you will or not. If you will not be my friend out of love, I will make you so by a good improvement of your hatred.

I have been musing with myself, what might be the true cause of all your rage against my book; one while I thought it proceeded from want of discretion, that you were not able to distinguish betwixt an adversary in a controversy, and an adversary to the person; but thought every blow that was given to your error, must needs be a mortal wound to your reputation. But, Sir, how close and smart soever my discourses against your errors be, I am sure they are more full of civility and respect to you, than such a reply as you have made deserves: And if, in exposing your errors, your reputation be exposed, you must blame them for occasioning it, and not me.

Sometimes I thought it an effect of your policy, that when followed close, and hard put to it, you endeavoured an escape this way. Camero, speaking of this kind of subtilty in his adversaries, saith, *Faciunt quod quarundum ferarum ingenium est, ut fetore et graveolentia, defectæ jam viribus, ac fractæ, venatorem abigunt.* Some cunning animals, as foxes, &c. when pursued at the heels, drive away both dogs and huntsmen with their intolerable stench. And Hierom long ago told Helvidius his adversary, *Arbitror te veritate convictum ad maledicta converti;* being vanquished by truth, he betook himself to ill language. After the same manner you act here, being no longer able to defend yourself by solid and sober ratiocination, you trust to your faculty in crimination; bad causes only drive men into such refuges.

In a word, I am satisfied that nothing but your extravagant zeal for your idolized opinion, could have thrown you into such disingenuous methods and artifices as these. The Ephesians were quiet enough till their Diana began to totter. Your passionate outcries signify to me, something is touched to the quick, which you are more fondly in love with than you ought. When one told Luther what hideous outcries his enemies made against him, and how they reviled him in their books; *I know by their roaring* (saith he) *that I have hit them right.*

You tell me in your reply, p. 24. That you perceive *I have a mighty itch to find out your absurdities.* I wish, Sir, you were no more troubled with the itch after them than I am after the discovery of them. Had I affected such employments I could easily have gathered three to one out of your book more than I did; and have represented those I gathered much more odiously (and yet

justly) than I did: but friendship constrained me to handle them (because yours) as gently as I could.

I might have justly charged you from what you say, p. 174, 175. of your Solemn Call, where you place all the believers on earth, without exception of any, under the covenant of works, as a ministration of death and condemnation, and the severest penalties of a dreadful curse: I might thereupon have justly charged you for presenting to the world such a monstrous sight as was never seen before since the creation, viz. a whole church of condemned and cursed believers. This I might as well have charged upon your position, and done it no wrong.

I could tell you from what you say, p. 76. of your reply, *That God doth indeed, in the covenant of works, make over himself to sinners, to be their God in a way of special interest; but it being upon such hard terms, that it is utterly impossible that way to attain unto life, &c.* I could justly have told you, that these passages of yours drop pure nonsense upon the reader's understanding; as if salvation were impossible to be attained by the same covenant, wherein God becomes our God, and makes over himself by way of special interest to us.

Had I had an itch to expose the burlesque and ridiculous stuff which lies obvious enough in your book, I should then have told your reader, That according to your doctrine, how opposite and inconsistent soever the two covenants of works and grace are, yet the same subjects, viz. believers, may, at once, not only stand under them both, but that the same common seal, viz. circumcision, equally ratifies and confirms them both: For you allow, in your Call, p. 205. *That it sealed the covenant of grace to believing Abraham, and yet was a seal of the covenant of works,* yea, the very condition of that covenant, as you frequently affirm it to be. *Vide* p. 81. of your Reply, and Passim.

I could as easily and justly have told you, That the most malicious Papist could scarcely have invented a more horrid reproach against our famous orthodox Protestant Divines than you (I dare not say maliciously, but) ignorantly have done; when you charge such men as Mr. Francis Roberts, Mr. Obadiah Sedgwick, and, indeed, all that assert the law, complexly taken, to be an obscurer covenant of grace; that they comprise perfect doing with the consequent curse for non-performance and believing in Christ unto life and salvation in one and the same covenant: This is an intolerable abuse of yours, p. 5. of your Reply. They generally assert the law in that complex sense and latitude you take it, to be a true covenant of grace, though more obscurely administered; and that the distinction of the covenants into old and new, is no parallel

distinction with that of works and grace, or of Christ's and Adam's covenant. Your public recantation of the injury you have done the very Protestant cause herein, is your unquestionable duty, yet scarce a due reparation of the injury.

In a word, I cannot but look upon it as a discovery of your great weakness, That when you meet with such a difficulty as poses your understanding, and you cannot possibly reconcile with your notion; as that of Paul's circumcising Timothy, and you affirming that the very act of circumcision did, in its own nature, oblige all on whom it passed to the perfect observation of the law for righteousness, you will rather chuse to leave the blessed *apostle* in a contradiction to his own doctrine, than to your vain notion: For what do you say, p. 95, of your Reply? *That however the case stood in that respect, this is certain, &c.* It also argues weakness in you to insist upon, aggravate, jeer, and reproach at that rate you do, p. 38. of your Reply, for the mistake and mis-placing of one figure, viz. Gen. xii. for Gen. xvii. as if the merit of the whole cause depended on it. The like I may say of your charging me with nonsense, for putting Gen. xvii. 7, 8. for Gen. xvii. 9, 10. when yet yourself, p. 205. of your Call, tell us, That circumcision was appointed as a sign, or token of the covenant, Gen. xvii. 7, 8, 9. What pitiful trifles are these to raise such a mighty triumph upon? When Dureus accused our famous Whitaker for one or two trivial, verbal mistakes, Whitaker returned him the same answer I shall give you, *Bene habet, his in rebus non vertuntur fortunæ ecclesiæ*; It is well the case of the church depends not upon such trifles.

For a conclusion; I do seriously warn all men to beware of receiving doctrines so destructive to the great truths of the gospel as these are. And I do solemnly profess I have not designedly strained them, to cast reproach upon him that published them; but the matters are so plain, that if Mr. Cary will maintain his positions, not only myself, but every intelligent reader, will be easily able to fasten all those odious consequents upon him, after all his apologies.

Sir, in a word, I dare not say but you are a good man; but since I read your two books, you have made me think more than once, of what one said of Jonah after he had read his history, that he was a strange man of a good man: Yet as strange a good man as you are, I hope to meet you with a sounder head and better spirit in heaven.

The Second APPENDIX: Giving a brief Account of the Rise and Growth of ANTINOMIANISM; the Deduction of the principal Errors of that Sect, With modest and seasonable reflections upon them.

THE design of the following sheets, cast in as a *Mantissa* to the foregoing discourse of *Errors*, is principally to discharge and free the free grace of God from those dangerous errors, which fight against it under its own colours; partly to prevent the seduction of some that stagger; and, lastly, (though least of all) to vindicate my own doctrine, the scope and current whereof hath always been, and shall ever be, to exalt the free grace of God in Christ, to draw the vilest of sinners to him, and relieve the distressed consciences of sin-burthened Christians.

But, notwithstanding my utmost care and caution, some have been apt to censure it, as if in some things it had a taint of Antinomianism: But if my public or private discourses be the faithful messengers of my judgment and heart, (as I hope they are) nothing can be found in any of them casting a friendly aspect upon any of their principles, which I here justly censure as erroneous.

Three things I principally aim at in this short *Appendix*.

1. To give the reader the most probable rise of Antinomianism.
2. An account of the principal errors of that sect.
3. To confirm and establish Christians against them by sound reasons, backed with scripture-authority. And,

### I. *Of the rise of Antinomianism.*

The scriptures foreseeing there would arise such a sort of men in the church, as would wax wanton against Christ, and turn his grace into lasciviousness; hath not only cautioned us in general to beware of such opinions as corrupt the doctrine of free-grace, Rom. vi. 1, 2. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid:" But hath particularly indigitated and marked those very opinions by which it would be abused, and made abundant provision against them; as namely,

1. All slighting and vilifying opinions or expressions of the holy law of God, Rom. vii. 7, 12.
2. All opinions and principles inclining men to a careless disregard and neglect of the duties of obedience, under pretence of free grace, and liberty by Christ, James ii. Matth. xxv.
3. All opinions neglecting or slighting sanctification, as the evi-

dence of our justification, and rendering it needless or sinful to try the state of our souls, by the graces of the Spirit wrought in us, which is the principal scope of the first epistle of John.

Notwithstanding, such is the wickedness of some, and the weakness of others, that in all ages (especially the last past, and present) men have audaciously broken in upon the doctrine of free grace, and notoriously violated and corrupted it, to the great reproach of Christ, scandal of the world, and hardening of the enemies of reformation. ‘Behold, (saith Contzen the Jesuit, on Matth. xxiv.) the fruit of ‘Protestantism, and their gospel-preaching.’

Nothing is more opposite to looseness than the free grace of God, which teaches us, *That denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* Nor can it without manifest violence be made pliable to such wicked purposes; and therefore the apostle tells us, Jude 4. that this is done by turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness; *μολαλισθηρες*, transferring it, *scilicet facta interpretatione*, by a corrupt abusive interpretation, to such uses and purposes as it abhors. No such wanton, licentious conclusions can be inferred from the gospel-doctrines of grace and liberty, but by wrestling them against their true scope and intent, by the wicked arts and practices of deceivers upon them.

The gospel makes sin more odious than the law did, and discovers the punishment of it in a more severe and dreadful manner, than ever it was discovered before. Heb. ii. 2, 3. “For if the word “spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience, received a just recompence of reward; how shall we “escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” It shews our obligations to duty to be stronger than ever, and our encouragements to holiness greater than ever, 2 Cor. vii. 1. and yet corrupt nature will be still tempting men to corrupt and abuse it. The more luscious the food is, the more men are apt to surfeit upon it.

This perversion and abuse of free grace and Christian liberty, is justly chargeable (though upon different accounts) both upon wicked and good men. Wicked men corrupt it designedly, that by entitling God to their sins, they might sin the more quietly and securely. So the devil instigated the Heathens to sin against the light and law of nature, by representing their gods to them as drunken and lascivious deities. So the Nicolaitans, and the school of Simon, and after them the Gnostics, and other Heretics in the very dawning of gospel-light and liberty, began presently to loose the bond of restraint from their lusts, under pretence of grace and liberty. The Etiani \* blushed not to teach, *That sin, and perseve-*

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\* August. de Hæres. Tom. 6. Hæres. 51.

rance in sin, could hurt the salvation of none, so that they would embrace their principles.

How vile and abominable inferences the Manichæans, Valentinians, and Cerdonites drew from the grace and liberty of the gospel, in the following ages, I had rather mourn over than recite; and if we come down to the *fifteenth century*, we shall find the Libertines of those days as deeply drenched in this sin, as most that went before them. Calvin\* mournfully observes, That under pretence of Christian liberty, they trampled all godliness under foot; the vile courses their loose opinions soon carried them into, plainly discovered for what intents and purposes they were projected and calculated: and he that reads the preface to that grave and learned Mr. Thomas Gataker's book, intitled, *God's eye upon Israel*, will find, That some Antinomians of our days are not much behind the worst and vilest of them. One of them cries out, *Away with the law, away with the law, it cuts off a man's legs, and then bids him walk.* Another saith, *It is as possible for Christ himself to sin, as for a child of God to sin. That if a man, by the Spirit, know himself to be in a state of grace, though he be drunk or commit murder, God sees no sin in him.* With much more of the same bran, which I will not transcribe.

But others there are, whose judgments are unhappily tainted and leavened with those loose doctrines; yet being in the main godly persons, they dare not take liberty to sin, or live in the neglect of known duties, though their principles too much incline that way; but though they dare not, others will, who imbibe corrupt notions from them; and the renowned piety of the authors will be no antidote against the danger, but make the poison operate the more powerfully, by receiving it in such a vehicle. Now it is highly probable, such men as these might be charmed into such dangerous opinions, upon such accounts as these:

1. It is like some of them might have felt in themselves the anguish of a perplexed conscience under sin, and not being able to live with these terrors of the law, and dismal fears of conscience, might too hastily snatch at those doctrines which promise them relief and ease, as I noted before in the *fifth Cause* of my *Treatise of Errors*. And that this is not a guess at random, will appear from the very title page of Mr. Saltmarsh's book of free-grace, where (as an inducement to the reader to swallow his Antinomian doctrine) he shews him this curious bait.

*It is (saith he) an experiment of Jesus Christ upon one who hath been in the bondage of a troubled conscience, at times, for the space*

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\* *Calv. adversus Libert. c. 8.*

of about twelve years, till now upon a clearer discovery of Jesus Christ in the gospel, &c.

2. Others have been induced to espouse these opinions from the excess of their zeal against the errors of the Papists, who have notoriously corrupted the doctrine of justification by free grace; decried *imputed*, and exalted *inherent* righteousness above it. The Papists have designedly and industriously sealed up the scriptures from the people, lest they should there discover those sovereign and effectual remedies, which God hath provided for their distressed consciences, in the riches of his own grace, and the meritorious death of Christ; and so all their *masses*, *pilgrimages*, *auricular confessions*, with all their dear *indulgencies*, should lie upon their hands as stale and cheap commodities. *Oh*, (said Stephen Gardiner) *let not this gap of free grace be opened to the people.*

But as soon as the light of reformation had discovered the free grace of God to sinners, (which is indeed the only effectual remedy of distressed consciences) and by the same light the horrid cheats of the man of sin were discovered; all good men, who were enlightened by the reformation, justly and deeply abhorred Popery, as the enemy of the grace of God and true peace of conscience, and fixed themselves upon the sound and comfortable doctrines of justification by faith through the alone righteousness of Christ. Meanwhile, thankfully acknowledging, that they who believe, ought also to maintain good works. But others there were, transported by an indiscreet zeal, who have almost bended the grace of God as far too much the other way, and have both spoken and written many things very unbecoming the grace of God, and tending to looseness and neglect of duty.

3. It is manifest, that others of them have been ingulphed and sucked into those dangerous quicksands of Antinomian errors, by separating the Spirit from the written word. If once a man pretend the Spirit without the scriptures to be his rule, whither will not his own deluding fancies carry him, under a vain and sinful pretence of the Spirit?

In the year 1528, when Helsar, Traier, and Seekler, were confuted by Hallerus; and their errors about oaths, magistrates and pædo-baptism, were detected by him and by Colveus at Bern, that which they had to say for themselves was, *That the Spirit taught them otherwise than the letter of the Scriptures speak.* So dangerous it is to separate what God hath conjoined, and father our own fancies upon the Holy Spirit.

4. And it is not unlike, but a comparative weakness, and injudiciousness of mind, meeting with a fervent zeal for Christ and his glory, may induce others to espouse such taking, and plausible, though pernicious doctrines; they are not aware of the dangerous

consequents of the opinions they embrace, and what looseness may be occasioned by them: I speak not of occasions taken, but given, by such opinions and expressions; a good man will draw excellent inferences of duty from the very same doctrine. Instance that of the shortness of time, from whence the apostle infers abstinence, strictness, and diligence, 1 Cor. vii. 29. but the Epicure infers all manner of dissolute and licentious practices, "Let us eat and drink, "for to-morrow we shall die," 1 Cor. xv. 22. The best doctrines are this way liable to abuse.

But let all good men beware of such opinions and expressions, as give an handle to wicked men to abuse the grace of God, which haply the author himself dare not do, and may strongly hope others may not do: but if the principle will yield it, it is in vain to think corrupt nature will not catch at it, and make a vile use and dangerous improvement of it.

For example, If such a principle as this be asserted for a truth before the world, *That men need not fear that any, or all the sins they commit, shall do them any hurt*; let the author, or any man in the world, warn and caution readers (as the Antinomian author of that expression hath done) not to abuse this doctrine, it is to no purpose: the doctrine itself is full of dangerous consequents, and wicked men have the best skill to infer and draw them forth, to cherish and countenance their lusts; that which the author might design for the relief of the distressed, quickly turns itself into poison, in the bowels of the wicked; nor can we excuse it, by saying any gospel-truth may be thus abused; for this is one of that number, but a principle that gives offence to the godly, and encouragement to the ungodly. And so much as to the rise and occasion of Antinomian errors.

2. In the next place, let us view some of the chief doctrines commonly called Antinomian, amongst which there will be found a *Πρωτον ψευδος*, the radical and most prolific error, from which most of the rest are spawned and procreated.

*Error 1.* I shall begin with the dangerous mistake of the Antinomians in the doctrine of *justification*. The article of justification is deservedly stiled by our Divines, *Articulus stantis, vel cadentis religionis*, the very pillar of the Christian religion.

In two things, however, I must do the Antinomians right: (1.) In acknowledging, that though their errors about justification be great and dangerous, yet they are not so much about the substance as about the mode of a sinner's justification; an error far inferior to that of the Papists, who depress the righteousness of Christ, and exalt their own inherent righteousness in the business of justification. (2.) I am bound in charity to believe, that some among them do hold those errors but speculatively, whilst the truth lies nearer

their hearts, and will not suffer them to reduce their own opinions into practice. Now as to their errors about justification, the most that I have read do make *Justification to be an immanent and eternal act of God; and do affirm, the elect were justified before themselves or the world had a being.* Others come lower, and affirm, *The elect were justified at the time of Christ's death.* With these Dr. Crisp harmonizes.

*Error 2.* That justification by faith is no more but a manifestation to us of what was really done before we had a being. Hence Mr. Saltmarsh thus defines faith, *It is, saith he, a being persuaded more or less of Christ's love to us; so that when we believe, that which was hid before doth then appear. God (saith another) cannot charge one sin upon that man who believes this truth, That God laid his iniquities upon Christ.*

*Error 3.* That men ought not to doubt of their faith, or question, Whether we believe, or no: Nay, That we ought no more to question our faith than to question Christ. *Saltmarsh of Free Grace, p. 92, 95.*

*Error 4.* That believers are not bound to confess sin, mourn for it, or pray for the forgiveness of it; because it was pardoned before it was committed; and pardoned sin is no sin. See Eaton's *Honeycomb, p. 446, 447.*

*Error 5.* They say, That God sees no sin in believers, whatsoever sins they commit. Some of them, as Mr. Town and Mr. Eaton speak out and tell us, That God can see no adultery, no lying, no blasphemy, no cozening in believers; for though believers do fall into such enormities, yet all their sins being pardoned from eternity, they are no sins in them. Town's *Assertions, p. 96, 97, 98.* Eaton's *Honeycomb, chap. 7. p. 136, 137.* with others of a more pernicious character than these.

*Error 6.* That God is not angry with the elect, nor doth he smite them for their sins; and to say that he doth so is an injurious reflection upon the justice of God. This is avouched generally in all their writings.

*Error 7.* They tell us, That by God's laying our iniquities upon Christ, he became as completely sinful as we, and we as completely righteous as Christ. *Vide Dr. Crisp, p. 270.*

*Error 8.* Upon the same ground it is that they affirm, That believers need not fear either their own sins, or the sins of others; for that neither their own, nor any other men's sins can do them any hurt, nor must they do any duty for their own salvation.

*Error 9.* They will not allow the new covenant to be made properly with us, but with Christ for us; and that this covenant is all of it a promise, having no condition on our part. They do not absolutely deny that faith, repentance, and obedience are condi-

tions in the new covenant; but say, They are not conditions on our part, but Christ's; and that he repented, believed, and obeyed for us. *Saltmarsh of Free Grace*, p. 126, 127.

*Error 10.* They speak very slightly of trying ourselves by marks and signs of grace. Saltmarsh often calls it a weak, low, carnal way; but the New-England Antinomians, or Libertines, call it a fundamental error, to make sanctification an evidence of justification: that it is to light a candle to the sun; that it darkens our justification; and that the darker our sanctification is, the brighter our justification is. *See their book entitled, Rise, Reign.* Error 72.

In this breviae, or summary account of Antinomian doctrines, I have only singled out, and touched some of their principal mistakes and errors into which some of them run much farther than others. But I look upon such doctrines to be in themselves of a very dangerous nature, and the malignity and contagion would certainly spread much farther into the world than it doth, had not God provided two powerful antidotes to resist the malignity, viz.

1. The scope and current of scripture.
2. The experience and practice of the saints.

(1.) These doctrines run cross to the scope and current of the scriptures, which constantly speak of all unregenerate persons (without exception of the very elect themselves, during that state) as children of wrath, even as others, without Christ, and under condemnation.

They frequently discover God's anger, and tell us his castigatory rods of affliction are laid upon them for their sins.

They represent sin as the greatest evil; most opposite to the glory of God and good of the saints; and are therefore filled with cautions and threatenings to prevent their sinning.

They call the saints frequently and earnestly, not only to mourn for their sins before the Lord; but to pray for the pardon and remission of them in the blood of Christ.

They give us a far different account of saving faith, and do not place it in a persuasion more or less of Christ's love to us, or a manifestation in our consciences of the actual remission of our sins before we had a being; but in receiving Christ as the gospel offers him for righteousness and life.

They frequently call the people of God to the examination and trial of their interest in Christ by marks and signs: and accordingly furnish them with variety of such marks from the divers parts or branches of sanctification in themselves.

They earnestly and every where press believers to strictness and

constancy in the duties of religion, as the way wherein God would have them to walk. They infer duties from privileges; and therefore the Antinomian dialect is a wild note which the generality of serious Christians do easily distinguish from the scripture-stile and language.

(2.) The experience and practice of the saints recorded in scripture, as well as our contemporaries, or those whose lives are recorded for our imitation, do greatly secure us from the spreading malignity of Antinomianism. Converse with the living, or read the histories of dead saints, and you shall find, that in their addresses to God they still bless and praise him, for that great and wonderful change of state which was made upon them when they first believed in Christ, and on their believing passed from death to life; freely acknowledged before God, they were before their conversion equal in sin and misery with the vilest wretches in the world: they heartily mourn for their daily sins, fear nothing more than sin, no afflictions in the world go so near their hearts as sin doth: they can mourn for the hardness of their hearts, that they can mourn no more for sin. They acknowledge the rods of God that are upon them, are not only the evidences of his displeasure against them for their sins, but the fruits of their uneven walking with him; and that the greatest of their afflictions is less than the least of their iniquities deserve. They fall at their Father's feet as oft as they fall into sin, humbly and earnestly suing for pardon through the blood of Christ. They are not only sensible that God sees sin in them, but that he seeth such and so great evils in them, as makes them admire at his patience, that they are not consumed in their iniquities. They find cause enough to suspect their own sincerity, doubt the truth of their faith, and of their graces; and are therefore frequent and serious in the trial and examination of their own states by scripture marks and signs. They urge the commands and threatenings, as well as the promises, upon their own hearts to promote sanctification; excite themselves to duty and watchfulness against sin; they also encourage themselves by the rewards of obedience, knowing their labour is not in vain in the Lord: and all this while they look not for that in themselves, which is only to be found in Christ; nor for that in the law, which is only to be found in the gospel; nor for that on earth which is only to be found in heaven: this is the way that they take. And he that shall tell them their sins can do them no hurt, or their duties do them no good, speaks to them not only as a Barbarian, in a language they understand not, but in such a language as their souls detest and abhor.

Moreover, the zeal and love of Christ and his glory being kindled in their souls, they have no patience to hear such doctrines as so greatly defogate from his glory, under a pretence of honouring

and exalting him: it wounds and grieves their very hearts to see the world hardened in their prejudices against reformation, and a gap opened to all licentiousness.

But, notwithstanding this double antidote and security, we find, by daily experience, such doctrines too much obtaining in the professing world. For my own part, he that searches my heart and reins, is witness, I would rather chuse to have my right hand wither, and my tongue rot within my mouth, than to speak one word, or write one line to cloud and diminish the free grace of God. Let it arise and shine in its meridian glory. None owes more to it, or expects more from it than I do; and what I shall write in this controversy, is to vindicate it from those doctrines and opinions, which, under pretence of exalting it, do really militate against it. To begin therefore with the first and leading error.

Error I. *That the justification of sinners is an immanent and eternal act of God, not only preceding all acts of sin, but the very existence of the sinner himself, and so perfectly abolishing sin in our persons, that we are as clean from sin as Christ himself; αναμαρτητοι, as some of them have spoken.* To stop the progress of this error I shall,

1. Lay down the sentence of the orthodox about it.

2. Offer some reasons for the refutation of it.

(1.) That which I take to be the truth agreed upon, and asserted by sound and reformed divines, touching gospel-justification, is by them made clear to the world, in these following scriptural distinctions of it.

Justification may be considered under a twofold respect or habitude.

1. According to God's eternal decree; or,

2. According to the execution thereof in time.

1. According to God's eternal decree and purpose; and in this respect grace is said to be "given us in Christ before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 19. and we are said to be "predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ," Eph. i. 5.

2. According to the execution thereof in time, so they again distinguish it by considering it two ways:

1. In its impetration by Christ.

2. In its application to us.

That very mercy or privilege of justification, which God from all eternity, purely out of his benevolent love, purposed and decreed for his elect, was also in time purchased for them by the death of Christ, Rom. v. 9, 10. where we are said to be "justified by his blood;" and he is said to have "made peace through the blood of his cross, to reconcile all things to himself," Col. i. 20. to be "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification,"

Rom. iv. 25. Once more, "That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses," 2 Cor. v. 19. God the Father had in the death of Christ, a foundation of reconciliation, whereby he became propitious to his elect, that he might absolve and justify them. Again,

2. It must be considered in its application to us, which application is made in this life at the time of our effectual calling. When an elect sinner is united to Christ by faith, and so passeth from death to life, from a state of condemnation into a state of absolution and favour; this is our actual justification, Rom. v. 1. Acts xiii. 39. John v. 24. which actual justification is again considered two ways:

1. Universally and in general, as to the state of the person.
2. Specifically and particularly, as to the acts of sin.

As soon as we are received into communion with Christ, and his righteousness is imputed by God, and received by faith, immediately we pass from a state of death and condemnation to a state of life and justification, and all sins already committed, are remitted without exception or revocation; and not only so, but a remedy is given us in the righteousness of Christ against sins to come: and though these special and particular sins we afterward fall into, do need particular pardons; yet, by the renewed acts of faith and repentance, the believer applies to himself the righteousness of Christ, and they are pardoned.

Again, they carefully distinguish betwixt,

1. Its application by God to our persons. And,
2. Its declaration, or manifestation in us, and to us.

Which manifestation, or declaration, is either,

1. Private, in the conscience of a believer, or,
2. Public, at the bar of judgment.

And thus justification is many ways distinguished. And, notwithstanding all this, it is still *actus indivisus*, an undivided act, not on our part, for it is iterated in many acts; but on God's part, who at once decreed it; and on Christ's part, who by one offering purchased it, and, at the time of our vocation, universally applied it, as to the state of the person justified; and that so effectually, as no future sin shall bring that person any more under condemnation.

In this sentence or judgment the generality of reformed, orthodox divines are agreed; and the want of distinguishing (as they, according to scripture, have distinguished) hath led the Antinomians into this first error about justification, and that error hath led them into the most of the other errors. That this doctrine of theirs (which teaches that men are justified actually and completely, before they have a being) is an error, and hath no solid foundation to support it, may be evidenced by these three reasons.

1. Because it is irrational.
2. Because it is unscriptural.
3. Because it is injurious to Christ and the souls of men.

*Reason 1.* It is irrational to imagine, that men are actually justified before they have a being, by an immanent act or degree of God. Many things have been urged upon this account, to confute and destroy this fancy, and much more may be rationally urged against it: let the following particulars be weighed in the balance of reason.

1. Can we rationally suppose, that pardon and acceptance can be affirmed or predicated of that which is not? Reason tells us, *Non entis nulla sunt accidentia*; that which is not, can neither be condemned nor justified: but before the creation, or before a man's particular conception, he was not, and therefore could not in his own person be a subject of justification. Where there is no law, there is no sin; where there is no sin, there is no punishment; where there is neither sin nor punishment, there can be no guilt; (for guilt is an obligation to punishment) and where there is neither law nor sin, nor obligation to punishment, there can be no justification. He that is not capable of a charge, is not capable of a discharge. What remains then, but that either the elect must exist from eternity, or be justified in time? It is true, future beings may be considered as in the purpose and decree of God from all eternity, or as in the intention of Christ, who died intentionally for the sins of the elect, and rose again for their justification; but neither the decree of God, nor the death of Christ takes place upon any man for his actual justification, until he personally exist: for the object of justification, is a sinner actually ungodly, Rom. iv. 5. but so no man is, or can be so from eternity. In election, men are considered without respect to good or evil done by them, Rom. ix. 11. not so in actual justification.

2. In justification there is a change made upon the state of the person, Rom. v. 8, 9. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. By justification men pass from a state of death to a state of life, John v. 24. but the decree or purpose of God, in itself, makes no such actual change upon the state of any person: it hath indeed the nature of an universal cause; but an universal cause produceth nothing without particulars. If our state be changed, it is not by an immanent act of God: hence no such thing doth *transire*. A mere *velle non punire*, or intention to justify us in due time and order, makes no change on our state till that come, and the particular causes have wrought. A prince may have a purpose or intention to pardon a law-condemned traitor, and free him from that condemnation in due time; but whilst the law that condemned him, stands in its full force and power against him, he is not justified or ac-

quitted, notwithstanding that gracious intention, but stand still condemned. So it is with us, till by faith we are implanted into Christ. It is true Christ is a surety for all his, and hath satisfied the debt; he is a common head to all his, as Adam was to all his children, Rom. v. 19. but as the sin of Adam condemns none but those that are in him; so the righteousness of Christ actually justifies none but those that are in him; and none are actually in him but believers: therefore, till we believe, no actual change passeth, or can pass upon our states. So that this hypothesis is contrary to reason.

*Reason 2.* As this opinion is irrational, so it is unscriptural. For

1. The scripture frequently speaks of remission or justification as a future act, and therefore not from eternity, Rom. iv. 23, 24. "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for ours also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him," &c. And, Gal. iii. 8. "The scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham." The gospel was preached many years before the Gentiles were justified; but if they were justified from eternity, how was the gospel preached before their justification?

2. The scripture leaves all unbelievers, without distinction, under condemnation and wrath. The curse of the law lies upon them all till they believe, John iii. 18. "He that believeth in him is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already." And, Eph. ii. 3, 12, 13. The very elect themselves *were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* They were at that time, or during that state of nature, (which takes in all that whole space betwixt their conception and conversion) *without Christ, without hope, without God in the world.* But if this opinion be true, that the elect were justified from eternity, or from the time of Christ's death, then it cannot be true, that the elect by nature are children of wrath, without Christ, without hope, without God in the world; except these two may consist together, (which is absolutely impossible) that the children of wrath, without God, Christ, or hope, are actually discharged from their sins and dangers, by a free and gracious act of justification.

*Objection.* But doth not scripture say, Rom. viii. 33. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" If none can charge the elect, then God hath discharged them.

*Solution.* God hath not actually discharged them, as they are elect, but as they are justified elect; for so runs the text, and clears itself in the very next words, *It is God that justifieth.* When God hath actually justified an elect person, none can charge him.

(3.) It is cross to the scripture order of justification, which

places it not only after Christ's death in the place last cited, Rom. viii. 33. but also after our actual vocation; as is plain, ver. 30. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." It is absurd to place vocation before predestination, or glorification before justification? Sure then it must be absurd also to place justification before vocation; the one as well as the other confounds and breaks the scripture order: You may as well say, men shall be glorified that were never justified, as say they may be justified before they believed, or existed. So that you see the notion of justification from eternity, or before our actual existence, and effectual vocation, is a notion as repugnant to sacred scripture, as it is to sound reason.

*Reason 3.* And as it is found repugnant to reason and scripture, so it is highly injurious to Jesus Christ and the souls of men.

(1.) It greatly injures the Lord Jesus Christ, and robs him of the glory of being our Saviour; for if the elect be justified from eternity, Christ cannot be the Saviour of the elect, as most assuredly he is; for if Christ save them, he must save them as persons subject to perishing, either *de facto* or *de jure*. But if the elect were justified from eternity, they could, in neither respect, be subject to perishing: For he that was eternally justified, was never condemned, nor capable of condemnation; and he that never was, nor could be condemned, could never be subject to perishing; and he that never was, nor could be subject to perishing, can never truly and properly be said to be saved.

If it be said the elect were not justified till the death of Christ, I demand then what became of all them that died before the death of Christ? If they were not justified, they could not be glorified; for this is sure, from Rom. viii. 30. that the whole number of the glorified in heaven is made up of such as were justified on earth: Let men take heed, therefore, lest, under pretence of exalting Christ, they bereave him of the glory of being the Saviour of his elect.

(2.) It bereaves him of another glorious royalty. The scripture every where makes our justification the result and fruit of the meritorious death of Christ, Rom. iii. 24, 25. Rom. viii. 3, 4. 2 Cor. v. 19, 20. Gal. iii. 13, 14. Eph. i. 17. but if men were justified from eternity, how is their justification the fruit and result of the blood of the cross? as it plainly appears from these scriptures to be. Nay,

(3.) This opinion leaves no place for the satisfaction of justice by the blood of Christ for our sins. He did not die according to this opinion to pay our debts. And here Antinomianism and Socinian-

ism meet, and congratulate each other: For if there were no debts owing to the justice of God from eternity, Christ could not die to pay them; and it is manifest there were no debts due to God's justice from eternity, on the account of his elect, if the elect were from eternity justified; unless you will say, a person may be justified, and yet his debts not paid: For all justification dissolves the obligation to punishment.

If there were any debt for Christ to pay by his blood, they must either be his own debts, or the elect's. To say they were his own is a blasphemous reproach to him; and, according to this opinion, we cannot say they were the elect's; for if they were justified from eternity their debts were discharged, and their bonds cancelled from eternity. So that this opinion leaves nothing to the blood of Christ to discharge, or make satisfaction for.

(4.) And as it hath been proved to be highly injurious to the Lord Jesus, so it is greatly injurious to the souls of men, as it naturally leads them into all those wild and licentious opinions, which naturally flow from it, as from the radical, prolific error, whence most of the rest derive themselves, as will immediately appear in

*Error II. That justification by faith is no more but the manifestation to us of what was really and actually done before; or a being persuaded more or less of Christ's love to us; and that when persons do believe, that which was hid before doth then only appear to them.*

*Refutation.* As the former error dangerously corrupts the doctrine of justification, so this corrupts the doctrine of faith; and therefore deserves to be exploded by all Christians.

That there is a manifestation and discovery of the special love of God and our own saving concernment in the death of Christ to some Christians at some times cannot be denied. St. Paul could say, Gal. ii. 20, 21. Christ loved him, and gave himself for him; but to say that this is the justifying act of faith, whereby a sinner passes from condemnation and death into the state of righteousness and life; this I must look upon as a great error; and that for the following reasons:

*Reason 1.* Because there be multitudes of believing and justified persons in the world, who have no such manifestation, evidence, or assurance, that God laid their iniquities upon Christ, and that he died to put away their sins; but daily conflict with strong fears and doubts, whether it be so or no. There are but few among believers that attain such a persuasion and manifestation, as Antinomians make to be all that is meant in scripture by justification through faith. Many thousand new-born Christians live as the new-born babe, which neither knows its own estate, or the inheritance to which it is born.

*Vivet, et vitam nescius ipse sua.*  
 "Not conscious of life, it lives."

A soul may be in Christ, and a justified state, without any such persuasion or manifestation, as they here speak of, Isa. l. 10. and if any shall assert the contrary, he will condemn the greatest part of the generation of God's children. Now that cannot be the saving and justifying act of faith, which is not to be found in multitudes of believing and justified persons.

But manifestation, or a personal persuasion of the love of God to a man's soul, or that Christ died for him, and all his iniquities are thereby forgiven him, is not to be found in multitudes of believing and justified souls.

Therefore such a persuasion or manifestation is not that saving justifying faith which the scripture speaks of.

That faith which only justifies the person of a sinner before God must necessarily be found in all justified believers, or else a man may be justified without the least degree of justifying faith, and consequently it is not faith alone by which a man is justified before God.

*Reason 2.* That cannot be a justifying act of faith which is not constant and abiding with the justified person, but comes and goes, is frequently lost and recovered, the state of the person still remaining the same. And such contingent things are these persuasions and manifestations; they come and go, are won and lost, the state of the person still remaining the same. Job was as much a justified believer when he complained that God was his enemy, as when he could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." The same may be said of David, Heman, Asaph, and the greatest number of justified believers recorded in the scripture. There be two things belonging to a justified state, (1.) That which is essential and inseparable, to wit, faith uniting the soul to Christ. (2.) That which is contingent and separable, to wit, evidence and persuasion of our interest in him. Those believers that walk in darkness and have no light have yet a real, special interest in God as their God, Isa. l. 10. Here then you find believers without persuasion or manifestation of God's love to them; which could never be, if justifying faith consisted in a personal persuasion, manifestation, or evidence of the love of God, and pardon of sin to a man's soul. That cannot be the justifying faith spoken of in scripture, without which a justified person may live in Christ and be as much in a state of pardon, and acceptance with God, when he wants it, as when he hath it. But such is persuasion, evidence, or manifestation of a man's particular interest in the love of God, or the

pardon of his sins. Therefore this is not the justifying faith the scripture speaks of.

*Reason 3.* That only is justifying, saving faith, which gives the soul right and title to Christ, and the saving benefits which come by Christ upon all the children of God. Now, it is not persuasion that Christ is ours, but acceptance of him that gives us interest in Christ, and the saving benefits and privileges of the children of God. John i. 12. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name." So that unless the Antinomians can prove, that receiving of Christ, and personal persuasion of pardon be one and the same thing, and consequently, that all believers in the world are persuaded, or assured, that their sins are pardoned; and reject from the number of believers all tempted, deserted, dark and doubting Christians; this persuasion they speak of is not, nor can it be the act of faith, which justifies the person of a sinner before God. That which I think led our Antinomians into this error, was an unsound and unwary definition of faith, which, in their youth, they had imbibed from their catechisms, and other systems, passing without contradiction or scruple in those days; which, though it were a mistake, and hath abundantly been proved to be so in latter days, yet our Antinomians will not part with a notion so serviceable to the support of the darling opinion of eternal justification.

*Reason 4.* A man may be strongly persuaded of the love of God to his soul, and of the pardon of his sins, and yet have no interest in Christ, nor be in a pardoned state. This was the case of the Pharisees and others, Luke xviii. 9. Rev. iii. 17. therefore this persuasion cannot be justifying faith. If a persuasion be that which justifies the persuaded person, then the Pharisees and Laodiceans were justified. Oh! how common and easy is it for the worst of men to be strongly persuaded of their good condition, whilst humble, serious Christians doubt and stagger? I know not what such doctrine as this is useful for, but to beget and strengthen that sin of presumption, which sends down multitudes to hell out of the professing world: For what is more common amongst the most carnal and unsanctified part of the world, not only such as are merely moral, but even the most flagitious and profane, than to support themselves by false persuasions of their good estate? When they are asked, in order to their conviction, what hopes of salvation they have, and how they are founded? their common answer is, Christ died for sinners, and that they are persuaded, that whatever he hath done for any other, he hath done it for them as well as others: but such a persuasion cometh not of him that called them, and is of dangerous consequence.

*Reason 5.* This doctrine is certainly unsound, because it confounds the distinction betwixt dogmatical and saving faith; and makes it all one, to believe an *axiom* or proposition, and to believe savingly in Christ to eternal life. What is it to believe that God laid our iniquities upon Christ, more than the mere assent of the understanding to a scripture axiom, or proposition, without any consent of the will, to receive Jesus Christ as the gospel offers him? And this is no more than what any unregenerate person may do; yea, the very devils themselves assent to the truth of scripture axioms or propositions as well as men, James ii. 19. "Thou believest there is one God, thou dost well; the devils also believe and tremble." What is more than a scripture axiom or proposition? "God laid the iniquities of us all upon Christ," Isa. liii. 6. And yet (saith Dr. Crisp, p. 296.) God cannot charge one sin upon that man that believes this truth, *That God laid his iniquities upon Christ.* The assent of the understanding may be often given to a scripture-proposition, whilst the heart and will remain carnal, and utterly adverse to Jesus Christ. I may believe dogmatically, that the iniquities of men were laid upon Christ, and persuade myself presumptively, that mine, as well as other men's were laid upon him; and yet remain a perfect stranger to all saving union and communion with him.

*Reason 6.* This opinion cannot be true, because it takes away the only support that bears up the soul of a believer in times of temptation and desertion.

For how will you comfort such a distressed soul that saith, and saith truly, I have no persuasion that Christ is mine, or that my sins are pardoned; but I am heartily willing to cast my poor sin-burthened soul upon him, that he may be mine; I do not certainly know that he died intentionally for me, but I lie at his feet to cleave to him, wait at the door of hope; I stay and trust upon him, though I walk in darkness and have no light. Now let such doctrines as this be preached to a soul in this condition (and we may be sure it is the condition of many thousands belonging to Christ) I say, bring this doctrine to them, and tell them, that unless they be persuaded of the love of God, and that God laid their iniquities on Christ, except they have some manifestation that their persons were justified from eternity, their accepting of Christ, consent of their wills, waiting at his feet, &c. signifies nothing; if they believe not that their particular sins were laid upon Christ, and are pardoned to them by him, they are still unbelievers, and have no part or portion in him. Whatever pretences of spiritual comfort and relief the Antinomian doctrine makes, you see by this it really deprives a very great, if not the greatest number of God's people of their best and sweetest relief in days of darkness and spiritual

distress. So that this doctrine which makes manifestation and assurance the very essence of justifying faith, appears hereby to be both a false and very dangerous doctrine. And yet there is as much or more danger to the souls of men in their

*Error 3. That men ought not to doubt of their faith, or question whether they believe or no. Nay, that they ought no more to question their faith than to question Christ.*

*Refutation.* What an easy way to heaven is the Antinomian way? Were it but as true and safe to the soul, as it is easy and pleasing to the flesh, who would not embrace it? What a charm of the devil is prepared in those two propositions? Be but persuaded more or less of Christ's love to thy soul (saith Mr. Saltmarsh) and that is justifying faith. Here is a snare of the devil laid for the souls of men. And then (2.) To make it fast and sure upon the soul, and effectually to prevent the discovery of their error, tell them they need no more to doubt or question their faith than to question Christ, and the work is done to all intents.

Now that this is an error, and a very dangerous one, will appear by the following reasons.

*Reason 1.* The questioning and examining of our faith is a commanded scripture-duty, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves," &c. And 2 Pet. i. 10. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. x. 12. *The second epistle of John*, ver. 8. "Look to yourselves that we lose not the things which we have wrought:" With a multitude of other scriptures, recommending holy jealousy, serious self-trial and examination of our faith, as the unquestionable duties of the people of God. But if we ought to question our faith no more than we ought to question Christ, away then with all self-examination, and diligence to make our calling and election sure; for where there is no doubt nor danger, there is no place or room for examination, or further endeavours to make it surer than it is. How do you like this doctrine, Christians? How many be there among you, that find no more cause to question your own faith or interest in Christ, than you do to question, whether there be a Christ, or whether he shed his blood for the remission of any man's sins?

*Reason 2.* This is a very dangerous error, and it is the more dangerous because it leaves no way to recover a presumptuous sinner out of his dangerous mistakes; but confirms and fixes him in them to the great hazard of his eternal ruin. It cuts off all means of conviction or better information, and nails them fast to the carnal state in which they are. According to this doctrine, it is impossible for a man to think himself something, when he is nothing;

or to be guilty of such a paralogism and cheat put by himself upon his own soul, James ii. 22. this, in effect, bids a man keep on right or wrong; he is sure enough of heaven if he be but strongly persuaded that Christ died for him, and he shall come thither at last. Certainly this was not the counsel Christ gave to the self-deceived Laodiceans, Rev. iii. 17, 18. but instead of dissuading them from self-jealousy and suspicion of their condition, whether their faith and state were safe or not, he rather counsels them to buy eye-salve, that is, to labour after better information of the true state and condition they were in, and not cast away their souls by false persuasions and vain confidences.

*Reason 3.* This doctrine cannot be true, because it supposes every persuasion, or strong conceit of a man's own heart, to be as infallibly sure and certain, as the very fundamental doctrines of Christianity. No truth in the world can be surer than this, that Jesus Christ died for sinners. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance," 1 Tim. i. 15. This is a foundation-stone, a tried, precious corner-stone, a sure foundation laid by God himself, Isa. xxviii. 16. and shall the strong conceits and confidences of men's hearts vie and compare in point of certainty with it? As well may probable, and merely conjectural propositions, compare with axioms that are self-evident, or demonstrative arguments that leave no doubts behind them. Know we not, that the heart is deceitful above all things, the most notorious cheat and imposter in the world, Jer. xvii. 9. Does it not deceive all the formal hypocrites in the world, in this very point? And shall every strong conceit and presumptuous confidence, begotten of Satan by a deceitful heart, and nursed up by self-love, pass without any examination or suspicion for as infallible and assured a truth, as that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners? The Lord sweep that doctrine out of the world by reformation, which is like to sweep so many thousand souls into hell by a remediless self-deception.

*Error 4.* The fourth Antinomian error before-mentioned, was this, *That believers are not bound to confess their sins, or pray for the pardon of them; because their sins were pardoned before they were committed; and pardoned sin is no sin.*

*Refutation.* If this be true doctrine, then it will justify and make good such conclusions and inferences as these, which necessarily flow from it: viz.

1. That there is no sin in believers.
2. Or if there be, the evil is very inconsiderable. Or,
3. Whatever evil is in it, it is not the will of God that they should either confess it, mourn over it, or pray for the remission of it; whatever he requires of others, yet they need

take no notice of it, so as to afflict their hearts for it; God hath exempted them from such concernments: There is nothing but joy to a believer, saith Mr. Eaton. But neither of these conclusions are either true or tolerable; therefore neither is the principle so which yieldeth them.

(1.) It is not true or tolerable to affirm, that there is no sin in a believer: 1 John i. 18. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "There is not a just man upon earth, that doth good and sinneth not," Eccl. vii. 20. "In many things we offend all," James iii. 2. The scriptures plainly affirm it, and the universal experience of all the saints sadly confirms it. It is true, the blood of Christ hath taken away the guilt of sin, so that it shall not condemn believers; and the spirit of sanctification hath taken away the dominion of sin, so that it doth not reign over believers; but nothing, except glorification, utterly destroys the existence of sin in believers. The acts of sin are our acts, and not Christ's; and the stain and pollution of those sinful acts, are the burthens and infelicities of believers, even in their justified state. Dr. Crisp indeed, in p. 270, 271. calls that objection (I suppose he means distinction betwixt the guilt of sin, and sin itself) a simple objection, and tells us, the very sin itself, as well as the guilt of it, passed off from us, and was laid upon Christ: So that speaking of the sins of blasphemy, murder, theft, adultery, lying, &c. From that time (saith he) that they were laid upon Christ, thou ceasest to be a transgressor. If thou hast a part in the Lord Christ, all these transgressions of thine become actually the transgressions of Christ. So that now thou art not an idolater, or persecutor, a thief, a murderer, and an adulterer, thou art not a sinful person; Christ is made that very sinfulness before God, &c. Such expressions justly offend and grieve the hearts of Christians, and expose Christianity to scorn and contempt. Was it not enough that the guilt of our sin was laid on him, but we must imagine also, that the thing itself, sin, with all its deformity and pollution should be essentially transferred from us to Christ? No, no. After we are justified, sin dwelleth in us, Rom. vii. 17. warreth in us, and brings us into captivity, ver. 23. burthens and oppresses our very souls, ver. 24. Methinks I need not stand to prove what I should think no sound experienced Christian dares to deny, that there is much sin still remaining in the persons of the justified. He that dares to deny it, hath little acquaintance with the nature of sin, and of his own heart.

(2.) It is neither true nor tolerable to say, there is no considerable evil in the sins of believers, deserving a mournful confession or petition for pardon. The desert of sin is hell: it is an artifice of Satan to draw men to sin, by persuading them there is no great

evil in it; but none except fools will believe it. Fools, indeed, make a mock of sin; but all that understand either the intrinsic evil of it, or the sad and dismal effects produced by it, are far from thinking it a light or inconsiderable evil. The sins, even of believers, greatly wrong and offend their God, Psal. li. 4. and is that a light thing with us? They interrupt and clog our communion with God, Rom. vii. 21. They grieve the good Spirit of God, Eph. iv. 30. Certainly these are no inconsiderable mischiefs.

(3.) Now if there be sin in believers, and so much evil in their sins (neither of which any sober Christian will deny) then undoubtedly it is their duty to confess it freely, mourn for it bitterly, and pray for the pardon of it earnestly; unless God have any where discharged them from those duties, and told them these are none of their concernments, and that he expects not these things from justified persons; but that these are duties properly and only belonging to other men. But on the contrary, you find the whole current of scripture running strongly and constantly in direct opposition to such idle and sinful notions. For,

(1.) He hath plainly declared it to be his will, that his people should confess their sins before him, and strongly connected their confessions with their pardons, 1 John v. 9. and frequently suspends from them the comfortable sense of forgiveness, till their hearts be brought to this duty, Psal. xxxii. 5. compared with verses 3, 4. the more to engage them to this duty, by the sensible ease and comfort attending and following it.

(2.) He also enjoins it upon them, That they mourn for their sins, Isa. xxii. 12. expresses his great delight in contrition and brokenness of spirit for sin, Isa. lxvi. 2. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit." Christ himself pronounces a blessing upon them that mourn, Mat. v. 4. Justified Paul mournfully confesses his former blasphemies, persecutions, and injuries done against Christ, 1 Tim. i. 13. So did Ezra, Daniel, and other eximious saints.

*Object.* Yes, say some, they did indeed confess their sins committed before their justification, but not their after-sins.

*Reply.* According to Antinomian principles, I would demand, If all the elect were justified from eternity, what sins any of them could confess which they had committed before their justification? Or, if they were justified from the time of Christ's death, what were the sins any of us have to confess who had not a being, and therefore had not actually sinned long after the death of Christ? But I hope none will deny, that the mournful complaints the apostle makes for sin, Rom. vii. 23, 24. were after he was a sanctified and justified person.

(3.) It is not the will of Christ to exempt any justified person upon

earth from the duty of praying frequently and fervently for the remission of his sins. This the most eminent saints upon earth have done. The greatest favourites of heaven have freely confessed, and heartily prayed for the remission of sin, Dan. ix. 4, 19. And that the gospel gives us no exemption from this duty, appears by Christ's injunction of it upon all his people, Mat. iv. 12.

*Error 5.* To give countenance to the former error, they say, *That God sees no sin in believers, whatsoever sins they commit*; and seek a covert for this error from Numb. xxiii. 21. and Jer. l. 20. In the former place it is said by Balaam, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor seen perverseness in Israel." And in the other place it is said, "In those times, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

*Refutation.* Now that this opinion of the Antinomians is erroneous, will appear four ways.

1. By its repugnancy to God's omniscience.
2. By its inconsistency with his dispensations.
3. By its want of a scripture-foundation.
4. By its contradictoriness to their own principles.

It is true, and we thankfully acknowledge it, that God sees no sin in believers as a judge sees guilt in a malefactor, to condemn him for it; that is a sure and comfortable truth for us: but to say he sees no sin in his children, as a displeased father, to correct and chasten them for it, is an assertion repugnant to scripture, and very injurious to God. For,

(1.) It is injurious to God's *omniscience*, Psal. cxxxix. 2. "Thou (saith holy David), knowest my down-sitting, and my up-rising, and understandest my thoughts afar off, and art acquainted with all my ways." Job xxviii. 24. "He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heavens." Prov. xv. 3. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Psal. xxxiii. 14, 15. "From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth; he fashioneth their hearts alike, he considereth all their works." He that denies that God seeth his most secret sins, therein, consequentially denies him to be God.

(2.) This assertion is inconsistent with God's providential dispensations to his people. When David, a justified believer, had sinned against him in the matter of Uriah, it is said, 2 Sam. xi. 27. "the thing that David had done displeased the Lord:" and, as the effect of that displeasure, it is said, chap. xii. 15. "The Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick." Among the Corinthians some that should not be

condemned with the world, were judged and chastened of the Lord for their undue approaches to his table, 1 Cor. xi. 32. Now, I would ask the Antinomians these two questions. *Quest. 1.* Whether it can be denied, that David, under the Old Testament, and these Corinthians under the New, were justified persons; and yet the former stricken by God in his child, with its sickness and death; and the latter in like manner smitten by God in their own persons; and both for their respective sins committed against God; and yet God saw no sin in them? Did God smite them for sin, and yet behold no sin in them? Beware lest in ascribing such strokes to God, you strike at once both at his omniscience and justice. *Quest. 2.* How God, upon confession and repentance, can be said to put away his people's sins (as Nathan there assures David he had done) when in the mean time he saw no sin in him, either to chastise him for, or to pardon in him? Do you think that God's afflictions, or pardons, are blindfold acts, done at random? How inconsistent is this with Divine dispensations.

(3.) This opinion is altogether destitute of a scripture-foundation; it is evident it hath none in the only places alleged for it. It hath no footing at all in Numb. xxiii. 21. Grave and learned Gataker hath learnedly and industriously vindicated that scripture from this abuse of it by Antinomians, in his treatise upon that text, entitled, *God's eye upon his Israel*; where, after a learned and critical search of the text, he telleth us, it soundeth word for word thus from the original; "He hath not beheld wrong against Jacob, nor hath he seen grievance against Israel." So that the meaning is not, that God did not see sin in Israel, but that he beheld not with approbation the wrongs and injuries done by others against his Israel; and shews at large, by divers solid reasons, why the Antinomian sense cannot be the proper sense of that place, it being cross to the main tenor of the story, and truth of God's word; which shews, that God often complained of their sins, often threatened to avenge them; yea, did actually avenge them by destroying them in the wilderness; nay, Balaam himself, who uttered these words unto Balak, did not so understand them, as appears by the advice he gave to Balak, to draw them into sin, that thereby God might be provoked to withdraw his protection from them.

And for Jer. l. 20. it makes nothing to their purpose. Many expound the sin there sought after, and not found, to be the sin of idolatry, which Israel should be purged from by their captivity, according to Isa. xxvii. 9. But the generality of sound expositors are agreed, that by the not finding of Israel's and Judah's sin, is meant no more, but his not finding those bonds or obligations

against them to eternal punishment which their sins had put them under.

(4.) In a word, this opinion clashes with their other principles. For they say, that though there was pardon and remission under the old covenant (which they allowed to be a covenant of grace) yet it was but *gradatim*, and successively, as they offered sacrifices. If a man had sinned ignorantly, until he brought a sacrifice, his sin lay upon him, it may be a week, a month's distance between before they could have their pardon. *Vide* Dr. Crisp of the two covenants, p. 256, 257. Now I demand, If this were the state and case of all God's Israel under the Old Testament, why do these men affirm, that God can see no sin in a believer? and why do they expound the words of Balaam so contradictory to this their other opinion? For they will not deny but God sees unpardoned sins in all; and here is a week, or month, or more time allowed between the commission and remission of their sin. And so much of the fifth Antinomian error.

*Error 6. That God is not angry with the elect, nor doth he smite them for their sins; and to say that he doth so is an injurious reflection upon the justice of God, who hath received full satisfaction for all their sins from the hand of Christ.*

There are several mistakes and errors in these assertions; and I suppose our Antinomians were led into them, (1.) By their abhorrence of the Popish doctrine, which errs more dangerously in the other extreme; for they wickedly assert our sufferings to be satisfactory for our sins, which is the ground of Popish penances, and voluntary self-castigations. (2.) From a groundless apprehension, that God's corrections of us for our sins are inconsistent with the fulness of Christ's satisfaction for them. Christ having paid all our debts, and dissolved our obligations to all punishment, it cannot consist with the justice of God to lay any rod upon us for our sins, after Christ hath borne all that our sins deserved.

This mistake of the end of Christ's death occasions them to stumble into the other mistakes; they imagine that Christ's satisfaction abolished God's hatred of sin in believers. But this cannot be; God's antipathy to sin can never be taken away by the satisfaction of Christ, though his hatred to the persons of the redeemed be; for the hatred of sin is founded in the unchangeable nature of God: and he can as soon cease to be holy as cease to hate sin, Hab. i. 13. Nor was Christ's death ever designed to this end; though Christ hath satisfied for the sin of believers, God still hates sin in believers. His hatred to their sins, and love to their persons are not inconsistent. As a man may love his leg or arm, as they are members of his own body, and notwithstanding that love, hate the gangrene

which hath taken them; and lance or use painful corrosives for the cure of them.

Neither do our Antinomians distinguish as they ought, betwixt vindictive punishments from God, the pure issues and effects of his justice and wrath against the wicked; and his paternal castigations, the pure issues of the care and love of a displeased Father. Great and manifold are the differences betwixt his vindictive wrath upon his enemies, and the rebukes of the rod upon his children. Those are legal, these evangelical. Those out of wrath and hatred, these out of love. Those unsanctified, but these blessed and sanctified to happy ends and purposes to his people. Those for destruction, these for salvation.

To narrow the matter in controversy as much as we can, I shall lay down three concessions about God's corrections of his people.

*Concession 1.* We cheerfully and thankfully acknowledge the perfection and fulness of the satisfaction of Christ for all the sins of believers; and with thankfulness do own, that if God should cast all, or any of them into an ocean of temporal troubles and distresses; in all that sea of sorrow there would not be found one drop of vindictive wrath. Christ hath drunk the last drop of that cup, and left nothing for believers to suffer by way of satisfaction.

*Concession 2.* We grant also, that all the sufferings of believers in this world are not for their sins; but some of them are for the prevention of sin, 2 Cor. xii. 7. some for the trial of their graces, Jam. i. 2, 3. some for a confirming testimony to his truths, Acts v. 41. Such sufferings as these have much heavenly comfort concomitant with them.

*Concession 3.* We do not say that God's displeasure with his people for sin, evidenced against them in the sharpest rebukes of the rod, is any argument that God's love is turned into hatred against their persons: No, his love to his people is unchangeable. Having loved his own, he loved them to the end, John xiii. 1. Yet notwithstanding all this, three things are undeniably clear, and being thoroughly apprehended, will end this controversy.

1. That God lays his correcting rod in this world on the persons of believers.
  2. That this rod of God is sometimes laid on them for their sins.
  3. That these fatherly corrections of them for their sins are reconcileable to, and fully consistent with his justice, completely satisfied by the blood of Christ for all their sins.
1. That God lays his correcting rod in this world upon the persons of believers. This no man has the face to deny that believes the scriptures to be the word of God, or that the troubles of good

men in this life fall not out by casualty, but by the counsel and direction of Divine Providence. He that denies the hand of God to be upon the persons of believers, in this life, in the way of painful chastisements and sufferings, must either ignorantly or wilfully overlook that scripture, Heb. xii. 8. "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not? but if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." Nor will any sober Christian deny these troubles of believers to be the effects of God's governing Providence in the world, or once imagine or affirm them to be mere casualties and contingencies; for "affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground," Job v. 6. In what Eutopia doth that good man live upon earth, that feels not the painful rod of God upon himself, nor hears the sad laments and moans of other Christians under it! This sure is undeniable, that the rod of God is every where upon the persons and tabernacles of the righteous; and if any doubt it, his own sense and feeling may in a little time give him a painful demonstration of it.

2. And for the second, that this rod of God is sometimes laid upon believers for their sins, methinks no sober, modest Christian in the world should doubt or deny it, when he considers, that,

1. God himself hath so declared it.

2. The saints in all ages have freely confessed it to be so.

1. God himself hath fully and plainly declared it to be so, 2 Sam. xii. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from thy house," &c. Here is the sword, a terrible and painful evil upon David's house, a man after God's own heart, and that expressly for his sin in the matter of Uriah. So Moses, one of the greatest favourites of heaven, for his sinful shifting of the Lord's work, "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses," Exod. iv. 13, 14. "For the multitudes of thine iniquities, because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee," saith God to his own Israel, Jer. xxx. 15. To instance in all the declarations made by God himself in this case, were to transcribe a great part of both testaments.

2. And, as God hath declared the sins of his people to be the provoking causes of his rods upon them; so they have freely and ingenuously confessed and acknowledged the same, Lam. iii. 39, 40. "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." This was spoken by Jeremiah in the name of the whole captive church; so Psal. xxxviii. 3, 5. "There is no soundness in my flesh, (saith David) because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin. My

wounds stink, and are corrupt because of my foolishness." And were it not an hideous and unaccountable thing to hear a child of God, under his rod, to stand upon his own justification, and say, Lord, my sins have not deserved this at thy hand, nor is it justice in thee thus to chastise me after thou hast received satisfaction for all my sins from the hand of Christ? Would it not look like an horrid blasphemy to hear the best men in the world disputing and denying the justice of God in the troubles he lays him under? For my own part, let the Lord lay on as smartly as he will upon me, I desire to follow the holy patterns and precedents recorded in scripture for my imitation, and to say with the people of God, Ezra ix. 13. "Thou hast punished me less than mine iniquities deserve." And Micah vii. 9. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." And he that refuses so to do gives little evidence of the spirit of adoption in him, but a very clear proof of the pride and ignorance of his own heart. Job indeed stiffly stood upon his own vindication; but that was when he had to do with men who falsely charged him, laying those sins as the causes of his troubles, which he was innocent of, Job xxii. 5, 6. But when he had to do with God, he disputes no more, but saith, *Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth,* q. d. I have done, Father, I have done; whether these chastisements be for my sin or no, sure I am, my sin not only deserves all this, but hell itself; thou art holy, but I am vile.

3. Nor can it at all be doubted, but that these fatherly corrections of the saints for their sins, are reconcileable to, and fully consistent with his justice, satisfied by the blood of Christ for all their sins. For, (1.) If it were not so, the just and righteous God would never have inserted such a clause of reservation in his gracious covenant with his people, to chasten them as he saw need, after he had taken them into the covenant, Psal. lxxxix. 30, 31, 32, 33. "If they transgress, I will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless (saith he) my loving-kindness will I not take away." That [*nevertheless*] clearly proves the consistency of his stripes for sin, with his loving-kindness to his people, and with Christ's satisfaction for their sins. (2.) If this were not consistent with the justice of God, to be sure he would never single them out to spend his rods upon, rather than others. It is most certain the holiest men have most lashes in this life; Asaph said, Psal. lxxiii. 12, 14. "The ungodly prosper in the world, but he was chastened every morning;" and ver. 5. "The wicked are not in trouble as other men." 1 Pet. iv. 17. "Judgment must begin at the house of God;" and if piety would give men an exemption from all troubles, pains and chastisements, then men might discern love or hatred by the things that are

before them, contrary to Eccl. ix. 1, 2. Neither could those that are in Christ, suffer the painful agonies of death, because of sin, expressly contrary to Paul, Rom. viii. 10. "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." (3.) In a word, As Christ never shed his blood to extinguish or abolish God's displeasure against sin, in whomsoever it be found, so he never shed it to deprive his people of the manifold blessings and advantages that accrue to them by the rods of God upon them. It was never his intent to put us into a condition on earth, that would have been so much to our loss. So then if the hand of God be upon his people for sin, and consistently enough with his justice, it must be an error to say, God smites not believers for their sins, and it would be injustice in him so to do; which is their sixth error.

Error 7. They tell us, *That by God's laying our iniquities upon Christ, he became as completely sinful as we, and we as completely righteous as Christ: That not only the guilt and punishment of sin was laid upon Christ, but simply the very faults that men commit, the transgression itself became the transgression of Christ; iniquity itself, not in any figure, but plainly sin itself, was laid on Christ; and that Christ himself was no more righteous than this person is, and this person is not more sinful than Christ was.*

*Refutation.* These two propositions will never go down with sound and orthodox Christians: the first sinks and debases Christ too low, the other exalts the sinful creature too high. The one represents the pure and spotless Lord Jesus as sinful: the other represents the sinful creature as pure and perfect: and both these propositions seem evidently to be built upon these two hypothesis. (1.) *That the righteousness of Christ is subjectively and inherently in us, in the same fulness and perfection as it is in Christ; grant that, and then it will follow indeed, That Christ himself is not more righteous than the believer is.* (2.) *That not only the guilt and punishment of sin was laid on Christ by way of imputation: but sin itself, the very transgression, or sinfulness itself, was transferred from the elect to Christ: and that by God's laying it on him, the sinfulness or fault itself was essentially transfused into him; and so sin itself did transire a subjecto in subjectum.* Grant but this, and it can never be denied but that Christ became as completely sinful as we.

But both these hypothesis are not only notoriously false, but utterly impossible, as will be manifested by and by; but before I come to the refutation of them, it will be necessary to lay down some concessions to clear the orthodox doctrine in this controversy, and narrow the matter under debate as much as may be.

(1.) And first, We thankfully acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ to be the *Surety* of the New Testament, Heb. vii. 22. and that as such, all the guilt and punishment of our sins were laid up-

on him, Isa. liii. 5, 6. That is, God imputed, and he bare it in our room and stead. God the Father, as supreme Lawgiver and Judge of all, upon the transgression of the law, admitted the spon- sion or suretiship of Christ, to answer for the sins of men, Heb. x. 5, 6, 7. And for this very end he was made under the law, Gal. iv. 4, 5. And that Christ voluntarily took it upon him to answer as our *Surety*, whatsoever the law could lay to our charge; whence it became just and righteous that he should suffer.

(2.) We say, That God by laying upon, or imputing the guilt of our sins to Christ, thereby our sins became legally his; as the debt is legally the surety's debt, though he never borrowed one farthing of it: Thus God laid, and Christ took our sins upon him, though in him was no sin, 2 Cor. v. 21. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," i. e. who was clean and altogether void of sin.

(3.) We thankfully acknowledge, that Christ hath so fully satisfied the law for the sins of all that are his, that the debts of believers are fully discharged, and the very last mite paid by Christ. His payment is full, and so therefore is our discharge and acquit- tance, Rom. viii. 1, 31. And that, by virtue hereof, the guilt of believers is so perfectly abolished, that it shall never more bring him under condemnation, John v. 24. And so in Christ they are without fault before God.

3. We likewise grant, That as the guilt of our sins was by God's imputation laid upon Christ, so the righteousness of Christ is by God imputed to believers, by virtue of their union with Christ; and becomes thereby as truly and fully theirs, for the justification of their particular persons before God, as if they themselves had in their own persons fulfilled all that the law requires, or suffered all that is threatened; No inherent righteousness in our own persons, is, or can be more truly our own, for this end and purpose, than Christ's imputed righteousness is our own. He is *the Lord our righteousness*, Jer. xxiii. 6. *We are made the righteousness of God in him*, 1 Cor. v. 21. *Yea, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them that believe*, Rom. viii. 4.

But notwithstanding all this, we cannot say, (1.) That Christ became as completely sinful as we. Or, (2.) That we are as completely righteous as Christ; and that over and above the guilt and punishment of sin, (which we grant was laid upon Christ) sin itself simply considered, or the very transgression itself, became the sin or transgression of Christ; and consequently that we are as completely righteous as Christ, and Christ as completely sinful as we are.

1. We dare not say, that sin simply considered, as the very transgression of the law itself, as well as the guilt and punishment,

became the very sin and transgression of Christ: For two things are distinctly to be considered and differenced, with respect to the law, and unto sin. As to the law, we are to consider it in,

1. Its preceptive part.

2. Its sanction.

(1.) The preceptive part of the law, which gives sin its formal nature, 1 John iii. 4. *For sin is the transgression of the law.* All transgression arises from the preceptive part of the law of God: he that transgresseth the precepts, sinneth: and under this consideration sin can never be communicated from one to another. The personal sin of one, cannot be in this respect, the personal sin of another. There is no physical transfusion of the transgression of the precept from one subject to another: this is utterly impossible; even Adam's personal sins, considered in his single private capacity, are not communicable to his posterity.

(2.) Besides the transgression of the preceptive part of the law, there is an obnoxiousness unto punishment, arising from the sanction of the law, which we call the guilt of sin; and this (as judicious Dr. Owen \* observes) is separable from sin: and if it were not separable from the former, no sinner in the world could either be pardoned or saved; guilt may be made another's by imputation, and yet that other not rendered formally a sinner thereby: Upon this ground, we say the guilt and punishment of our sin, was that only which was imputed unto Christ, but the very transgression of the law itself, or sin formally and essentially considered, could never be communicated or transfused from us unto him. I know but two ways in the world by which one man's sins can be imagined to become another's, viz. Either by imputation, which is legal, and what we affirm; or by essential transfusion from subject to subject (as our adversaries fancy) which is utterly impossible; and we have as good ground to believe the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation, as this wild notion of the essential transfusion of sin. Guilt arising from the sanction of the law may, and did pass from us to Christ by legal imputation; but sin itself, the very transgression itself, arising from the very preceptive part of the law, cannot so pass from us to Christ: For if we should once imagine, that the very acts and habits of sin, with the odious deformity thereof, should pass from our persons to Christ and subjectively to inhere in him, as they do in us; then it would follow,

*First,* That our salvation would thereby be rendered utterly impossible. For such an inhesion of sin in the person of Christ is absolutely inconsistent with the hypostatical union, which union is the very foundation of his satisfaction, and our salvation. Though

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\* Owen of Justification, p. 165.

the Divine nature can, and doth dwell in union with the pure and sinless human nature of Christ, yet it cannot dwell in union with sin.

*Secondly*, This supposition would render the blood of the cross altogether unable to satisfy for us. He could not have been the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world, if he had not been perfectly pure and spotless, 1 Pet. i. 19.

*Thirdly*, Had our sins thus been essentially transfused into Christ, the law had had a just and valid exception against him; for it accepts of nothing but what is absolutely pure and perfect. I admire, therefore, how any good men dare to call our doctrine, which teaches the imputation of our guilt and punishment to Christ, a simple doctrine; and assert, that the transgression itself became Christ's; and that thereby Christ became as completely sinful as we. And,

*Fourthly*, If the way of making our sins Christ's by imputation, be thus rejected and derided; and Christ asserted by some other way to become as completely sinful as we; then I cannot see which way to avoid it, but that the very same acts and habits of sin must inhere both in Christ and in believers also. For I suppose our adversaries will not deny, that notwithstanding God's laying the sins of believers upon Christ, there remain in all believers after their justification, sinful inclinations and aversations; a law of sin in their members, a body of sin and death. Did these things pass from them to Christ, and yet do they still inhere in them? Why do they complain and groan of indwelling sin? as Rom. vii. If sin itself be so transferred from them to Christ? Sure, unless men will dare to say, the same acts and habits of sin which they feel in themselves, are as truly in Christ as in themselves, they have no ground to say, that by God's laying their iniquities upon Christ, he became as completely sinful as they are; and if they should so affirm, that affirmation would undermine the very foundation of their own salvation.

I therefore heartily subscribe to that sound and holy sentence, of a clear and learned divine, \* *Nothing is more absolutely true, nothing more sacredly and assuredly believed by us, than that nothing which Christ did or suffered, nothing that he undertook, or underwent, did, or could constitute him subjectively, inherently, and thereupon personally a sinner, or guilty of any sin of his own. To bear the guilt or blame of other men's faults, to be alienæ culpæ reus, makes no man a sinner, unless he did unwisely and irregularly undertake it.* So then this proposition, that by God's laying our sins

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\* Owen of Justification, p. 185.

upon Christ (in some other way, than by imputation of guilt and punishment) he became as completely sinful as we, will not, ought not to be received as the sound doctrine of the gospel. Nor yet this

Second proposition, *That we are as completely righteous as Christ is; or, that Christ is not more righteous than a believer.*

I cannot imagine what should induce any man so to express himself, unless it be a groundless conceit and fancy, that there is an essential transfusion of Christ's justifying righteousness into believers, whereby it becomes theirs by way of subjective inhesion, and is in them in the very same manner it is in him: and so every individual believer becomes as completely righteous as Christ. And this conceit they would fain establish upon that text, 1 John iii. 7. "He that doth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous."

But neither this expression, nor any other like it in the scriptures gives the least countenance to such a general and unwary position. It is far from the mind of this scripture, That the righteousness of Christ is formally and inherently ours, as it is his. Indeed it is ours relatively, not formally and inherently; not the same with his for quantity, though it be the same for verity. His righteousness is not ours in its universal value, though it be ours as to our particular use and necessity. Nor is it made ours to make us so many causes of salvation to others; but it is imputed to us as to the subjects, that are to be saved by it ourselves.

It is true, we are justified and saved by the very righteousness of Christ, and no other; but that righteousness is formally inherent in him only, and is only materially imputed to us. It was actively his, but passively ours. He wrought it, though we wear it. It was wrought in the person of God-man for the whole church, and is imputed (not transfused) to every single believer for his own concernment only. For,

(1.) It is most absurd to imagine that the righteousness of Christ should formally inhere in the person of every, or any believer, as it doth in the person of the mediator. The impossibility hereof appears plainly from the incapacity of the subject. The righteousness of Christ is an infinite righteousness, because it is the righteousness of God-man, and can therefore be subjected in no other person beside him. It is capable of being imputed to a finite creature, and therefore, in the way of imputation we are said *to be made the righteousness of God in him*; but though it may be imputed to a finite creature, it inheres only in the person of the Son of God, as in its proper subject. And indeed,

(2.) If it should be inherent in us, it could not be imputed to us, as it is, Rom. iv. 6, 23. Nor need we go out of ourselves for

justification, as now we must, Phil. iii. 9. but may justify ourselves by our own inherent righteousness. And,

(3.) What should hinder, if this infinite righteousness of Christ were infused into us, and should make us as completely righteous as Christ; but that we might justify others also as Christ doth, and so we might be the saviours of the elect, as Christ is? Which is most absurd to imagine. And,

(4.) According to Antinomian principles, What need was there that we should be justified at all? or, What place is left for the justification of any sinner in the world? For, according to their opinion, the justification of the elect is an immanent act of God before the world was; and that eternal act of justification, making the elect as completely righteous as Christ himself, there could not possibly be any the least guilt in the elect to be pardoned; and consequently no place or room could be left for any justification in time. And then it must follow, that seeing Christ died in time, for sin, according to the scriptures; it must be for his own sins that he died, and not for the sins of the elect; diametrically opposite to Rom. iv. 25. and the whole current of scripture, and faith of Christians.

It is therefore very unbecoming and unworthy of a justified person, after Christ hath taken all his guilt upon himself, and suffered all the punishment due thereunto in his place and room; instead of an humble and thankful admiration of his unparalleled grace therein, to throw more than the guilt and punishment of his sins upon Christ, even the transgression itself: and comparing his own righteousness with Christ's, to say he is as completely righteous as Christ himself. This is, as if a company of bankrupt debtors, arrested for their own debts, ready to be cast into prison, and not having one farthing to satisfy, after their debts have been freely and fully discharged by another, out of his immense treasure, should now compare with him, yea, and think they honour him, by telling him, that now they are as completely rich as himself.

I am well assured, no good man would embrace an opinion so derogatory to Christ's honour as this is: did he but see the odious consequences of it, doubtless he would abhor them as much as we. And as for those now in heaven, who fell into such mistakes in the way thither, were they now acquainted with what is transacted here below, they would exceedingly rejoice in the detection of those mistakes, and bless God for the refutation of them.

*Error 8. They affirm, That believers need not fear their own sins, nor the sins of others; forasmuch as neither their own, or other sins can do them any hurt, nor must they do any duty for their own good or salvation, or for eternal rewards.*

That we need fear no hurt from sin, or may not aim at our own good in duty, are two propositions that sound harsh in the ears

of believers. I shall consider them severally, and refute them as briefly as I can.

Proposition 1. *Believers need not fear their own sins, or the sins of others; because neither our own or others sins can do us any hurt.*

They seem to be induced into this error, by misunderstanding the apostle, in Rom. viii. 28. as if the scope of that text were to assert the benefits of sin to justified persons; whereas he speaks there of adversities and afflictions befalling the saints in this life. *Universalis restringenda est ad materiam subjectam, loquitur enim de afflictionibus piorum.* The subject-matter (saith Paræus on the place) restrains the universal expression of the apostle: for when he there saith, "All things shall work together for good;" he principally intends the afflictions of the godly, of which he treats there in that context. It may be extended also to all providential events; *Omnia quæcunque eis accedunt forinsecus, tam adversa, quam prospera:* All adverse and prosperous events of things without us, as Estius upon the place notes. Nothing is spoken of sin in this text. And the apostle distributing this general into particulars, ver. 38. plainly shews what are the things he intended by his universal expression, ver. 28. as also in what respect no creature can do the saints any hurt, namely, that they shall never be able "to separate them from "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And in this respect it is true, that the sins of the elect shall not hurt them, by frustrating the purpose of God concerning their eternal salvation; or totally and finally to separate them from his love. This we grant, and yet we think it a very unwary and unsound expression, *That believers need not fear their own sins, because they can do them no hurt:* It is too general and unguarded a proposition to be received for truth. What if their sins cannot do them that hurt, to frustrate the purpose of God, and damn them to eternity in the world to come? Can it therefore do them no hurt at all in their present state of conflict with it in this world? For my part, I think the greatest fear of caution is due to sin, the greatest evil; and that Chrysostome spake more like a Christian, when he said, *Nil nisi peccatum timeo,* I fear nothing but sin. Though sin cannot finally ruin the believer, yet it can many ways hurt and injure the believer, and therefore ought not to be misrepresented as such an innocent and harmless thing to them. In vain are so many terrible threatenings in the scriptures against it, if it can do us no hurt; and it is certain nothing can do us good, but that which makes us better and more holy: But sin can never pretend to that of all things in the world. But to come to an issue, sin may be considered three ways.

1. Formally.      2. Effectively.      3. Reductively.

*First,* Formally, as a transgression of the preceptive part of the

law of God, and under that consideration it is the most formidable evil in the whole world. The evil of evils at which every gracious heart trembles, and ought rather to chuse banishment, prison, and death itself in the most terrible form, than sin, or that which is most tempting in sin, the pleasures of it; as Moses did, Heb. xi. 25.

*Secondly*, Sin may be considered effectivly, with respect to the manifold mischiefs and calamities it produceth in the world, and the spiritual and corporeal evils it infers upon believers themselves: Though it cannot damn their souls, yet it makes war against their souls, and brings them into miserable bondage and captivity, Rom. vii. 23. It wounds their souls, under which wounds they are feeble, and sore broken; yea, they roar by reason of the disquietness of their hearts, Psal. xxxviii. 5, 8. Is war, captivity, festering, painful wounds, causing them to roar, no hurt to believers? It breaks their very bones, Psal. li. 8. And is that no hurt? It draws off their minds from God, interrupts their prayers and meditations, Rom. vii. 18, 19, 20, 21. And is there no hurt in that? It causeth their graces to decline, wither, and languish to that degree, that the things which are in them are ready to die, Rev. iii. 1. and Rev. ii. 4. And is the loss of grace and spiritual strength no hurt to a believer? It hides the face of God from them, Isa. lix. 2. And is there no hurt in spiritual withdrawments of God from their souls? Why then do deserted saints so bitterly lament and bemoan it? It provokes innumerable afflictions, and miseries which fall upon our bodies, relations, estates; and if sin be the cause of all these inward and outward miseries to the people of God, sure then there is some hurt in sin, for which the saints ought to be afraid of it.

*Thirdly*, Sin may be considered reductively, as it is over-ruled, reduced, and finally issued by the covenant of grace. Under this consideration of sin, which rather respects the future than present state, the Antinomians only respect the hurt or evil of it; overlooking both the former considerations of sin, which concern the present state of believers, and so rashly pronounce, Sin can do believers no hurt; an assertion tending to a great deal of looseness and licentiousness. A man drinks deadly poison, and is, after many months, recovered by the skill of an excellent physician; shall we say, There was no hurt in it, because the man died not of it? Sure, those fearful twinges he felt, his loss of strength and stomach were hurtful to him, though he escaped with life, and got this advantage by it to be more wary for ever after. *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.*

And then, for other men's sins, (which they say we need not fear) it is an assertion against all the laws of charity; for the sins

of wicked men eternally damn them, disturb the peace and order of the world, draw down national judgments upon the whole community, cause wars, plagues, persecutions, &c. which considerations of the sins of others opened fountains of tears in David's eyes, Psal. cxix. 136. caused horror to take hold upon him, ver. 53. and yet, if you will believe the Antinomian doctrine, believers have no need to fear, much less to be in horror (which is the extremity of fear) for other men's sins. How is Satan gratified, and temptations to sin strengthened upon the souls of men, by such indistinct, unwary, and dangerous expressions as these are? A good intention can be no sufficient salve for such assertions as these.

*Secondly*, They tell us, 'That as the saints need fear no sin for any hurt it can do them, so they must do no duty for their own good; or with an eye to their own salvation, or eternal rewards in heaven.'

*Refutation.* This, as the former, is too generally and indistinctly delivered. He that distinguisheth well, teacheth well. The confounding of things which ought to be distinguished, easily runs men into the bogs of errors. Two things ought to have been distinguished here;

1. Ends in duties.
2. Self-ends in duties.

First, *Ends in duties*; there are two ends in duties, one *supreme* and *ultimate*, viz. the glorifying of God, which must, and ought to take the first place of all other ends: Another *secondary* and *subordinate*, viz. the good and benefit of ourselves. To invert these, and place our own good in the room of God's glory, is sinful and unjustifiable; and he that aims only at himself in religion, is justly censured as a mercenary servant, especially if it be any external good he aims at; but spiritual good, especially the enjoyment of God, is so involved in the other, viz. the glory of God, that no man can rightly take the Lord for his God, but he must take him for his supreme good, and consequently therein may, and must have a due respect to his own happiness.

*Secondly*, *Self-ends* must always be distinguished into,

1. Corrupt or carnal self-ends.
2. Pure, and spiritual self-ends.

As to carnal and corrupt self-ends, inviting and moving men to the performance of religious duties; when these are the only ends men aim at, they bewray the hypocrisy of the heart, and accordingly, God charges hypocrisy upon such persons. Hos. vii. 14. "They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds; They assemble themselves for corn and wine," &c. God reckons not the most solemn duties animated

by such ends, to be done unto him. Zech. vii. 5. "Did ye at all fast unto me?"

But beside these, man hath a *best self*, a *spiritual self*, to regard in duty, viz. The conformity of his soul to God in holiness, and the perfect fruition of God in glory. Such holy self-ends as these are often commended, but no where condemned in scripture. It was the encomium of Moses, that "he had respect unto the recompence of reward," Heb. xi. 26. These ordinate respects to our spiritual, best self, are so far from being our sin, that God both appoints and allows them for great uses and advantages to his people in their way to glory. They are, (1.) Singular encouragements to the saints under persecutions, straits, and distresses, Heb. x. 34. and to that end Christ proposes them, Luke xii. 32. and so the best of saints have made use of them, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. (2.) They are motives and incentives to praise and thankfulness, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. Col. i. 12. (3.) They stir up the saints to cheerful and vigorous industry for God, Col. iii. 23, 34. 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Now to cut off from religion all these spiritual and excellent self-respects, and to make them our sins and marks of hypocrisy, is an error very injurious to the gospel, and to the souls of men. For, (1.) It crosses the strain of the gospel, which commands us to strive for our salvation, Luke xiii. 24, 25. Phil. ii. 12. 1 Tim. iv. 16. (2.) It blames that in the saints as sinful, which the scripture notes as their excellency, and records to their praise, Heb. xi. 26. (3.) It makes the laws of Christianity to thwart, and cross the very fundamental law of our creation, which inclines and obliges all men to intend their own felicity: and on this account, not only our Antinomians are blame worthy, but others also, who are far enough from their opinion, who urge humiliation for sin beyond the staple; teaching men they are not humbled enough, till they be content to be damned. (4.) It unreasonably supposes a Christian may not do that for his own soul, which he daily doth, and is bound to do for other men's souls, to *pray, preach, exhort, and reprove* for their *salvation*.

Error IX. 'They will not allow the new covenant to be properly made with us, but with Christ for us. And some of them affirm \*, That this covenant is all of it a promise, having no condition upon our part. They acknowledge, indeed, faith, repentance, and obedience, to be conditions, but say they are not conditions on our part, but on Christ's; and consequently affirm, that he repented, believed, and obeyed for us.'

*Refutation 1.* The confounding of distinct covenants leads them

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\* Vide Saltmarsh of Free Grace, p. 126, 127.

into this error; we acknowledge there was a covenant properly made with Christ alone which we call the *covenant of redemption*. This covenant, indeed, though it were made for us, yet it was not made with us: It had its condition, and that condition was laid only upon Christ, viz. That he should assume our nature, and pour out his soul unto death, which condition he was solely concerned to perform; but besides this, there is a *covenant of grace* made with him, and with all believers in him: with him *primarily*, as the head, with them as the members, who personally come into this covenant, when they come into the union with him by faith. This covenant of grace is not made with Christ alone, personally considered, but with Christ and all that are his, mystically considered, and is properly made with all believers in Christ; and therefore it is called their covenant, Zech. ix. 11. "As for thee, also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." So when God entered into the covenant of grace with Abraham, Gen. xvii. 7. "I will establish my covenant (saith he) between me and thee, and thy seed after thee." So when he took the people of Israel into this covenant, Ezek. xvi. 8. "I swear unto thee, (saith he) and entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine."

This covenant of grace made with believers in Christ, is not the same, nor must it be confounded with the covenant of redemption made with Christ before the world began; they are two distinct covenants: For in the covenant of grace, into which believers are taken, there is a Mediator, and this Mediator is Christ himself. But in the other *covenant of redemption*, there neither was, nor could be any Mediator, which manifestly distinguishes them. Besides, in the covenant of grace, Christ bequeaths manifold and rich legacies, as he is the Testator; but no man gives a legacy to himself. This covenant is really and properly made with every believer, as he is a member of Jesus Christ, the head; and they are truly and properly foederates with God: The covenant binds them to their duties and encourages them therein by promises of strength, to be derived from Christ, to enable them thereunto.

2. We thankfully acknowledge, that the glory of the new covenant is chiefly discovered in the promises thereof; upon the best promises it is established. And all the promises are reducible to the covenant. They meet and center in it, as the rivers in the sea, or beams in the sun; but yet we cannot say, that nothing but promises is contained in this covenant: For there are duties required by it, as well as mercies promised in it.

Nor may we say, that those duties required by it are required only to be performed by Christ, and not by us; but they are required to be performed by us in his strength: Nor is it Christ that

repents and believes for us, but we ourselves are to believe and repent in the strength of his grace: and till we do so actually in our own persons, we have no part or portion in the blessings and mercies of this covenant. If Christ by believing for us, give us an actual right and title to the promises and blessings of the new covenant, then it will unavoidably follow:

(1.) That men, who never repented for one sin in all their lives, may be, nay, certainly are pardoned as much as the greatest penitents in the world; because though they never repented themselves, yet Christ repented for them; expressly contrary to his own words, Luke xiii. 3. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" and contrary to his own established order, Luke xxix. 47. Acts iii. 19.

(2.) It will also follow, that unbelievers, who never had union with Christ by one vital act of faith in all their lives, may be, nay, certainly shall be saved, as well as those that are actual believers: because though they be unbelievers in themselves, yet Christ believed for them; expressly contrary to Mark xvi. 16. "He that believeth not shall be damned." John iii. 36. "He that believes not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." And Luke xii. 46. "He will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with unbelievers."

(3.) It will also follow from hence, that men may continue in a state of disobedience all their days, and yet may be saved, as well as the most obedient souls in the world; expressly contrary to Eph. v. 6. "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." And Rom. ii. 8. "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath." And 1 Pet. iv. 17. "What shall the end of them be that obey not the gospel of God?"

This language sounds strange and harsh to the ears of Christians, a repenting Christ saving the impenitent sinner; a believing Christ saving unbelievers; an obeying Christ saving obstinate and disobedient wretches: Whither doth such doctrine tend, but to encourage and fix men in their impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience? But the Lord grant no poor sinner in the world may trust to this, or build his hopes of eternal life upon such a loose, sandy foundation, as this is. Reader, all that Christ hath done without thee, will not, cannot be effectual to thy salvation, unless repentance, faith, and obedience, be wrought by the Spirit in thy soul. It is "Christ in thee, that is the hope of glory," Col. i. 27. beware, therefore, on what ground thou buildest for eternity.

Error 10. *They deny sanctification to be the evidence of justification,*

*'and deridingly tell us, this is to light a candle to the sun; and the darker our sanctification is, the brighter our justification is.'*

*Refutation.* I am not at all surprised at this strange and absonous language; it is a false and dangerous conclusion, yet such as naturally results from, and, by a kind of necessity, follows out of their other errors: For if the elect be all justified from eternity, and that neither repentance, faith, nor obedience, be required of us in the covenant of grace; but were all required of, and performed by Christ, who repented, believed, and obeyed for us; then, indeed, I cannot understand what relation our sanctification hath to our justification, or how it should be an evidence, mark, or sign thereof, or what regard is due from Christians to any grace, or work of the Spirit wrought in them, to clear up their interest in Christ to them. For we being in Christ, and in a state of justification, before we were naturally born, we must necessarily be so before we be regenerated, or new-born: and, consequently, no work of grace wrought in us, or holy duties performed by us, can be evidential of that which from eternity was done before them, and without them.

1. I grant, indeed, That many vain professors do cheat, and deceive themselves, by false, unscriptural signs and evidences, as well as by true ones misapplied.

2. I grant also, That by reason of the deceitfulness of the heart, instability of the thoughts, similar works of common grace, in hypocrites; distractions of the world, wiles of Satan, weakness of grace, and prevalency of corruptions; the clearing up of our justification by our sanctification, is a work that meets with great and manifold difficulties, which are the things that most Christians complain of.

3. I also grant, That the evidence of our sanctification in this, or any other method, is not essential, and absolutely necessary to the being of a Christian. A man may live in Christ, and yet not know his interest in him, or relation to him, Isa. l. 10. Some Christians, like children in the cradle, live, but understand not that they live; are born to a great inheritance, but have no knowledge of it, or present comfort in it.

4. I will further grant, That the eye of a Christian may be too intently fixed upon his own gracious qualifications; and being wholly taken up in the reflex acts of faith, may too much neglect the direct acts of faith upon Christ, to the great detriment of his soul.

But all this notwithstanding, The examination of our justification by our sanctification, is not only a lawful, and possible, but a very excellent and necessary work and duty. It is the course that Christians have taken in all ages, and that which God hath abundantly blessed to the joy and encouragement of their souls.

He hath furnished our souls to this end with noble, self-reflecting powers and abilities. He hath answerably furnished his word with variety of marks and signs, for the same end and use. Some of these marks are *exclusive*, to detect and bar bold presumptuous pretenders, 1 Cor. vi. 9. Rev. xxi. 8, 27. Some are *inclusive* marks, to measure the strength and growth of grace by, Rom. iv. 20. And others are *positive* signs, flowing out of the very essence of grace, or the new creature, 1 John iv. 13. "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."

He hath also expressly commanded us to examine and prove ourselves; upbraided the neglecters of that duty, and enforced their duty upon them by a thundering argument, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves; know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." In a word, for this end and purpose, amongst others, were the scriptures written, 1 John v. 13. "These things have I written to you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." And therefore, to neglect this duty is exceeding dangerous; but to deny and deride it, intolerable. It may be justly feared, such men will be drowned in perdition who fall into the waters, by making a bridge over them with their own shadows.

For my own part, I verily believe, that the sweetest hours Christians enjoy in this world, are when they retire into their closets, and sit there concealed from all eyes, but him that made them; looking now into the *bible*, then into their own *hearts*, and then up to *God*; closely following the grand debate about their interest in Christ, till they have brought it to the happy desired issue.

And now, reader, for a close of all, I call the Searcher of hearts to witness, 'That I have not intermeddled with these controversies of Antipædo-baptism, and Antinomianism, out of any delight I take in polemical studies, or an unpeaceable contradicting humour, but out of pure zeal for the glory and truths of God; for the vindication and defence whereof I have been necessarily engaged therein. And having discharged my duty thus far, I now resolve to return (if God will permit me) to my much sweeter, and more agreeable studies; still maintaining my Christian charity for those whom I oppose; not doubting but I shall meet those in heaven, from whom I am forced, in lesser things, to dissent and differ upon earth.'

# GOSPEL UNITY

RECOMMENDED TO THE

## CHURCHES OF CHRIST.

A SERMON.

1 COR. i. 10.

*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.*

**W**HEN I consider this healing and uniting text, and the scandalous divisions of the congregations to which I recommend it; I could chuse rather to comment thereon with tears than words; It is just matter of lamentation to think what feeble influences such divine and pathological exhortations have upon the minds and hearts of professed Christians. But it is not lamentations, but proper counsels, and convictions obeyed, must do the work.

The primitive and purest churches of Christ consisted of imperfect members, who, notwithstanding they were knit together by the same internal bond of the Spirit, and the same external bonds of common profession, and common danger, and enjoyed extraordinary helps for uniting, in the presence and doctrines of the apostles among them; yet quickly discovered a schismatical spirit, dividing both in judgment and affection, to the great injury of religion, and grief of the apostle's spirit. To check and heal this growing evil in the church at Corinth, the apostle addresses his pathological exhortation to them, and to all future churches of Christ, whom it equally concerns in the words of my text; *Now I beseech you, brethren, &c.* Where note,

1. The duty exhorted to,
2. The arguments enforcing the duty.

1. The duty exhorted to, namely, unity; the beauty, strength, and glory, as well as the duty of a church. This unity he describes two ways, 1. As it is exclusive of its opposite, schism, or division: all rents and rash separations are contrary to it, and destructive of it; *I beseech you, brethren, that there be no divisions [or schisms] among*

*you.* 2. As it is inclusive of all that belongs to it, namely, the harmony and agreement of their judgments, hearts, and language. (1.) That ye all speak the same thing. (2.) That ye be perfectly joined together in one mind. And, (3.) In the same judgment. This threefold union in judgment, affection, and language, includes all that belongs to Christian concord, makes the saints *Συμφύχοι*, men of one heart and soul, the loveliest sight this world affords, Acts ii. 46, 47.

2. The arguments enforcing this duty upon them, come next under consideration. And these are three; (1.) *I beseech you.* (2.) *I beseech you, brethren.* (3.) *I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* These arguments are not of equal force and efficacy; the first is great, the second greater; the last the most efficacious and irresistible of all the rest: but all together should come with such power, and irresistible efficacy upon the judgments, consciences, and hearts of Christians as should perfectly knit them together, and defeat all the designs of Satan, and his agents without them, or of their own corruptions within them, to rend asunder their affections or communion.

*Argum.* 1. And first, he enforces the duty of unity by a solemn, apostolical obsecration and adjuration, *I beseech you*, saith he; he had power to command them to this duty, and threaten them for the neglect of it: He had in readiness to revenge all disobedience, and might have shaken that rod over them; but he chuseth rather to intreat and beseech them: Now *I beseech you*, brethren; here you have, as it were, the great apostle upon his knees before them, meekly and pathetically intreating them to be at perfect unity among themselves. It is the intreaty of their spiritual Father that had begotten them to Christ. Now [I] beseech you, brethren: I who was the instrument in Christ's hands of your conversion to him; I, that have planted you a gospel-church, and assiduously watered you; I beseech you all, by the spiritual ties and endearments betwixt you and me, that there may be no divisions among you. This is the first argument, wrapt up in a solemn obsecration.

Next, he enforces the duty of unity by the nearness of their relation; *I beseech you, brethren*: Brotherhood is an endearing thing, and naturally draws affection and unity with it, 1 Pet. iii. 8. "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; ye are the children of one Father, joint heirs of one and the same inheritance." To see an Egyptian smiting an Israelite, is no strange sight; but to see one Israelite quarrelling with another, is most unnatural and uncomely: The nearer the relation, the stronger the affection.

“ How good and how pleasant is it (saith the Psalmist) for brethren  
 “ to dwell together in unity !” Psal. cxxxiii. 1.

But the greatest argument of all is the last, viz. *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* In this name he beseeches and intreats them to be at perfect unity among themselves. In the former he sweetly insinuated the duty by a loving *compellation*, but here he sets it home by a solemn *adjuration* ; I beseech you brethren, *by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* That is to say, 1. For Christ’s sake, or for the love of Christ ; by all that Christ hath done, suffered, or purchased for you ; and as Christ is dear and precious to you, let there be no divisions. If you have any love for Christ, do not grieve him, and obstruct his great design in the world by your scandalous schisms. Mr. John Fox never denied a beggar that asked alms of him for Christ Jesus’ sake.

2. *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,* that is, in the authority of Christ ; for so his name also signifies, 1 Cor. v. 4. and it is as if he had said, If you reverence the supreme authority and sovereignty of Christ, which is the fountain out of which so many solemn commands of unity do flow ; then see, as you will answer him at the great day, that ye be perfectly joined together in one mind and in one judgment. The point will be this.

*Doct. Unity amongst believers, especially in particular church-relation, is as desirable a mercy, as it is a necessary and indispensable duty.*

How desirable a mercy it is, and how necessary a duty, let the same apostle, who presseth it upon the Corinthians in my text, be heard again, enforcing the same duty with the same warmth upon the church at Philippi, chap. ii. ver. 1, 2. “ If there be therefore  
 “ any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellow-  
 “ ship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that  
 “ ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of  
 “ one mind.” In handling this point, I will shew,

1. What unity among believers is.

2. How the necessity and desirableness of it may be evinced.

3. And then lay down the motives and directions about it.

(1.) What unity among believers is, and more particularly such believers as stand in particular church-relation to each other.

There is a twofold union, one *mystical*, betwixt Christ and believers ; another *moral*, betwixt believers themselves : faith knits them all to Christ, and then love knits them one to another. Their common relation to Christ their head endears them to each other as fellow-members in the same body : hence they become

*sanguine Christi conglutinati*, glued together by the blood of Christ. Union with Christ is fundamental to all union among the saints. Perfect union would flow from this their common union with Christ their head, were they not here in an imperfect state, where their corruptions disturb and hinder it; and as soon as they shall attain unto complete sanctification, they shall also attain unto perfect unity. How their unity with one another comes, by way of necessary resultancy, from their union with Christ, and how this unity among themselves shall at last arise to its just perfection, that one text plainly discovers, John xvii. 23. "I in them, and thou in me; that they may be made perfect in one," &c.

Unity amongst those that hold not the head, is rather a conspiracy, than a gospel-unity. Believers and unbelievers may have a political or civil union; but there is no spiritual unity, but what flows from joint membership in Christ. I will not deny, but in particular churches, there may be, and still are, some hypocrites, who hold communion with the saints, and pretend to belong unto Christ, the same head with them; but as they have no real union with Christ, so neither have they any sincere affection to the saints; and these, for the most part, are they that raise tumults and divisions in the church, as disloyal subjects do in the commonwealth. Of these the apostle speaks, 1 John ii. 19. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us; but they went out, that it might be made manifest they were not all of us."

Sincere Christianity holds fast the soul by a firm bond of life to the truly Christian community, wherein they reap those spiritual pleasures and advantages, which assure their continuance therein to a great degree: but those that join with the church upon carnal and external inducements, make little conscience of rending from it; and God permits their schismatical spirits thus to act, for the discovering of their hypocrisy, or (as the text speaks) "that it might be made manifest they were not of us;" as also, that they which are approved, may by their constancy be also made manifest, 1 Cor. xi. 19.

It hath indeed been said, that it is never better with the church, than when there are most hypocrites in it; but then you must understand it only with respect to the external tranquillity and prosperity of the church: For as to its real spiritual advantage, they add nothing. And therefore it behoves church-officers and members to be exceeding careful (especially in times of liberty and prosperity) how they admit members, as the Jews in Solomon's time were of admitting proselytes. It is said, Amos iii. 3. "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" I deny not, but

persons that differ in some lesser points, as to their judgment, may, and ought to be one in affection; but of this I am sure, that when sanctified persons, agreed in judgments and principles, do walk together under pious and judicious church-officers, in tender affection, and the exercise of all duties tending to mutual edification, glorifying God with one mouth, Rom. xv. 6. and cleaving together with oneness of heart, Acts ii. 42. this is such a church-unity, as answers Christ's end in the institution of particular churches, and greatly tends to their own comfort, and the propagation of Christianity in the world. Tongue-unity flows from heart-unity; heart-unity in a great measure from head-unity; and all three from union with the Lord Jesus Christ. The divisions of our tongues come mostly from the divisions of our hearts; were hearts agreed, tongues would quickly be agreed; and then what blessed times might be expected? And so much briefly for the nature of unity. Next,

(2.) Let us evince, both the necessity and desirableness of this unity among believers, and this will appear in a threefold respect; viz.

1. With respect to the glory of God.
2. The comfort and benefit of our own souls.
3. The conversion and salvation of the world.

(1.) With respect to the glory of God. The manifestative glory of God (which is all the glory we are capable of giving him, is the very end of our being, and should be dearer to us than our lives) is exceedingly advanced by the unity of his people. Hence is the apostle's prayer, Rom. xv. 5, 6. "Now the God of patience, and consolation, grant you to be like minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind, and one mouth glorify God." It is highly remarkable, that the apostle, in this petition for the unity of the saints, doth not only describe that unity he prays for, one mouth and one mind, and shews how much God would be glorified by such an union; but he also addresses himself to God for it, under these two remarkable titles, the *God of patience, and consolation*; thereby intimating two things, (1.) How great need and exercise there is of patience in maintaining unity among the saints: They must bear one another's burthens; they must give allowance for mutual infirmities, for the church here is not an assembly of spirits of just men made perfect. The unity of the saints therefore greatly depends upon the exercise of patience one toward another; and this he begs *the God of patience* to give them. And to endear this grace of patience to them, He, (2.) joins with it another title of God, viz. the *God of consolation*, wherein he points them to that abundant comfort which would result unto themselves from such a blessed unity,

continued and maintained by the mutual exercises of patience and forbearance one towards another. And to set home all, he lays before them the pattern and example of Christ: *The God of patience and consolation, grant you to be like-minded, according to Christ.* How many thousand infirmities and failures in duty doth Christ find in all his people? notwithstanding which, he maintaineth union and communion with them; and if they, after his example, shall do so likewise with one another, God will be eminently glorified therein. This will evidence both the truth and excellency of the Christian religion, which so firmly knits the hearts of its professors together.

(2.) The necessity and desirableness of this unity farther appears, by the deep interest that the comfort and benefit of our souls have in it. A great example hereof we have in Acts ii. 46, 47. Oh! what cheerfulness, strength and pleasure, did the primitive Christians reap from the unity of their hearts in the ways and worship of God? Next unto the pleasure and delight of immediate communion with God himself, and the shedding abroad of his love into our hearts by the Holy Ghost; none like that which ariseth from the harmonious exercises of the graces of the saints, in their mutual duties and communion one with another. How are their spirits dilated and refreshed by it? What a lively emblem is here of heaven! the courts of princes affords no such delights. Whereas on the other side, when schisms have rent churches asunder, they go away from each other exasperated, grieved, and wounded, crying out, Oh, that I had a cottage in the wilderness! or, Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, that I might flee away, and be at rest.

(3.) *Lastly,* The necessity and desirableness of this union further appears with respect unto the world, who are allured unto Christ by it, and scared off from religion by the feuds and divisions of professors. To this the prayer of Christ hath respect, John xvii. 23. "That they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that thou hast sent me," q. d. This, O Father, will be a convincing evidence to the world, of the Divinity both of my Person and doctrine, and a great ordinance for their conversion to me, when they shall see my people cleaving inseparably unto me by faith, and to one another by love. And on the other side, it will be a fatal stumbling block in the way of their conversion; to observe my followers biting and devouring, rending and tearing one another.

A learned and judicious divine\*, commenting upon those words,

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\* Mr. J. Cotton.

Cant. ii. 7. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the  
 " roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor a-  
 " wake my Love till he please;" gives the sense thus: By roes  
 and hinds of the field (saith he) understand weak comers on to-  
 wards Christ, persons under some preparatory work towards con-  
 version, who are as shy and as timorous as roes and hinds of the  
 field; and as they will be scared by the yelp of a dog, or the sound  
 of a gun; so will these at any offensive miscarriages in the churches  
 of Christ.

Alexander Severus, finding two Christians contending with one  
 another, commanded them that they should not presume to take  
 the name of Christ upon them any longer; for (saith he) you  
 greatly dishonour your Master, whose disciples you profess your-  
 selves to be. And thus briefly of the nature of church-unity, and  
 the necessity and desirableness thereof, among all that stand in that  
 relation.

*Use.* The only improvement I shall make of this point, shall be  
 for,

1. Exhortation to unity.
2. Directions for the maintaining of it.

*The first use, for exhortation.*

*Use 1.* And first, having briefly discoursed of the nature, neces-  
 sity, and desirableness of unity among all Christians, and especially  
 of those in particular church-relation, I do in the bowels of Christ,  
 and in the words of his apostle, Phil. ii. 1, 2. earnestly and humbly  
 intreat all my brethren, "That if there be any consolation in  
 " Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if  
 " any bowels of mercy, fulfil ye my joy; that ye be like-minded,  
 " having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." He  
 speaketh not as one doubting, but as one disputing when he saith  
*If there be any consolation in Christ*; And it is as if he had said,  
 I passionately and earnestly intreat you by all that comfort and joy  
 you have found in your mutual communion from Christ and his  
 ordinances, wherein you have comfortably walked together, by all  
 that comfort resulting from the mutual exercises and fruits of  
 Christian love; by the unspeakable joys and delights the Spirit of  
 God hath shed down upon you, whilst you walked in unity in the  
 ways of your duty; by all the bowels of compassion and mercy you  
 have for yourselves, for your brethren, or for the poor carnal  
 world, who are in hazard of being destroyed by our divisions; or  
 for me, your minister, whose joy and comfort is bound up in your  
 unity and stability; "That ye be like-minded, having the same  
 " love, being of one accord, of one mind." What heart that  
 hath one spark of the love of Christ in it, yields not to such an ex-

hortation as this, enforced by “the consolation of Christ, comfort “of love, fellowship of the Spirit, and bowels of mercy?” More particularly, suffer ye this word of exhortation from the consideration of the following arguments or motives, what distances soever you are at from one another.

*Motive 1.* Reflect upon the late long and continued troubles you have been under, as the just rebukes of God for your former contentions and follies.

I need not tell you, you are but lately plucked as brands out of the burning, and that the smell of fire is yet upon you. The time lately was, when you got your bread with the peril of your lives; when God handed it to you behind your enemies backs; when your eyes did not, could not behold your former teachers, except in corners or prisons, when your souls were sorrowful for the solemn assemblies, when you mournfully confessed before the Lord, that these were the just and deserved punishments for your wantonness, barrenness, and provoking animosities. These things were not only the matter of your humble confessions, but the reformation of those evils was what you solemnly promised the Lord when he should again restore you to your liberty. What! and is the rod no sooner off your backs but you will to the old work again? Read Ezra ix. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. and view the face of this sin in that glass. Have we been so many years in the furnace, and our dross not purged? Such sharp and long-continued afflictions produce no better effects? It may be said of our troubles, as of the siege of Tyrus, Ezek. xxix. 18. “Every head was made bald, and every “shoulder peeled.” Some of us went young men into persecution and trouble, and are come forth old; and, which is worst of all we bring our old corruptions forth with us. Either we did confess and bewail these sins in the days of our affliction, or we did not. If we did not, we were incorrigible, and defeated the design of the rod. If we did, our confessions and sorrow were either sincere or hypocritical: If sincere, certainly they would effectually caution us, that we return not again to folly, Ezra ix. 13, 14. “After all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our “great trespass, seeing that thou, our God, hast punished us less “than our iniquities deserve; and hast given us such a deliverance “as this; should we again break thy commandment?”

*Motive 2.* Consider the common, imminent danger that now threatens us, both from enemies upon our borders, and within our own bowels. The Canaanites are in the land, let there be no strife therefore betwixt brethren; our natural, civil, and spiritual comforts are all shaking and trembling about us. If wanton children fall out and quarrel at a full table, our enemies stand ready to take away the cloth. They are not so far from us and out of sight,

but God can call them in a few hours to end the strife amongst us. We act not only beneath the rules of religion, but of reason also. Brute creatures will depose their antipathies in a common danger. Mr. Thomas Fuller, in his *History of the worthies of England*, tells us, That when the Severn sea overflowed the lower grounds of Somersetshire, it was observed, that dogs, and hares, and cats, and rats, swimming to the burroughs and hills to preserve their lives, stood quiet during the flood; not offering the least injury one to another. It is pity that sense should do more with beasts than reason and religion with men.

*Motive 3.* Reflect upon the scandal your divisions give to the world; how it hardens and prejudices them against religion and reformation. And thus the souls of men are eternally hazarded by the follies of professors: They are ready enough to take occasions against religion, where none are given, and much more to improve them where occasions are given. "Woe unto the world" (saith Christ) because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh," Matth. xviii. 7. The woe is not only denounced against the taker, but the giver of the offence. It fixes such prejudices in the hearts of carnal men, that some of them will never have good thoughts of religion any more: but utterly distaste and nauseate those assemblies and ordinances from which their conversion might, with greatest probability be expected.

How long and how anxiously have we prayed and waited for such a day of gospel-liberty as we now enjoy? It hath been one of the sorest afflictions we have grappled with in the days of our restraint, that we could not speak unto the carnal world. If we had an opportunity to speak at all, it was for the most part to such as stood in need of edification more than of conversion. God hath now, beyond the thoughts of most hearts, opened to us a door of liberty to preach, and for all that will, to hear. Some fruits we have already seen, and more we expect. The children are as it were coming to the birth, and will you obstruct it? Will you give the gospel a miscarrying womb? be instruments at once by your contentions, to destroy the souls of men, and break the very hearts of your ministers, whose greatest comfort is bound up in the success of their labours? Brethren, I beseech you read these words as if they were delivered to you upon my bended knees; I beseech you for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the hope's sake of saving the precious immortal souls of men; and for your poor ministers' sake, who have scarce any thing besides the fruits of their labours, to recompense their long-continued and grievous sufferings, depose your animosities, maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; help us, but do not hinder us in our hard labours.

What good will our lives do us if we must labour in vain, and spend our strength for nought? We find it difficult enough to persuade sinners to come unto Christ, when no such stumbling-blocks are laid in the way; the counter-pleas of Satan, the unbelief and sensuality of unsanctified nature, are difficulties too great for us to grapple with; but if to these must be added prejudices against religion, from your dividing lusts and scandalous breaches, what hope then remains? If you have no pity for yourselves, pity perishing souls, and pity your poor discouraged ministers; have a care you make us not to groan to God against you; or if that be a small thing in your eyes, have a care lest the blood of souls be charged to your account in the great day. Are there none in the towns or neighbourhoods where you live? Are you sure there are none that have hopeful inclinations towards religion? Desires and purposes to attend on the same means of grace you sit under, who will charge the occasion of their damnation upon you at the bar of Christ, and say, Lord, we had some weak convictions upon our consciences, that we needed a rousing and searching minister; we were convinced that the profane and carnal world, among whom we had our conversation, were not in the right path that leadeth to salvation! We felt in ourselves inclinations to cast off our old companions, and associate with those that professed more strictness and holiness, and place ourselves under the most fruitful and advantageous ministry, and accordingly improved opportunities to get acquaintance with them; but when we came nearer to them we found such wrath and envy, such wranglings and divisions, such undermining and supplanting each others reputations; such whisperings and tale-bearings, such malicious aggravations and improvements of common failings and infirmities, such covetousness and worldliness, such pride and vanity, as gave us such a disgust and offence at the ways of reformation, that we could never more be reconciled to them. Beware, I say, how you incur the guilt of such a dreadful charge as this, by giving liberty to such lusts and passions, under a profession of religion, and pretence to reformation.

*Motive 4.* Consider the contrariety of such practices to that solemn and fervent prayer of Jesus Christ, recorded in John xvii. It is highly remarkable, how in that prayer which he poured out a little before his death, with such a mighty *pathos* and fervency of spirit, he insists upon nothing more than unity among his people. He returns upon his Father again and again, for the obtaining of this one thing: Four times doth he beg for unity among them, and every time he seems to rise higher and higher, beseeching his Father, (1.) That they may be one. (2.) That they may be one in us. (3.) That they may be one, as thou and I are one. And, lastly, that

they may be made perfect in one. By all this shewing how intent his spirit was upon this one thing.

Brethren, if you would study how to frustrate the design, and grieve the heart of your Lord Jesus Christ (to whom you profess love and obedience) you cannot take a readier way to do it, than by breaking the bonds of unity among yourselves. I beseech you, therefore, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath so earnestly prayed for the unity of his people, *That ye be perfectly joined together in one heart, and in one mind*, as the text speaks.

*Motive 5.* Consider how directly your divisions cross, and frustrate the design and end of church-fellowship, which is instituted for the improvement of each other's graces, and helping on the mortification of each other's corruptions.

God hath distributed variety of gifts and graces, in different degrees amongst his people; the improvement of these gifts and graces to the glory of God and our mutual edification, is the very scope and end of particular church-fellowship and communion: Every man hath his proper gift of God, and (as a late \* worthy notes) the gifts and graces of all are this way made useful and beneficial. Job was exemplary for plainness and patience; Moses for faithfulness and meekness; Josiah for tenderness and a melting spirit; Athanasius was prudent and active; Basil heavenly, and of a sweet spirit; Chrysostom laborious and without affectation; Ambrose resolved and grave: One hath quickness of parts, but not so solid a judgment; another is solid, but not ready and presential; one hath a good wit, another a better memory, a third excels them both in utterance; one is zealous, but ungrounded; another well principled, but timorous; one is wary and prudent, another open and plain-hearted; one is trembling and melting, another cheerful and full of comfort. Now the end and use of church-fellowship is to make a rich improvement unto all by a regular use and exercise of the gifts and graces found in every one. One must impart his light, and another his warmth; the eye, (viz. the knowing man) cannot say to the hand (viz. the active man) I have no need of thee: Unspeakable are the benefits resulting from spiritual and orderly communion; but whatever the benefits be, they are all cut off by schisms and dissensions; for as faith is the grace by which we receive all from God, so love is the grace by which we share and divide the comfort of all among ourselves. The excellent things of the Spirit are lodged in earthen vessels, which death will shortly break, and then we can have no more benefit by them; but these jars and divisions render saints as it were dead one to another whilst they are alive. Ah, how lovely, how sweet, and

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\* Torshell's Help to Christian Fellowship, p. 6, 7.

desirable it is, to live in the communion of such saints as are described, Mal. iii. 16. to hear them freely, and humbly to open their hearts and experiences to one another! After this manner some say the art of medicine was found; as any one met with an herb, and discovered the virtue of it by an accident, he was to post it up, and so the physician's skill was perfected, by a collection of those posted experiments. But woe to us! we are ready to post up each other's failings and infirmities, to the shame and reproach of religion, and to furnish our common enemies with matter of contempt and scorn against us all.

*Motive 6.* In a word, These schisms and dissensions, in the churches of Christ, are ominous presages, and foreboding signs of some sweeping judgment, and common calamity near approaching us. It is a common observation with shepherds, that when the sheep push one another, a storm speedily ensues. I am sure it is so here; if God turn not our hearts one towards another, he will come and smite the earth with a curse, Mal. iv. 6. I believe it, sirs, you will have other work to do shortly; there be those coming (if God prevent not) that will part the fray.

*Use second, for direction.*

*Use 2.* In the last place, therefore, give me leave to lay before you some necessary and proper directions and counsels, for the prevention and healing of schisms and divisions amongst the churches of Christ; For it is not complaints and lamentations, but proper counsels and directions, and those not only prescribed, but obeyed that must do the work. When Joshua lay upon his face before the Lord, Josh. vii. 8, 9, 10. bewailing the sins and miseries of Israel; *Up* (saith God) *sanctify the people: wherefore liest thou upon thy face?* As if he should say, thy moans and lamentations are good and necessary in their place; but speedy action, and vigorous endeavours, must be also used, or Israel will perish. So say I, *Up, up, fall speedily to your duties, as men in earnest; and for your guidance in the paths of duty, I will lay before you the following plain and necessary directions.*

*Direction 1.* The orderly gathering, and filling particular churches, is of great influence to the peace and tranquillity of those churches; and therefore it greatly concerns all that are interested therein, especially such as are vested with office-power, to beware whom they receive into their communion.

The scriptures do plainly discover to us, that church-members ought to be visible saints, 1 Cor. i. 2. 2 Cor. i. 1, 2. Acts ii. 41. to the end; Eph. ii. 7. 1 Thess. i. 2, 3. Rom. i. 7. Col. i. 2. Hence particular churches are called the churches of the saints, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. If admissions be lax, and negligent, so much heterogeneous

matter fills the church, that it can never be quiet. Christians, and Christians, may live together harmoniously, and coalesce in one orderly and comfortable society, as having one and the same Head, one Spirit, the same general design and end: But godly and ungodly, spiritual and carnal, are acted by contrary principles, pursue opposite designs, and can never heartily coalesce. There is a spirit of discerning, a judgment of discretion in the saints, and it is especially desirable in a more eminent degree, in those that have office-power in the church, to judge of men's fit qualifications for church communion. We all allow, that gross ignorance and profaneness are just bars to men's admission; and to deny this, were to take all power from the church to preserve the purity of God's ordinances, or to cast out notorious offenders. None ought to be admitted into church communion, but such as do appear to the judgment of charity (comparing their professions and conversations) to be Christians indeed, that is, men fearing God, and working righteousness.

And I make no doubt, but some opinions, as well as practices, render men unmeet for church communion, Tit. iii. 10. 2 John 10. All opinions which overthrow doctrines necessary to be believed, which the apostle comprehends under the name of faith; and all such opinions as are inconsistent with an holy life, and overthrow the power of godliness, which the apostle comprehends under the name of a good conscience, 1 Tim. i. 19, 20. whosoever shall hold or maintain any such opinions as these, he is either to be kept out, if not admitted; or cast out, if he be in church-fellowship. In receiving such, you receive but spies, and incendiaries, among you. What a firebrand did Arius prove, not only in the church of Constantinople, but even to the whole world? Men of graceless hearts, and erroneous heads, will give a continual exercise to the patience of sober Christians. I deny not, but out of the purest Churches, men may arise, speaking perverse things, and yet the officers and members of those churches be blameless in their admission; but if they can be discerned before they be admitted, a little preventive care would be of singular and seasonable use, to the tranquillity of church-societies.

*Direction 2.* Let all officers and members of the church, study their duties, and keep themselves within the bounds of their proper places; ordinate motions are quiet motions. 1 Thess. iv. 11. "Study to be quiet and do your own business, and work with your own hands, as we commanded you." In which words he condemns two vices, which disturb, and distract the church of Christ, viz. curiosity in matters which pertain not to us, and idleness in the duties of our particular callings. Two things I shall drop, by way of caution:

(1.) Let it be for a caution to ministers, that they mind their proper work, study the peace of the church, impartially dispense their respects to the saints committed to their charge, not siding with a party. There be few schisms in churches, in which ministers have not some hand. Jerome upon those words, Hosea ix. 8. hath this memorable note; *Veteres scrutans historias, invenire non possum scidisse ecclesiam, præter eos qui sacerdotes a Deo positi fuerunt.* Searching the ancient histories (saith he) I can find none that hath more rent the church of God, than those that sustain the office of ministers. This is a sad charge, and it is too justly laid upon many of that order. O what a blessing is a prudent, patient, peaceable minister, to the flock over which he watches! \*

(2.) Let the people keep their places, and study their proper duties. There be in most congregations, some idle people, who having little to do at home, are employed upon Satan's errands, to run from house to house, carrying tales to exasperate one Christian against another. These the apostle particularly marks and warns the churches of, 1 Tim. v. 13. "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tatlers also, and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not." If that one rule of Christ, Matth. xviii. 15, 16. were conscientiously and strictly attended to, to tell a trespassing brother his fault privately, then with one or two more, if obstinacy make it necessary, and not to expose him to the whole church, and much less to the whole world, without a plain necessity; how many thousand ruptures would be prevented in Christian societies? But instead of regularly admonishing and reproofing those irregular and idle tatlers, (as the apostle calls them) who make it their business to sow jealousies, to make and widen breaches amongst brethren.

*Direction 3.* Let all Christians govern their tongues, and keep them under the command of the law of kindness in their mutual converses with one another. "A soft answer (saith Solomon) Prov. xv. 1. turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger." Hard to hard will never do well. How easily did Abigail disarm angry David by a gentle apology? What more boisterous than the wind? yet a gentle rain will allay it. It may be strongly presumed, that a meek and gentle answer will more easily allay the passions of a godly man, than of one that is both ungodly, and full of enmity towards us; and yet sometimes it hath done the latter. A company of vain, wicked men, having inflamed

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\* From vain-glorious doctors, contentious pastors, and unprofitable questions, the good Lord deliver us. *Luther's prayer.*

their blood in a tavern at Boston in New-England, and seeing that reverend, meek and holy minister of Christ, Mr. Cotton, coming along the street, one of them tells his companions, "I will go (saith he) and put a trick upon the old Cotton." Down he goes, and crossing his way, whispers these words into his ear, "Cotton (said he) thou art an old fool." Mr. Cotton replied, "I confess I am so; the Lord make both me and thee wiser than we are, even wise to salvation." He relates this passage to his wicked companions, which cast a great damp upon their spirits, in the midst of a frolic. What peaceful societies should we have, if our lips transgressed not the laws of love and kindness.

*Direction 4.* Respectful deportments to those that are beneath us in gifts, or estates, is an excellent conservative of church-peace; lofty and contemptuous carriages towards those that are beneath us in either respect, is a frequent occasion of bitter jars and animosities. The apostle chargeth it upon the Corinthians, "That no one be puffed up for one against another; for who maketh thee to differ from another?" 1 Cor. vi. 7. What respectful language did holy Mr. Brewen give to his own godly servants? Remember, Christians, that there is neither rich nor poor, bond nor free, but all are one in Christ Jesus. This indeed, destroys not the civil differences God hath made between one and another; grace will teach the godly servant to give double honour to a religious master or mistress, the private Christian to a godly magistrate, or minister. It will teach the people to know them which labour among them, and are over them in the Lord, and admonish them, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, and to be at peace among themselves, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. and it will also teach superiors to condescend to men of low degree, and not to think of themselves above what they ought, but "with all lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering, to forbear one another in love, keeping (this way) the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," Eph. iv. 2, 3.

*Direction 5.* This gentle language and respectful deportment would naturally and constantly flow from the uniting graces of wisdom, humility, and love, were they more exalted in the hearts of Christians.

Wisdom would allay those unchristian heats, Prov. xvii. 27. a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit, so we render it; but the Hebrew signifies a cool spirit; "the wisdom that is from above is gentle and easy to be intreated," James iii. 17.

Humility takes away the fuel from the fire of contention; only from pride cometh contention, Prov. xiii. 10. How dearly hath pride, especially spiritual pride, cost the churches of Christ!

Love is the very cement of societies, the fountain of peace and unity; it thinketh no evil, 1 Cor. xiii. puts the fairest sense upon

doubtful words and actions, it beareth all things. "Love me (saith "Austin) and reprove me as thou pleasest:" It is a radical grace, bearing the fruits of peace and unity upon it.

*Direction 6.* Be of a Christ-like forgiving spirit one towards another, Eph. iv. 31, 32. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, "and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all "malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving "one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Hath thy brother offended thee? How apt art thou also to offend thy brother? And, which is infinitely more, how often dost thou every day grieve and offend Jesus Christ, who yet freely forgives all thy offences? Remember friend, that an unforgiving is a bad sign of an unforgiven person. They that have found mercy, pity, and forgiveness, should of all men in the world be most ready to shew it.

*Direction 7.* Be deeply affected with the mischievous effects and consequents of schisms and divisions in the societies of the saints, and let nothing beneath a plain necessity divide you from communion one with another; hold it fast till you can hold it no longer without sin. At the fire of your contentions your enemies warm their hands, and say, Aha, so would we have it; Your prayers are obstructed, Matth. v. 24. "First be reconciled to thy brother, and "then come and offer thy gift." Edification is hindered; Feverish bodies thrive not, Eph. iv. 15. *God is provoked* to remove his gracious presence from among you. "Be of one mind (saith the "apostle) live in peace, and the God of peace shall be with you," 1 Cor. xiii. 11. implying that their contentions would deprive them of his blessed company with them. The glory of your society is clouded: "If ye have bitter envyings and strife in your "heart, glory not," James iii. 14. Glory not in your church privileges, personal gifts and attainments; whatever you think of yourselves, you are not such Christians as you vogue yourselves for, living in sin so directly contrary to Christianity. The name of Christ is dishonoured. You are taken out of the world, to be a people for his name, that is, for his honour: but there is little credit to the name of Christ from a dividing, wrangling people. The alluring beauty of Christianity, by which the church gains upon the world, Acts ii. 46, 47. is sullied and defaced, and thereby (as I noted before) conversion hindered, and a new stone, as it were, rolled over the graves of poor sinners, to keep them down in their impenitency: Tremble therefore at the thoughts of divisions and separations. St. Augustine notes three sins severely punished in scripture. The golden calf, with the sword; Jehoiakim's cutting the sacred roll, with a dreadful captivity; but the schism of Korah

and his accomplices, with the earth's opening her mouth and swallowing them up quick.

*Direction 8.* Let all church-members see that they have union with Christ, evidencing itself in daily sweet communion with him. Lines drawn from a circumference come the nearest to one another in the center. When God intends to make the hearts of men one, he first makes them new, Ezek. xi. 19. "I will give them "one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you." And the more any renewed heart tastes the sweetness of communion with God, by so much it is disposed for unity and peace with his people. Our forwardness and peevishness plainly discovers all is not well betwixt God and us. Nothing so opposite to, or abhorred by a soul that enjoys sweet peace and communion with Christ, than to live in sinful jars and contentions with his people. Return therefore to the primitive spirit of love and unity; forbear one another; forgive one another; mortify your dividing lusts; cherish your uniting graces; "mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the "doctrine ye have learned, and avoid them," Rom. xvi. 17. In a word, and that the word of the apostle in the text, "I beseech you, "brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak "the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but "that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the "same judgment."

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.







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