

T H E

W O R K S

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M<sup>r</sup> J O H N G L A S.

I N F I V E V O L U M E S.

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T H E S E C O N D E D I T I O N.

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V O L U M E I I.

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9/5

T H E

C O N T E N T S.

	Pag.
1. <i>A Plea for Pure and Undeſiled Religion.</i>	1
2. <i>An Answer to ſome Objections moved by a Friend againſt the Plea.</i>	43
3. <i>The Uſefulneſs of Catechiſms conſidered, in a Letter to a Friend.</i>	68
4. <i>The Uſe of Catechiſms further conſidered; with a more full account of God's Ambaſſadors, of Saving Faith, and of the Faith of Devils; in Letter to a friend.</i>	102
5. <i>The Unlawfulneſs of Blood-eating, ſhewed from a view of the tenure by which the Chriſtian Gentiles from the beginning held their liberty in Chriſt from the yoke of the law of Moſes.</i>	154
6. <i>A Letter to a Miniſter of the Eſtabliſhed Church, in Answer to one from him on Forbearance.</i>	173
7. <i>Catholic Charity: A View of the Scope of Rom. xiv. offered to the conſideration of Mr George Whitefield, who preached the Antinomian Charity from ver. 17.</i>	180
8. <i>The Rule of Forbearance Defended, A Letter.</i>	196
9. <i>Of the Unity and Diſtinction of the Elders Office.</i>	213
10. <i>The Right of the Chriſtian People, and the power of their Paſtors, in the Ordination of Miniſters of the Goſpel aſſerted. With ſome di- rections for Reformation.</i>	229
11. <i>A Letter to Mr Willifon on a paſſage in his Sy- nodical Sermon, concerning Illiterate Miniſters,</i>	256
12. <i>A</i>	

9/5

THE

THE

# CONTENTS.

	Pag.
1. <i>A Plea for Pure and Undeiled Religion.</i>	1
2. <i>An Answer to some Objections moved by a Friend against the Plea.</i>	43
3. <i>The Usefulness of Catechisms considered, in a Letter to a Friend.</i>	68
4. <i>The Use of Catechisms further considered; with a more full account of God's Ambassadors, of Saving Faith, and of the Faith of Devils; in Letter to a friend.</i>	102
5. <i>The Unlawfulness of Blood-eating, shewed from a view of the tenure by which the Christian Gentiles from the beginning held their liberty in Christ from the yoke of the law of Moses.</i>	154
6. <i>A Letter to a Minister of the Established Church, in Answer to one from him on Forbearance.</i>	173
7. <i>Catholic Charity: A View of the Scope of Rom. xiv. offered to the consideration of Mr George Whitefield, who preached the Antinomian Charity from ver. 17.</i>	180
8. <i>The Rule of Forbearance Defended, A Letter.</i>	196
9. <i>Of the Unity and Distinction of the Elders Office.</i>	213
10. <i>The Right of the Christian People, and the power of their Pastors, in the Ordination of Ministers of the Gospel asserted. With some directions for Reformation.</i>	229
11. <i>A Letter to Mr Willison on a passage in his Synodical Sermon, concerning Illiterate Ministers,</i>	256
12. <i>A</i>	

12.	<i>A Supplement to Mr Ebenezer Erskine's Synodical Sermon.</i>	279
13.	<i>A Letter to Mr Randie from his Friend, occasioned by a Letter lately published concerning Frequent Communicating.</i>	298
14.	<i>A Letter on National Fasts appointed by the Clergy.</i>	314
15.	<i>A Fast Sermon.</i>	322
16.	<i>A Second Fast Sermon; with a Note on Haman and Mordecai.</i>	334
17.	<i>A Dissertation on Infant-Baptism.</i>	356
18.	<i>The Sabbatism of the People of God; or, The First Day of the Week shewed to be the Christian Day of Rest, from Heb. iv.</i>	379
19.	<i>Predestination Impugned and Defended, in Two Letters, the First Impugning, the Second Defending the Doctrine.</i>	395
20.	<i>Remarks on Dr Benson's Doctrine of Predestination Reviewed.</i>	415
21.	<i>Of Mr Hutchinson's Philosophy and Divinity.</i>	426
22.	<i>A Letter on the Scripture Distinction between the Law and the Promise.</i>	436
23.	<i>A Petition to the Associate Presbytery by Four Brethren.</i>	447
24.	<i>A Dialogue upon the Petition.</i>	459
25.	<i>A Dissertation on Incest.</i>	470

T H E

W O R K S

O F

Mr J O H N G L A S.

A Plea for PURE and UNDEFILED RELIGION.

With an Answer to some Objections moved  
against it by a Friend: in a Letter to that  
Friend.

2 Cor. viii. 9. *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus  
Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes  
he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be  
rich.*

[First published in the year 1741.]

To the Honourable

Colonel JAMES GARDINER.

**T**HIS plea for pure and undefiled religion, as a  
testimony of gratitude and respect, is dedicat-  
ed by,

*His much obliged, and*

*most humble servant,*

JOHN GLAS.

The P L E A.

**T**HE gospel of Jesus Christ stains the pride of  
man's glorying, and excludes boasting on  
his part, when it proclaims the glory of the  
divine perfections in his salvation. And the preach-

VOL. II.

† A

ing

ing of peace by Jesus Christ, is a declaration of war against the lusts of this world in our hearts, from which Christ came to save us, and that, not merely as they tend to the disturbance of society, and to our disquiet in this life, but chiefly, as they are opposite to the love of God, and inconsistent with the regard due to the life and immortality that is brought to light, and with conformity to Christ, and subjection to him in his kingdom that is not of this world.

This pride and love of the world, to which the gospel is so opposite, is the true cause of infidelity. And the praises infidels are pleased to bestow on some of the laws of the gospel, proceed from a mistake of these laws, as if they carried in them some such flattery of the pride of our own virtue and merit, as we find in the moral philosophy, and as if these laws had been made for such a society as a kingdom of this world.

And all the perversions of the gospel, by them who found their interest in professing some belief of it, have flowed from the same source with infidelity; as they all serve, one way or other, to exalt the wisdom, the merit, and the power and authority of man, against the mercy and grace of the righteous Father, the righteousness of the Son of God, and the office he bears in his church, and the work of his Spirit; and as they all likewise serve some way to indulge, or even approve us in fulfilling the lusts of this world, except in ways that are openly hurtful to a worldly society; for a kingdom of this world cannot flourish without such a fulfilment of these lusts as is plainly condemned in the gospel.

This is visible in the grand perversion of the gospel, and corruption of Christianity, that was beginning to work in the very time of the apostles, and displayed itself in form when Christianity became the religion of the empire, and will continue in some shape or other in the world, till the Lord Jesus destroy it by the brightness of his second coming.

Many

Many instances might be brought from the laws of the gospel, to shew that they are designed unto quite another and higher end than the happiness and prosperity of a nation of this world; and so to manifest, that the author of the Christian religion did not appoint it to be the religion of any nation of this world, but of a people whom God is pleased to take out of every nation, for his name, Acts xv. 14. 17.

The description of *covetousness*, in the law of the gospel against it, is one instance, which, if well understood, may serve abundantly to clear this, though there were no more.

Jesus Christ treats this subject expressly in his discourse to his disciples before the multitude, Luke xii. 15.—40. The occasion of that discourse was, one of the multitude of his hearers saying to him, *Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me*, ver. 13. It seems this man thought that his brother ought, in conscience, to grant what he desired, and did not doubt but Christ's judgement in the case, to which he supposed his brother would yield, would be for him. It is like, both the brothers had some respect to Jesus as the Messiah, whom the Jews were expecting as a judge and a divider over them, under whose government they would be a happy nation: and so he was giving him employment, as a judge and divider over him and his brother. This his notion of the Messiah was not very agreeable to the doctrine Jesus was preaching immediately before, but agreeable enough to that faith concerning Christ, which is consistent with the love of this world, and which abounds every where, in the nations called Christian to this day.

Our Lord points out to him his mistake about the office of the Messiah and his kingdom, when he says, *Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?* ver. 14. and, in place of granting his request, begins a discourse against covetousness, which closely accompanies that mistake about the Messiah's kingdom among

the Jews to this very day, and is indulged where-ever any such thought of Christ's kingdom is entertained, as if it were of this world.

Though Christ declines the part of a judge in the question betwixt this man and his brother, about the inheritance, he judges of the distemper of his mind, that shewed itself in his petition, and applies himself to the cure. For he shewed himself uneasy at his situation, in comparison with his own brother, and not contented with what he had; and therefore, desirous to better his condition in the world, and to possess more abundance, in a method that was just and equal in his eyes; and this in connection with his being a follower of Christ. This is the plain import of his petition to Jesus Christ. And he is not singular in this: there are still abundance of such followers of Christ, who, if he would grant this desire of possessing a little more abundance, to ease their minds of the fears of straits that may come on them and theirs, that they may be preserved from the misery of being poor and burdensome to others, would be content to follow him as far as he will. But the Lord's answer to this petition, is, *Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* And this answer points out to that man, and all that are of the same mind with him, the true cause of their uneasiness, *viz. covetousness*; and, if we would hearken to it, directs us how our minds may be more eased than they can be by the greatest possessions.

When he says, *Take heed and beware of covetousness*, he signifies, that, in this shape wherein he condemns it, it is covered over with the fairest pretences, which makes it the more dangerous. We are surrounded with temptations to the fulfilment of this lust in all the situations wherein we are placed in the world; and we must watch against it, as a most crafty enemy lying in wait to surprise us, and take away our life.



life: for we can never be truly happy without the victory over it.

The Lord discovers the nature of this evil, and the principle that supports it, when he says, *For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* The life that Christ came to give his people, was prefigured by the temporal happiness the Israelites had in the abundance of the things which they possessed in the land of Canaan; but the true life consists in the possession of *all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.* Unto this the patriarchs looked, and would not be satisfied with the type of it: *They desired a better country, that is, an heavenly.* The Psalmist declares, that life lies in God's favour, not in the abundance of corn and wine, but in the light of his countenance. This is the life that Jesus Christ gives to men; and when he came to bring it clearly to light, he set aside the type of it, which was as a veil over it, and declared plainly, that a man's life consists not in it. And if man's life consist not in the abundance of the things which Israel possessed in the land of promise, which was the life promised to that nation in God's covenant with them, how much less doth it consist in the abundance of any other possessions of this world?

Every vitious inclination of our hearts is supported by some false principle, some error so deeply rooted in our minds, as to determine our choice, even though the judgement of God, against what we chuse to do, be manifest in our consciences. Therefore sin is called darkness, and a state of sin the power of darkness. Now, the error that influences the covetous man in the fulfilment of his lust, in all cases, is this, That a man's life consists in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, even as the pride of life goes upon this principle, That a man's life consists in the gaiety and bravery, the honour and power of this world; and the lust of the flesh is founded in this persuasion, that a man's life lies in the pleasures and ease of the  
flesh.

flesh. He that walks in the pride of life, and has his bias that way, values his possessions only as they contribute to that which is his life; and he can hazard his bodily life, to preserve or attain more of that wherein he imagines his life consists. And the sensual man loves possessions for the sake of his sensual pleasures, and he can part with his possessions, and endanger his bodily life for the pleasures of the flesh, without which it would be no life to him. But the covetous man's life, the ease of his soul, consists in the abundance of possessions; and though he delights also in worldly honour and power, and in the pleasures of the flesh, yet more in possessing abundance; for his greatest fear is want; and this keeps him moderate and sober in the pursuit of honour and pleasure.

The gospel that declares the mercy and grace of God in Christ to us miserable sinners, and brings the true life and immortality to light, bears very hard on the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, and requires the mortification of these lusts in the doing of good works and almsdeeds to all the needy, especially to those of the household of faith, that so we may imitate the grace of the Lord Jesus manifested in our salvation, and declare our lively hope of that eternal glory and pleasure that is promised by him to them who thus obey him. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 19. we see the rich man damned for spending that on his pride and vanity and his luxury, that should have relieved poor Lazarus. The trade of the worldly society might be promoted by his wearing purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day; and the working poor, whose labour was turned to the service of his lusts, had benefit by him; and so he might be considered an as useful member of society; but Lazarus, who was incapable to minister to his lusts, had little help from him. This Lazarus would have been a very fit person for the public care, or for being laid on some of those hospitals and mortifications, which are sacrifices to the pride  
and

and vanity of the mortifiers : and so he might have been removed, as a grievance, from the sight of the rich man, whose daily work it should have been to pity and relieve him. By this parable we are also taught, not to look on worldly plenty and prosperity, as any evidence of the divine favour, nor on the deepest poverty and distress, as a token of his wrath. Yea, fulness of possessions proves a curse, and serves to damn us, without that almsgiving which the gospel requires ; and poverty a blessing, when it serves as a mean to wean our hearts from this world, and turn our affections to heavenly things.

As the gospel calls the man of pride and vanity to be mortified to his life, and the sensual luxurious man to his, in the doing of good works and alms, it no less requires the covetous man to be mortified to his life, or to that pleasure and ease his soul would take in abundance possessed, and that this mortification, and his hope of the better and more enduring substance, should appear in the giving of alms. But however far he may agree with the gospel against luxury and pride, (as others will join in condemning his covetousness), yet he will not agree to the sayings of Jesus Christ on this matter, till they be so far explained away, as to leave him room for some ease to his soul, in possessing worldly substance, as a guard against his greatest fear, *viz.* want that may come in this life.

Our Lord describes covetousness farther in the parable of the rich man, whose ground brought forth plentifully ver. 16.—21. And here he draws the picture of a covetous man, agreeably to what he was just before saying of covetousness, but very unlike what is commonly thought.

He supposes the man coming to wealth, not by any indirect or unlawful means, nor by pinching and churlish saving ; for he gets it by the providence of God sending him an extraordinary crop far exceeding his living. And when it comes thus to his hand, he appears to be no miser as to enjoying the good of his labour,  
when

when he has the prospect of abundance remaining to serve him in many years of greater scarcity that might come afterward: but he would have his soul eased of the fears of future straits, by possessing enough to supply him for many years, through laying up, as conveniently and safely as he could, upon the earth, what God had now provided for him. Thus he placed his life in the abundance of the things he possessed; and in the view of this his life, he eats, drinks, and is merry.

The employment of the husbandman is much like the labour of the ants and bees, and he has his food and raiment, as the fruit of his labour, returning to him at a certain period. Jesus Christ doth not charge covetousness upon this; but supposes it, and so puts the case, of his ground casting up far more to him than is sufficient for his maintenance and present living; and then the question is, How that should be bestowed? The man's covetousness resolves him what to do with his well-gotten goods, that so far exceed his yearly living by his ground, as to be a stock for many years to come. He resolves to lay them up in store for himself on the earth, and so makes not rich toward God.

But God says to him, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?* Here that which is accounted great wisdom among men, is declared to be folly with God, who calls this man a fool, for providing in this manner against evils that might happen to him in times to come in this life, a great uncertainty, and not providing for death; a fool in neglecting to do good, and give alms while he had opportunity, and it was in his power, and that on supposition of what might happen after the time when (for what he knew) his soul might be required of him; a fool in not securing his treasure better, for the ease of his soul, but laying it up where it might be lost, or he be taken from it, where it could afford  
him

him no ease after death, and where he could not be certain how; or by whom, it should be used or bestowed after his removal.

The wisdom of Joseph, in providing for the years of famine to come, is by some set in opposition to those words that Jesus Christ puts here in God's mouth. But when we consider Joseph as directing the government of a kingdom of this world, and providing against an evil certainly coming on that kingdom, and so as good as present, this no way answers the case in the parable. And if we consider Joseph as the type of him who is here speaking, and is appointed head over all things to his church, to provide for it as to this life and that which is to come; and observe, that what he here teaches us, serves to bring us into entire dependence on him as such; we shall easily perceive that our covetousness can find little encouragement from the history of Joseph. And when we really depend on the true Joseph as our provider, then we shall be under his direction, and take care to do what he is here injoining us.

Our Lord's reflection on his parable, is, *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.* The parable shews us what we are to understand by a man's *treasuring*, or laying up in store *to himself*; and the following part of this discourse puts the meaning of *becoming rich towards God*, as a depositary, beyond all doubt: for he says, ver. 33-34. *Sell that ye have, and give alms; \* provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, that faileth not:—for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* In this manner should the rich man in the parable have *bestowed* his *fruits* and his *goods* which he had to bestow, if he would have been rich toward God; but, in place of this, he would become rich by them in this world, and take the keeping of them into his own hand. These two very

VOL. II.

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different

\* Compare Prov. xix. 17.

different ways of laying up our substance, and making rich, are here opposed to one another; and bestowing in alms all the fruits and goods that we have, or that exceed our living, is required of us, as *making rich towards God*, in opposition to *laying them up to ourselves on the earth*, as in the parable: for, if we be at any such pains to find out how to bestow our goods in alms, as worldly covetous men are at to find how to lay up in store on earth for themselves, our Lord does not so much as suppose that we can be at any loss for room where to bestow them.

They who are influenced by the gospel to bestow their goods in this manner, are acting a wise part in the sight of God, laying up to themselves treasures for eternal life, and providing daily against that certain evil, death, as mortals should do. And both the Old-Testament and the New point out this as the best way of providing against wants that may come in this life, as well as it is the only way of laying up worldly substance for eternal life. See Psal. xxxvii. 3. 25. 26. 1 Tim. vi. 17. 18. 19.

The xith chapter of Ecclesiastes, from the beginning to the 7th verse, agrees remarkably with the doctrine of the New Testament, and with this discourse of our Lord. There the wise man exhorts to almsgiving in this manner: He says, with an allusion to his trade by sea, *Send † thy bread on the waters,— give a portion to seven, and also to eight.* And he compares this giving, to *the clouds full of rain, emptying upon the earth*; even as, Matth. v. 45. Christians are commanded to imitate their Father, who *sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust.* He likewise commends it to us under the notion of *sowing*, when he says, *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand.* And this is referred to, Gal. vi. 8. 10. where doing good to all men, especially to the household of faith, as we have opportunity

† *שלח* signifies to send, not so properly to cast.

opportunity, is called *sowing to the Spirit*. His motives to this, are, *Thou shalt find it after many days*; like the profits of his Indian or African trade. Compare Luke xvi. 19. and Gal. vi. 6. 8. 9. 10. where laying up to ourselves treasures on the earth, or bestowing them to gratify and fulfil any of our worldly lusts, is called *sowing to the flesh*, of which we shall reap corruption; and almsgiving, *sowing to the Spirit*, of which we shall, in due time, reap life everlasting, if we faint not, and be not weary in this well-doing: and as many as think and act as if it were otherwise, deceive themselves, and mock God; as do all they who pretend to be spiritual, while, in place of this well-doing, they are sowing to the flesh, by making rich in this world. He says next, *For thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth*, or, *Thou shalt not know the evil that shall be upon the earth*. And the reason for which the covetous lay up their treasures on the earth, is the very same that Solomon gives here for almsgiving. He says further, *If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north; in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be*. Compare Matth. xxv. from ver. 31. to the end, Luke iii. 9. 10. 11. and Rev. xiv. 13.—*Their works do follow them*; and these words in the parable, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; whose then shall these things be?* Lastly, he says, what may serve to obviate the objections arising in our covetous hearts against the alms required in the gospel, when he tells us, *He that observeth the wind, shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds, shall not reap; and, Thou knowest not the works of God who doth all.—Thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they are both alike good.*

Our Lord's discourse following his parable, in the xiith chapter of Luke, coincides with a part of his sermon on the mount, Matth. chap. vi. ver 19.—34. which seems to point against the covetousness of the Pharisees, and to explain the fourth petition of his

prayer, even as what he says, ver. 14. and 15. explains the fifth. That fourth petition is opposed to thoughtfulness for the future, and is inconsistent with our reckoning any thing we have of our own, while the children of God, with whom we pray for daily bread, are in want of that bread: for, if we have present sufficiency for ourselves and for them, and suffer them to want this day, how can we pray with them, *Give us this day our daily bread?*

The Lord supposes the different conditions his people may be in, as to the things that serve to support their life in the body. Some may be so situated, as not only to have food and raiment sufficient at present, but also to be capable to lay up such things as may be rusted, mothened, or stolen, before there be necessity for them to themselves; and the beginning of his discourse suits best with this sort: for there is no such occasion to exhort them, not to lay these things up in store to themselves on the earth, who have scarce food and raiment at present, and so cannot lay up for the future. What he says, from verse 26. downward, applies better to those who have difficulty to live to-day, and see not how they are to live to-morrow. Though the first sort be not excluded there either: for it is still the fear of future evils in this life, that moves them to lay up such things to themselves on the earth, who have it in their power, that so their minds may be eased of anxiety and disquieting fear about these evils.

We must notice here, in the first place, what are the *treasures* that the Lord speaks of, when he directs us about laying them up. And it is most plainly told us, that they are treasures of such things as may be mothened, rusted, or stolen, if laid up on the earth: so that we are not left to our own imagination, as to what should be meant by the *treasures*. And to deny them to be treasures of such things, would be using too much freedom and boldness with his words.



It must likewise be observed, that he does not absolutely forbid us to lay up treasures of these things to ourselves. On the contrary, he bids us lay them up. But that which he forbids is, laying them up on earth; where they may be rusted, moth-ed, or stol-en; while he commands us to lay them up in heaven, where no such thing can befall them.

And we are not left at any uncertainty as to what should be the meaning of *treasuring up treasures* of these things in *heaven*: for, if we explain the scripture by itself, and do not follow our own fancy, to make it say any thing we please, we must take it to signify the giving of these things in alms, as appears most evidently by comparing Luke xii. 21. 33. 34. See likewise Luke xvi. 9. Gal. vi. 6.—10. and 1 Tim vi. 17. 18. 19. And the apostle speaks of wealth and riches in the matter of alms, 2 Cor. viii. 2. and chap. ix. 6.—11. This is agreeable to what was said in the Proverbs, chap. xix. ver 17. *He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth unto the Lord: and that which he hath given, will he pay him again.* Almsgiving, then, is lending to the Lord, who hath obliged himself to repay what is so lent, and is *able both to give bread for our food, and multiply our seed sown, and increase the fruits of our righteousness*: and so it is a laying up with our Father in heaven, the things which, being laid up on the earth, might be moth-ed, rusted, or stolen, but cannot be lost with him who is abundantly able to perform all that he has promised.

This is a good work much insisted on in the gospel; yea, it is that which is ordinarily intended where we read of *good works* in the New Testament. Doing good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith, is the great fruit of the grace of God bestowed on us by Jesus Christ, the evidence of our faith and knowledge of his grace, who for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich, and the proof of the sincerity of our love. By this we shew the subjection of our confession to the  
gospel

gospel of Christ, whereby God is glorified, 2 Cor. ix. 12. 13.; and by this the purification of the heart through faith, shews itself in its excellency above the Phari-  
saical purification, Luke xi. 41. *But rather give alms of such things as you have, or give the things you have in alms\**; and, *behold all things are clean unto you.* When the apostle James calls us to be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving our own selves, he points out this to us as the doing of the word, and calls it *pure and undefiled religion*, in distinction from that fiery zeal and those flaming speeches about the word, wherein those place their vain religion who are hearers only, and not doers, and whose unbri-  
dled tongues keep no measures with their practice. James i. 27. *Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, to keep himself unspotted from the world.*

Christ's peculiar people are *zealous of good works*: yet how rare is this distinguishing zeal even among them that would be esteemed zealous Christians? There is indeed a great noise made about charity and alms in the Roman church: but, as in that worldly kingdom they are far enough from keeping themselves unspotted from the world; so, by the merit that is there placed in almsdeeds, these are stated in opposition to the mercy and grace of the Father, and the righteousness of his Son Jesus Christ; and the fatherless and widows in their affliction are not the chief objects of their alms; but the enriching of that worldly church, and cherishing the swarms of sturdy holy beggars, is the great work of their charity. At best, the Roman alms favour more of the Pharisee than the Christian. They who separated from that antichristian church, contending for free justification, by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ's blood, against the Popish merit of good works, did a notable service to Jesus Christ, and

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\* Τα ἰόντα δότε ἑλεημοσιωνν.

to the salvation of sinners by him. But the pure and undefiled religion of the gospel should have been more insisted on, and warmly pressed upon the professors of faith in Christ's righteousness, and the zeal of good works would have been more stirred up, in opposition to that sort of religion and works wherein that society, so greatly polluted with the world, had placed merit. If this had been done with as much zeal as the other, there had been no room left for shunning the almsdeeds of the gospel, under pretence of flying from self-righteousness. How much need is there for that warning the apostle gives us, 1 John iii. 7. *Little children, let no man deceive you: He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous?* The doing of alms, as the gospel requires, at the rate of keeping ourselves unspotted from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and that before him who hath shewed his mercy and grace to us at an infinite rate, is reckoned by some but a low evidence of faith, in comparison with the impressions they feel on their hearts by the word; a lower evidence of the love of God to us, than that which is in faith itself without works: for they do not duly consider that faith without works is dead; and that to hear the word with the greatest feeling, without the practice of this pure and undefiled religion, is to hear it, and not do it, and so to deceive our own selves. The influences of the Spirit upon mens minds by the word (which are all that many have to shew for the fruits of the gospel) are but as the pains taken on ground, by dressing and watering, to make it fruitful. But the saving influences of the gospel are distinguished from the common, by the fruits, even the practice of pure and undefiled religion, Matth. xiii. 18—23. Heb. vi. 4.—11. Phil. iv. 17. And the sealing work of the Spirit, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, is the consequent of our bringing forth fruit in obeying the commandments of the Lord Jesus, John chap. xiv. which is therefore

therefore a far greater rarity than the first influences, that are as the dressing and watering of ground to make it fruitful. It is most certain, that without faith in the blood of the Son of God, through whom alone God is accessible to a sinner, it is impossible to please him with any works; but the faith by which we know the only true God, and come to him through Christ's blood, the only atoning sacrifice, shews itself in good works and almsdeeds, which are sacrifices of thanksgiving offered to God by him, well-pleasing to God, and of a sweet smell and favour, Heb. xiii. 15. 16. Phil. iv. 18. When Paul says, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. *Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing;* he speaks not of this as a low outward evidence, or small attainment; for he places it beyond speaking with tongues, prophesying, understanding all mysteries and knowledge, and the greatest faith of miracles; but he signifies that this may possibly be where true charity is wanting; and in that case, it proceeds from pride, to which the description of charity in that passage is especially opposed. Yet that charity, or love of the truth, which is there declared to be greater than the greatest spiritual gifts, yea, a greater grace than faith and hope, shews itself in good works and almsdeeds, especially to the household of faith, and appears in ministering to them, or in humble services to them, as the apostle says, Heb. chap. vi. where, after signifying that men might be illuminated, taste of the heavenly gift, be made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and, after all, fall away irrecoverably, and be as ground oft rained on, bringing forth thorns and briers, rejected, nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned, he says, ver. 9. 10. 11. *But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love,*

*love which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister: And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end. Thus true charity shews itself, and thus it will appear in the judgement at the last day, Matth. xxv. 31.—46. where we see good works and almsdeeds expressly connected with that eternal life which was given us in Christ before the world began, as they are likewise, Gal. vi. and 1 Tim. chap. vi.*

The practice of this pure and undefiled religion, then, is laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven; yea, the giving of our money, our food, and our raiment, to all the poor, especially such as are of the household of faith, is such a way of laying up against all real straits we may be in while this life lasts, as secures what we lay up effectually against the rust, the moth, and the thief: for it has God's faithful promise of supplying our need of these things, Matth. vi. 32. 33. *Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.* See Prov. xxviii. 27. and Psal. xli. 1. 2. 3. Whereas, in treasuring up these things on the earth, we have no security given us, that they shall not be lost to us before the evils come against which they are provided, while, at the same time, they are no provision for eternal life; but piety, or pure and undefiled religion, is *profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come,* 1 Tim. iv. 8. If then we would indeed lay up for a time of infirmity, and for old age, or for our widows and fatherless children, let us keep ourselves unspotted from the world, in doing good, and giving alms to the infirm and the old poor, and to the widows and orphans in their affliction; and let us study to be as diligent in this, before him who has shewed mercy and ill-deserved goodness to unworthy miserable us, as we see others diligent in laying up treasures on earth

in a lawful way (as they call it) for sickness, old age, and for their wives and children after them, as they profess, but really to gratify their own lust of covetousness; for the indolent, and they who are far from industry, love themselves and their wives and children, and would desire to be easy in old age, no less than they; but they have their present ease, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, to gratify, to which all other things must give place.

This way of making rich, and laying up treasures in this life, as well as for eternal life, looks indeed very odd; but the reasons why it is so strange to us, and why we are so much estranged from it, can be no other but such as these: *1<sup>st</sup>*, We do not, at bottom, believe God's word, that *he that giveth to the poor, shall not lack* \*. And so we have more trust to put in a sufficient man's bond or bill, or such securities as we have for what we lay up on the earth, than we have to put in the security that the Lord of heaven and earth, who keepeth truth for ever, is pleased to give us in his most faithful word; and yet we would take it very ill to be reckoned infidels. *2<sup>dly</sup>*, He who lendeth to the Lord, and lays up his treasures with him, commits himself to his care, as a child to his father, and depends on him for repayment according to his promise, with resignation to his will as to all the concerns of this life; but we are not willing to be thus at his disposal; and being full as much intent upon this life as life eternal, we do not like that we and ours should have no more of the wealth, honour, and ease of this world, than God has promised to his children; and so we do not incline to fall into his hand; we chuse rather to venture ourselves and our treasures into the hands of men, if thereby we may attain to that moderate or competent portion (as we call it) of the good things of this life, that we propose as most proper for ourselves and our wives and children. *3<sup>dly</sup>*, We have not been so far changed  
into

\* Prov. xxviii. 27.

into the image of the divine mercy and grace in Christ, as to love mercy more than our money, and more than the gratifying of our worldly lusts thereby. Now, *if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him: for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doth the will of God, abideth for ever; even he that practises pure and undefiled religion.* 1 John ii. 15. 16. 17. and chap. iii. 16. 17. 18.

But we must return to our Lord's exhortation, Matth. chap. vi.

He there states a direct opposition betwixt these two ways of laying up treasures of the things that are liable to the moth, the rust, and the thief, upon the earth; and he expressly forbids the one, and commands the other: so that, when a man has not only bread to eat, and raiment to put on, but, beyond the expence of the maintenance of his family, has likewise to lay up in store against wants and necessities that may happen to him, or his, in times to come; if the question be put in this case, What shall he do with that which he has to lay up? our Lord's answer comes plainly to this, Lay not up to yourselves treasures of these things on the earth, where they may be lost to you before the evils come against which you laid them up; but lay up to yourselves treasures of these things, by almsgiving, in the hand of your Father in heaven, to whom you pray daily, *Give us this day our daily bread*; and with him, as a depositary, they will be safe, and certainly forthcoming, as he shall know your need in all times; and so you will lay up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that you may lay hold on eternal life.

He presses his exhortation further upon us, by this argument, *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*, ver. 12. He is not saying, as some

would have it, Though you lay up to yourselves treasures on earth as well as in heaven, yet set not your hearts on that which ye lay up on earth: for he forbids us to lay up treasures on earth, for this reason, Because this will be an evidence of our hearts being set on the earth, and an effectual mean to draw our hearts thither, and to detain them there; and he commands us to lay up treasures with our Father in heaven, because in that case, our heart will be there; as if he had said, Your heart, your trust, and your affection will be where that is which you lay up in store for yourselves as a foundation against the time to come; therefore let not that which ye lay up be on earth, that your heart be not there; but let what ye lay up be with your Father in heaven, that your heart may be with him also. This argument serves to support the sense that has been given of the foregoing exhortation that is enforced by it. The opposite sense that is put upon that exhortation is variously expressed; but it comes all to this, *Set not your heart on the things that are on the earth, but set your heart on the things which are above, and heavenly things,* And so this argument would have no more in it but this, *For where your hearts are set, there will your hearts be set also.* Therefore this gloss, that leads us quite off from the particular scope of the exhortation, by giving us a fair general in the place of it, cannot be admitted, because it destroys the argument, and leaves it without any sense at all; nor can the argument stand with this turn that has been given to the exhortation, *Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth ONLY, but lay up to yourselves treasures ALSO AND CHIEFLY in heaven:* for the argument that enforces it would then turn to this, *For so will your heart be not only on the earth, where that is which you lay up there, but also and chiefly in heaven, where your treasure is chiefly laid up.* But if the argument goes not upon the evil of our hearts being on the earth, and so not in heaven; it goes on nothing at all: and when earth and heaven stand



stand in competition for our heart, as in this passage; can it be said to be there where it is not chiefly? This gloss, that would give us some encouragement to divide our treasures and our hearts betwixt these two, cannot be reconciled with the account that the Lord gives of them, in directing us where to lay up our treasures: for, if we had money to lend, and a friend in whom we trusted should tell us of two hands that offered, that the one was a good sure hand, and the other a bad one, with whom it would be in great hazard, would we make any question, in that case, about dividing it betwixt the two?

But lest we should yet imagine, that he has left some room for us to lay up treasures to ourselves on earth, as well as in heaven, or to divide our work of laying up some way betwixt the two, he takes pains to shew us that our hearts, in that case, will be divided, and certainly cleave at last to this earth, in opposition to the Father in heaven: he signifies, ver. 22. 23. our *eye* will not be *single*; whatever respect we may pretend to the Father in heaven, and to heavenly treasure, we will have an eye to this earth, and to the things we lay up on it, whereby we shall be effectually darkened as to the heavenly treasures to which this *eye* is *evil*: for this *evil eye*\* being opposite to bounty in almsgiving, that is connected with the heavenly riches, will darken us in it, and make us go about it grudgingly, and sow sparingly. Whatever might be  
said

\* The *evil eye*, in the style of the scripture, which our Lord's bearers knew, is opposed to the good or *bountiful eye*, in this manner, Prov. xxii. 9. *He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.* Deut. xv. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. — *And thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought* — Prov. xxviii. 22. *He that hatheth to be rich, hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.* See likewise chap. xxiii. 6. And simplicity here ascribed to the eye, is put for liberality, Rom. xii. 8. *He that giveth, with simplicity.* See likewise in the Greek, 2 Cor. viii. 2. and ix. 11. 13.

said when God promised store of temporal blessings in earthly places, as a type through which his people were to look, as through a veil, to the spiritual blessings in heavenly places; yet no such thing can be pleaded now, when the Lord has mercifully removed that veil, that we may behold heavenly more clearly, and look directly to the heavenly inheritance, discharging us, at the same time, to set our affections on earthly things, or to mind them, even as they might be minded by them who had them in the covenant under which they were, as types of the things that are above, where Christ now sitteth on the right hand of God.

He pursues this same purpose further, ver. 24. and sets God and the wealth of this world (which he calls *Mammon*) in opposition to one another, as two masters that cannot be served together; so that if we will indeed serve any one of them, we must of necessity despise and hate the other. So far is he from saying, we should not only serve *Mammon*, by making rich in this world, but also and chiefly serve God.

In his reflection on the parable of the unjust steward, whose wisdom is commended (Luke chap. xvi.) he calls the riches of this world, *the mammon of unrighteousness*, or the unrighteous *mammon*, with reference to the unrighteous steward, who made a living to himself out of his lord's goods, when he was put out of his stewardship for wasting them: for we are indeed but stewards to God, as to what we possess of the wealth of this world, and it cannot be righteously bestowed by us, but according to his will who intrusts us with it, that it may be forthcoming to him: so far, then, as it is not applied to his service as he appoints, it becomes an idol to us, and we are unrighteous in all the use we make of it. And thus it is the *mammon of unrighteousness*: not only unrighteous, as being deceitful to them that trust in it, as the steward to his lord, but properly unrighteous with respect to the common use that is made of it, both in gathering and spending it; yea, it is the grand instrument of  
 unrighteousness

unrighteousness among men, and a great temptation to all the unrighteousness that is in the world. Our Lord bids us imitate the wisdom (not the injustice) of the unrighteous steward, in making to ourselves friends of the unrighteous *mammon*, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations. *i. e.* Give it to the poor, and through God's gracious promises, their bills or securities, you shall be received into the heavenly mansions when your life in this world fails. This is what Jesus calls, being *faithful in the unrighteous mammon*, when God intrusts us with it; and if we be not thus faithful to our trust as to it, he lets us know we need not pretend that we are trusted with the true wealth, and that if we are not faithful in the false riches, we cannot pretend to be faithful in the true. Then he concludes, as in Matth. vi. 24. *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* Luke xvi. 13. The Pharisees, who were covetous, and yet, perhaps, gave more alms than many great pretenders to Christianity now give, when they heard these things, derided our Lord, because his doctrine of alms, and of the inconsistency of serving God thereby, and serving *Mammon* by laying up the false riches, served to manifest the vanity of their pretences to the service of God: for, it seems, they thought it very ridiculous for one to insinuate, that a man could not both make rich in this world and in the world to come. But he tells them, upon their sneering behaviour, which proceeded from the pride of their own merit and religious character among men, ver. 15. *Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God.*

Yet this way of thinking was not quite so inexcusable in the Pharisees as it is among, Christians, who have the New-Testament revelation full and clear.

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We may indeed wonder, when we read the New Testament with attention, how it could be a prevailing principle among the professors of Christianity, to lay up treasures on earth and in heaven also, if we do not consider what the apostle says, 2 Thess. ii. 10. 11.—*Because they received not the love of the truth; — God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; even this lie, that we can serve Mammon without hating or despising God, and that the friendship of this world is not enmity with God.* When we observe the belief of this lie lying at the bottom of the grand perversion of the gospel, and corruption of Christianity, we need not wonder that our Lord spends so much discourse on this subject.

This his doctrine, with the practice of his followers, recorded in the New Testament, explains a prophecy of Isaiah, concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, Isa. xxxii. 5 to 8. *The fool (Nabal) shall no more be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful: for the fool will speak folly, and his heart will work iniquity, to practice hypocrisy, and to speak error to the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.—But the liberal deviseth liberal things, and upon liberal things shall he be established.* Here the wisdom of him that layeth up for himself, and is not rich toward God, or who withholds from the poor what he carefully layeth up on the earth, is declared to be folly, in opposition to the liberal, his devising liberal things; and all the shifts and pretences of the sparing almsgiver, are pointed out, as the gospel manifests them to be, wicked, cruel, or unmerciful, and deceitful. The prophet foretels there will be such almsgivers in the gospel-day, but such will the liberality of the gospel be, that their alms shall not be accounted alms, whatever reckoning might have been made of them before. Agreeable to this, we find the apostle speaking of *covetousness* and *bounty* in almsgiving, 2 Cor. ix. 5. And the prophet makes all the religious professions of them who have  
not

not this liberality, to be but hypocrisy and lies spoken to the Lord. Compare Isaiah chap. lviii.

Our Lord, in like manner, by this his doctrine, drives on the purpose that was begun in the ministry of John the Baptist, at the dawning of the gospel-day. He said, Luke iii. 9. *Now the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.* And when the people inquired what this fruit should be, he answered, ver. 11. *He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.* This is what he calls fruits worthy of repentance, without which he told the Pharisees, who were covetous, that the things upon which they valued themselves would go for nothing, and be no evidence of their interest in the kingdom of heaven. We may even see how Daniel called Nebuchadnezzar to repentance, Dan. iv. 27. and we may observe how the Lord calls his people to repentance; and this fruit of it, as that, without which, all fasting, and the greatest diligence in the ordinances of worship, signify nothing, Isaiah chap. lviii. But for any to pretend evangelical repentance, and the bringing forth of the fruits of the gospel, without this fruit called for by John the Baptist, is indeed to practise hypocrisy, and speak lies to the Lord. And can we perceive sincerity in giving this always as one of the causes of the public fasts, *viz.* barrenness and unfruitfulness under the gospel, and means of grace, if this be the fruit that is intended?

Jesus Christ, coming after John, pursues this purpose in his doctrine, in such a manner, and to such a length, as to be derided by the Pharisees, who paid tithes of all, and gave alms upon honour; so that to press more liberality than theirs, was ridiculous to them; yea, he astonished his own disciples, when he put covetousness to the last trial, in the young man who was extremely intent upon eternal life in the way

of his own righteousness, by calling him to sell whatsoever he had, and give to the poor, and take up the cross and follow him, Mark x. 21. when, upon this trial, it plainly appeared, that he would not part with his possessions for that eternal life; and that therefore he trusted in these possessions, and thought, at bottom, that his life consisted in them, ver 22. Jesus astonished his disciples, by saying, ver. 23. *How hardly shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of God!* And they were yet more astonished, when they heard him say again, ver. 24.—*Children, how hard is it for them THAT TRUST IN RICHES, to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* Surely it could not increase their astonishment to hear no more but this, that it is impossible only for those rich men who trust in their riches, to enter into the kingdom of God; for it could not be any of the principles of their education, that *trusting in riches* (which was so plainly forbid and condemned in their law, Psal. lxii. 10. and lii. 6. 7.) was any good sign of a man's standing in the fairest way for entering into the kingdom of God; but it was natural enough for them, who had been educated in the hope of a temporal kingdom of God, and taught to look on riches as a promised blessing, and on the observers of the law that enjoyed them, as highly favoured of God, to be astonished out of measure, when they found their Master saying, It is as hard for a rich man to enter that kingdom, as it is for him to be rich without trusting in his riches. And they could not well understand him otherwise, considering the occasion of his speaking. They saw a rich young man, who was loved by their Master for the extraordinary regard to God's commandments, which he shewed in that obedience which had the promise of national happiness to Israel annexed to it, at the same time fearing he lacked something to intitle him to eternal life, and willing to do any thing that

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Jesus should direct him to, for the obtaining of that life which he earnestly desired. They had just seen this rich man going away *grieved* from his guide to eternal life, when he laid it in the balance to him with his possessions; and this was the reason of his going away, *for he had great possessions*. This, with what their Master said upon it, let them see plainly what they never thought of before, and now saw with amazement, how hard it is for a man to be rich, and yet not trust in his riches. And knowing that trusting in riches is a great hinderance to salvation, they expressed their surprise at the discovery of the connection betwixt having riches, and trusting in them: for when, by means of this connection, (appearing with such evidence in the leading instance of the young man), he shewed them how impossible it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, *they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved!* Though the gospel does not put this so far to the trial in every one as in this young man, yet we see the apostle grafting an exhortation, upon this connection betwixt having riches, and trusting in them, that was taught by our Lord, 1 Tim. vi. 17. 18. 19. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they—trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God;—that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.* Here is the grand evidence of a rich man's not trusting in riches, but in God, even his becoming rich in almsdeeds; and this is connected with eternal life: so that, let a rich man profess to trust in the living God, and to seek eternal life as much as he will, if that trust in God, and distrust of this world's riches, do not appear in distributing them to the poor, so as to become rich in good works; if that concern for eternal life, do not shew itself in his laying up in store to himself a good founda-

tion against the time to come, by doing good, distributing and communicating, his profession is downright hypocrisy and lying to the Lord. Our Lord answers the question of his astonished disciples, by telling them, ver. 27. *With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.* Such was the rich young man's eagerness for eternal life, that if it had been in man's power to trust in the living God, and not worldly possessions, and to part with them for eternal life, he would certainly have done it; but so much was he under the power of his covetousness, and love to his possessions (which we find, in other instances as well as this, \* connected with self-righteousness), that he went away sorrowful from Christ, and from eternal life. Men may sacrifice their riches to the pride of their own merit, as well as their life to their honour, and to a name that shall survive them in this same world: but to forsake all our lusts, and follow Jesus Christ to eternal life, this is above man; and particularly for a rich man to take all his trust off his own merit, and off his riches, and place it wholly in the Son of God for eternal life, so as to become his follower unto that life, bearing his cross after him; this, though it be impossible with men, is the very work of God by the gospel; for, to the power that made the Son of God of a woman, and raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, all things are possible; and this power appears where man's power fails, and shews itself especially in making a rich man bountiful with the bounty of the gospel, and liberal in almsgiving, as it requires.

After all, many a great pretender to Christianity says in his heart, I will make rich, and rise in the possessions of this world, or at least carefully preserve all that I have, and yet not set my heart upon it. Thus we can take fire in our bosom, and not be burnt!

\* Rom. vii. 7.



burnt! and thus we take heed and are aware of covetousness! Shall we study to put ourselves in that same situation, or shall we endeavour to preserve ourselves constantly in that very condition, wherein our Lord tells us we shall most hardly enter into his kingdom; and yet, at the same time, pretend to seek that kingdom first, and to trust the promise of adding these things unto us which the nations seek after?

The nations of this world seek what they shall eat and drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed in all times to come, and cannot prosper without great industry in seeking these things, yea, the avarice of some in making and hoarding money, and the prodigality of others in spending it, are the very pillars that support the trade of the nations; and if we can reconcile these to the content and moderation that is inseparable from seeking the kingdom of heaven in the first place, then indeed we may think of *national Christianity*, and be well persuaded that Christ's kingdom is of this world.

Though all this be more plain and evident in the New Testament, than many other things for which men have contended earnestly, while in the meantime, they had liberty to gratify their covetousness and other lusts; yet, as the corruption of our hearts has, in many respects, corrupted Christianity, by perverting the rule of that most holy religion, and accommodating it to our interests and pursuits in this present evil world, so covetousness, which has a peculiar influence to blind the mind, has induced men to endeavour to overthrow the scope of the foresaid discourses of our Lord, and to plead to that purpose some texts of the New Testament.

As, *first*, We shall hear 1 Tim. v. 8. insisted on, as if the apostle were there declaring him worse than an infidel, and a denier of the faith, who doth not provide for his family and children, by laying up for them treasures on the earth, to make them live comfortably (as they reckon comfort) after he is taken  
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from them, and to keep them from being burdensome to others.

According to this gloss on the apostle's words, if any man had hearkened to the Lord's discourses on covetousness, or to John Baptist calling for fruits meet for repentance, he could not have been saved; especially he in whom Jesus Christ put covetousness to the greatest trial, if he had done what he was called to, would have been worse than an infidel, and denied the faith; and the apostles did very ill in suffering the members of the church in Jerusalem to become worse than infidels, and deny the faith, by going far beyond what has been pleaded from our Lord's discourses. Yea, it will be hard, according to this sense of the text, to find one among the Christians, of whom we read in the New Testament as true followers of Christ, who did not deny the faith, and was not worse than an infidel: for it will not be easy to find one among them laying up treasures on earth for himself, or for his children after him,

But it will be manifest to them who look on this text with any singleness, that it is rather strong against covetousness and for almsgiving. The apostle, in that passage, is on the subject of the relief of desolate widows, which he calls honour, as he also calls that which is bestowed for the support of the elders; and he says, 1 Tim. v. 4. *But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.* And after the description of a widow indeed, ver. 5. 6. he says, ver. 7. *And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless; and ver. 8. But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house (or, and especially those of the household\*), he hath denied the*

\* *And especially those of the household, Καὶ μάλιστα τῶν οἰκίῶν.* This seems, as Mr Hallet has observed in his notes, to be much the same with *μάλιστα δὲ πρὸς τοὺς οἰκίους τῆς πίστεως,* especially unto them who are of the household of faith. For those of the household here, are such as

*the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* From thence he continues on the subject of widows, to ver. 16. where he says, *If any man or woman that believeth, have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged, that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.* From all this it plainly appears, that he is so far from calling parents to make rich, and lay up stocks for their children, that, on the contrary, he is pressing the children or nephews of poor widows to be charitable first at home, in providing maintenance for them. This he commends as *piety to their own house*, where they should do alms in the first place; and he commends it likewise as justice or gratitude, *to requite their parents*, who provided food and cloathing for them, when they could not do it for themselves. Then he declares, that they who neglect this piety to their own, especially if these be of the household of faith, do in effect deny the faith, which obliges us to much more almsgiving than that comes to, and which will make us outdo infidels, Jews or Gentiles, in almsdeeds; yea, he is worse than these infidels, who neglects this: for, whatever principle they do it from, they take care of their own poor parents, and relieve their destitute relations. The *providing* here spoke of, cannot be laying up stocks, or making rich in this world: for who imagines that children or nephews are obliged to provide in this manner for their poor widows, and to requite their parents in this way? And in the same sense wherein it can be said that these desolate widows must be provided for by their children or nephews, these same children or nephews ought to provide for their own children; as they requite their parents, for the care they took of them, by relieving them with the necessaries of life, so let them take care of their own children till they be able to do for themselves.

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beloved to be relieved at the charge of the church, if they had not believing children or nephews to do it, and so to keep the church from being charged.

This is all that can be made of this text by consequence, concerning provision for our children: for it speaks not directly on that subject. And could it be believed that any man who has eyes in his head, would gravely plead this passage in favour of studying to better our condition in this world, and make rich in it, instead of making rich toward God? Yet there are men in the Christian world, who will readily plead this text for laying up stocks to their children, and practise accordingly with great industry, whose practice, at the same time, declares they see nothing in this text, that should hinder them to live in the scandalous neglect of this piety toward their poor parents, and other destitute near relations; even as others can see nothing in the gospel that hinders them to make money as fast as they can, and then feed their vanity and luxury with it, let come of the desolate widows and their own children what will. Yea, we may hear words of scripture brought for the pride of life, and for drunkenness and fornication, as well as for covetousness: and it may be a question, if it be altogether consistent with that awful respect due to the words of God, to be at pains to refute the profane turns upon the gospel: yet, because some seriously insist on them, to the hardening of themselves and others in a thing that tends to their destruction, we may take some notice of another text that is brought to the same purpose with the foregoing; and that is, 2 Cor. xii. 14. where the apostle says to the Corinthians, *Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be burthensome to you; for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.* From this text it is alledged, that the gospel lays it on parents, as their duty, or at least allows them, to lay up treasures on earth, and make stocks for their children, as they are able.

But as the apostle is here plainly pursuing another scope, and this comes in only as a similitude applied  
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to that scope; one would think it is not very fair dealing with the scripture, to oppose this to whole discourses treating the subject expressly, and of set purpose. That this is a common practice in the nations of this world, is as certain as it is certain there are unjust stewards and judges, that neither fear God, nor regard man, from whom the gospel takes similitudes for our instruction; but they can be no further applied by us, than the gospel applies them; nor are we warranted to put them to any other use beside what it makes of them. And unless it can be made appear, that the scripture makes every thing lawful to us, which it uses as a type, and from which it takes a similitude, the plea from this text, for laying up treasures on the earth for our children, must be very weak.

And if it were the design of this text, to command parents to lay up for the children, by the same rule, it must be understood to discharge the children to lay up for the parents: but as the scripture elsewhere requires parents to take care of and bring up their children, so it shews that children, when able for it, ought, in piety and grateful requital, to provide for their parents, as in the passage before considered. The patrons of the covetousness that is condemned in the gospel, must therefore reconcile this text with the former, which they chiefly insist on, before they can make any thing out of it for their purpose.

And it is evident, that *laying up*, in this text, can signify no other sort of laying up, but that which the Corinthians should have done for Paul, if he had been burdensome to them, in taking from them as he took from other churches. And what kind of laying up was that? Were the churches laying up treasures on earth to make the apostles rich in this world? Or, were they not providing only for their necessities, as the poorest parents are every where doing for their children, and as all ought to do who are in no capacity to make rich?

It is no less evident, that the apostle, who speaks

of himself here as a parent to his children in the faith, did not walk with his other children, according to this rule that he here lays down for the Corinthians : for they were inferior to other churches in this, that he took not relief from them, as he did from these. His children in Philippi, particularly, provided for him, as he will not here allow the Corinthians his children to do, for this reason, *Because the children ought not to lay up for the parents ;* and yet the Philippians are more highly commended for walking contrary to this Corinthian rule, Phil. iv. 14.—18. than the Corinthians seem to be in this passage.

But when we consider how the apostle asserts to this same church his right to be maintained by them, as well as others, and so to live of the gospel, 1 Cor. chap. ix.; and when we observe that this church took more pressing to raise charity from them, and were not so forward in it as other churches ; and when we also take notice, that the apostle's adversaries easily influenced them against him, by insinuations of his being ready to make a gain of them, whereby it appears they had more of an air of covetousness than other churches, we may easily perceive that he is here insinuating a heavy reflection on them, in giving the reason why he will take nothing from them, in opposition to his adversaries, who were ready to catch them on this point. In this view of the case, these words, *The children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children,* seem rather to be the language of the apostle's adversaries at Corinth, to which the Corinthians gave a ready ear ; especially seeing we find him, in the context, using their words so as crafty politicians about religion have fathered them upon the apostle himself, and pleaded them as his words, to countenance them in that which they call *holy guile!* 2 Cor. xii. 16. *Being crafty, I caught you with guile.* Satan, who was making use of the Judaizing teachers at Corinth, against the apostle's ministry, knew well the weak side of these Corinthians, soothed

soothed their covetousness, and misrepresented the Apostle as seeking to make a gain of them; and these instruments of Satan took care not to be burdensome to them, while they got their ready ear to their saying, with a reflection on the apostle their father in Christ, *The children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.* To vindicate himself, and chastise them for being so easily imposed on by the soothers of their covetousness, he tells them he had not been, and was resolved not to be burdensome to them; and makes use of one of the sayings of these teachers to which they gave ear, as if it were a reason why he made them inferior to other churches, in not receiving from them what was otherwise really his due.

And these are the texts of the New Testament that are ordinarily brought to vindicate that covetousness which is described and condemned by our Lord in his sermons treating expressly on that subject. As it is usual with some men in scriptural controversies to betake themselves to the light of nature, when they are straitened, and then give out their own opinions as the dictates of nature; so some have taken occasion, from these texts, to say, That the light of nature taught infidels, and teaches all parents, to make rich in this world to their power, and to lay up stocks for their children. What has been before said, serves to shew how little occasion they have, from these texts, for saying so. And if, by the light of nature, they mean the discovery of God that is made to the minds of men by the works of creation, and the knowledge of his law, and his judgement against sin, in their consciences, it will not be easy to shew, that this light, which sets death, the wages of sin, before the sinner, and serves to fill him with the fear of that death, can manifest to sinful mortals, That it is their duty to seek to rise in the possessions of this world, and lay up treasures on the earth for themselves and their children. It will be a vain attempt to seek countenance

to this practice, or to the disposition of heart from which it proceeds, from the light of nature, as it appears either in innocent or fallen man. The principle that influences men to this practice, took place in man's mind, when he found himself not easy and content in all that he possessed, and began to think of possessing the *tree* that was *pleasant to the eyes*, being persuaded to think that he should *not surely die*. But then the *darkness*, that *comprehends not the light*, had entered the mind of man; and, under the power of this darkness, he has *found out many inventions* to hide his shame, and divert the just fear of death, and to make himself easy without God, by fulfilling *the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life*. This darkness that rules this present evil world, is, in many instances, put for light, and passes for the light of nature among men; and so it is in this case. But if, by light of nature, be meant what nature prompts us to in common with the beasts, as to suckling and cherishing our children, defending them, and relieving their necessities as our own, till they be able do for themselves, none will deny it; but nature itself does not teach us to make rich, or, having food and raiment, not to be content therewith, without treasures laid up for wants that may never happen. And there can be no Mammon to serve in a state of mere nature: it is in well-formed societies, that men arise peaceably from cow-herds or begging pedlars, to high stations of worldly riches and power.

The comparing of them to David, who, under a profession of Christian devotion, are, from the meanest condition, climbing as fast as they can to high stations in the world, is an excellent improvement on these principles, whereby the kings of this earth are set on David's throne, and the nations come in place of that nation of which, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. But that laying up treasures on the earth which is condemned by our Lord, cannot find refuge



in the Old Testament; or the practice of the saints there, by any other kind of argument, but such as will support polygamy, or any other practice whereby the New Testament is distinguished from the Old. And even when worldly wealth was a blessing, because a promise of the covenant with the fleshly seed of which Christ was to spring, and a type of the true riches, it will be hard to find any saint then, on whom God bestowed largely of these typical riches, on whom he did not also bestow largeness of heart answerable to their wealth; and therefore churls who are delighted with the increase of their gain, and grudge any alms they are obliged to bestow, so as to give in the most sparing manner they can, and far below their power, and yet would glory in what they give, and desire to be esteemed and called liberal; these, at least, cannot claim likeness to any saint of the Old Testament; nor would they have been easy under the commandments of Moses, or what was enjoined by Nehemiah, chap. v. with respect to the poor. But the grace of the gospel makes true Christians liberal to their power, and willing beyond their power. And what sort of Christians must they be, who would fain betake themselves to the Old Testament for shelter from the influence of Christ's example, and the example of his true followers, as set before us, 2 Cor. viii. 1. 2. 3. 9. ? *We do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia, how that, in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality; for, to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves.* — *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.* But we cannot wonder at their hiding themselves from the light and evidence of these examples under the shade of the Old Testament, who fly from the gospel of the kingdom that is not of this world, to the Old Testament,

ment, to seek a foundation there for that worldly state of the church by which they have their wealth and power. The Old Testament is glorious in its subserviency to Christ the *Mediator of the new covenant*, the *surety of the better testament*, and king of the *kingdom of heaven*. But to set it thus in opposition to him, is to follow the example of the Jews pleading Moses against him, as exactly as men can follow it under the Christian name, and is, in effect, to deny *that Christ is come in the flesh*.

Jesus, the *Son of God*, lived in this world in that situation from which Christians now fly as they should do from hell; and in the days of his ministry, when he was obliged to others, under the direction of his Father's providence, for his necessary food and raiment, and for the support of his twelve, even then his little bag lay open to the poor, John xii. 5. 6. and xiii. 29. But great pretenders to Christianity now, whom we must, it seems, believe to be filled with the Spirit of Christ, or provoke the Christian mob, have a spirit much fitter for the state of a wealthy and powerful Old-Testament saint, and much better suited to the acquiring of the inheritance of the Old Testament, than to the rich liberality of Jesus in his poverty and affliction. Shall we acknowledge that such men are *led by the Spirit of Christ*? God forbid.

The gospel-doctrine of alms against covetousness, in laying up treasures on the earth, cannot tend to slacken that diligence in our lawful employments which the gospel enjoins for this end, That we may have to give or distribute to the needy, Eph. iv. 28. Acts xx. 34. 35. They who are capable to work with their hands, and can have work, are commanded to keep at their work, as they would keep honesty, and not cast themselves on the charity of any, as if they lacked, or were needy, 1 Thess. iv. 11. 12.; for indeed the apostle declares, That such persons, neglecting their business, let the pretence be what it will, are not fit objects for the alms of the gospel,  
2 Thess.

2 Theff. iii. 12.—15. There he says, *This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.* And he appoints this as a cure for idle professors, busy-bodies, that when they get no entertainment but admonitions, they may be obliged, *with quietness, to work and eat their own bread,* and so be preserved from being cast out of the brotherhood. Yet when he thus declares them to be no proper objects of alms, lest the evil eye should catch any occasion from hence, to look too narrowly about the needy, and stop the current of the gospel-liberality, (for the evil eye can scarce see a needy person, a fit object), he says, *But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing.*

But we may daily see diligence in the hardest labour, among the working poor, no way connected with any hope or design of mending their condition in the world, or laying up treasures on earth. Necessity indeed drives, but it is the present necessity of food and cloathing, which comes as hard and coarse as their work. And these are the most substantial and useful part of society. *The king is served by the field.* Their labour, and the sweat of their brows, is turned to the ease and pleasure of others. And when a time of security and dearth comes, so that they cannot live by their work, they who are full and easy through their toil, ought, in all reason, to relieve them, and instead of minding the increase of their riches, or even preserving them in such a time, should diminish their stocks to ease them, and so bear burden with them, and take share in the calamity, or else not pretend to humanity, let be Christianity.

And we may see others that work not so hard, perhaps, as the contented poor, who are spurred on to what they do by the desire of mending their condition, and laying up treasures on the earth; and the very end of their work is the possession of abundance, to give them ease from labour and toil. These declare themselves, no doubt, to be acting very christianly in their diligence, when they have the confidence

dence to propose this as an objection against the gospel, doctrine of almsgiving, That it tends to slacken the diligence in our employments that is required in the gospel. But this is the sense of their objection, "If we are not to raise ourselves, and become richer in the world, by our labour, but give that in alms whereby we might rise to more ease, then we shall slacken our diligence, and be at less pains in our employments." This is not an uncharitable construction of the objection, and yet such men would have us look on their industry as a Christian virtue.

Many things may be said in disputing for a thing we are inclined to: suppositions may be made, inferences drawn, and objections started without end, which yet will not stand against the scripture in our own consciences; many specious pretences may be found out to cover a frame and disposition of our hearts, whereof we would be ashamed, if it were fairly laid open; and prevailing custom and common practice, especially among them that are esteemed in the world for godliness and honesty, is a great bulwark of Satan, and a strong defence to many against the gospel of Christ. But as we must all be made manifest before his judgement-seat, and every one of us must give an account of himself, to him who will judge us by his words in the scriptures, which we have read or heard, and as to which we cannot pretend ignorance, whatever our teachers have, or have not told us; let us for once fairly examine this affair of making rich in this world, and securing our riches the best way we can on the earth, in opposition to the almsgiving that has been described; let us try it by the scriptures before our own consciences, as in the sight of God, and examine the frame and disposition of heart from which it proceeds; and let us see if we can easily satisfy ourselves as to a few questions about it.

As, 1. If it be consistent with that earnest desire of being made conformable to Christ's death, that we  
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may attain conformity to him in his resurrection, which ought to be in every true Christian, Phil. iii. 10. 11. 15.?

2. If it can be fairly reconciled with that mortification to this world, so much pressed in the gospel, as Col. iii. 1. to 7. and with the renunciation of the world that we make in baptism?

3. If it can stand with the contentment in every estate, that Jesus Christ teaches his disciples, Phil. iv. 11. and that is expressly opposed to covetousness, or the love of money, and desire to be rich, 1 Tim. vi. 5.—10. Heb. xiii. 5. 6.?

4. If it can be without a tincture of that great error, that a man's life consists in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, and of this, that we can serve God and Mammon; and if it can consist with seeking first the kingdom of God, and laying hold on eternal life, hid with Christ in God, to appear when he appears?

5. If it be agreeable to a mind duly exercised with the thoughts of death and eternal judgement? “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.”

6. If almsgiving, in this case, can be an imitation of Jesus Christ and his grace; or, if it require any more self-denial, than the Pharisees alms, who derided our Lord's doctrine concerning alms?

7. If it can prevail where that trust in the living God prevails, that is required in almsgiving; and if it can be vindicated from the trusting in uncertain riches, that is opposed to good works and almsdeeds?

However we may satisfy ourselves as to these, and whatever be the rule of our religion, yet our religion must be tried at last by this scripture-definition of religion, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, to keep himself unspotted from the world;” even from “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” And all attempts to reform religion will be to no pur-

pose ; all endeavours to purify the outer court of the Lord's house, that has been troden under foot of the nations, will be in vain, if this religion do not take place as before the man of sin was revealed : and till this appear, pure religion cannot be seen. How comes it then, that while there is so great noise made in the world with zeal for the purity of religion, we hear so little of this religion !

An Answer to some Objections moved by a  
Friend, against the *Plea for pure and undefiled  
Religion* :

In a Letter to that Friend.

DEAR SIR,

ACCORDING to promise, I here send you my thoughts  
on your objections against my plea for pure and  
undefiled religion.

*Obj.* 1. You cannot see it more unlawful (if we  
keep strictly by the letter of the gospel) to increase  
our worldly substance, or to lay up any part of our pro-  
fits, gained by lawful industry, for old age, sickbed,  
famine, or for wife and children, or any such things  
as these, than it is to lay up for to-morrow, or for a  
week, or a month to come.

*Ans.* As to *the letter of the gospel*; if you mean by  
it the words wherein God has been pleased to express  
his mind to us, which are written to us in the New  
Testament, and are to be understood by us as they  
stand in a consistency together, then you may observe  
how this letter of the gospel is made of none effect  
by the Roman church, to establish their tradition and  
infallible interpretation; and how it is opposed by the  
Quakers, to set up their spirit or light within; and  
likewise by the modern Deists, to set up the same thing,  
their light of nature, which they would say is all that is  
intended in the gospel, let the letter say what it will:  
and this is *Christianity as old as the creation*. In op-  
position to these, and all others who do not take the  
scripture as its own interpreter, nor hold it as the only  
rule and standard of Christianity, we ought to keep  
strictly by the letter of the gospel, if we are to keep  
strictly by Christianity, whatever the consequence be.  
Though I must at the same time own, that *the letter  
of the gospel* is not scripture style. I see, indeed, the  
gospel

gospel is called the *Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. in distinction from the law of Moses, which is styled the letter; but the letter of the gospel, and the spirit of the gospel, is not a scriptural distinction. Or, if you will insist for it, I think I do well to hold by the letter, till I get another revelation to open that letter, and that again behoved to have another revelation to lay it open, and so on endlessly; for still the distinction betwixt the letter and the spirit, or meaning, might take place. But as the apostles have used great openness of speech, not as Moses, who put a vail over his face, and I am forbid to look for another revelation, I am resolved to keep strictly by the scripture as its own interpreter, and by the words of the Holy Ghost, as the fittest to express the mind of God to me: for if, by the letter of the gospel, you mean nothing else but the letters and sounds of words, and consider them not as serving to convey any meaning to our minds, then the letter, in this case, cannot make any thing lawful or unlawful.

Now, as to what you say of laying up for to-morrow, or for a week, or a month to come, perhaps I do not understand it; but it seems you mean, that, having food and raiment that may serve for a man's use next day, week, or month, or may be used for that time by another, in case of his death, is so far the same with increasing our worldly substance, or laying up any part of our profits for old age, sickbed, &c. after we are provided with the present food and raiment, that if the gospel condemn the one, it must, at the same time, condemn the other.

A man may be providing for his family's subsistence for next day, week, or month, who is daily becoming poorer; yea, and it is daily done by thousands that have no hope of becoming richer than they are: and I cannot say it is a great compliment to the letter of the gospel, to alledge that it makes this the same case, and puts it to the same account, with the case of a man who not only lives by his industry, but,  
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over and above that, is, every year, month, week, or day, if you please, laying up some part of that wherein his profit exceeds his living, for many years, in case he should become useless by age, or for his widow and children, in case of his dying sooner. The letter of the gospel cannot condemn the first case, unless you would suppose, that it condemns the Lord himself, which is impossible: for I reckon you will not deny, that his raiment, which the soldiers parted among them, and his coat, for which they cast lots, might serve for next day, week, or month. And the letter of the gospel cannot be said to make that unlawful, which it allows and supposes to be lawful. In the 12th chapter of Luke's gospel, it supposes the industry of the husbandman who provides seed for his ground, that returns to him with profit, not till after some months, and when it comes, his living upon it (which I need not describe to you) is supposed and allowed; but, over and above all this, he has an extraordinary profit in a year of great plenty, which may serve for many years to come. The letter of the gospel says, he ought to have given this in alms, and so made rich with it toward God, and condemns him for laying it up, or treasuring it up for himself on the earth. And this may serve to shew, that it cannot appear, from the letter of the gospel, to be as unlawful for a husbandman to reserve his seed to be cast into the ground in its season, and to have his living of his crop till the next come in, as it is for him to treasure of it up to himself for years to come.\* The same thing may be said as to any other lawful employment.

\* If it is only setting his heart and affection upon a thing in itself lawfully done, that is condemned; then it is true the same censure might as well have been passed upon his reserving his seed, and providing his living out of that year's crop, till the next came in, as upon his laying up of it for years to come. But the Lord censures this practice of laying up for himself, as proceeding from, and manifesting that covetous set of heart which is nowhere said to be so discovered in the other.

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Now, as to what you say of laying up for to-morrow, or for a week, or a month to come, perhaps I do not understand it; but it seems you mean, that, having food and raiment that may serve for a man's use next day, week, or month, or may be used for that time by another, in case of his death, is so far the same with increasing our worldly substance, or laying up any part of our profits for old age, sickbed, &c. after we are provided with the present food and raiment, that if the gospel condemn the one, it must, at the same time, condemn the other.

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over and above that, is, every year, month, week, or day, if you please, laying up some part of that wherein his profit exceeds his living, for many years, in case he should become useles by age, or for his widow and children, in case of his dying sooner. The letter of the gospel cannot condemn the first case, unless you would suppose, that it condemns the Lord himself, which is impossible: for I reckon you will not deny, that his raiment, which the soldiers parted among them, and his coat, for which they cast lots, might serve for next day, week, or month. And the letter of the gospel cannot be said to make that unlawful, which it allows and supposes to be lawful. In the 12th chapter of Luke's gospel, it supposes the industry of the husbandman who provides seed for his ground, that returns to him with profit, not till after some months, and when it comes, his living upon it (which I need not describe to you) is supposed and allowed; but, over and above all this, he has an extraordinary profit in a year of great plenty, which may serve for many years to come. The letter of the gospel says, he ought to have given this in alms, and so made rich with it toward God, and condemns him for laying it up, or treasuring it up for himself on the earth. And this may serve to shew, that it cannot appear, from the letter of the gospel, to be as unlawful for a husbandman to reserve his seed to be cast into the ground in its season, and to have his living of his crop till the next come in, as it is for him to treasure of it up to himself for years to come.\* The same thing may be said as to any other lawful employment.

\* If it is only setting his heart and affection upon a thing in itself lawfully done, that is condemned; then it is true the same censure might as well have been passed upon his reserving his seed, and providing his living out of that year's crop, till the next came in, as upon his laying up of it for years to come. But the Lord censures this practice of laying up for himself, as proceeding from, and manifesting that covetous set of heart which is nowhere said to be so discovered in the other.

ment. It cannot appear from the letter of the gospel, that it is no more unlawful for one to make rich by his employment, than it is for him to have the necessary materials for labouring in it, or to live by it as it casts up his living to him. And so likewise, as to a man who lives on the yearly rent of his estate, it would be a very bad inference to say, that, because it is unlawful for him to add to his estate, by treasuring up any part of that which is over his living, therefore it must be unlawful for him to live by his rent, as it casts up to him yearly. And if we apply it to widows and orphans, and old infirm persons, to the naked and the hungry, whom we are bound to clothe and to feed, we will be straitened to find any rule in the gospel, obliging us to make them rich with our alms, or allowing them to make rich upon alms; nor shall we find any rule in the gospel, to hinder us from giving the naked raiment that may serve them for next day, week, or month, or them from taking it; or to hinder us from giving the hungry food that may serve them for next day, week, or month, or them from receiving it.

*Obj.* 2. You cannot understand how I should say, that if a person should thus lay up any part of his profits so gained (although at the same time in the practice also of giving a part to the poor), the same is his treasure and idol, and how yet, at the same time, I should acknowledge a person may retain wife and children, houses and lands, &c. and none of these his idol. You do not well understand how the one can be an idol, and not the other also. You cannot make the difference betwixt a person's acquiring, by his lawful industry, an idol, as I would make it, and another person's retaining an idol handed down to him by his forefathers.

*Ans.* You seem to lay much stress, both here and in what you say afterward, on the word *idolatry*; which, if we take in its largest sense, is to be found in every sin, and particularly in all the ways wherein  
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men love this present evil world, as it is set in opposition to God in the New Testament, telling us, that whosoever will be a friend of it is the enemy of God; and especially covetousness is expressly called idolatry. If this be the same that is forbid in the tenth command, it must differ both from the idolatry that is expressly forbid in the first command, and from that forbid expressly in the second, by which the nation of Israel brake covenant with God.

If we take idolatry in the largest sense wherein it stands in the New Testament, then a person may make an idol of any thing, beside God himself, that he has, or is seeking after, by setting his heart upon it, as it ought only to be set on God and eternal life: yea, a man may make an idol of his wife, and of his children (whom the gospel commands him to love), by loving them beyond the limits of God's law, or with that love that is due to God alone: but a man's retaining his wife (except in the case wherein he must either give up with God or her) can never be made a proof of his making her his idol; at least, it cannot be a proof of it by the gospel, which forbids him to put her away, or to leave her. And the case may happen, wherein our retaining any part of our possessions, will prove that what we possess is our idol. Thus the young man's possessions were his idol, when he would not part with them all, at Christ's call, for eternal life: and yet, before the matter was put to that trial, such was his concern about eternal life, that I dare say he would think his heart preferred it to all the world: so ready are we to deceive ourselves about the disposition of our hearts, and our willingness to good, before it come to the trial! the case of Ananias and Sapphira furnishes us with another instance, that serves to shew the case may happen wherein our retaining any part of our possessions will prove the part retained to be our idol. But the scripture no where makes the retaining of any part of what we possess, in every case, to be a proof of idolatry, or that our hearts are where what

we have is. Even the communion of goods, as it is called, which was peculiar to the church in Jerufalem, was not fo enjoined there, but that they might lawfully forbear to fell their lands, or have the money of them, when fold, as their own. *Whilcs it remained, faid Peter to Ananias, was it not thine own? and after it was fold, was it not in thine own power?*

And now, if the fcripture make laying up, or treafuring to ourfelves on the earth, a proof of our hearts being there, this muft make a very wide difference betwixt retaining any part of what we poffefs, and our laying up more, or adding by our induftry to our earthly poffeffions.

The idolatry (as you notice I told you before) lies in the difpofition of the perfon's heart who lays up, which is, his inclination to be rich, in oppofition, to contentment in his prefent condition and in oppofition to trust in the living God, and his *love of money*, which is the true fpring of that induftry that tends to laying up treafures on the earth, in diftinction from the lawful induftry or diligence in our employments, that tends to no more but our daily bread, and to give to him that needeth, as being content with the prefent food and raiment. Therefore, the treafure, or that which is laid up, can be an idol, in that way, only to him who is treafuring it, or laying it up by his induftry: and when he is turned from that difpofition, and repents, and fo lays up no more, but being content with what he poffeffes, gives that in alms which he might now lay up on the earth, and fo treafures to himfelf treafures in heaven; he is then no more an idolater in that way, *i. e.* it no more appears that his heart is on the earth, by his treafuring to himfelf treafures there. This may be eafily underftood by a parallel inftance. The fcripture forbids a man to touch a woman, but his own wife. If a man keep not himfelf within this limit, he is fo far an idolater, a lover of that flefhy pleasure more than God, and fo far an enemy to God, as he is not fubject to his law in that matter. But if he repent of fornications,  
and

and cleave to one woman as his wife, with whom perhaps he had also committed fornication before, he is now no more an idolater in the way of fornication: and yet, in the way that is in itself lawful, he may be more devoted to his wife than to God, and so be an idolater still; but no man can prove him to be an idolater by his keeping to his own wife, and not touching another. Yea, one who turns from treasuring to himself treasures on the earth, unto almsgiving, and not only gives that in alms which he might lay up on the earth, but also part of his living, and yet further, all that he hath, may, after all, be an idolater in giving alms, as acting in it from a principle of pride and self-merit, and not from charity; so that the grace of God might shew itself in saving him from his own righteousness and pride, and in making him truly charitable, but I cannot prove him to be an idolater by his abounding in alms. So that the question still recurs, Has the scripture declared, that our heart will be on the earth, in opposition to heaven, if we be treasuring to ourselves treasures on the earth? or has it declared, that treasuring to ourselves treasures on earth is the service of *Mammon*, as treasuring to ourselves treasure in heaven is the service of God?

As to your comparison and judgement concerning them in whom the grace of God shines most; it is best for us not to trust too much to the sense we may sometimes have of our own willingness, as an evidence of the grace of God, while that willingness is not put to the proof, and while we are not exercised in deeds and works that manifest it. The grace of God shines in turning men every one from that lust to which he is most devoted, to serve the living God, especially in opposition to that. And the scripture is the only rule by which we ought to measure the appearance of God's grace. As to covetousness and almsgiving; Zaccheus had been most devoted to riches, and we see how the grace of God shined in him. The Lord institutes a comparison betwixt the widow's mite, and

what the rich gave of their abundance, and gives the preference to the mite. And if he makes so little of the alms that men give of their abundance, what then will he make of the alms of those who, over and above their abundance, are also laying up and making themselves more abundant in riches? The apostle declares, how much the grace of God shined in the churches of Macedonia, and shews how much God would be glorified by that imitation of them, and of the Lord Jesus, to which he exhorts the Corinthians, and calls it God's unspeakable gift. The grace that is bestowed on us sinners, shined originally in him who knew no sin, in that, while he was himself ministered unto, he gave to the poor, from the little bag that served for his daily living, John xiii. 29. and that was sometimes empty, Matth. xvii. 27.

*Obj.* 3. You say, "If there be an inseparable connection betwixt a person's so increasing his substance in this world and idolatry, then I cannot see how believers under the law can be freed from having been idolaters, seeing many of them were in this practice of laying up or increasing their substance, idolatry being plainly forbid under the law as well as under the gospel."

*Ans.* Here I think you are doubling on the word *idolatry* (as I hinted before), and not considering the great difference betwixt the Old-Testament and the New, in this, as in several other things.

Polygamy and divorce, except in case of fornication, is declared by our Lord, in the New-Testament, to be contrary to the primitive institution of marriage, when he discharges it, and yet it was allowed in Israel, and Moses gave them a precept about divorce.

They were commanded to defend the kingdom of God by arms, and cursed if they did not arm against the enemies of the Lord, and come out to fight, where he helped them to overcome and kill them; and by faith some of the Old-Testament saints subdued kingdoms, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the  
armies



of the aliens. But I reckon you will not from this infer, that this defence of the kingdom of God is now lawful under the New-Testament, or consistent with the nature of God's kingdom now, and with our Lord's dying testimony, and the following of him, and with the faith and patience of the saints.

Elias called for fire from heaven to destroy mens lives, and was countenanced highly in the answer to his call; but you see what the Lord says to his disciples, when they propose an imitation of him in that.

Believers under the law were circumcised, and circumcised their children in faith, and in obedience to the command that had the threatening of cutting off annexed to it; yet the New-Testament testifies, that if we be circumcised, Christ shall profit us nothing; which is as strong as any thing that has been said about making rich in this world: And you would not infer from this, that Christ profited the Old-Testament saints nothing.

They were in bondage under the elements of the world, and observed days, and months, and times, and years, yea, and observed them in faith, and in obedience to God's commands, and so likewise they served the tabernacle; but if we should follow them in that, the apostle says to us, *I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you labour in vain; and, We have an altar whercof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.*

In God's earthly kingdom, there was occasion for those whom he made wise for managing the affairs of that kingdom, (as Solomon), to glory in their wisdom, and for their mighty men of valour to glory in the strength he gave them for their worldly warfare, and for those who enjoyed his promise of wealth (as Solomon did in the highest degree) to glory in their riches; but now all occasion for this is removed with the setting aside of that worldly kingdom, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah: *Let not the wise glory in*

*his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgement, and righteousness in the earth: for in these I delight, saith the Lord.* And this knowledge of the mercy, judgement, and righteousness that God exercised in the death and resurrection of Christ, shews itself in doing justly, and loving mercy, (or pure and undefiled religion), and walking humbly with our God.

No doubt, they who did not make use of the promised wealth, as a type of the true riches of the heavenly inheritance, were idolaters in the large New-Testament sense of idolatry; but when earthly wealth is no more a type of the heavenly, nor promised in the new covenant under which we are, and which, on the contrary, connects conformity to Christ, in his humiliation and self-denial in this life, with conformity to him in his glory in the life to come; in this case, to be affected toward riches, as the Old-Testament saints were, is the same as to be affected like them toward the worldly sanctuary, the sacrifices, and the worldly kingdom. It would not have been easy to persuade a saint of the Old-Testament, that it was right for him to sell his part in the promised land, or to take joyfully the spoiling of his goods there, by the enemies of the Lord; and yet you see, to the contrary, what effect the pouring out of the New-Testament spirit had upon the first Jewish converts, putting the greatest difference betwixt them and the unbelievers, who, in their zeal for the old covenant, and love of wealth, were the most bitter enemies to Christ, as their posterity are to this day, though without the temple, and the land of Canaan, yet having the old desire after riches, and prospering in the pursuit of them, under the curse of God.

*Obs. 4.* Again, you say, “What is become of all those since Christ came in the flesh, and that some of them

them were, and others of them yet are, in their own eyes, and in the judgement of charity of others, looked on as disciples of Christ; and yet some of them were, and others of them yet are in this practice? Sure, conform to this doctrine, those of them that are dead have died in a sad delusion, as those of them are in that are still alive; and, in place of being disciples of Christ, or Christians, nothing but idolaters.”

*Ans.* The disciples of Christ, whose practice is recorded for our imitation in the New-Testament, the only rule by which we are to judge of Christ's disciples, do not come into this reckoning; not one of them can be found to have been in this practice. The mystery of iniquity was indeed working in their time: and there were some going under the Christian name, even teachers, studying to reconcile Christianity and Judaism, and minding earthly things, opposing the blessed purpose of conformity to Christ's humiliation and death, in Christ's true disciples; and some supposed that gain was godliness; but such were the forerunners of Antichrist, who denies that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.

In the third century, I find Cyprian complaining of this as a great fault among the professors of Christianity, and a cause of God's wrath and displeasure against them, that *they were studying to augment their patrimony.*

After this, when the man of sin was fully revealed, the outward profession of Christianity could not be measured by the rule of God's word, and the woman was hid from the face of the serpent in the wilderness, where she was nourished (as Elijah) for a time, times, and an half: and, during that time of confusion and disorder in the visible profession of Christianity, it would be hard to reason from the practice of any professor of it, in order to shew the lawfulness of any thing that the letter of the gospel makes unlawful.

Yet, even in the fifteenth century, I find the brethren of Bohemia declaring their offence against the  
Waldenses

Waldenses for this practice, and condemning them, by the 6th chapter of Mathew, for laying up to themselves treasures on the earth for a time of persecution. The Waldenses are still looked on as disciples of Christ; but the practice of the reputed godly can never make that lawful, which the only rule of godliness makes unlawful, yea, though they were really what they are reputed.

But it is not every one who, in his own eyes, and in the charitable judgement of others, is looked on as a disciple of Christ, that can be called a disciple according to the New-Testament. And I must observe, that you seem to forget what the Lord said of the most highly esteemed for godliness in his day, on occasion of their ridiculing his doctrine concerning alms, and the impossibility of serving God and Mammon: *He said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God.* And, at the same time, I think I may warn you to beware of that evil that the apostle points out to Christians, 2 Cor. x. 12.

By your argument, from the practice of some reputed disciples of Christ, I might undertake to prove that there is no idolatry in the worship of the church of Rome, and that the worshippers in that church are not idolaters; and yet you will not deny, that the worship of that church is idolatrous in the strictest sense; for I can tell you, with as great confidence as you can say that Christ's people have made rich, that the Lord's people have lived and died in the communion of that church; and I am sure you would not vindicate the worship of that idolatrous church by the practice of the Waldenses who attended it, and yet are famous among Protestants to this day, as disciples of Christ.

*Obj. 5.* You want to know, why I should refuse an explanation of Matth. vi. ver. 19. 21. and yet see a necessity to explain ver. 20. as also other texts quot-

ed by you; and you think our Lord himself explains the 19th and 21st verses, and some other verses following, by the 33d verse of that same chapter, where it is said, *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, &c.* or, as Luke has it, *But rather seek ye, &c.*; and you say the two verses quoted by me, and some of the following verses, plainly explain what *those things* are there promised to be added.

*Ans.* Though I refused your explanation of the 19th and 21st verses of the 6th chapter of Matthew, because to me it appears to destroy the text, and disagrees with the parallel passage in the 12th chapter of Luke; yet I insist for an explication of them, and a sense that appears to me necessarily imported in the words, both as they stand in the Greek and in our translation, and perfectly agreeable to the strain of the New-Testament, and the practice of the Lord, and of all his followers, recorded in the scriptures.

You know I shew what are the things we are forbid to lay up on earth, and commanded to lay up in heaven, from what is said of the moth and rust corrupting, and of thieves stealing; and that I plead these words, *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, or, Do not treasure to yourselves treasures on earth,* cannot be taken to signify no more but this, *Do not make that which you lay up on the earth your treasure; or, When you lay up corruptible things that may be stolen on the earth, do not set your hearts on these things as your portion.* Against this gloss, which appears, at first sight, to offer violence to the text, I pleaded the opposite command in the 20th verse, *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, or, Treasure to yourselves treasures in heaven,* which I shewed, from Luke xii. 33. the scripture has not left you nor me either to explain; for it gives the meaning of these words expressly; to which also these other scriptures agree, Luke xvi. 9. Gal. vi. 6.—10. 1 Tim. vi. 18. 19. And I likewise pleaded that motive which the Lord makes use of to enforce his exhortation, ver. 21. *For where*  
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*your treasure is, there will your heart be also*; which according to your gloss, can mean no more but this, *Where your heart is, there will your heart be also*; or, *Where you place your treasure, there will you place your treasure also*. And the absurdity of this needs not be further pointed out.

You also, on the other hand, endeavour to fix your sense of, *Lay not up——treasures upon earth*, by the opposite command, *Lay up ——treasures in heaven*, which you make to be setting our heart and affections on things above, that is, making these things our treasure: and this is all you would have to be intended in the expression. And I again insist for the sense \* of that expression which the scripture itself gives me in the parallel place, Luke chap. xii. and say, That, to lay up treasures of things that might be corrupted, or stolen, if laid up on the earth; to lay up treasures of such things in heaven, is to give them in alms, to give them to the poor, and so lend them to the Lord; and this is sowing to the Spirit, of which life everlasting is reaped; this is laying up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life; and thus we make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations. If we be thus treasuring to ourselves treasures in heaven, and not treasuring to ourselves treasures on the earth, our Lord signifies to us, it will be an evidence that our heart and affection

\* That sense is in our Lord's words, Luke xii. 33. 34. *Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*. After this, one would think it very bold to say, that our Lord means not giving alms, by laying up to ourselves treasures in heaven, but something else. And yet when this question, concerning making rich in this world, is duly considered, the lawfulness of it cannot be supported without denying that the Lord means almsgiving, by laying up treasures in heaven, *i. e.* refusing his sense of his own words.

affection is set on things above, and not on things on the earth; and, at the same time, a mean of taking our affections off earthly things to heavenly; and the reverse will be, if we be treasuring to ourselves treasures on the earth: *for, says he, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

As for the other texts quoted by you, that you alledge I saw a necessity to explain, I wish you had put me in mind of them, because I may mistake your meaning, and overlook the texts you have in your view. I remember of two texts that you wanted to palm senses upon, that put me upon shewing, that the words of these texts, as they stand in connection with the rest of the scripture, could not bear those senses; and, at the same time, I thought I was vindicating the scripture style and way of speaking, from an imputation that, in my view, was injurious. The texts were, *Take no thought for to-morrow; and, Sell that ye have, and give alms.*

As to the first, If I remember right, I told you, that neither the Greek word, nor the English phrase, *taking thought*, by which that word is rendered, could bear that sense that you wanted to fix upon it; for neither of them signify mere simple thinking, but thinking with anxiety and careful sollicitousness, burdening the mind: and to this agrees an expression the Lord uses on this subject in the parallel passage, Luke xii. 29. *Neither be of doubtful mind; or, as it is on the margin, Live not in careful suspence.* And, as *taking thought for the morrow* stands in connection with the context, it must signify taking the care and burden of our life, our food and raiment to-morrow, upon our own thoughts, instead of casting it upon our Father in heaven, and in opposition to doing our duty this day, in seeking the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and in opposition to contentment with the present food and raiment he gives us, and to submission to his will as to our life to-morrow, and what he shall then see needful for us; and, in a

word, in opposition to that frame of mind that is necessary for the business of laying up to ourselves treasures in heaven. This, as I take it, is the literal sense (pardon the expression) of, *Taking no thought for tomorrow* \* ; but if I mistake not, the sense you wanted to fix upon it, was, that we should not so much as think, let be *to say, On the morrow, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that.* And, I must own, this is a treatment of the letter of the gospel that any author would think himself injured by as to his writings.

And, as I took it, *Sell that ye have, and give alms,* was treated much in the same manner, to shew that it is as unlawful, by the letter of the gospel, to have that food and raiment wherewith we are called to be content, as to make rich in this world with that which we have to give to him that needeth: for the sense of the words, as you would have it, came to this, that a Christian ought not to have any thing whatsoever unfold; that he ought not to *have to give to him that needeth*; that no Christian ought to *have this world's good, or life,* from which he can shew his bowels toward his brother, whom he seeth have need, by relieving him off the life that he himself hath; and that

\* *Take no thought.* This prohibition, Μη μεριμνάτε τῆ ψυχῆ ὑμῶν and μὴ μεριμνήσατε εἰς τὴν αὐριον, is pointed against storing up to ourselves treasures on the earth, against the evil or covetous eye, and against the service of Mammon, ver. 19.—23. 24. 25. and Luke xii. 21. 22. and it is set against the Gentiles seeking what to eat and drink, and wherewithal to be clothed, to which our seeking first the kingdom of God is opposed, ver. 31. 32. 33. with Luke xii. 29. 30. 31. And the Lord presses this prohibition upon his people, by the peculiar care of their Father about them, without whose providence their taking thought can avail them nothing, and by the promise to them seeking the kingdom of God first, that *these things* they would take thought about *shall be added* to them, ver. 26. 27. 30. 31. 33. 34. with Luke xii. 30. 31. 32. 33.; and as it is thus stated, it can be a prohibition of nothing else but that very temper of mind that is absolutely necessary to our making ourselves rich in this world, though it do not always reach that end.



that every Christian ought to *have lack of others*, and not *eat his own bread*; because, if after a man has been some time a professor of the gospel, and had opportunity to sell whatsoever he hath, if he hath any thing whatsoever unsold, he is living a life of disobedience to the gospel in this letter of it, *Sell that ye have, and give alms.*

And thus by turning this positive precept into a negative, that it may be on a footing with the prohibition to make rich in this world, and forcing the words to say more than they can say, either in a consistency with the rest of the gospel, or as they stand in that passage, in opposition to the evil that is there condemned, you are so fond as to think you have evaded the force of what is pleaded from the express law of Jesus Christ, and from the whole strain of the gospel, against making rich in this world. And after this, I need not wonder that some of our people's words, on this subject, have been so much wiredrawn, and absurd inferences made from them, and these fastened upon them, in order to ridicule the doctrine they were maintaining, that a Christian should fly from the desire to be rich in this world, and instead of that, should make rich toward God by almsgiving. And this same doctrine is the more confirmed to me, the more I see it opposed in this manner. The truth of the gospel disdains such a method of maintaining it, and scorns this sort of opposition to it.

For my part, who can make nothing of the gospel without the letter of it, and therefore resolve to hold by the letter, I am persuaded that the gospel commands Christians to *study to do their own business* or affairs, and *to work with their own hands, that they walk honestly toward them that are without, and may have lack of nothing*, or of no man, and likewise that they may *have to give to him that needeth*; and, at the same time, I am no less persuaded that the same gospel commands us to *sell that we have, and give alms,*

alms, and so to provide ourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth, and that because where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. And I think I can direct you to a case stated by the Lord himself, and to which this last command has a plain reference, whereby you may perceive that I hold no inconsistency in holding by both thee com- of the gospel.

The rich man's ground, in the parable, was his living; his business that he had to do, that he might have lack of no man, walk honestly, and give to him that needeth, was about that ground. In keeping this ground; the instruments needful for his business, and his seed unfold, and in living on the product of his ground, as it cast up to him, he did nothing that the gospel condemns; but when it cast up more than this, and the question was, where he should bestow this that he now had, to the best advantage? and he laid it up, and treasured it to himself on the earth, then he did contrary to that command of the gospel *Sell that ye have and give, alms, &c.* He should, if he had been wise, have sold what he thus had to sell, and distributed it among the poor, and so made rich with it toward God, instead of treasuring it on the earth for many years, against famine, sickbed, or old age, that might happen to him; and such as he is every one that treasureth to himself, and is not rich toward God. From the case thus stated, and this conclusion made upon it, the Lord infers an exhortation to his disciples, thus; *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, neither for the body what ye shall put on.—And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind: for all these things do the nations of the world seek after.—But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.—Sell that ye have, and give alms, &c.* From which  
you

you may understand, that your *Scilicet that ye have, and give aims*, and, *Take no thought for the morrow*, must lead you again to this, *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*, and must fasten that on you which you wanted to shake off, *viz.* the doctrine that condemns our enriching ourselves in this world, as the service of Mammon; and, instead of that, commends almsgiving, as the service of God, that has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. And this same doctrine that appears so frightful to you, that you would give up with the letter of the gospel to save yourself from it, appeared so amiable and divine to Grotius, a noted writer for the truth of Christianity, that he scruples not to draw an argument from it for the truth of the gospel, and to shew to infidels the excellency of Christianity above all other religions.

You will not, I think, come better off with Matth. vi. 33. which you give me as our Lord's own explanation of the 19th and following verses of that chapter, nor with Luke xi. 31. to which I am ready to suspect you refer me, for the sake of the English word *rather*; as to which you may see Eph. iv. 28. To Luke xii. 31. then, to which you have appealed, you shall go. And there, when I ask, What is the duty that is laid upon us in these words, *Seek ye the kingdom of God*, in distinction from the nations of the world? the context leaves you to your own discretion as to the answer. You will be ready to think you have done enough, when you have told me of faith and prayer, and some agreeable motions and desires of the heart toward that kingdom; and you may enlarge upon these excellent things as much as you please, while, at the same time, you imagine we may practise as the nations of the world do, as to what they shall eat, and drink, and put on, in all time that may come, the furthest off as well as the nearest, and yet have our hearts in the opposite disposition to them, and in the  
first

first place, or rather, intent on the kingdom of heaven. But the text speaks of a practice, whereby our faith in prayer, and the intentness of our minds and hearts on God's kingdom, shall appear in opposition to the practice of the nations of the world. And now see what the context says, keeping in mind the introduction to it, from ver. 13. and downward, and beginning at the end of ver. 28.—*How much more you, O ye of little faith. Ver. 29. And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. Ver. 30. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. Ver. 31. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. Ver. 32. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Ver. 33. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. Ver. 34. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

When you consider this, it will not be easy for you to keep, *Sell that you have, and give alms, &c.* out from being imported in the exhortation, *Seek ye the kingdom of God.* And thus I shall own to you, that the 33d verse of Matth. chap. vi. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,* agrees exactly, though in another way than you thought of, with the 19th, 20th, and 21st verses of that chapter. And in doing as I am there directed, I have the promise that God will add to me in time coming, as he sees I then need, those things that the men of the nations are now adding to themselves against the time to come, and against needs they or theirs may be in; and he will provide those things for me, as far as they can be added unto my enjoying the kingdom which I am seeking in the first place, by giving alms, instead of laying up for these supposed needs myself on the earth.

And

And let it not be strange to you, that I hold the practice of almsgiving, in opposition to making rich in this world, to be seeking the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: for if the seeking of that kingdom which it is the Father's good pleasure to give to Christ's little flock, be the same with seeking eternal life, then you may see, from Gal. vi. 6.—10. that doing good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith, is sowing to the Spirit, and *he that thus soweth, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting*; and if we do not weary and faint in this well doing, *we shall in due time reap*. And you may also see, from 1 Tim. vi. 6.—12. and 18. 19. that if we would lay hold on eternal life, fighting the good fight of faith, we must flee the love of money, and the will or desire to be rich, being content with the food and raiment which we have; and that, if we have the wealth of this world, we must *do good, be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store, or treasuring up for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life*. And thus we seek the kingdom of God, or eternal life, by almsgiving, as the nations of the world seek to lay up a foundation to themselves for this life, in time to come, by laying up treasures on the earth.

Nor let it offend you, that I call this *seeking of God's righteousness*: for, suppose that to be the righteousness that is wrought already by Jesus Christ, to which we can add nothing, and which alone can justify us, or intitle us to the kingdom, and to eternal life; what is it that the gospel calls us to, as our duty with respect to that righteousness revealed in the gospel? Is it not to believe it, and to bring forth the fruits of that faith? Is it not to give all diligence to make sure to ourselves an interest in it, by these fruits of faith? And is not this done by the labour of love, in ministering to the saints? Heb. vi. 10. 11. And you see how our interest in that righteousness, or our title to the kingdom,

dom, through it, will be manifested at last, Matth. xxv. 34.—40. Is not he then, who is labouring in the word there spoke of, seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness? The pure and undefiled religion mentioned by James, and the fruit meet for repentance, spoke of by John Baptist, is a very notable part of our conformity to the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and to the Father's love in giving him; and as John says, *He that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous*; he condescends on this as the great instance of it, see 1 John. iii. 7. 16. 17. 18. and compare 2 Cor. ix. 9. 10. and Isaiah lviii. 7. 8. which, if you consider, serves to let you see that almsgiving is not so foreign to his righteousness as you would be ready to imagine. Yea, and this is it to which God's promise of adding these things to us, in the time of our need that may come, which the Gentiles seek to add to themselves, is annexed, both in the Old-Testament prophecy and in the New-Testament; see Psal. xxxvii. 25. 26. Psal. xli. 1. 2. 3. Heb. xiii. 1. 2. 3. 5. 6.

*Obj. 6.* You say, "I think also, that there is something relating to this in what our Lord says unto his apostles, when first sending them out to preach the gospel. Then he says unto them, *Provide nothing for your journey*, as you have it in Matthew chap. x.; and yet afterwards says (being about to leave them), *When I sent you without purse, &c. lacked ye any thing? they said, Nothing. But now, said he, He that hath a purse, let him take it, &c.* as you have it in Luke chap. xxii."

*Ans.* To this I only answer in a word: Look how the apostles, after Christ left them, and the first Christians, did with their purses; and then see what you can make of that word, as they observed it, for making rich in this world.

*Obj. 7.* You say, after a commendation of Paul, to which I heartily agree, "When exhorting the church of Corinth to a liberal contribution for the poor saints, he says, *I speak not by commandment, &c.* and again  
only

only says, *As every man hath purposed in his heart, so let him give.* By which I think it is plain, the quantity is much left unto the discretion or conscience of the giver, and no where that I know of ascertained by the apostle. Neither do I think that the example of the churches of Macedonia (as to the quantity of their gift) set before the church of Corinth by the apostle, was any command from him to them, to give as the churches of Macedonia had done; it being testified of them, that they gave beyond their power.”

*Ans.* I own I cannot understand what you mean here by its being left to the conscience of the giver; for, if there be no law about it, I cannot see what the conscience of right and wrong can have to do with it. But as to almsgiving being left to the discretion of the giver, I must observe you cannot make out that conclusion \* from this passage, without going upon such mistakes as I see you have fallen into here.

It is not testified of the Macedonians, that they gave beyond their power, but that they were willing beyond their power.

And the apostle here exhorts to a liberal contribution, in imitation of them, especially in their willingness and forwardness in it, as doing a thing under the constraint of a command, to which they were

VOL. II,

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otherwise

\* The conclusion here intended is not, That it is left to our discretion, whether we shall give alms at all or not, though that might be the same way inferred from this passage, as is this conclusion, That it is left to the discretion of the giver, whether he shall so give alms, as likewise to make rich in this world, or not. If this be not what is meant by leaving the quantity to the discretion of the giver, the argument is no way pointed to the thing in question. And indeed it is nothing to the point in question, though the apostle had left it free to the Corinthians, what they should give in that particular collection, or whether their charity (that wanted not other channels to flow in) should run out as abundantly in the contribution for the saints in Judea as did the Macedonian charity. Could it ever be inferred from this, That he left it to them, whether they would serve God, by almsgiving, and also Mammon, by making rich, or God alone?

otherwise unwilling, because he would have it as bounty; like the Macedonians, and not as covetousness, which gives more sparingly and grudgingly, or of necessity; and so he signifies to them, he would not be thought to command them to contribute, whether they would or not. That would not have been consistent with the nature of almsgiving, nor with his call and exhortation to a hearty bountiful contribution, which is true almsgiving, after the example of the Macedonians.

And the gospel no where constrains us with any command to do alms against our wills; but it requires hearty almsgiving, just as the apostle does in this instance, as a *proof of the sincerity of our love*, which you have overlooked when you cited the first part of the verse, *viz. I speak not by commandment*. Nor have you noticed, that he requires this bountiful sowing in connection with the promise of reaping bountifully, and that he requires it in connection with the glory of God, and demands it as the profession of their subjection to the gospel of Christ. Neither have you observed, that these words, *Every man according as he hath purposed in his heart*, stand in opposition to *grudgingly, or of necessity*, and come in consequence of his threatening to *sowing sparingly*, or covetously, and his promise to bountiful sowing; and concludes it with this reason, *For God loveth a cheerful giver*.

And you have not considered all that the apostle says to the Corinthians concerning this contribution, when you affirm he only says, *As every man hath purposed in his heart, so let him give*, and this to shew, that the quantity is left to the giver's discretion. You have not considered these words, *If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted, according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not*. Nor have you considered what he had said to them of this same contribution, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. And I do not see how much more particular he could be in writing to them, unless he had got a list of what every particular person had,



had, and was able to give, and given a particular direction to every one accordingly; and that could have amounted to no more than what he does, when he says, *According to that a man hath, and as God hath prospered him.*

And, upon the whole, unless you can say, That the whole obedience of the gospel is left to our discretion, because it must all be unconstrained, and with purpose of heart, you shall never prove from this, or any passage in the gospel, that almsgiving, as it stands opposed to making rich in this world, is left to our discretion. His commandments are not grievous to his children, that overcome the world by faith; and if the law concerning alms be grievous to us, we might let it alone; but then let us not pretend to be the children of the Father which is in heaven.

Thus I have run over your objections; and if I have left any thing untouched, you may put me in mind. What I have said, I think enough for the time. But then, you are not to think that I entertain any such vain or foolish imagination, as to think myself sufficient, in disputing, to match a lust of this world, especially that deceitful one of covetousness, seeing I find myself far from being any thing like a match for the lusts of the world in my own soul. The word of God can cleanse us from them: that weapon is mighty, through God, for casting down strong holds. And if I have said any thing beside that, let it be rejected; and so, leaving you with these two scriptures, Matth. vi. 22. 23. John iii. 20. 21. I am, &c.

October 6. 1738.

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# The Usefulness of CATECHISMS considered:

In a Letter to a Friend.

2 Tim. 3. 15. *From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

[First published in the year 1736.]

S I R,

**T**HIS comes to offer to your consideration, a question previous to that now on the field, about the Assembly's Shorter Catechism; and it is this,

What is the use of catechisms?

Most part of Christians will readily think this a very needless question, and be surpris'd, that any man in his right wits should seriously move it, seeing all sects of Christians have seen it needful to use catechisms, and find their great usefulness, by indisputable experience. The reviser of the assembly's catechism, and he who makes remarks upon him, however great their difference may be otherwise, are perfectly agreed on this head.

An agreement so universal, in a matter of this kind, among the opposite sects of Christians, might incline one to think, there must be a clearer ground in the scripture (the foundation of Christianity) for this, than for those things that are disputed; but a variety of instances may move a suspicion, that their agreement is as little regulated by the Bible, as they are in their differences. It has happened in many cases, that the Christian and learned world has differed widely on points plainly enough taught in the scriptures; and, at the same time, agreed perfectly in things  
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that are not, without the greatest difficulty, if at all, deducible from the scriptures. In some cases, it is enough that a thing cannot be proved to be flatly contradicted in the Bible; and it is sufficient, sometimes, to make it agreeable, that it cannot appear disagreeable, at first view; while other things must not be regarded, as having any foundation in the scriptures, as long as the least shift or evasion of the evidence that is brought for them can be found out.

Contending parties about church-government are generally agreed on this, That there are general rules in the scripture, which warrant us to do what we think most orderly, and most for edification, according to the times and occasions, which are not the same with those wherein the New-Testament was written, but vastly different; yet, in disputing about their forms of church-government, they require of one another demonstrative particular evidence from the scripture, for that about which they contend; even while, in these debates, all of them are fain sometimes to have recourse to the general rules, or they are willing, by agreement, to suppose them.

Neither is there any considerable difference in the Christian world on this, That Christianity is fit to be the religion of a nation, empire, or kingdom of this world; and that the right form of it (*i. e.* every man's own form) should be the prevailing form; and seeing the Bible is liable to so many false interpretations, the true sense of it ought to be expressed in a creed or confession, and established by law, so as the power of the nation of this world, where it is so established, may be employed in its defence, against all opposers. Every party in power is agreed to support the authority of the standard of faith by law established; and every party out of power is agreed, that the power which upholds the reigning confession, should not be employed against themselves. Even they who think forbearance to Dissenters the fittest way

way to support the established church, and who insist on the distinction betwixt Christ's kingdom and the kingdoms of this world, have not got so far clear yet of the thought of a worldly kingdom to Christians, as to agree with old Tertullian \* and Cyprian †, in what they say of patient suffering for Christianity, even when it may be in the power of Christians to repel force by force; for, it seems, the fathers understood the New Testament too literally, and with too much of a limitation to the times they lived in.

Perhaps you will think I have gone out of my way, to talk to you of the fathers; but now that I have got at them, you must allow me to observe, how much the Christian world is, at this day, agreed in rejecting Cyprian's sense and application of Mat. chap. vi. Luke chap. xii. & xvi. in his exhortation to alms-deeds §; and how unanimously they disapprove of the method of laying up for old age, and for our children, that he would there infer from the scriptures. The assembly's shorter catechism expresses the general sense of Christians on this head, in the answer to that question, *What is required in the eighth commandment?* The answer is, *The eighth commandment requireth the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others.* The text of the New-Testament brought to prove this, is 1 Tim. v. 8. which, it seems, did not cast up to Cyprian among the objections which he states to himself against his doctrine of almsgiving, though it be in every body's mouth now: it was pretty natural for him to think, that a text which served to press almsdeeds, could never be improved against almsgiving; and he could not imagine, at that time, that the neglecting to make rich in this world, by means that may be now accounted lawful, was a breach of the eighth commandment. It could not easily enter his mind, that Jesus Christ and  
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\* Apol. c. 36. 37. † Ad Demetrianum.  
§ De opere et eleemosynis.

his apostles, and their first followers, (who minded nothing less, than the procuring or furthering their wealth in this world, by any means), were all guilty of leading a life of disobedience to the eighth commandment, or of thieving: But if he had lived to see national Christianity, he had been of another mind, and would have used a less literal explication of the scriptures concerning alms, so as to have allowed Christians a little more liberty to see to themselves and their children in this world, by procuring and furthering their wealth: for how can a nation of this world stand, let be flourish, without any in it endeavouring, within the bounds of law, to make rich? It is true, some will allow, and highly commend, all the length Cyprian goes in the matter of alms, to them that please; as they will also readily agree with him on the merit he pleads in almsdeeds †. But, to bind almsgiving on all Christians, as he does by the gospel-law, and with so severe reflections on them that shift and neglect it, is what few will now admit of. Yet who doth not appeal to this Cyprian on the affair of the government and discipline of the church? And I may ask again, who is perfectly agreed with him even on that? Yea, I must tell you, it will not be easy to subscribe that same exhortation of his to almsdeeds, without renouncing the scripture-doctrine concerning merit: and indeed, if we have a mind to cleave to the scriptures, we must have the courage to dissent even from the fathers, in many cases; therefore, I assure you, I shall trouble you no more with them.

You must not think I have lost my way by this digression. I have another instance ready for you, to strengthen the suspicion, that any agreement there is among

‡ The ancient church sojourning in Rome, thought otherwise concerning merit, when Clemens wrote their minds to the Corinthians thus: *Καὶ ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἐν διαβολῆματι αὐτοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ κληθέντες. ἡ δὲ ἑαυτῶν δικαιοσύνη, οὐδὲ διὰ τῆς ἡμετέρας σοφίας, ἢ συνέσιωσιν, ἢ ἰουσιβίας, ἢ ἔργων οὐκ ἐπιτεργασάμεθα ἐν ἐπιότητι καρδίας· ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς πίστεως, δι' ἧς πάντας τὴν ἀπ' αἰῶνος ὁ πᾶντοκράτωρ θεὸς ἰδικαίωσεν.*

among contending parties of Christians, cannot be owing merely to the influence of the scripture, whereby true Christians must be united.

All churches and sects, in their disputes with one another about the sense of the scripture, are much agreed in pleading human authority, where they can plead it, and in magnifying the merit, the wisdom, and holiness of the doctor or doctors, or of the church whose name is the argument. Christians do not seem much afraid of any danger they may be in, of treating their Bible, and even the New-Testament, as they see the Jews did the Old. That people could not be blamed for the want of a zeal of the divine authority of the Old-Testament scriptures, or for the want of care to preserve them from corruption; but they made these scriptures of none effect to themselves, by setting up human authority in the interpretation of them; so that they put the Messiah to death as a deceiver of the people, and a blasphemer, because he was opposite to the interpretation that the most wise and godly rabbies and fathers had given of the scriptures. Though the Jews were thus far misled, by trusting to these interpreters, who, they thought, might well be supposed to know the mind of God in the scriptures, better than themselves, and better than Jesus and his disciples, who had never learned; yet Christians are not very apprehensive of being misled by the interpretations of Christian doctors, who are to be esteemed wiser and better than themselves; and they even seem to think the humility of the Jewish people, as to the interpretation of the scriptures, not unworthy of their imitation, with application to their own learned and godly interpreters, and to the tradition of their own fathers. Yea, though Protestants readily own, that the scriptures have been much perverted, and Christianity greatly corrupted, by means of the Christian leaders, (and they pleaded, at first, the authority of the scriptures, against the Romman church), yet every sect of them has now its rabbies  
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and fathers, with their traditions, and some of these are of note among different sects; and their interpretations pass as current for scripture, as ever the interpretations of the Jewish rabbies did among the Jews. The very infidels have the books they write, to seduce Christians, Protestants, from the belief of the scriptures, stuffed with authorities; so sensible are they of the deep impression that human authority has on the generality of Christian minds! They know how much they are devoted to the authority of their doctors; and so bring the very argument against Christianity, that the most part of Christians have for it.

In the very days of the apostles, the disciples were imposed on by teachers, who pretended to tell them the mind of the apostles; and this was the occasion of their beginning to write the New-Testament,\* that Christians might be thereby guarded against the frauds of tradition, and be able to answer the perverters of the gospel, as Jesus Christ answered Satan, *It is written again.* But after the gospel is fully committed to writing, with a severe prohibition of adding any thing to it, there is no keeping of Christians from the influence of tradition; and, in disputes about the sense of the written word of God, few are satisfied with that answer, *It is written again.* Human authority must cast the balance; and that determines the question to the generality of Christians.

I might add to this, That whatever differences there have been in doctrine, about signs and prophecies that are of a latter date than the finishing of the New-Testament scripture, the Christian world is pretty much agreed in shewing a regard to them; even they who profess that the signs wrought at the coming forth of the New-Testament, were a sufficient confirmation of the mission and testimony of those by whom it was given out, and that prophecy is completed in the New-Testament, and who profess to believe the scripture,

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\* Acts chap. xv.

where it says, *These things should cease*, are yet very ready to demand some regard to latter signs and prophecies, which they scruple not to plead in confirmation of their own form of Christianity; while, at the same time, they readily reject all signs and prophecies that may be pleaded in confirmation of any other opposite form; and there are few zealous Christians of any noted sect, upon whom this has no influence.

If you have not already forgot the purpose for which these instances have been brought, I will drive it on to you by another instance. You know the disputes that have been in the Christian world, about abstinence from certain kinds of meats, on certain days and seasons. Amidst these disputes, the Roman church herself, and all the churches separated from her, seem to be much at one about this, That the decree which looses us Gentiles from the yoke of Moses's law, (Acts xv. 28. 29.), leaves it lawful for us to eat things strangled and blood, and renders that as indifferent, and as little necessary to be abstained from, as any other food, from which the law of Moses obliged Israel to abstain; yet they hold, that the same decree makes it necessary for us to abstain from fornication, and from meats offered in sacrifice to idols of the Heathen: and, at the same time, it appears from their *Confessions of Faith*, how much they are of one accord in believing, that synods and councils, with the obligation of their decrees, are manifest from that passage.

Once more, while there have been sharp contentions, even unto blood, about the head of the nation this being the head of the national church, there has been a good agreement upon this, That Christian kings and rulers come in place of the kings and rulers of Israel, or of the heads of Zion, Micah iii. 10. 11.

From these, and such like instances, which will easily occur to you, it may appear, there is no reason to wonder, that the reviser of the catechism, and the remarker, who differ so widely in some points of the doctrine



doctrine of the catechisms, are yet so much of one mind, as to the usefulness of the catechism. It is true, the remarker shows much more regard to the authority of the authors of the catechism, than the reviser does; for he could not contend much more earnestly for the words of the Bible, than he doth for the words of his catechism, nor be much more apprehensive of the danger of any alteration of the Bible-words, than he is of the least change of the assembly's words. The reviser makes a little more free with the catechism, than with the scriptures; otherwise he would as easily have dropt Rom. chap. ix. as what the catechism says of God's decrees and the election; and he had as soon parted with the expressions of scripture, touching the corruption of our nature, the demerit of every sin, our justification by Christ's obedience, and our condemnation by the disobedience of Adam, as he parts with some of the words wherein these things are expressed in the catechism. But when he goes about to correct the catechism, he is so sensible of the influence of the assembly's authority on mens minds, that he sees need to inform us they were not infallible; yet his performance supposes their authority, and makes the best of it. After all, the usefulness of catechisms remains a fixed point; for, without that, the reviser's labour had been useless: his work is to make the catechism more generally useful. And, indeed, I am ready to believe, it will be the more generally agreeable to the world called Christian, the less agreeable it is to the Bible. But you must be no longer diverted from our question about the use of Catechisms.

Now, if we seek a foundation for catechisms in the scripture, we may indeed see there the catechiser, *κατηχίων*, and the catechised, *κατηχόμενος*, Gal. vi. 6. But if I should plead this for makers or explainers of the catechisms, and for repeaters or students of them, I would be doing the same, as if you would plead *παιροῦν* for one of our parishes, *ἐπισκοπος* for our parochial or diocesan bishops, *πρεσβυτεριον* for our classical presbytery

over kirk-fessions, ἐκκλησίαι τῶν ἁγίων for our churches, κλήροι or for the clergy: for we have got quite new things for the most of the old scripture names; yet our translators have not affixed any thing like the idea of catechisms to this word, either in this text, or in Luke i. 4. Rom. ii. 18. Acts xviii. 25. and xxi. 21. 24. 1 Cor. xiv. 19. The text stands thus in the English Bible, *Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.*

As to a teacher, who is not an apostle, his business, with respect to the word, or the scriptures, is not to compendise them, or give us a short abstract of them; but rather to explain them at large, or to tell the same things more largely by mouth; as may be gathered from Acts xv. 30. 31. 32. and Heb. xiii. 22. It can as little appear, that teachers were appointed for composing the set forms of teaching, which we call catechisms, as that men gifted for prayer were appointed to compose set forms of prayer, or exhorters to compose set homilies. It is true, there is a form of prayer set in the Bible; but that form is appointed by him who hath power to furnish us with the Spirit of prayer, and to enable us to say it with understanding, and suitable affections; and the inference would be too wide, from him to any other prayer-maker, as to the capacity to compose a proper form of prayer. There are likewise sermons set down in the Bible (as little copied after in our sermons, as the prayer is in our prayers); but these preachings were inspired, and are the rule of faith, which no sermons or homilies since composed, can pretend to. We have no catechism in the Bible; and though we had, as we have something like short sums of the first principles, we could not infer from thence, that uninspired men have power to compose and impose set forms of catechising. It must therefore be surprising, that they who are so much offended with set forms of prayer, as in the church of England, and set homilies for uniformity of preaching, as in Sweden, should

should be so much attached to a set form of catechising, which, through some dislike at the word *form*, they chuse to call *A directory for catechising*.

The teacher of the word is to explain the Bible, the words of the Bible, which is the word of God. He is not obliged by his office, he is not gifted by Jesus Christ, for explaining any other form of sound words, but that which was set by the inspired writers; and, by the way, I must say, it is intolerable impudence to apply 2 Tim. i. 13. to any form of uninspired mens setting. The teacher's business is to make the ignorant know the holy scriptures, in explaining them by themselves: for, as Protestants profess, the scripture explains itself. The Israelites were commanded to teach their children the words of the law, Deut. vi. 6. 7. And when the Levites went about to teach the people, they behoved to take the book of the law with them, and instruct them out of it, 1 Chron. xvii. 8. 9. 10. He must be cramped in the exercise of his gift of teaching the word, who is obliged to lay open the import of the words of a catechism, as well as of scripture-texts, and to accommodate the one to the other, while the catechumen is burdened with the addition of a human text to the divine, and with the accommodation.

This will be manifest, when you consider, that a catechism like the assembly's, is an extract of the principal theological theses from the polemic divinity, where the scriptures are metaphysically explained; and these theses are laid in the catechism by the logical art, in opposition to the several condemned errors and heresies, with as much condescension to the capacities of the vulgar, as the thing would admit of. Every one of these theses must be some way explained and proved by the scriptures; and the catechumen must get some notion of them, and of the foundation they have in the scriptures, if he be duly taught. But the catechist and catechumen both must be in great distress, where the catechism says what an ignorant person

person cannot perceive to be founded in the scripture, in matters of pure revelation. Here the catechumen must either give an implicit faith to the catechism, and rest in that, without the scripture (according to common practice), or do nothing.

The doctrine concerning the church, of which the scripture speaks a great deal, is a matter of pure revelation. The shorter catechism mentions it not, but, in opposition to the supposed error of those who deny a catholic visible church, in that question which is also intended against Ana baptism. The question is, "To whom is baptism to be administered?" *Answer*, "Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; but the infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptized." Here the teacher must make the ignorant understand the church to be the whole company of them that profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him, with their infants; and cannot confine this notion of the church, to any particular assembly or sect of Christians: he must shew his catechumen, that this church comprehends all on the globe, who profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him, with their infants; and that all congregations, or any kind of particular societies of these, however large, are but members of this catholic body. Next, he must let him understand, that this church is visible, by shewing him that it may be seen; and so give him the distinction betwixt this church which may be seen, and the invisible church which may not now be seen, and is only believed to be. And thus he is put to the trouble of shewing his scholar a church in the scripture, carefully abstracted from any particular society of Christians, and from the whole company of the regenerated redeemed elect; which, you may think, must cost him some pains: yet this is not all; he must persuade him, that a church, which neither he, nor any other man ever saw, or can see, is the true visible church, where-  
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of all particular churches are but members. And, if I mistake not, (as I am very ready to do upon a point so very metaphysical), the catechumen, if he would be defended from the error on this head, must understand, that the particular visible society of Christians, whereof he is a member, is a church, and must be so called, for this good reason, because it is a member of that general visible body, the church: and for that same reason, he may be persuaded, that he himself is a church, *viz.* because he is a part or member of it. And, on the other hand, he must perceive, that the catholic body is visible, because the member of that body, of which he is a member, is visible; yea, and because he himself is visible.

I dare say you will think, the authors of the catechism had done as well, to have let the catechist and catechumen alone with their Bible on this subject. No doubt they wanted to preserve them from a dangerous error, by expressing a thing clearly and shortly to them, which seemed intended, in the scriptures, about the church, and which even the catechist, if left entirely to the scripture, might not perceive. But, if the first principles, which are the proper subject, especially of a shorter catechism, be not so obvious, nor so clearly expressed in the scripture, as the assembly of divines could express them, the scripture must be a dark book indeed! and it must follow from this, that the scripture is not so good a preservative from error, as the catechism, or the interpretation of a synod or council; upon which we ought therefore to depend, as on the clearest and safest rule of faith.

Yet you find Paul saying to Timothy, *From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* I suppose the scriptures that he knew from a child, were those of the Old-Testament, which were darker than the explication of them in the New, that Timothy learned from Paul, and that is now completely written. But, it seems, the catechism  
makers

makers think their catechisms more clear for children, and more capable to instruct them, than even the New-Testament scripture itself. Whatever they think, I cannot persuade myself, that you will impute heterodoxy or error to this proposition that I would gather from that passage of Paul's epistle to Timothy, with other texts, and from the nature of the thing, *viz.* "No words are capable to tell the mind of God, so shortly and clearly at once, to young or old, to learned or unlearned, wise or foolish, as the words of the scriptures themselves." Now, if this be the use of catechisms, to give a child, or an ignorant person, a shorter and more clear and distinct view of the scripture-doctrine, than is given in the scripture itself, you will not be able to convince me of their usefulness, till you persuade me, by the scriptures, that my proposition is erroneous.

And would not a child's memory, think you, be as well bestowed upon passages of scripture, as first upon some Mother's Catechism, and then on the Shorter Catechism, and after that on the Larger, or some large catechism explaining the Shorter? Or, would you, were it in your choice, have your child's memory filled with the words of men, or with the words of God? Do not think I am here any way pleading for a catechism drawn up in scripture-words: I have seen such catechisms, where all the answers to the questions were in scripture-words; and yet I found the scripture so perverted, in the application of it to the questions, that I could call the catechism nothing else, but an imitation of Satan saying to Christ, when tempting him, *For it is written.* As this did not move our Lord, in the least, to depart from the scripture, as his defence (for his answer was, *It is written again*); so this imitation of Satan should, in nowise, move us to depart from the words of the scripture, to words of mens framing, as a preservative and defence against error, or to depart from our Lord's example, in his answer to the tempter. If we be afraid, lest  
**our**

our children should be misled by perverse applications of scripture-words, I am confident we cannot take a better way to fortify them against this, than to endeavour to have their minds so stocked with a treasure of scripture-words, as they may be in a readiness to answer, *It is written again.* And, if they be trained up, at the same time, in a regard to the authority of the holy scriptures, in opposition to human authority, this will be the best mean to secure them, not only against errors that have been in the world already, or that we may have in our view at present, but against all errors that may cast up afterward, or all new shapes wherein the old may again appear: for, what can be called an error in Christianity, but that which is disagreeable to the scriptures? And, if the scriptures be not a sufficient rule to direct us against error in religion, can the deficiency be made up by any human writing? When Paul forewarns the Ephesian elders of false teachers, and of some among themselves arising, after his departure, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them, and calls them to take heed to themselves, and to all the flock, he commends them to God, and to the word of his grace, even to the whole counsel of God, which he had declared to them (now written to us in the scriptures); and with this he leaves them, as a sufficient antidote against all future errors, sufficient to build them up in the faith, and to give them an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. And what more could we desire for our children? Or, how shall a young man learn to cleanse his way, but by taking heed thereto, according to God's word?

Take an ignorant person with a catechism, and another of equal capacity and inclination to learn, with the Bible itself; and by the time that the one shall be able to repeat his catechism, and tolerably understand it, and see the justness of the proofs, (for without that he is trained to depend merely on human

authority), the other shall be able to give a tolerable account of the *scripture-history*, with the character of Jesus, as drawn in the *gospel*; and copied, as far as it is imitable, by the first Christians, and of the first principles of the oracles of God, or of the doctrine of Christ, and of the evidence brought in the scripture for the truth of them; with this advantage, that he will be habituated to God's words, and ways of speaking, and a regard to them, instead of mens; and stand fairer, all his days, for improvement in true scripture-knowledge, and his knowledge will be more practical, than that of the poor student of the theses of polemical divinity.

A catechism is designed for the instruction of the ignorant in the first principles of the oracles of God; it exhibits milk to babes. And, if the Assembly's Shorter Catechism was designed to set forth these first principles in the shortest, easiest manner, and make them more clear to the capacities of children, and of the ignorant, than they are in the New Testament, it would seem, that they who have composed catechisms for children, as introductions to it, and to prepare them for it, are of opinion, that it doth not answer this design; and is, therefore, so far useless, as their introductory catechisms are useful. And certainly, they have not thought the Shorter Catechism clear enough, who saw it needful to compose a catechism by way of an explanation upon it. The pains taken in composing these introductory and explanatory catechisms, upon the Assembly's, with the general reception these have met with, is a fact that sufficiently manifests the common opinion, that the Assembly's Catechism doth not sufficiently answer the end for which it is supposed to be designed, whatever men may profess to the contrary. Or, you may think, this multiplication of catechisms to the vulgar, by those who thus seek to share in the great regard paid by them to such composures, looks also very like a plot upon them, to steal them away from  
searching



searching the scriptures, by filling up, with catechisms, the little time they have for the perusal of their Bible. The assembly of divines themselves, who composed the Shorter Catechism, for such as are of weaker capacity, have also composed a larger one, for such as have made some proficiency in the knowledge of the grounds of religion; and these are directories for catechising both the weaker and stronger. Thus, they have taken sufficient care, that all the time the vulgar can have for study and search after knowledge, should be filled up with catechisms, and that the Bible should not be accessible to them, but by their interpretation: for, till they get through this long tract of *catechising*, (whereby they may be sufficiently prepossessed), they make nothing of the Bible, but as it is quoted and applied in the catechisms. Yea, and we see care taken, in the assemblies for worship on the Lord's day, that the vulgar should hear only so much of the scripture read to them, as the preachers explain; and, indeed, they are so trained to depend on the interpretation of the clergy, that they do not care to hear any more of the scripture, but what is explained to them; and the explication is more popular than the text; so that our people are far from needing that exhortation the apostle gave to Christians in his day, *And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation; for I have written a letter unto you in few words.* The very children, in learning to read, must first read the catechism, before they be admitted to read the New Testament. And thus, I fear, our vulgar was effectually trained into dependence on the church's interpretation, and, by means of teaching them knowledge, as effectually kept from seeing the scripture with their own eyes here, as in the Roman church.

A catechism composed by fallible men, is not only their own sense of the scriptures, but it also determines what are the truths of the scriptures, proper for the ignorant to be instructed in; and as some

things must be left out, the catechism-makers, not only prepossess the ignorant with their interpretation, but are likewise judges for them, what they must know, and what they may well remain ignorant of, without hurt to their souls. The scriptures were written, not only for the wise and learned, but full as much for the unwise and ignorant, who are therefore bound to know as much of them, as they are capable to know, by reading or hearing, by meditating on them with prayer, besides attendance on the gift of pastors and teachers: and therefore, this cutting and carving on the counsel of God, in composing a set form of knowledge for the ignorant, must be a very hard, as well as a dangerous task. A pastor or teacher, that has the daily inspection of the vulgar, will find a variety of capacities, and a great variety of occasions of insinuating the words of God upon their minds, and see the greatest need of continual dependence on the Author of the scriptures, for ability rightly to divide the word of truth among them. But, according to the idea I have of one who labours in rightly dividing the word of God among the people, it cannot but appear very ridiculous to him, to carve a common standard of knowledge, out of the scriptures, for all the variety of weaker capacities, in all the variety of situations wherein they can be placed, for receiving *scripture-knowledge*.

I have before given you an instance, wherein I alledge the Shorter Catechism goes far beyond the capacity of the vulgar, and much farther than the scripture goes on that point; and seeing there is no lack of metaphysics in the catechism, you will easily think of more instances. You may find some things mentioned there, that are scarce named in the Bible; but several things neglected, or negligently treated, that are very much taught and inculcated in the New Testament, and therefore most necessary to be known. Take these instances.

The

*The kingdom of heaven*, which was the great subject of the preaching of John Baptist in the very dawn of the gospel, and of our Lord and his apostles, their preachings, yea, and of his dying testimony.

*The two covenants*, described and distinguished, Gal. iv. and Heb. chap. viii.

*The new commandment*, John xiii. 34. 35. on which our Lord preached his last sermon to his disciples, and which is the subject of the whole first epistle of John, and the New Testament is filled with it.

*The doctrine of self-denial, and bearing the cross after Christ*, which is the lesson he teaches all that would come after him, and which the apostles continually teach in all their writings, and recommend by the example of Jesus Christ, and by their own copying after him, and make it essential to the character of a Christian.

*The pure and undefiled religion*, which is described by James. *The fruits meet for repentance*, which are required by Christ's forerunner\*, and much pressed by himself and his apostles, and much practised by the first Christians.

*The character of Jesus Christ*, which is drawn from the life, by the four evangelists, and set forth continually in all the writings of the apostles, and which ought to be imprinted on the heart of every Christian, who ought to be intimately acquainted with the nature of that obedience or righteousness whereby we are justified, and with that pattern to which we must be conformed. And seeing the New Testament takes so much pains on the character of church-members, and gives us the character of church-officers, and particularly of the minister of the word, once and again, every church-member ought to be very well instructed in these things likewise.

However great the importance of these things might be reckoned by the first Christians in the situation wherein they were placed, the authors of the  
catechism

\* Matth. iii. 8. and Luke iii. 8.—11.

catechism have not, it seems, found themselves, by their situation and circumstances, much concerned to think on them, or to train up their church-members in the knowledge of them. A directory for catechising a whole nation of this world, subjected to the dominion of the clergy, (which is the thing that every sect of catechism-makers would be at), must abstract from many of the words of God that were absolutely necessary for the people whom God took out of the nations for his name, when he first visited them with the gospel. The New Testament itself would be still the fittest book for such a people; but a catechism setting forth as much of the scriptures as is judged meet to be the confession of a nation of this world, and in such a manner as is thought most fit to be confessed by such a nation, is most proper for national Christians.

The explication of the ten words in the catechism, is very abstract from the difference betwixt the state of the church of Israel, and the state of the New-Testament church, and is accommodated to any nation of this world, as well as to the nation of Israel. It is true, the fourth commandment is explained so as to oblige all nations, not to observe the sabbath there enjoined, but the first day of the week, the sabbath-day that remains to the people of God; but, as they could not avoid taking notice of the change of the sabbath, they thus took care to justify the compelling of the nations to keep the sabbatism of the people of God, by virtue of the law given on Sinai to the nation of Israel. The Gentiles, who had not the law written to them on tables of stone, are not to be judged by that law, but by the law written on their hearts, by which, and not by the law of Moses, the apostle convinces them of sin. But he convinces the Jews of sin by the law that was delivered to them on Sinai, and written on the two tables: for, when God entered into the peculiar co-  
venant.

venant with the family of Jacob, which he redeemed from Egypt, as his nation and kingdom, separated from all the nations of the earth unto him, as his peculiar people, he summed up their duty in the ten words, which were the words of the covenant. All the statutes and judgements he gave them, were his explications upon the ten words, in a suitableness to the peculiar relation betwixt him and them, so that they were bound by the ten words, to the observation of all these statutes and judgements, and disobedience to any of them was disobedience to the law written on the tables. The sanctuary, with all the ordinances of divine worship thereunto belonging, directed Israel in the observation of the first table, and without these, they could not obey that table, as it was delivered to them. And all those judgements which men have called the judicial law, were not only a directory to Israel, in the observation of the second table, but likewise directed the government and discipline of the nation upon the whole ten words: for thereby, cutting off from among the people, or death, was appointed for the presumptuous neglect of circumcision and the passover, and for the profanation of the instituted worship, and of the sabbath. The Lord Jesus Christ, the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, the mediator of the new covenant, hath abolished the peculiar covenant with Israel; and the application of the law to the peculiar state of that nation, with all the explications and directions to the observation of it, that were adapted to the peculiar state of that nation, and suited to the discovery of God made to that people, of which Christ came, according to the flesh, and which was a figure of the true Israel; and he hath laid the law in the new covenant, in a suitableness to the discovery of God therein made, and to the state of the true Israel, God's heavenly nation, chosen, redeemed, and called, and born again of the incorruptible seed  
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of the word, out of every nation of this world, without difference. And this is a new kingdom of God, to which he stands related by a new covenant, it has a new heavenly sanctuary, a new priesthood, altar, sacrifice, throne of grace, and new ordinances of divine service, or institutions of worship, belonging to it, and a new sabbath or day of rest, as well as the new rest into which Jesus Christ is entered; a new commandment of peculiar love among the new brotherhood, the true Israel, and a new government, exercised by Jesus Christ, the judge, lawgiver, and king of the kingdom of heaven, who died and rose again, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and the living; with a new discipline to be exercised in his name, in the churches of his brethren on the earth, which he hath instituted, Matth. chap. xviii. & 1 Cor. chap. v. and appointed to be done in the closest dependence on himself, and without any dependence on any authority or power but his alone. Now, if the statutes and judgements, directing the worship of Israel, and the discipline of that kingdom of God, were the explication and application of the ten words of the covenant made with that nation, then certainly the laws of the new covenant written on the hearts of the heavenly nation, cannot be explained or applied, nor can the people of God be duly directed in the observation of them, without the things just now mentioned, which are plain enough in the New Testament. Thus, the design of the New Testament, in applying the law to the kingdom of heaven, and to the state of the subjects of that kingdom, sojourning among the nations of this world, is vastly different from the design of the catechism in applying the words of the covenant with the nation of Israel, to a nation or kingdom of this world, brought under the Christian name. And, if the New-Testament way of explaining the law be not clear and plain enough, the catechism is very far from serving to make it clearer; and the same thing may be said of all  
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all interpretations of it, that serve to accommodate it to the state of national Christians.

The assembly's account of the institutions of worship, is not placed in their explication of the law, though they make some general mention of them there. Give me leave to say, their account of the ordinances of worship, as well as of the grace and duty of faith, and of repentance, is not so well placed; for, whereas the apostle Paul, after he had convinced all men of sin, and of their subjection to God's judgement by the law, which they were under, directs them immediately to the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is imputed to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly; the assembly, after concluding their explication of the law, with a declaration, that all are sinners against it daily, and that every sin deserves God's wrath and curse eternally, instantly give us this question, *What doth God require of us, that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us for sin?* and, in answer thereto, point out the grace or duty of faith, afterward defined, with that of repentance, and the diligent use of the ordinances of worship, which they call the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption. I would not have you here to think, I am going about to charge the assembly of divines, with shifting in the graces of faith and repentance, as there defined, and the diligent use of these ordinances, to the room and place that is only due to the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to us, and we receive by faith alone: for, their definition of justification, and their *Confession of Faith*, on that head, clear them of all charge that can be brought against them, of having any such bad design. But the reviser, who thought fit to make some alteration in the question on justification, has seen meet to make none in the point I am now upon; and you will not help the ignorant, from being ready to think, upon this con-

nection, as they see it standing in their catechism, that this saying faith and repentance, with the diligent observance of these ordinances, will deliver them from God's wrath and curse due to them for sin, and bring them into favour with God, and so to go about, by these things, to establish a righteousness of their own: yea, further, they will be very ready to think, that seeing no man is now able to keep the law, God requires of them, in lieu of the obedience of the law, that they seek after these graces, faith and repentance, in the diligent use of these outward means of grace, or ordinances of worship; and, if they do this, God requires no more of them, and they have done their duty. That men are very liable to deceive themselves with such imaginations as these, is manifest from what our Lord says of some, who will plead thus for themselves before him, *Thou hast taught in our streets, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, we have prophesied in thy name, &c.* However well the assembly meant in this matter, I dare say, a catechist, who wants to keep his catechumens from this grand, but very common mistake, will have hard work with him, on this part of his catechism, to keep him by the words of his catechism, and, at the same time, to preserve him from the mistake.

But, if the ignorant may be led into this dangerous error, beyond the assembly's design, by their way of introducing the ordinances in the catechism, I fear this is managed to the best advantage, for the authority of the clergy, in the answer to that question, *How is the word made effectual to salvation?* Where, I must say, they have taken more care of their own authority, as preachers, than of the authority of God, in the preaching of his inspired prophets and apostles, written in the holy scriptures, to be read and heard by us, Luke xvi. 27.—31. Their answer to the question, is, *The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and*  
of



of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation.

The reviser of the Catechism here drops *but especially*, and says, *the reading and the preaching*. This was modest enough. I could have forgiven him, though he had turned the *but especially* upon the reading. But the remarker upon his performance, is very angry with him here, for two reasons.

*First*, Because he thinks the reviser sets the ordinance of preaching on a level with the bare reading of the word.

It seems, this remarker thinks not the reading, or bare reading, as he says, of the word, an ordinance; yea, it is his opinion, that the preaching of ordinary uninspired ministers of the word, is debased too much, in being put on a level with the bare preaching of the apostles and prophets in the scriptures: for, though the scripture sets the gift of the inspired ministers of the word above that of pastors and teachers \*, he would rather reverse that order, than alter a word of his catechism, or derogate, in the least, from the high regard that may be paid by any to the preaching of its doctrine. And whatever the scripture have to say for itself, on this head, he has the people fully of his opinion here. \*They love not to look on the apostles and prophets, without the cloathing of the interpretation of their teachers: and, I dare say, there is no part of their catechism they understand better, or conform themselves more to, than this. They expect little benefit by the reading of the word, in comparison with what they look for from a solemn discourse of a noted preacher: and, therefore, you see the most religious of them running together, with the greatest expectations, twenty, or thirty, and many more miles, to a solemn occasion of preaching. I call it preaching, because, you know, if any of them go to the sacrament-table, the chief thing they lay themselves open to there, is the fervent discourse or

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preaching

\* Eph. iv. 11. 1 Cor. xii. 28.

preaching of the Server of the table; and, as it is ordinarily some impression made upon them by the minister's preaching that leads them to it, they chuse to go to their darling minister's table. But call them to hearken to their Bible, (which, through God's good providence toward them, is every where at hand), they will readily answer you, as the eunuch answered Philip, when he was reading the Old Testament, and wanted the New-Testament revelation to explain it, which Philip came to give him, How can I understand what is read, except the ministers guide me? And the clergy, very tamely, suffer the people to hold their sermons in the same place, as to the whole scriptures, wherein the New Testament stands to the Old. Yet, you will say, the preachings of our Lord and his apostles, in the New Testament, may compare, as to simplicity, clearness, and suitedness to vulgar capacities, (as far as the things of God can be suited to them), with many of their sermons. But, if the honest man, whom you would advise to expect more from his Bible, and some less from his preachers, and to take some more pains on his Bible, should not be so well versed in the scriptures, as to answer you in the words of the eunuch, it is ten to one but he would, Avoid you Satan, and tell you, our catechism says, *The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means, &c.* And, no doubt, you have observed, that when they have not their own preachers at hand, to hear the gospel from their mouth, they think themselves better entertained with the reading of their sermons, wherewith they take care to furnish them in plenty, than with the company of bare or naked apostles and prophets. Yet the apostle says, *We are of God, (and they instructed it): he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the Spirit of error.*

Next,

Next, the remarker is of opinion, that the alteration made on this question by the reviser, serves to derogate from the public worship.

Here he speaks, as if the minister's preaching, and the hearing of him preach, were the main thing in the public worship, and as if the reading and hearing of God's own words in the scriptures were no part of that worship. And though the Larger Catechism own, that the word may be read publicly to the congregation, according to Deut. xxxi. 9.—13. and Neh. chap. viii. and ix. yet the general practice, and the opinion of the vulgar, agrees fully with him here also. The chief thing the people look after in the public worship, is the minister's preaching; and the ministers are very far from discouraging them in this regard they pay to their preachings, above the preachings of the prophets and apostles, in the scriptures: for, they do not take up their time in the public worship, with the bare reading of the word; they take care to fill up that time, as much as may be, with their own discourses, which the catechism makes, and the people believe to be, the especial mean of salvation. While things are in this situation, and the preachings of the apostles and prophets, in the scriptures, are not so much regarded among those that make up the worshipping congregations, as the minister's preachings, I will not deny, that the reviser's alteration of the words of the catechism here, may possibly serve to derogate a little from the public worship, and to slacken the diligence of the people's attendance upon it: but, as this is a lamentable state of things, I must think, it would no way derogate from the public worship, in a congregation of such people as inclined to pay due regard to the words of God, if the *especially* should be turned to the side of the reading: for, though this alteration in the public worship would derogate from the honour or worship of the clergy, it would tend **the more to the honour of God, and answer much better**

better to the end for which he committed his word to writing.

When the apostles began first to write the New Testament, they gave this reason for it, *For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath-day*, Acts xv. 20. 21. And this, compared with Col. iv. 16. 1 Thess. v. 27. 1 Tim. iv. 13. 2 Pet. i. 15. manifestly shows, that the scriptures were written, in order to be read in the churches, or worshipping assemblies of Christians; that so, when the apostles should be removed, they might still be heard preach in their writings, as our Lord says of Moses and the prophets, *They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.—If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead*, Luke xvi. 27.—31. The scriptures that are cited in the proof of the answer to this question of the catechism, speak of the preaching of the apostles, which we have now only in their writings: and, therefore, these very scriptures serve to show, that the Spirit of God maketh especially the reading of the word an effectual mean of salvation. And considering how the Reformation from Popery was brought about, by means of the translating and reading of the scriptures to the people in the vulgar languages, is it not a base, ungrateful requital of this goodness of God, in the Protestant clergy, to establish the authority of their own preachings, upon the debasement of the reading of the scriptures?

From all this, we may see, that catechisms have been useful to advance the authority of the clergy above the scriptures, and so to set them in the temple of God, to shew themselves as God, exalting themselves above him: for, what less can be said, when we see them exalting their words above his, and telling us, if it should be otherwise, that would derogate from the public worship?

As

As we have been trained up in a way of thinking agreeable to this question of the catechism, and, I am apprehensive, you may be fortifying yourself against me on this subject by experience, my bias against authorities shall not hinder me from quoting a passage from a famous preacher, and a great observer of the influence of the word upon himself and others\*, wherein I have a fair confession in favour of what I have been pleading for. The passage is thus: "One reason why the gospel is so unsuccessful at this day, is, because the simplicity of preaching is neglected. A due application of scripture is best preaching; for confirming which, it is remarkable, that though God may make use of the words of man, in letting in to the meaning of it, yet it is the very scripture-word whereby he ordinarily conveys the comfort or advantage of whatever sort; it is this tool of God's own framing, that works the effect."

The faith or belief of the gospel of Christ, whereby we are saved, is more clearly and plainly described in the New Testament, than in any catechism; and an ignorant person may have a far better notion of that grace, by reading or hearing the New Testament, than by the catechisms. These differ much in their definitions of it, as you may see by comparing one of the Old Catechisms, framed about the time of the Reformation from Popery, with the Assembly's Shorter Catechism. The definition of faith in that shorter catechism, is the darkest of all, and doth not so much as make any express mention of that which the New Testament calls faith; and, by this, as well as by the odd descriptions of it, and of its various acts, in sermons, the minds of the people have been so confounded about it, that they know not well what notion to frame of it. They suppose the truth of the gospel, in their exercises about faith, in such a way, as their minds lie not open to the influence of the evidence of its truth; but that which  
they

\* Mr Th. Halliburton's Memoirs, p. 141. 142.

they aim at in this matter, is to be made to feel in themselves, or to do that, (be what it will) that is imported in *receiving and resting on Christ*; and this is what they look for in hearing the ministers preach and offer Christ to them.

When you see these words in the definition of faith, *As he is offered to us in the gospel*, you will be ready to think, this is the gospel written to us in the scriptures; but, if you compare this, with the question that speaks of the efficacy of the preaching of the word, above the bare written gospel, you may reasonably suspect the authors of the catechism would have us think, that to believe in Jesus Christ, is to receive and rest on him as he is offered in the minister's preachings. You may vindicate them here, if you please, by their saying plainly, in the same catechism, That the scriptures are the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God; and that they teach what we are to believe concerning him, and what he requires of us. And this might be sustained in their behalf, if there had never been such a thing in the world, and among divines, as professing the truths of the gospel, and, at the same time, maintaining opinions and practices that serve to overthrow them. I have heard the Calvinist doctrine, and an Arminian application in the same sermon. The very Roman church holds the great articles of the Christian doctrine. And, I own to you, I am jealous of the clergy, where their own authority is any way concerned, let them profess in words, as much as his Holiness, when he calls himself the Servant of the Servants of God.

But however well the assembly of divines may have meant here, the people that are best instructed out of the catechism, take it thus; and in this they are much encouraged by their chief leaders among the ministry. There is nothing more ordinary with these demagogues, than to assume to themselves, all that the apostles say of themselves and their office,

in these texts, Rom. x. 13.—17. 2 Cor. v. 18. 19. 20. They put on all the airs of apostles, that they can take to themselves, without their personal qualifications, and their power to instruct their commission; and, without these, the people are willing to regard them according to their high pretensions. And how then can they but think, that to believe on Christ, is to receive him as they offer him? It were to be wished, that these ministers did but study the qualities and character of an ordinary minister of the word, described in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, and endeavour to recommend themselves thereby to the people. But their authority does not stand on such a foundation; for, as it will not bear examination by the scriptures, they decline to submit to such a trial, or even to condescend to satisfy scruplers, as the apostles themselves did not refuse to do. The following copy of a letter I received lately, gives you an instance of this.

S I R,

“**S**OME few days ago, I had occasion to meet with a clergyman of note in this place, performing his annual task of visiting the families of his charge. I was looked upon as a member of the family, and accordingly exhorted. He concluded with a solemn declaration to us all in general, of his ambassadorship, his being sent of God, to bring the word of salvation to the house, &c. I was not a little puzzled to know what for an ambassador this was, who pretended to bring me the word of salvation; and, you need not wonder, seeing it was my opinion, that the ambassadors who brought us that word, had long ago completed their embassy, and left their message written to us, to prevent our being imposed on. Accordingly, (with due deference, I hope) I proposed my scruple to him; he quickly interrupted me, and turned off with an Apage. Now, Sir, do you think

that Christ, the true sent of God, or his apostles, would have treated one that questioned their commission, after this manner? I shall be glad to hear your mind, since the Reverend gentleman himself thinks it not worth his while.

I am,

S I R,

Your humble servant."

There can be nothing more unlike the first Christians, let be the apostles, than the disposition of such ministers, with respect to the cross. The following distich was written on occasion of a minister of this kind, his applying that motto to himself,

*Sub pondere crescit.*

In English.

He grows under the weight of his burden.

*Nota,* That minister, indeed, had once the burden of the church's censure in his offer, but refusing to stoop to take it on, it is since quite removed out of his reach; but still enjoying all the temporal profits of his post, he is now become the very darling of the populace.

*Crescere nil mirum est sub pondere honoris et æris,  
Tale tuum prorsus jam tibi pondus erat;  
Quod mirum est latet hic, sub pondere crescere crucis,  
Hoc quid sit sed adhuc, non tibi scire datur.*

Englised thus:

Beneath the weight of wealth and fame,  
To grow, appears no wonder:  
This, hitherto, is all the weight  
You have been pressed under.

But



But still the mystery lies here,  
 Under the cross to grow;  
 This by experience as yet  
 You've not been made to know.

The people who hold such ministers as apostles, account their preachings the gospel; and since you and I knew the world, their gospel was the preaching of a minister that zealously pressed personal covenanting; and then it came to be the preaching of those ministers who refused the oath of abjuration, and after that, it was the preaching of such ministers as contended for the doctrine of the Marrow, and set forth every man's right to be persuaded that Christ is his; and there behoved to be likewise a zealous cry against professor Simson, and against the church, for not deposing and excommunicating him. But now the gospel is the testimony to the liberty said to be purchased by Christ, for the majority of the heads of families in every parish, to elect the parish-minister, in opposition to patronages, and to the call of the majority of heritors and elders; and a cry against the delusion of Independency belongs to this gospel; but a testimony to the solemn league and covenant, or a prayer for the revival of the covenanted work of Reformation, has been all along inseparable from the gospel of such ministers and their people. Now, to receive and rest on Christ, as offered in this gospel, especially at sacraments, and in discourses at the sacrament-table, (for all these things have had their place there), is, with many people, the saving grace whereby they receive and rest on Christ, as he is offered to them in the gospel.

I am far from thinking, that the authors of the catechism had all these things in view, when they spake of Christ's being offered in the gospel; but, as I said before, they could not but have the minister's preaching especially in their eye, and especially the preaching of those ministers who should pursue

the design of the solemn league and covenant; for the catechism is a part of the uniformity therein designed. Accordingly, the people look for the right offer of Christ from these ministers, who would appear to them to adhere most strictly to the covenanted Reformation, though they live upon the present establishment, perfectly inconsistent with it. But, if their character be found on this point among the people, and they take care to make proper mention of the present darling article, they may borrow as much of their sermons as they please from Episcopal and Independent writers, and take a good note from a Popish commentator; yea, let them say with, or against the apostles, and cry down brotherly love and charity, as much as ever they cried it up, and meddle in politics, encourage seditions and tumults, and study to distress the government of the nation, as much as ever the apostles studied to avoid these things, all will be received by their people as good gospel.

The use of the Shorter Catechism, as a part of the uniformity intended in the covenant, is to afford the ignorant, and the weaker sort of the nation, a form of their confession of Christ; because they also must have their share in the national profession of Christianity. In this view, it comes in place of the confession of the name of Christ, whereof the scripture speaks, and serves to set it aside. That confession was produced by the teaching of the Bible, and the hearers made it out themselves, from what they heard; they were persuaded by the evidence of the gospel working on their minds, gladly received the scripture-doctrine and exhortation, and confessed it freely themselves: but, a catechism supplies the ignorant with a confession, which, getting by rote, they who were never influenced by the gospel to confess Christ, may as easily make, as those who are, and is accepted as such, by the church that claims a peculiar property in the catechism. And, as it is a part of the foresaid uniformity, it prevents inquiry into the scriptures,

scriptures, and obliges all, from their childhood, to embrace this set of principles; as the true scripture-doctrine; whereas, the confession of Christianity is what a man himself gathers from the scripture, or from teaching in it, and not a form gathered to his hand, and repeated by him.

Thus, you have my first attempt on the usefulness of catechisms. If you find me lame on the subject, impute it to the newness of the question, or to my weakness, or to my taking the wrong side of the question, as you please: but I have my aim, if you shall think thoroughly on the subject; which, if you do, it shall not displease me that as many subjects cast up to you, as you see touched in this rhapsody of mine; and it will be a great favour, if you shall please to offer any thing on the question.

I am,

S. I. R.,

December, 1735.

Your, &c.

The

The Use of CATECHISMS further considered.

With a more full Account of GOD'S AMBASSADORS;  
of SAVING FAITH, and of the FAITH of DEVILS.

In a Letter to a Friend.

*Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard  
of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus,  
2 Tim. i. 13.*

[First published in the year 1737.]

S I R,

**M**Y letter to you, on the use of catechisms, has made many people very angry, and I hear it has been warmly resented from the pulpit; yet, nobody, so far as I know, undertakes to answer it: not because, they will say, there would be any difficulty in that; but, because it is not worth while. And, why then, (think I) should it be worth the while of *solemn men* to be so angry at it?

I could not be surpris'd to find the popular clergy, with their devotees, shewing their zeal against the letter, seeing it touches their authority in a tender point, and in a manner unexpected, and more free than they have been accustomed to. But I have been listening to hear the grounds they give out for the offence they have taken at it; and, so far as I have heard, they come to this, "That the letter not only sets aside the catechism, (the mean of enlightening this land with the light of the gospel) but also makes the ordinary ministry of the word useless; and, further, it sets up the faith of devils in opposition to true saving faith."

I understand them well; and, indeed, I could not expect more ingenuity in an accusation from them. But the charge, as it stands, is very heavy; and, if  
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it could be made good, would infer the censure due to *darkness arising from the pit*, as some have called it, in opposition to the light of the gospel that is come into the world.

But it can never appear, that, chusing to follow the light that shines in the Bible itself, without any catechism, manifests that love to darkness, rather than the light, for which men will be damned. Nor can it be proved, that the holding fast of that form of sound words which was set by the inspired writers, without any form of uninspired mens setting, is a hellish opposition to the light of the gospel that is come into the world.

We are allowed, by our most approved interpreter of the Revelation, to say, that the kingdom of Antichrist came with darkness arising out of the bottomless pit; and that was a kingdom of clergy, or churchmen, compared to locusts\*. Shall we then say, that this kingdom came, by holding fast the Bible itself, without any creed or catechism? Shall we receive it as gospel from our pulpit, that this kingdom of darkness came, by holding fast the form of sound words, that was taught by the apostles, in opposition to all other forms?

And, as little can it appear, that the letter makes the preaching of ordinary ministers of the word useless; except we shall hold it proved by such arguing as this, *viz.*

“The letter on catechisms sets the gift of the inspired ministers of the word, above that of pastors and teachers who are not inspired: therefore, it makes the gift of these pastors and teachers useless.

“The author will not allow Rom. x. 14. 15. to be meant of their preachings, and grudges them the title of ambassadors, which he appropriates to the apostles: therefore, he makes their ministry and their preachings useless.

“He

\* Durham on the Rev. chap. ix.

“He will not allow their sermons to be the rule of faith, yea, nor to be a more especial mean of faith, than the preaching of Christ and his apostles in the scriptures: and, therefore, (whatever he acknowledges concerning pastors and teachers, and their work\*) he makes their preaching as useless as he makes catechisms.”

As this way of reasoning plainly tells us what our clergy would have, so a man who is willing to admit these consequences, is ready to pay them all the regard that they themselves can wish.

The moving of a scruple against the application of Rom. x. 14. 15. and 2 Cor. v. 20. and specially of the title *ambassador*, to ordinary uninspired ministers of the word, has raised a great cry. But, considering the use our clergy have made of that title, there is no reason that we should yield it to them, unless they can fairly claim it by the New Testament. The idolatrous church of Rome claimed the title of priests to her clergy; but this was justly rejected by our fathers, together with the sacrifice of the mass: yet our clergy, when they mean to reflect on any that shall pretend to act as ministers of the gospel, and to administer baptism and the Lord's supper, without their mission; never fail to use this text for themselves, and against such invaders of their property, Heb. v. 4. 5. *And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God as Aaron: So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest!* Our fathers denied, that the claim of this distinguishing title to the clergy had any ground in the New Testament, notwithstanding any thing that might be alledged from 1 Cor. ix. 13. 14.; yet this text is insisted on, as the grand foundation for the life our ministers have by their stipends, which they plead the *Christian nation* should afford them; even as the priests who attended at the altar, were maintained  
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\* Let. on catech. above, p. 76. 77. 84. 91.

by the offerings of the nation of Israel at that altar \*. How far the title *ambassador*, assumed by the clergy, has been connected with the worship paid to them by the nations, or whether there be any idolatry in the religious homage they receive, I leave it to you to consider. But let us see if their claim to this title be any better founded in the New Testament, than is the claim to that of *priest*.

On this subject, you must, in the first place, be a critic: for it is observed, “that presbyter, *πρεσβύτερος*, which is elder, and the word *πρεσβύω*, that signifies to be, or to act the part of an ambassador, come from the same root, *πρέσβυς*, in the language wherein the New Testament was penned.” And from this it is concluded, “there can be no fault in calling a presbyter an ambassador.”

Whether they intend this should hold as to those  
 VOL. II. † O presbyters

\* The Lord hath ordained, (Matth. x. 10. Luke x. 7.) That they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel, even as they which ministered about holy things, did eat of the temple, and they which waited at the altar, were partakers with the altar. This ordinance of the Lord took place in the time of the apostles, when the gospel had the greatest influence to make the disciples liberal, and long before there were any legal stipends. But there is a vast difference betwixt *living of the gospel*, and living of an act of parliament, which, by its proper constraining power, raises such livings as the gospel never raised to the apostles from Christ's subjects, or from his willing people; as may appear from the apostles manner of living, and from this, that they were sometimes obliged to work with their hands for necessaries to themselves, and those that were with them. And they who pretend to succeed them under the name of *presbyters*, or *bishops*, but are very clear for a difference betwixt themselves, and the apostles on this head, should consider that Paul sets himself before the Ephesian presbyters, or bishops, as an example to them in this very thing, when he says, *I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive, Acts xx. 33. 34. 35.*

presbyters who are not at all ministers of the word, commonly called *ruling elders*, I shall not say. But, if this argument be good, these must be ambassadors too, as they are presbyters or elders; yea, the conclusion will be as strong, that every ambassador is a presbyter; and even any Indian ambassador to our king, is doing the office of a presbyter, and may be properly enough called by that name.

Yet, I cannot tell, if it will seem good to them who see the force of this argument, that all the words which come from the same root in that language, should be promiscuously applied. As I cannot pretend to be master of the language, I am willing to learn from them on this head: yea, they would oblige me extremely, by letting me know further, if I must affix the same idea to the very same word, as oft as I find it in the Greek Testament. Take but one instance: The famous word *ὑποστασις* occurs only five times; and in our translation, it is thrice taken to signify *confidence*, 2 Cor. ix. 4. and xi. 17. Heb. iii. 14. Once it is rendered *substance*, Heb. xi. 1. and once *person*, Heb. i. 3. Possibly I might affix one idea to this word, that should answer to all the texts where it is found; but do you think they would allow me to deal thus with the word *ὑποστασις*? Scapula, I suppose, understood the Greek language, and he thought it no blunder to distinguish the derivates of *πρεσβυς* *legatus*, from the derivates of *πρεσβυς*, *senex*.

But though we should not admit this distinction, we can make no more of the matter than this, *viz.* The word *elder*, in the Greek, comes from a root that signifies an old man, because the elder's office is proper for one of age and experience; and *ambassador* belongs to the same root, because that office requires age and experience. And must we infer from this, that the exercise of the elder's office, is the exercise of the office of an ambassador, or that elders are all ambassadors? Then we shall next say, because



a ram pushes with his horns, and so doth a bull; therefore a ram is a bull.

They proceed in the same way of reasoning, and observe, "That, in the two places where the apostle speaks of his ambassadorship, 2 Cor. v. 18. 19. 20. and Eph. vi. 19. 20. he takes that title to himself, as a preacher of the gospel, *beseeching men to be reconciled to God, and making known the mystery of the gospel.* Now, this is not a thing peculiar to the apostles, but common to them with all elders, or bishops, who are labourers in the word and doctrine; and, therefore, so must the title *ambassador* also be, which is connected with the preaching of the gospel in all the texts where it is used. Yea, when the apostle Peter calls himself *also an elder*, it is supposable, that the apostles were called ambassadors, as they were elders labouring in the word and doctrine: and as ordinary ministers of the word succeed them in that ministry, so do they likewise in their ambassadorship, which they exercised as ministers of the word."

By this argument, those presbyters who are not at all ministers of the word, are excluded from succeeding to the title *ambassador*: but, if the absurdity of ruling the church without the word\*, and the necessity of holding fast by the two orders of church-officers against Prelacy †, should move any of our Presbyterians to say, that these ruling elders must, in some sense, be *apt to teach*, as every elder should ‡; and so be ministers of the word in their own way: then, certainly, they must be ambassadors likewise, as being successors of the apostles, who were elders, and that in some branch of the ministry of the word, which they exercised as elders.

O 2

But

\* Matth. xxviii. 20. 1 Pet. v. 1. 2. 3. with Jer. iii. 15. Acts xx. 23.—32.

† Acts vi. 2. 4. Rom. xii. 6. 7. 1 Pet. iv. 10. 11. Phil. i. 1. 1 Tim. iii. 1.—13.

‡ 1 Tim. iii. 2. Tit. i. 5. 9.

But the whole argument goes upon this supposition, that the preaching of an apostle, and that of a presbyter are the same, or that no such difference can be condescended on betwixt an apostle's ministering the word, and a presbyter's ministering it, as should make the title *ambassador* applicable to the one, and not to the other. And yet there is no great difficulty in pointing out such a difference.

Though the notion of an ambassador from God to us, cannot appear at all to be proper, while we are only thinking of the infinite disproportion, and of our baseness before him as sinners; yet it answers well enough to the infinite condescension that we behold in the Son of God, his *taking part with us in flesh and blood*, and *bearing our sins in his own body on the tree*: for he is pursuing this same astonishing condescension toward us, when he sends ambassadors of peace, beseeching us, by this, to be reconciled to him; and as this is amazing, so must our wickedness appear to be in refusing this message. The apostles kept this divine condescension in view when they acted as God's ambassadors; and acted accordingly: for they did not imagine that their honourable office, as ambassadors, gave them any thing of that superiority over those to whom they were ambassadors, which their pretended successors have drawn out of it. They kept by the notion of an ambassador when they applied it to themselves. But we must point out the foresaid difference, so as to make it appear, that uninspired elders, or bishops, preach as they will, do not succeed the apostles in preaching as ambassadors.

The apostles were sent as the chosen witnesses of the Lord's resurrection from the dead; which they testified in their preachings. Acts x. 40. 41. 42. and xxvi. 16. with 1 Cor. xv. 8. 9.

They were immediately commissioned and inspired with the Holy Ghost, to declare the import of Christ's resurrection, whereof they were witnesses, and to reveal the whole counsel of God concerning that eternal  
life

life which was manifested to them, and which they saw in Jesus Christ, when they saw him alive *from the dead*, 1 John i. 1. 2. 3. Acts v. 20.

They were sent to declare this whole counsel of God, as the true sense and hid meaning, or mystery (Rom. xvi. 25. 26. with Eph. vi. 19.) of the Old-Testament, under the infallible conduct of the same Spirit wherewith the prophets had been inspired, 1 Pet. i. 10. 11. 12. Acts xxvi. 22. 23. and x. 43. 44. 2 Pet. i. 20. 21.

And this, together with the signs and wonders, and divers miracles which they had power to work in the name of Jesus, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost wherewith they were endowed, and which were bestowed on men by the laying on of their hands, did instruct their mission, and shewed them to be faithful to the trust committed to them, Heb. ii. 1. 2. 3. 4. So that the belief of their preaching, as the testimony of God, is required of men under the pain of eternal death; and whosoever disbelieves it, makes God a liar, because he believes not the testimony of God which they declared, Mark xvi. 15. 16. John xx. 21. 22. 23. 1 John v. 10.—13.

Their testimony concerning Christ's resurrection, and declaration of the import of it, was the preaching of peace and reconciliation with God by Jesus Christ, (Acts x. 36.) delivered for the offences of sinners of all nations, and raised again for their justification; and men are reconciled to God, in believing their testimony concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ the Son of God from the dead, which is the testimony of God, Rom. iv. 24. 25. Chap. v. 1. and Chap. x. 8. 9. 13. 14. 15. 1 Thess. ii. 13.

God condescended infinitely to the rebellious world, in sending the apostles and inspired ministers of the gospel to them, with a message of peace from him. He gave them the ministry of reconciliation, empowering them so to propose his peace, with all the articles of it, to the world, as if he himself were doing it;

it; and so the apostle says, *God hath given to us* (or committed unto us, or put in us) *the word of reconciliation.*—*Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* Thus the apostles and inspired ministers of the gospel, preached the word of reconciliation as God's ambassadors of peace; and this was their preaching that we have written to us in the New Testament.

Now, such is not the preaching of ordinary ministers of the word; who come with no new revelation, nor immediate commission; but, according to the rules laid down by the apostles, (1 Tim. iii. Tit. i.), they are appointed to instruct, exhort, and guide us by the revelation of the word of God's peace, which is fully made already by the apostles his ambassadors; and this, without any power to add any thing to the message of the apostles, or to take any thing from it, or any way to alter it, Gal. i. 6. 7. 8. Rev. xxii. 18. 19. And God doth not oblige us to hold every thing they say concerning reconciliation with him in their sermons, as his word, or to believe that he is speaking to us all that they speak, and is beseeching us to all that they require of us: for their interpretations of the preaching of the apostles are not infallible, as are the apostolic interpretations of the prophets. Their interpretations must be tried by the word of the apostles and prophets in the scriptures, and rejected as far as they are not according to that; but if they be founded in these scriptures, they are to be received as God's word which he sent by his ambassadors, the apostles, 1 John iv. 6. Acts. xx. 28.—32.

One would think, that a man who believes the scriptures, or believes on Christ, through the word of his apostles, (John xvii. 20.) needs not be told all this, needs not be informed of any such difference betwixt the preaching of the apostles, and the preaching of ordinary ministers of the word, as should warrant the calling of the one ambassadors, in distinction  
from

from the other; yet it is fact, that some still plead there is no such difference, “because the apostles proved the truth of what they said in their preachings by the scriptures of the Old Testament, and the Bereans are commended for searching the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.” And they might add, that our Lord himself (who told the Jews, that if they believed not him to be the Christ, they should die in their sins) also bade them search the scriptures, which testified of him.

But, at this rate of arguing, and inferring the identity of apostles and elders, I might affirm to you, that any private Christian, who instructs or exhorts another by the scripture, or who gives his ignorant neighbour any information of the way of peace with God through Christ, revealed in the scriptures, and exhorts him accordingly, is God’s ambassador, and may be so called, as well as the apostles: for, if his instruction and exhortation be according to the scripture, which is the word of God, his neighbour is bound to receive it as God’s word, from him who is doing his duty as God commands him in his word.

Our presbyters, I fear, will grudge this application of the title *ambassador* to the private Christian; and yet the difference betwixt the elders and the brethren, or the *elder* and the *younger* \*, cannot appear to be so great, even in this matter, as that betwixt the apostles and elders; unless it could be proved, that the apostles were not sent and empowered to explain the Old Testament infallibly, or that elders are infallible interpreters of the scriptures.

All this serves to let us see, too manifestly, that our presbyters want to have their sermons of the same

\* 1 Pet. v. 5. *Likewise ye younger (νεώτεροι), submit yourselves unto the elder (πρεσβύτεροι): yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* From this text, we may have a true view of the comely order that God hath appointed in his churches.

same account with the preachings of the apostles; yea, I may say, of greater: for, while we must receive their explication of the scriptures as the word of God, just as we receive the apostolic explication of the Old Testament, the apostles only explained the Old Testament, but they explain both Old and New.

And as to the mission of apostles to preach that *word of faith*, which whosoever believes shall be saved, they plainly take it to themselves, when they would have us to understand their preaching and their mission to be meant by the apostle, Rom. x. where he says, *The word is nigh thee:—that is, the word of faith which we preach.—For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

It cannot be denied by Christians, that this is true with respect to the preaching and mission of the apostles. God revealed unto them, by his Spirit, the deep things of his wisdom, which none of the princes of this world knew, and which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had they entered into the heart of man; and he sent them to teach these things, not in the words of the teaching of man's wisdom, but in the words of the Holy Ghost's teaching (1 Cor. ii.); so that it might well be said with respect to their preaching, *How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent.* For the word of salvation, through Christ raised from  
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the dead, was only to be learned at first from their mouth to whom God revealed it, sending them to tell it as good news to the world.

But after they published the *glad tidings* by word of mouth, they also wrote the things they taught, as they say, *These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name, John xx. 31.* It must be owned, therefore, that those have heard the word of salvation through Christ, who hear them preach in their writings, and that they who have their writings, are not destitute of the mean of believing on the Son of God, unto life eternal. Yea, they have a ready answer to those questions coming from any set of uninspired teachers, with respect to their own sermons and mission, *How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?*

They can tell them, "We hear of him from his apostles, whom he chused and sent to publish the good news of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things; for they have written to us the things they preached, that we might believe and be saved, in believing what they still preach to us in their writings. And as they tell us of pastors and teachers, elders or bishops, whom they characterise to us, beseeching us to suffer the word of exhortation, because they have written in few words; (Heb. xiii. 22.) so, if we shall understand you to be these ministers of the word, by the characters they have given, and specially by this, that you hold fast, in your teaching, that word of faith which they preached, (without adding thereto any thing, or taking from it) so as to be able, by that very doctrine of theirs, both to exhort and convince the gainfayers, then we are willing to hear you, and ought to pay you all the regard that the apostles require of us toward you, and because they require it. But if you come to us, preaching up any other rule or

standard of faith, beside that very word of faith which the apostles preached and have written for us; and if you tell us, at the same time, that you are sent to bring us the word of salvation, and signify to us, (as your questions plainly import) that we cannot call on the name of the Lord and be saved, because we cannot hear of him, and so cannot believe on him, without your sermons, then we must tell you, we have ground to look upon you as preachers of another gospel, or perverters of the gospel of Christ; and we are bound to hold by the form of sound words written by the inspired ministers, and hear them preach to us, without you, or any other teachers, but such as are formed upon the holy scripture, and are holding fast the apostolic form in their teaching, so as to be able there, by both to exhort and convince gainsayers."

Jesus Christ sent the apostles as the Father sent him; but the world called Christian, is far from being agreed about the mission of those who would be reckoned sent by him, as the successors of his apostles.

The Roman clergy are very confident the Protestants cannot lawfully preach, as presbyters, or bishops, because they have not the true mission, by an uninterrupted succession from the apostles; and because they are heretics and schismatics from the holy apostolic church of Rome, which has taken away the ordination that any of them may pretend to have had from her, because they departed from the only terms upon which they received it.

Some Protestants again would assure us, the rest cannot preach nor administer the sacraments, for want of the Episcopal ordination, by an uninterrupted succession, through that same Roman church, from which they themselves stand separated and excommunicated.

In our part of the Christian world, the true gospel must be looked for from them, who, being qualified with academical learning, have been tried and ordained by a classical presbytery, without the lord-  
bishop



bishop, upon the terms of the *Formula*, which they subscribe.

But some say further, he that is sent must be popular in his preaching, must have the call of the parish, *i. e.* of the majority, not of the heritors and elders, but the heads of families who keep the parish-kirk, or of the male communicants \*, that so he may *come in by the door* †; and he must stand up for the covenanted work of reformation, if he would be accounted a preacher of the true gospel, and not be looked upon as one that runs unsent.

And some of these justified their mission (when called in question) by this, that they had not departed from any of the terms of their ordination, and by their adherence to the covenanted Presbyterian Reformation. This supposes the validity of the mission of the first reformers, who had no other ordination, (as it is commonly called) but from the Roman church. And yet it carries a reflection on their mission, because they departed from the terms of their ordination, and had no other ground to stand on but the scriptures.

Now, all these different sects of pretenders to the apostolic mission, have a people ready to believe them, and to say after them, How can we believe to salvation without our sent preachers? and how can those of any other sect preach, seeing they are not sent? But if it were granted to them in the first place, truly to believe that God sent the apostles, and in good earnest to hear their writings, they would soon find a satisfying answer to these their questions.

The apostles have their name from their being sent to preach the word of faith; and why then do not our presbyters call themselves apostles, as well as ambassadors? The argument for the one, is full as strong for the other: for can they not say, "The apostles  
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\* This point is not yet settled among them.

† This is a reference to the very mission of Christ himself.

Had that name from their being sent to preach the gospel, the word of salvation: but we are sent to preach the gospel, the word of salvation; therefore we should be called apostles? This is the proper inference from these questions, whereby they crave the title ambassador: *Are not ministers of the word sent? have they not a commission to preach?* We may therefore be allowed, either not to call them ambassadors, or to call them also apostles. It is true, this is not the name given ordinary pastors and teachers in the New Testament; but neither is the name ambassador. And though the apostles be expressly distinguished from elders by that name, yet, if our presbyters had made as free with it, as with ambassador, the people would have as little grudged the name, as they do the claim to the very thing intended by it, *viz.* that same sending to preach the word of salvation, which is spoke of, Rom. x. 14. 15.

The general commission, Matth. xxviii. 19. 20. may be supposed to include elders, as well as Christ's ambassadors the apostles, from what is said there of baptizing, compared with these words of the apostle, 1 Cor. i. 17. *Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.* But these words lead us to think of some peculiar excellency in his mission, and preaching of the gospel, beyond that of ordinary baptizers. And the Lord's promise of his presence to the end of the world, with his ministers and people serving him, is connected with the instructions and commandments which he gave to his apostles, and which remain to this day in their writings, as we may believe they will do to the end of the world.

Perhaps you may wonder that I have insisted so long on this subject, without taking any notice of *the angel of the church*, Rev. i. 20. and ii. 1.; the name about which the diocesan bishop, and the classical presbytery have been so long contending. But I am afraid this title suits my subject as little, as it does either of those contenders about it: For, I may say,

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with the consent of a learned Espiscopalian \*, and a no less learned Presbyterian †, that *the angel of the church* is a name borrowed from the ancient synagogue, where he, by whose mouth the congregation made their public prayers to God, was called מַלְאָךְ אֱלֹהִים, *i. e.* *The messenger or angel of the congregation.* And it is remarkable, that this business was not so confined to the rulers of the synagogue, but that other members were sometimes employed in it; and whosoever was at any time delegated from the congregation to speak their prayers to God, was the angel of the congregation for that time: for the proper signification of the word used in the Hebrew language for an angel, is a *messenger*; and therefore, as a messenger from God to the people, is an angel of God, so a messenger from the people to God, is an angel of the people. In this latter sense only, was the name of *angel* given to that minister in the ancient synagogue. If this be the case, I have nothing to do with it in speaking of ambassadors, or even messengers from God; and as little has the diocesan bishop, or classical presbytery, to do with the mouth of a single congregation to God in prayer, especially where that is not confined to the rulers.

## S E C T. II.

**B**Y this time, I suppose, you have forgot a very considerable branch of the charge against the Letter on the Usefulness of Catechisms, which was, “That it sets up the faith of devils in opposition to the true saving faith defined in the Assembly’s Catechism.”

If you would understand this charge, and see how it is founded, you must look to that paragraph of the letter,

\* Prideaux’s Connect. part 1. book 6.

† Vitringa de synagoga veteri, lib. 3. par. 2. c. 1. 2. 3.

letter\*, where I commend the New Testament above the catechisms, for a more clear and plain description of the nature of saving faith, and affirm (some think, with great impudence) that one may have a far better notion of that grace from the New Testament itself, than from the assembly's catechism, or the sermons formed upon it.

There I give but a hint of my opinion concerning the nature of faith, as it is pointed out in the New Testament, and there distinguished from all the other graces that flow from it, and are inseparable from it. But now, to prevent any strife about words, and avoid being the author of a definition of faith, I shall give it you in the words of a pretended ambassador, which I find in an account he gives us of the nature of that faith, whereby we are united to Christ, and blessed, in distinction from repentance, love, and all the other graces that always attend it †. His words are, "Faith credits the record of God in his word concerning his Son, as true."

He adds more, that, he says, faith does "upon the warrant of God's own word." But, while I agree with this ambassador, so far as to the nature of saving faith, I may plead to be excused from adding what he there adds, till he be pleased to distinguish that from repentance, love, and all the other graces always attending it: or, if he mean not to tell us the precise nature of faith, but to describe it by its necessary fruits that shew it to be true, when he says, "It approves, it trusts or rests;" I so far agree with him. But here, again, I would add more, and say, "It works good works." And so I plead, that this should have some place in his description of faith: or, if this cannot be obtained, I must insist, that this definer of faith should point it out in its precise nature, as distinct from all the other graces attending it:

\* Let. on catech. above, p. 94. 95. 96.

† Mr William Wilson's sermons on Psal. lxxii. 17. p. 26. 27.

it: and this, because the scripture not only describes faith by the fruits of it, and particularly good works; but likewise points out to us the nature of it, in distinction from all other graces; and that I take to be, as my author says, “the crediting of the record of God in his word, concerning his Son, as true;” and whatever is produced in us, or done by us through this faith, is done “upon the warrant of God’s own word.”

From what is said, you may perceive the whole foundation that can be found for this charge, against the author of the Letter on Catechisms. And now I tell you plainly, that when I consider these words, receiving and resting, or coming and embracing, and trusting, as importing more than giving credit to the record of God in his word, concerning his Son, I can take them to signify nothing else but love and hope; the love of the truth as it is in Jesus, and the hope of salvation through him; if they do not comprehend the exercise of all the graces of the gospel. But I find the scripture expressly distinguishing *faith* from *love*, and from *hope*, (1 Cor. xiii. 13.) and yet it makes them inseparable; for *faith worketh by love*, Gal. v. 6, and is *the substance of things hoped for*, Heb. xi. 1. And so doth it connect *good works* with *faith*, which are likewise distinguished from it: for, *faith without works is dead, being alone*; and, *See thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect*, James ii. 17. 20. 22. As I dare not, therefore, separate those things which God hath conjoined in his word, so I am afraid to confound the things that he hath expressly distinguished. For this reason, I cannot approve of the definition of faith in the assembly’s catechism; and hence came the so much complained of *impudence* in finding fault with it.

And this is the cause (on my part) of its being affirmed with great confidence, “That I am in an error, a great error! a fundamental error! and under  
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strong delusion! that my faith is the faith of devils, and that I am left of God.”

These terrible words, you know, have a much greater influence, than any argument or evidence of truth can have, with the mob, which you must suppose to be filled with a mortal hatred of error and delusion, and of the devil, with every thing that is declared by the ambassadors to belong unto him, and ready enough to *persecute and take* any one whom they point out to them as *forsaken of God*.

I remember the mob was once excited to act with fury against a practice \*, which, in other cases, they bear with patience, by its being recommended to their wrath, in these words of an ambassador's sermon †, “ I am bold to warn you against such an abominable practice ; it is, with a witness, a trampling under foot the Son of God, and a counting the blood of the covenant wherewith we ‡ are sanctified, an unholy or common thing.”

These words, you see, are taken from the description of the unpardonable sin, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. x. 26. 29. But however much evil was in that practice, I may be bold to say, it was not the sin against the Holy Ghost : or, if it had been that sin, the hands of the mob would have been easily held, by the ambassador's telling them the words immediately following, which the apostle applies to that case, *Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord.—It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. x. 30. 31.* And, perhaps, they would give more heed to him, than they do to the apostle speaking in that passage, if he were but as bold to warn them against mobbing (which he cannot justify) by this, that the despisers of Moses's law died by the hands of men, to whom it belonged,

\* This was Wrightson's picture shown at Perth.

† See the forecited sermon, p. 64. 65.

‡ Here the scripture-expression is altered.

to execute the vengeance; for *they died under two or three witnesses*. But the greatest despisers of the new covenant in Christ's blood, fall into the hands of the living God; who says, *Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense*, Heb. x. 28.—31. with Rom. xii, 18.—21. If they were allowed to think on this, they might learn a difference betwixt the law of Moses and the new covenant, which they would find of more use to them, and more to their real advantage, than they are willing to believe. But I must not wander from my subject.

I was going to tell you, that I made the definition of faith, which I took from my author, no further mine, than as I took it to refer to the 5th chap. of the 1st Epistle of John, from whence the words of it have been at first taken, by some body that has been taking an account of faith from the Bible itself; for the Assembly's Catechism makes no reference to this passage. And I must beg your patience, till you have my notion of faith, even that same faith that is connected with eternal life, as it is described there in its nature, and by its causes and effects.

I. And now you shall find me describing faith by *receiving*, but receiving a testimony, as the apostle says, ver. 9. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.*

Here, you see, the *receiving*, which is *believing on the Son of God*, cannot be taken in that large sense wherein it stands in the catechism, or in the sermons formed about it, which tell us, what it is to receive Christ into our hearts; for *receiving*, in that sense, takes in the exercise of all the graces that may be found in *them that believe on his name*. And they would make it to signify any good disposition of heart toward Christ that you can name, rather than

believing, or receiving the testimony of God concerning him.

And thus, while they teach us, that we are united to Christ by faith only, and not by the other graces that always attend it; we must, at the same time believe them, that we are united to Christ by all the good dispositions that the gospel works in our hearts toward Christ, or by the whole compliance of our hearts, with all that the gospel requires of us toward him, in all the ways wherein it exhibits him to us: for this is the meaning of receiving Christ into our hearts, as he is offered to us in the gospel.

I am not therefore ashamed of my confident boasting in the New Testament against the catechism, with the sermons formed upon it: for the apostle commends himself to me exceedingly above his pretended successors, by his plainness and clearness to the meanest capacity, on a subject wherein the most ignorant of mankind have an infinite concern. They know well, by daily practice and experience, from their infancy, what it is to receive the witness of men, or to take man's testimony. From this, the apostle leads us into a notion of the faith demanded in the gospel, only by putting God's testimony in place of that of man; and as God is greater than men, so is his testimony, with our receiving it, differenced from theirs. If this may yet possibly be mistaken, he points it out to us by its opposite, which is, *Not believing the testimony that God hath testified of his Son, and that is to make him a liar.* To this, agree the words of John Baptist, speaking of Christ, John iii. 32. 33. *And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal, that God is true.* Though it should be granted to our catechisers, that receiving stands in their large sense, John i. 12. (*But as many as received him, to them gave he power, or right to become the sons of God; to them that believe on his name*), no more could be inferred from it, but that they



they that believe in his name, are they that receive him, even as they are they that do his commandments. Yet if they will plead upon the supplement **EVEN**, and affirm, that *receiving* and *believing* are utterly the same thing in this text, then this *receiving* must be the same that is described by the Apostle and John Baptist, when they are giving us an account of believing, and not *receiving* in the large sense: for if, in that large sense, it be the very same with believing, then we must say, that sinners are justified and entitled to sonship, by receiving Christ as their king, to do his commandments.

II. But let us next attend to the apostle, as he describes faith by that which is believed, and that is, *That Jesus (who came by water and blood) is the Christ, the Son of God; and, That God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; he that hath the Son, hath life; he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.*

The testimony of God that we are called to receive or believe, is concerning Jesus who died on the cross, whose side was pierced by one of the soldiers, after they saw that he was dead already, and *forthwith there came out blood and water*, John xix. 33. 34. 35.

We are to believe concerning this Jesus, *That he is the Christ*, or the Messiah, that was promised and prophesied of in the Old Testament, and that all that was said there of that Messiah is verified, and holds true only and fully in him; and especially, *That he is the Son of God*, described by the same apostle, in the first chapter of the gospel written by him, where the Son of God is called *the Word*, (as he is likewise in this passage) and declared to be the eternal God, by whom all things were created, John i. 1. 2. 3. 14. 15. 33. 34.

*And this is the testimony, that God hath given to us, eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* This giving is more largely expressed by the apostle in this same

epistle, chap. iv. 9. 20. where he says, *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son, the propitiation for our sins.* Compare Gal. iv. 4. 5. 6. and Rom. iii. 21.—26. He likewise shews us how God hath given us eternal life in his Son, when he tells us, that he, and the rest of the witnesses of his resurrection, saw this eternal life begun in him, when he shewed himself alive to them from the dead, by many infallible proofs, in presence of the disciples that were with them, and made them his witnesses of what they thus saw, (Acts i. 3. 8.) He says, chap. i. 1. 2. 3. *That — which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us), that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

This, with what is said, chap. ii. ver. 19. may let us see who are meant by *US*, to whom we must believe that God hath given eternal life, in raising his Son from the dead; or, we may understand it, by these words of the prayer, made by Jesus Christ, in presence of his apostles, John xvii. 9. 20. 21. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.—Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.* This is that company which is pointed out to John in the vision, (Rev. v. 9.) saying to the Lamb, *Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.*

And

And thus we may understand who they are that have the Son, and therefore have this life which is in him. They are those of every nation and sort of men, without difference, who have received or believed this testimony of God concerning him; as we may also see plainly from the 10th and 13th verses of this chapter, *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.*—*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.*

We may compare this, with what Paul says to the Romans, chap. x. 6.—14. *Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down: or, Who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead\*.*—*The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach, That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart † man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*—*For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?* This, then, is that faith whereby we have Christ, with the life from the dead that is in him; even our taking God's testimony, or believing him, that he hath raised Jesus Christ his Son from the dead; and what else is this, but the  
knowledge

\* Say not in thine heart, any thing that may import, that the Son of God came not down from heaven to fulfil the law for sinners of all nations; or, that he lies yet under death, as if he had not fulfilled the law, nor given complete satisfaction to the offended Majesty of God, for the sins of his people in his death: for, this is the import of the way of thinking, that moves men to go about to establish a righteousness of their own; and this way of thinking and speaking is the very opposite of saving faith, and of the confession of it.

† The heart cannot be taken here, to stand in distinction from the persuasion of the mind, but from the confession of the mouth!

knowledge and persuasion of this truth by testimony? yea, if it were any thing else, it behoved it to get another name than faith.

III. The apostle speaks of this testimony as it is the ground of this faith, and points it out to us several ways. He says, *There are three that bear record in heaven*, where Jesus, *the Word*, appears gloriously alive from the dead, in the name of all his people, through the merit of his obedience to the death, and thereby declares himself to be the Son of God, in whom there is eternal life for his people; and thereby also *the Father*, who gave him that life, as the due reward of his obedience to the death, declares the same thing; as does likewise *the Holy Ghost*, by whose power he was raised from the dead, and is glorified in heaven as the head of his body the church.

The testimony that we believe, is expressly called the testimony of God the Father, concerning his Son; and in his testifying, he has two other witnesses concurring with him; *the Word*, or the Son himself, who declares his Father's name unto his brethren, Heb. ii. 12. John xvii. 26. For as none knoweth the Son but the Father, so none knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him, Matth. xi. 27. *And the Holy Ghost*, whose work is to testify of the Son, John xv. 26. These two concurred with him in the creation of all things, and without them he never did any work.

*And these three are one.* The *Word* and the *Holy Ghost*, who bear witness with the *Father* in the divine testimony, are one and the same God with him\*; so that we believe these three when we receive the testimony that is greater than that of men, because it is the testimony of God. We look on them as three distinct witnesses, and we look on them as one  
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\* Deut. vi. 4. *Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah.* See Letter to a Bishop, &c. and Christianity very near as Old as the Creation.

and the same God, in believing their testimony; and therefore the believers of Christ's resurrection are baptized, (Matth. xxviii. 19.) and blessed, (2 Cor. xiii. 14. with Numb. vi. 23.—27.) in the name of these three,

The testimony of the Divine Three who bear record in Heaven, is on earth, in the testimony of the three that bear witness there; for, the apostle says, *There are three that bear witness on earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.* And he lays the main stress of this upon the spirit when he says, *This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ.—And it is the spirit that beareth witness\*.*

*The spirit*, as it is here distinguished from the *Holy Ghost*, is not to be taken for his person; but it is the word of the truth of the gospel, concerning the sufferings of Christ, and the following glory, which was preached by the apostles, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, 1 Pet. i. 10. 11. 12. And the gospel itself that was preached by the apostles, is here called the spirit, as it is the sense and meaning, the scope and drift of the Old Testament, which we find, in distinction from the gospel, called *the letter*, 2 Cor. chap. iii. and *the flesh*, Gal. iii. 3. The apostle himself may be understood thus to shew us, that it is the truth of the gospel, that he means by the word *spirit*, as he says, *For the spirit is the truth, or For the truth is the spirit †.*

The gospel itself beareth witness to us, as it is the spirit, the true sense and scope of the Old Testament: and, therefore, we find the apostles setting forth Christ as the *end of the law*, in whom *all the promises of God are Yea and Amen*; and declaring, that they said none other things but what Moses and the Prophets did say should come. That Christ should suffer, that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and  
should

\* Καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ἰσὶ το μαρτυρῶν.

† Ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμα ἰσὶν ἡ ἀλήθεια.

should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles: And in all their preachings and writings, they still set forth that which they testified, as the sense and drift of the Old Testament. Nothing serves more to convince us that the gospel is the word of God, or to shew us the divine glory shining in it, than when we are made to view it as the spirit of the law of Moses, or of the whole Old Testament: for thus we have the whole strength, of the evidence that is carried, in the Old Testament revelation, and in the New, before us at once: and, therefore, nothing could be more proper than the apostle's calling the gospel, *the spirit*, where he speaks of its testimony as the ground of faith.

The apostle taught the first Christians to distinguish the New Testament by the name *spirit*, from the Old Testament, which they taught them to call the *flesh* and the *letter*. And this way of speaking was exceeding significant, as it at once expressed the nature of the difference, and the connection betwixt the two, and signified the necessity of the New Testament with respect to the Old, with its great excellency above it. But when their pretended successors (seeking a worldly kingdom to themselves, like that of the Old Testament) thought fit to lay aside the apostolic distinction betwixt the New Testament and the Old, this primitive way of speaking concerning these two covenants, which was very plain to the first Christians, contending against the Jews, became very dark and turned quite obsolete.

We need not wonder at this, when we find our pretended ambassadors maintaining their kingdom, which is of this world, after the example of the kingdom of Israel, (though it be but a very poor imitation of it) by telling us, we must not call these, *two covenants*, as we see the apostle expressly doing, Gal. chap. iv. and Heb. chap. viii. but *two dispensations* of one and the self-same covenant. And they teach us, that our nation should make a covenant  
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with God, according to the covenant that God made with the nation of Israel, when he took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, though it be most manifest, that God, by his apostles and prophets, says the quite contrary, Heb. viii. 8.—13. with Jer. xxxi. 31.—34.

But however useless this way of speaking of *letter* and *spirit* has been made in this case, by the doctrine of our divines; yet it is not quite out of use among men in other cases: for, I think, I have heard our lawyers speaking of *the LETTER of the law, and the SPIRIT of the law.*

Paul shews the excellency of the glory of the New Testament, or of the *spirit*, which is ministered by the apostles of Christ, above the glory of the ministration of the Old Testament, or the *letter*. He tells us, the glory of that *letter*, was the glory that shined on *the face of Moses*, which the Israelites could not steadfastly behold, and which was to be done away; but the glory of the New Testament, which is the *spirit, i. e.* the intent and scope of that *letter*, is the very divine glory that shines in *the face of Jesus Christ*, and from him into the hearts of his apostles, who ministered that *spirit* so plainly, that all believers may, by that ministration, behold the unveiled glory of the Lord, 2 Cor. chap. iii. and chap. iv.

But that which we are especially to notice here, is, that it is said concerning the first covenant, *Neither was the first dedicated without blood: for when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, according to the law, he took the BLOOD of calves, and of goats, with WATER, and scarlet wool, and byssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you,* Heb. ix. 18. 19. 20. with Exod. chap. xxiv. And here it is said of Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, *That he came by water and blood.*

The not breaking of Christ's bones, when the bones of the thieves were broken, (John xix. 31. 32.)

should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles: And in all their preachings and writings, they still set forth that which they testified, as the sense and drift of the Old Testament. Nothing serves more to convince us that the gospel is the word of God, or to shew us the divine glory shining in it, than when we are made to view it as the spirit of the law of Moses, or of the whole Old Testament: for thus we have the whole strength, of the evidence that is carried, in the Old-Testament revelation, and in the New, before us at once: and, therefore, nothing could be more proper than the apostle's calling the gospel, *the spirit*, where he speaks of its testimony as the ground of faith.

The apostle taught the first Christians to distinguish the New Testament by the name *spirit*, from the Old Testament, which they taught them to call the *flesh* and the *letter*. And this way of speaking was exceeding significant, as it at once expressed the nature of the difference, and the connection betwixt the two, and signified the necessity of the New Testament with respect to the Old, with its great excellency above it. But when their pretended successors (seeking a worldly kingdom to themselves, like that of the Old Testament) thought fit to lay aside the apostolic distinction betwixt the New Testament and the Old, this primitive way of speaking concerning these two covenants, which was very plain to the first Christians, contending against the Jews, became very dark and turned quite obsolete.

We need not wonder at this, when we find our pretended ambassadors maintaining their kingdom, which is of this world, after the example of the kingdom of Israel, (though it be but a very poor imitation of it) by telling us, we must not call these, *two covenants*, as we see the apostle expressly doing, Gal. chap. iv. and Heb. chap. viii. but *two dispensations* of one and the self-same covenant. And they teach us, that our nation should make a covenant  
with



with God, according to the covenant that God made with the nation of Israel, when he took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, though it be most manifest, that God, by his apostles and prophets, says the quite contrary, Heb. viii. 8.—13. with Jer. xxxi. 31.—34.

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33.) was a circumstance of his death, that not only shewed him to have been manifestly dead, but pointed forth his death as the truth of the sacrifice of the pas-  
 sover, John xix. 36. with Exod. xii. 46. And John, who takes notice of that, declares this other circum-  
 stance of his death, as of no small importance with respect to our faith, That when his side was pierced, according to the prophecy, (John xix. 37, with Zech. xii. 10.) *Forthwith there came out blood and water* : for, he says upon it, *And he that saw it, bare record, and his record is true : and he knoweth that he sayeth true, that ye might believe*, John xix. 34. 35. For this blood, and this water, bring to mind the blood and the water at the dedication of the first covenant, and so they point forth Christ's death as the truth of the sacrifices whereby the covenant was confirmed. Thus, our Lord, in the institution of his supper, sets forth his death as the confirmation of the new covenant, as he refers to these words of Moses, at the dedication of the first, *This is the blood of the testament* ; or, *Behold the blood of the covenant*, when he says, *This is my blood of the new testament*, or covenant, Matth. xxvi. 28.

Now, this blood and water, answering to the blood and the water of the first covenant, testify and declare, that the death of Christ put an end to that first covenant, and by these God signifies to us, that the new covenant of eternal life from the dead, is now in full force by his death, and firmly established with him that died : for to declare the covenant established with him by blood and water on his dead body, was plainly to shew that this covenant was to give him life from the dead. And, as this life could not take place but by his fulfilling and abolishing the first covenant in his death, it is hereby signified that this life is in him ; so that *whosoever bath him, bath life ; and whosoever bath not him, bath not life*.

The *blood* is the sign, or symbol, or emblem of the atoning meriting virtue of his obedience to the death ; and the *water* is the sign of the efficacious working

working of the Holy Ghost, John vii. 38. 39. through which also he had *offered up himself without spot*, Heb. ix. 14. By virtue of this *blood* he was brought again from the dead, Heb. xiii. 20. and so declared to be the Son of God, who, *as he had power to lay down his life, had power to take it again*, by his own infinite merit. And he was raised again from the dead by the efficacy of this *living water*, that *springs up unto everlasting life*. And by this blood, and this water of the new covenant, all his people are made sharers with him in the eternal life to which he was raised, Rom. viii. 10. 11.

The apostle says, *He came not in water only, but in water and blood*. When he came in the flesh, being made of a woman, made under the law, and was about to enter on the exercise of his office, as a *minister of the circumcision*, (Rom. xv. 8:) he came in water, at the baptism of John, where he appeared as the Son of God undertaking to fulfil all the righteousness of the law for his people; and the voice of the Father was heard from heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*, and the Spirit of God descended under the emblem of a dove, and remained on him; so that John saw and bare record, *That this is the Son of God*, Matth. iii. 13.—17. John i. 31.—34. But this is not all that serves to shew him to be the Son of God; neither did the life from the dead yet appear in him by the baptism of John, as it did by the baptism (Luke xii. 50.) with water and blood: for, when he *came again from the dead into his kingdom*, or when he *came in the new covenant*, he came *not in water only*, as he did under the law, *but in water and blood*. In the *water* that came out of his pierced side, importing the life-giving efficacy of the Spirit of God, which shewed itself in the raising of him from the dead unto eternal life. And this could not be without the *blood* that came with it, importing his own infinite merit, the merit of his atoning sacrifice, which shewed itself in

his resurrection from the dead: for, he was brought again from the dead in the blood of the everlasting covenant, wherein God calls not iniquity again to remembrance, by requiring any more sacrifice for sin, Heb. x. 3. 11. 12. 14.—18.

And thus the *water* and the *blood* concur with the word of faith which the apostles preached, the *spirit* or sense of the Old Testament, in testifying to us, that we may believe, *that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.* And in believing this, that is thus testified to us by the three witnessing in earth, agreeing in one with the testimony of the three witnessing in heaven, we set to our seal, that God is true.

IV. The apostle declares that this faith is the effect of our being born of God: for he says, ver. 1. *Whoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* And however easy they may imagine this to be, who are not exercised in examining themselves as to their belief of the truth of the gospel, nor studying to behold the evidence of its truth, but take it as a tradition from their fathers; yet it must be owned by them who would not deny the scriptures, that there is such a belief, that cannot be without the new birth. However wicked men, or their father the devil may believe, we are assured here, there is a belief of the truth, which is the effect of being born again. And this belief that is peculiar to the children of God, as they are begotten of him, must be of a different nature from any belief that is to be found in the children of the devil, however much the one may resemble the other. They who are enlightened, and receive the word with joy, so as to join the children of God in the confession of the faith, and yet draw back to perdition, have not that same knowledge of the truth, nor that persuasion of it upon its proper evidence, that the children of God have; who believe to the saving of the soul: therefore, the faith of *them who believe to the saving of the soul*, is called, *the evidence*

*ence of things not seen, in distinction from those who draw back to perdition, Heb. x. 39. and xi. 1.*

This birth, whereof faith is the effect, is not of bloods, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man; but of God, (John i. 12. 13.) who, of his own will, begat us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures; (James i. 18.) being born again not of corruptible seed, (as Israel, the children of God according to the flesh, whose birth, tho' it was by virtue of God's promise to Abraham their father, yet was of corruptible seed) but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever, 1 Pet. i. 23. Thus our Lord points out this spiritual birth to Nicodemus, and distinguishes it from the fleshly, wherein the Jews gloried, John iii. 3. 5. 6. 8. *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.—Except a man be born of water and spirit, (H. xlv. 3. 4.) he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.—The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh:—so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

The faith of God's testimony concerning his Son, whereby we see the kingdom of God, and enter into it, is not, therefore, of ourselves; it is the gift of God, who gave his Son, and gave us eternal life in him; when he raised him from the dead, Eph. ii. 4.—8. And it is given us in the behalf of Christ, Phil. i. 29. and for his merit, that brought him again from the dead; for we obtain it through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. i. 1. as it is also wrought in us (by means of the gospel) by the power of the Spirit of God, which wrought in the raising of him from the dead, Eph. i. 19. 20. Col. ii. 12.

V. The apostle shews us, that this belief of the truth, which proceeds from the new-birth, distinguishes itself by its peculiar fruits and effects, as we see from ver. 1. to 5. And these are, first, *love to God,*  
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and to the *children of God*, who know the truth, and that for the truth's sake which dwelleth in them, 2 John ver. 2. This again must be evidenced in keeping the commandments of God, or doing the good works that he requires, specially the works of love one to another, even as Christ loved us, according to his new commandment: for hereby the children of God are distinguished from the children of the devil. And when we love, not in word nor in tongue, but in deed, or work, and in truth, then we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him, 1 John iii. 10. 18. 19. And whereas the works of this peculiar love that are commanded by God, make the practisers of them the objects of the hatred of the men of this world, (John xv. 17. 18. with 1 John iii. 13.) and the love of this world prevailing in us, will make these commands grievous to us, and the lusts of this world struggle so in our hearts, against the doing of the works of the peculiar love God requires, that we can do them no further than these are overcome; the apostle says, that this faith overcomes the world, so as to make his commandments *not grievous* to us. His words are, *His commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he that came by water and blood.* The faith that overcomes the world, looks on him that was pierced, as he came from the dead by water and blood, having put an end to the covenant of temporal life in Canaan's land, and ratified the new covenant \* of eternal life from the dead, or having done away the testament of the worldly inheritance, and confirmed the testament † of the eternal heavenly

\* It has the notion of a covenant, as it has a mediator, and is ratified by sacrifice.

† And the inheritance of children, with the confirmation by the testator's death, give it the notion of a testament.

heavenly inheritance, whereof he himself the first begotten of the dead, is the heir, and all his people, of every nation, joint heirs with him. And this has a most manifest tendency to wean our hearts from this world, and to give us the victory over it, Col. iii. 1.—5. This testimony that we believe concerning the eternal life that God hath given us in his Son, whom he raised from the dead, must likewise influence us, in believing it, to love God, and to love one another, and do the works of love that he requires toward them, with whom we look for a share of this life in his Son, that he hath given us; as we may see from this whole epistle of John.

And, indeed, we hold this truth in believing it, as we do the principles that guide our inclinations, even the principles of our practice: for all our choice is directed, all our practice influenced, by some persuasion; and therefore the scripture speaks of *living in error*, 2 Pet. ii. 18. and of *walking in darkness*, 1 John i. 6. For though we *know that they who commit such things are worthy of death*, yet another principle leads our practice, when we *not only do the same, but consent with them that do them*, Rom. i. 32. And, on the other hand, when the truth of the gospel becomes the principle of our practice, as it does when we really believe it, we are said to *do the truth*, John iii. 21. *to walk in truth*, 2 John ver. 4. and *in the light*, 1 John i. 7. And thus whatsoever the scripture ascribes to believing, is ascribed, at bottom, to the truth, or to that which is believed, and which is, at the same time, the cause of faith; and all the power that believers have to will or to do good, is the power of the word which they believe, *which bringeth forth fruit in them*, Col. i. 6. and is *able to save their souls*, as it is *grafted in them*, James i. 21. Yea, and I would have our catechisers especially to notice, that we shall not so easily place a merit of our own, in our believing the testimony concerning the merit and righteousness of Jesus Christ for justification, as we  
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can think of our own merit in believing, when we conceive that *believing* to be the good dispositions and inclinations of our hearts toward him, as exhibited in the gospel; even while, as to these good hearts of ours, we may be saying, *I thank thee I am not as other men.*

The belief of Christ's righteousness, as it is revealed in the gospel, conforms us to his obedience to the death, especially in love to the brethren whom we have seen; and this is ever attended with that love and good-will to all men, even our enemies that hate us, and persecute us for the truth, which he requires of us, and hath taught us by his example. But this fruit of the gospel must not be looked on as the same thing with natural affection, friendship, and the love of our species, or of the human kind, and the love of one's country: for this love to all men, even the enemies of the gospel, doing them good for evil, blessing them and praying for them, which is the proper fruit of faith, and accompanies brotherly love, is for the sake of the unknown elect, 2 Tim. ii. 10. Tit. iii. 2. 3. even as God is good to the evil and unthankful world for their sakes, as Peter tells, 2 Pet. iii. 9. *He is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* Thus our Lord prayed for his enemies that were spitefully using him, in putting him to death; but he was praying for them that the Father had given him, and his prayer was effectual upon the *remnant according to the election of grace*, that was saved from among the Jews, by the preaching of the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and afterward. Stephen imitated his Lord, in praying for his spiteful persecutors at his death, and the Lord answered his prayer in the conversion of Saul, who says, *I did it ignorantly and in unbelief*, 1 Tim. i. 13. And when our Lord prayed for forgiveness to his enemies, he said, *For they know not what they do.* So that if any of them that acted spitefully against Christ, in putting him to death, had



had been first illuminated in the knowledge of him, they would have had no interest in this prayer; even as Paul signifies, that if he had persecuted the church, and blasphemed as he did, after illumination, he had not obtained mercy. The gospel declares, *that the world lieth in wickedness*, except them that believe, and yet commands us to pray for them that lie in wickedness: but the sin unto death excludes men from that love to all men and to enemies, that is the fruit of faith; for it crosses the very end and design of the gospel-benevolence, which is for the sake of the unknown elect, for whom Christ died; because, by this sin, men appear to be reprobates: therefore the apostle says, *There is a sin unto death, I do not say that ye shall pray for it*; yea, Paul seems to give us an instance of a prayer against it, 2 Tim. iv. 14. Thus we may see how the love that the gospel requires toward all men, and even the enemies of the gospel, is connected with that brotherly love that is the great fruit and evidence of faith. And, if you take this hint, you will know how to improve it when you happen to hear any of our fine declaimers on charity.

Now, by these necessary fruits of the belief of the truth that the apostle mentions, even love to God and the children of God, and the good works that he requires done in the way of overcoming the world, we know that we do indeed believe the testimony of God concerning his Son, and so *have the Son*; and thus we know that *we have eternal life*, according to the testimony that says, *He that hath the Son, hath life; he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life*. Compare John iii. 36.

### S E C T. III.

**I**F your patience be not quite spent on this long lecture, you must bear with me a little further, till you have my account of the faith of devils.

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By the charge against the Letter, on this head, I am referred to the Epistle of James, chap. ii. ver. 19. 20. where he says, *Thou believest that there is one God\**; *thou dost well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou not know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?* Now, I cannot find that James distinguishes the faith of God's elect here, from that of devils, by placing the nature of it in any thing beside the belief of the truth of the gospel; but it is easy to perceive that he would have us to shew our belief of the truth, to be of a different nature from their belief, by the fruits of it, good works. He doth not say any thing from which we can possibly infer, that there must be more in faith, than the belief of the truth of the gospel; but he teaches us, that the true saving belief of the gospel, in the souls of men that are born of God, (James i. 18. 21.) must be very different from the devils belief; because it produces good works, fruits of a very different nature from the fruit of the devils faith; and he would have the root distinguished by the fruits, as he says, *I will shew thee my faith by my works.* He speaks more particularly of the works whereby he distinguishes true faith from false, where he bids us be *doers of the word*, and forbids us to let our zeal in words and professions outrun our practice in religion. Here he says, *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world*, James i. 21. 22.—27. Here are fruits very different from what the devils faith produces; and if our zeal in this pure and undefiled religion, hold pace with our zeal in words and professions, we need not be much afraid of the faith of devils.

That terror and dreadful horror which James places as the effect of the devils believing, when he says, *they believe and tremble*, is very opposite to that love whereby faith worketh in bringing forth good works;

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\* Compare 1 John v. 7. *These three are one.*

as John tells us, when he says, *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment: he that feareth, is not made perfect in love,* 1 John iv. 18. And I need not tell you that this tormenting fear is very different from that *godly fear*, without which there can be no obedience, and from the *fear of our coming short of the promised rest through unbelief*; since you see it is opposite to love and good works, and therefore to saving faith. We see one of the children of the devil *trembling* with this tormenting fear at the preaching of an apostle his prisoner, and putting the word away from him, Acts xxiv. 24.—27. And we find the slothful servant giving this as the reason of his neglecting the improvement of his talent, *I feared thee, because thou art an austere man,* Luke xix. 20. 21. But some of them are said to *receive the word with joy*, Matth. xiii. 20.; yet this their joy (however they be *enlightened and taste the good word of God*) cannot be that *rejoicing in the truth*, which is the property of charity or love; it must be a joy belonging to the love of one's self, aside from God and his children, in whom the truth dwells: for these tasters of the good word of God bring not forth the fruits of the word, the works of love. Compare Heb. vi, 4.—11. with Matth. xiii. 20. 21. And thus, I think, we may set aside all that belief of the gospel, from the true saving belief of it, that doth not produce love and good works, however men or devils be affected with it. What shall we then say of their belief of the gospel, who neither rejoice nor tremble at it, let be to do it's works?

The coming of the man of sin, or of Antichrist, after the working of Satan, is declared to be the righteous judgement of God upon the professors of the truth of the gospel, who received not the love of that truth: for, the apostle speaking of that great apostasy from the gospel, under a form of the profession of it, says, *because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; and for this cause*

*God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness, 2 Theff. ii. 9.—12.* The *love of the truth*, which you see here inseparably connected with the true belief of that truth, and separated from the false, did, from the beginning, shew itself in patient joyful suffering for the truth, (Heb. x. 32.—35. 1 Theff. ii. 13. 14. 2 Theff. i. 4. 5.) and in the zeal of good works and alm deeds, denying the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, 2 Cor. viii. 1.—8. 1 John ii. 15.—19. But when men began to profess the truth, grudging the cross, and became cool in the zeal of good works, through the love of this world prevailing in them, this brought the *strong delusion* upon them *that believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

And the end of it was, *That they should believe a lie, that they might be damned:* That they should believe that they may follow Christ without the cross, and not that only, but even persecuting others; that the friendship of the world is not enmity with God, and that they can serve God and Mammon, and obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ in seeking the glory of this world: for, if the gospel be true, this is a damnable lie. And it is fact, that the belief of this lie has been wrought in multitudes of men called Christians, and is a judgement exceeding well suited to the cause for which it came.

The opposite of this, is, *the sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth*, through which God's elect are saved, 2 Theff. ii. 13. 14. For they who received not the love of the truth, or who had pleasure in unrighteousness, however they professed the truth, yet believed it not; because the true saving belief of the gospel is inseparable from the sanctification of the Spirit.

And the mean of preservation from this strong delusion, is, *standing fast, and holding the traditions of the*

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the apostles that weren ot yet all written in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, but are now fully written in the New-Testament scriptures, where they are only to be found pure and entire; and by these the Lord establishes his own people *in every good word and work*: yet some pretended successors of the apostles would have us believe, it is *strong delusion* that makes men contend for the necessary connection betwixt the *sanc-tification of the Spirit*, and the *belief of the truth*, as it appeared in the church of the Thessalonians; and they would have those men reckoned deluded believers of a lie, who pretend to hold fast the traditions of the apostles written in the New Testament, without a national confession of faith, or without the catechism, which they call the mean of enlightening the land with the light of the gospel.

But I proceed to give you some notes from the history of the faith of devils.

And, first, I find, after that notable manifestation of Jesus his being the Son of God at John's baptism, the devil, who could not be ignorant of it, came to him, moving a question about the truth that had been manifested, desiring him to prove it by evidence inferior to that which he had already, and using scripture to induce him to manifest it in an unscriptural manner; and when he failed in that attempt, he dropt the question, and offered him the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, which was most conspicuous at that time in the Roman empire, if he would hold them of him, the *prince of this world*, and the *god of this world*, and worship him. This offer our Lord rejected, with the abominable condition, Matth. iii. 15. 16. 17. and chap. iv. 1.—10. Some ages after this, the clergy came to be set over that empire; but by what tenor they held it, and upon what condition they keep the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, will not be so easily understood.

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From the time of Satan's making this attack upon Jesus, we may suppose the devils knew him to be the Christ, the Son of God, that was promised in the Old Testament; and they understood his authority and power, as *the Son of God manifested to destroy the works of the devil*, by the works he wrought, and especially his casting them out of those that were possessed; and they confessed it with *trembling*; as we find them crying out, *What have we to do with thee Jesus thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?* Matth. viii. 29. Mark v. 7. Luke viii. 28. Thus they believed, and trembled. But whatever way they acted, or stirred up men to act, with respect to the truth, their design was still devilish; for we cannot expect to find in these desperately proud, spiteful, and crafty spirits, that belief of the truth which works by self-denied unfeigned love.

The multitude that was like to take Jesus by force to make him a king, from whom he fled, (John vi. 14. 15.); the multitude that followed him for the loaves, (ver. 26. 27.) hoping to make a fine life of him in this world, as their fathers lived when God was bringing them to their kingdom in Canaan, (ver. 31.) shewed a great zeal for him; but they were set on by the devil, the prince of this world. When Christ's doctrine drove them away, and the disciples, who found themselves disappointed in their worldly hopes, had left him, (ver. 66.) he enquired at the twelve, whom he knew to be a little tainted with that devilish prejudice of a *worldly kingdom* to the Messiah, *Will ye also go away?* and they answered him, *To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.* Then he tells them, *One of you is a devil.* This was Judas Iscariot, who, at bottom, preferred this life to the *words of eternal life*; and therefore at last betrayed him, when he was no longer able to reconcile the following of Christ with  
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his worldly hope, John vi. 67.—71. When Peter confessed the faith, the Lord sustained his confession, and pronounced him blessed, as a child of God that had been taught of the Father, Matth. xvi. 16. 17. But when this same Peter discovered his thoughts of a worldly kingdom to Christ, and shewed his affliction to him on that footing, he called him Satan, and rejected with disdain the zeal he shewed for him, as being inconsistent with his faith, and as opposite to it as Satan is to God, ver. 21. 22. 23.

From all this, we may justly suspect, that confession of the faith of Christ the Son of God, that is entwisted with men's worldly interests, and has not a connection with the cross\*; for this must be a distinguishing effect of the belief of the truth of the gospel, that Christ taught Peter with a severe rebuke, viz. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*, Matth. xvi. 24.—27.

If Jesus had come to the nation of the Jews in the power of an earthly monarch, it is probable they had owned him with great zeal, and readiness to knock down all his opposers; but seeing he came in the very opposite manner, they were easily instigated by the devil to oppose him; and they shewed themselves to be the children of the devil, (notwithstanding their high pretensions to be the children of God, and his people) by persecuting him to the death, for calling himself the Christ, the Son of God, John viii. 39.—44. But behold, at the same time, the unclean spirits confessing him to be the Christ the Son of God! *I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God*, says one of them, Mark i. 24. Luke iv. 34.

*And*

\* These three Greek letters  $\chi$ ,  $\xi$ ,  $\varsigma$ , which express the number of the beast's name, Rev. xiii. 17. 18. happen to be the initials of this motto for all his company.  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\iota\alpha\nu\acute{o}\varsigma \xi\nu\acute{o}\varsigma \varsigma\alpha\upsilon\rho\eta$ , and the opposite number of the Lamb stands in these three letters  $\rho$ ,  $\mu$ ,  $\delta$ , Rev. vii. 4.  $\rho\acute{\eta}\mu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma \mu\acute{\alpha}\rho\tau\upsilon\rho\epsilon\varsigma \delta\iota\omega\nu\acute{o}\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\iota$ .

*And they fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God,* Mark iii. 11. Yet Jesus would have no confession, no testimony from that quarter; he commanded them to hold their peace, and charged them that they should not make him known. He suffered them not to speak, because they knew him, Mark i. 34. And, indeed, whether men took him for the Christ upon their testimony, or rejected him because they testified of him, their point was gained in both events.

After this, the devil, who stirred up persecution every where against the apostles, offered his testimony to the way of salvation preached by them, and to them as the declarers of it; and urged it upon them, saying, *These are the servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.* The apostles, in like manner, rejected this testimony, and they paid for it; for they were beaten and imprisoned as troublers of the world, and disturbers of the peace, at the instigation of those who made gain by the devil's prophets, Acts xvi. 16.—24.

Neither you nor I question, that the philosophical opposition which Arius (the product of the first Christian school of learning), made unto the doctrine of the gospel concerning Jesus Christ, did proceed from the devil; but perhaps you never dreamed that he had any hand in the Nicene Confession of the Faith: for, as the majority of the bishops of that Grand Synod, and the Emperor by whom it was called, held the right side of the question, in opposition to Arius; what know I but you may have had that much confidence to put in the devil, as to think he would not speak inconsistently with himself? But, though he needs not speak contradictions, for want of logic or metaphysics, the facts I have noted down from the scripture-history, serve to shew you he is in no strait about speaking any way; at least, he casts up in so very opposite shapes, (driving his point still against Christ) in the gospel-history, that you need not be  
alarmed



alarmed, if I call upon you to take a look of the Council of Nice, to see if we can find him even there.

Observe, then, in the first place, That, as Arius attacked the truth by philosophy, the fathers of the council opposed to him the fittest words their wisdom could devise, to distinguish it from his error; and these their words stood as the confession and standard of the faith of Christ the Son of God. Thus the deep things of God came to be confessed, not in the words which the Holy Ghost taught, but in the words of the wisdom of the disputer of this world, now established as the standard of the truth of the gospel. You will see little in this; for, if the truth at bottom be owned, you are easy about the words. But I cannot so easily pass over this; for those words wherein the truth was now set forth to be believed and confessed, carried another authority in them, than that upon which the truth was at first received in the *form of sound words* set by the inspired apostles; and this was the authority of the Catholic Council. And from this time the *form of sound words* that was dictated by the Holy Ghost, became of less consideration in the confession of the faith, as less fit to distinguish a true profession from a false, than the forms that men have been framing and imposing ever since that famous beginning in the Council of Nice. All heretics own the scriptures, and plead them, it is true; but still the scripture alone must determine to me, who is a heretic, and who not. Here I shall leave to your consideration three queries, that I find in a twopenny pamphlet written against the infallibility of the church of Rome, intitled, *The Plain Man's Reply to the Catholic Missionaries*, printed in the year 1686; and I would even catechise our catechisers with these same queries: which are,

1. "Suppose a controversy should arise about the canons of any council, how, and in what sense they

are to be understood? Can such decrees determine themselves, and explain their own meaning? If so, then,

2. “Why must not the same privilege be granted to the holy scriptures? Why cannot the writings of God judge and determine controversies, as well as the writings of men?”

3. “Whether cannot the Spirit of God, by which the scriptures were indited, express his mind as plainly and intelligibly, as the fathers of any council?”

And you may likewise consider what Dr Owen says in his *Theologumena*, *Digress. de philosophiæ cum theologia mixtura*, p. 509. though he too composed a catechism.

But let us behold next the confession of the faith of the Son of God, set at the top of the Roman empire, and connected with the power and glory thereof. What you will think of this, I know not; but, I suppose, this would have pleased Peter, when he was saying that for which his master called him Satan. The multitude, and the disciples that went back, and Judas, who was called a devil, would have been delighted with this; yea, the Jewish rulers themselves had been far from calling Jesus a blasphemer for his doctrine, if it had been attended with this power and glory.

The cross that Jesus Christ joined inseparably to the true confession of the faith, was set at a great distance from this confession, and the reverse came in its place. It is true, the story tells, that the likeness of the cross appeared in the air to Constantine, with this inscription, *Through this thou shalt overcome*, i. e. *Through this thou shalt vanquish thy rivals, and become Roman Emperor*; and so it came to pass. Then, the sign of the cross in the Roman banner accompanied the confession of the faith in its exaltation in that empire. Thus, I own, the cross and the faith were connected: but you may let me say, this was a  
new

new way of taking up the cross, together with the new confession and standard of faith.

And now the Christian leaders, who were originally ensamples to the flock, of humble dependence on the Lord Jesus, and of self-denial in conformity to him, came to have the empire subjected to them, in dependence on the Emperor, and distributed among them in subordination to one another. The bishops of each province were dependent on their metropolitans, with a provincial synod; and there were bishops again of capital churches, set over those metropolitans and their provinces, as the bishop of Alexandria over Egypt, Lybia, and Pentapolis; the bishop of Antioch over the whole east. But there is some difficulty about the jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome in the west; for he was not yet come to his supremacy: and the Council of Nice did not precisely or clearly enough determine the limits of his jurisdiction. Our clergy have no offence at the subjection of provinces and nations, as a flock to the Christian pastors, in their synods and councils subordinate to one another; but they suspect the subordination of bishops to metropolitans, and of them again to capital bishops, to have proceeded from the devil: for they have all their share in the government of the world, by subordination of synods and councils; and though they have no scruple at lording over the people, (but are clear for it to avoid confusion) they are pretty positive, that the subjecting of themselves to the jurisdiction of a superior bishop, (to avoid confusion) is a thing that came of the devil, though it be a thing that was done even by the Council of Nice. They will not be called *the clergy*; but they can plead, 1 Pet. v. 3. against the lordship of the bishop over them, (*Neither as being lords over God's heritage, τῶν κληρῶν, but being ensamples to the flock*), yet they will not allow it to be pleaded against their lordship over the people; but though nothing else that was done by the Council of Nice should please our clergymen,

they are well satisfied, that the making of that creed, or confession of the faith of the Son of God for the empire, was a great and a good thing; for therein they see the name of the Son of God exalted.

Yet I cannot tell what they will think of this when they consider it, *viz.* That the name of Christ, by this exaltation, and the faith of him, as thus dignified, was dependent on the power that ruled the Roman empire, and held this its station much at the will of the Emperor, who sometimes inclined to the Nicene faith, and sometimes to Arianism, till he was taken out of the way, and the kings, who divided the empire, gave their power to the clergy. And this did not mend the matter: for, when the clergy came thus to be the head, they were ruled immediately by the devil, as our Reformers thought, and as some Protestants still think. Compare Matth. iv. 8. 9. 10. with Rev. xiii. 3.—8.

But let us next give our thoughts to this, that the Nicene confession of the faith was made for the empire: it was designed to be the confession of the faith of the whole empire distributed under the clergy. Now, let even a Popish writer \*, who cannot be suspected of disaffection to the state of the church that then was, give us an account of the people who had this faith. He says, “As to the manners of believers, Christianity becoming the common and almost general religion in the Roman empire, we must not be surpris’d if there were abundance of persons who were only Christians in name, and who led a life almost Heathenish.” Here is a faith without works with a witness. The prime national faith, the faith of the Council of Nice, that famous original of all national confessions of faith, appears to be a faith without good works: and let James tell us what sort of faith that is. Some shew much zeal for the orthodoxy of the national faith; but James tells us plainly, that, hold off works, the devils can be **ORTHODOX.**

And

\* Dupin.

And here I would ask them who hold the faith pointed out in the Letter on Catechisms, to be no other than the faith of devils; what they take their beloved national faith to be? Can they say any more of the persuasion of the truth of their catechism, but that to have this persuasion is to be of good sound orthodox belief? But the belief of the truth, by their assertion, is only the faith of devils; what then do they contend for, in contending so earnestly for sound principles, and orthodox belief? Surely the design of all the stir and noise they make, cannot be merely this, to make us no better than devils.

Or, do they expect to make the nation shew its faith of the gospel by the works of the gospel, and to establish the nation in *every good work*, together with *every good word*? If this be their meaning, then I should hope they would plead for the inseparable connection betwixt the sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth, and all their believers of the truth will be saints. But, alas! a national faith, with all the power of the nation establishing it, was never able to produce love and good works. The word of the apostles did this, and can do it still, by its power working in them that believe it; but they proposed only to take a people out of the nations for God's name. And to this agree the words of the prophets about the nations, Acts xv. 14.—17.

Let us, in the last place, take a view of the fruits of that first national faith, and the works that attended it. The first fruit of it was persecution. The apostolic faith had been persecuted; but the power of the empire began to be employed in defence of this faith, as soon as it was given forth by the Council. The effect of this was dissimulation in some who feared the defending power; and as to Arius himself, and two bishops called *Secundus* and *Theonas*, who would not profess the faith, their fate was exile. Thus, persecution by Christians began as the product of the Nicene faith; and, I suppose, you will not be positive

to deny, that this is the work of the devil. To this you may add the many famous strifes among the clergy, contending who should have most of the power and glory of the kingdoms of this world? which contention began then, and continues to this day, where ever there is any occasion or opportunity for it, as there will, in all appearance, still be more or less, to the end of the world. And as religion was then often the pretext in the clergy's strivings for power and honour in this world, so I reckon it will be to the end.

Thus you see a faith, not in the words of the Holy Ghost's teaching, but in the words of the teaching of man's wisdom, leaning on human authority, and supported with secular power, connected with the power and glory of the kingdoms of this world, in separation from the zeal of good works, and from bearing the cross after Christ, and producing persecution, accompanied with dissimulation, pride, and ambition, the works of the devil; and you may add covetousness; 2 Pet. ii. 3. If you see this, you can say you see the faith of devils as it may be seen among men.

And you can be in no strait to distinguish this from the belief of the testimony of God, in his own word, begot and maintained by the power of God, producing love and good works, with self-denial, mortification to the world, and patient bearing the cross; which is the faith of God's elect.

This is that faith which owns no standard but the scriptures of the inspired prophets and apostles, depends on no authority but that of God in these scriptures, admits no light but that which shines there, and receives no testimony but what is given there. As the Letter on Catechisms served the cause of this faith, I placed the usage it met with to the account of the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ; and as this Letter has no other drift, I am ready to do the same with it; still allowing every thing in it to be rejected that does not serve this purpose; yea, if you  
cast

cast it into the fire, and cleave wholly to your Bible, you will lose nothing, and its end is gain'd.

And this is that faith, in the unity of which the whole body of Christ is growing up to a perfect man in him; but his people have been divided, enslaved to human authority, and confounded with the world, by creeds and catechisms. I conclude, wishing you, and yours, a share in that prayer which you read, John xvii. 20. 21. And am,

S I R,

Your, &c.

P O S T S C R I P T.

AS I am persuaded all that believe on Christ thro' the word of his apostles, are one, in spite of all the divisions that have been made among them by the doctrines and commandments of the leaders of the several sects among whom they have been scattered, I cannot but approve of that way of speaking that is now pretty common, *viz.* That they who are agreed in the main, ought to forbear one another in differences about things of lesser moment. But I want to know your mind of a remarkable text that has been often cited to support this saying; because it seems to point out that *main* wherein all true Christians should be agreed.

The text is, Phil. iii. 7.—18. Notice these words, *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss—that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*—Let

*us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.*

I must own to you, I cannot perceive how one can walk by this same rule, and mind this same thing, in minding a worldly kingdom to Jesus Christ, or in walking up to the principles of uniformity, upon which national churches and national covenants have been built. The principles of the extirpation of heretics and schismatics to establish a kingdom of this world to Jesus Christ, are perfectly inconsistent with the minding of conformity to Christ in his humiliation in this life, and the desire of so attaining to the resurrection of the dead.

But when I would think as charitably as I can on this head, I consider that the disciples, in the days of the Lord's flesh, were much under the influence of the then prevailing notion of a worldly kingdom to the Messiah; and true Christians now may have received, by tradition from their fathers, principles inconsistent with this same rule, which (in spite of the influence those principles have upon them) they are most inclined to walk by. For the apostle supposes, that in some things they may be *otherwise minded, i. e.* differently minded from that one rule, and so divided from one another. But the cure of these divisions must be the Lord's revealing this same thing more clearly to them, that they may see its inconsistency with those other opinions that they were entertaining. And till they see this, they can be no further agreed, but in as far as they are walking by this same rule, and minding this same thing, *viz.* the salvation that lies in the sufferings of Christ, and the following glory, and is to be enjoyed in the way of conformity to him in his sufferings in this life, as necessarily connected with, and preparing us for conformity



formity to him in his glory in the resurrection of the dead.

As our Lord said to his disciples, *O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?* It may be said to them that are minding a worldly kingdom to Christ, and seeking after a state of happy security from heretical apostasies, and from persecutions to the church in this present world, *O fools, and slow of heart to believe the words that were spoken before by the Holy Prophets, with the commandment of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour! Ought not Christians to suffer with Christ in this life, and to enter into his glory in the life to come?*

The work of providence at this day is to fulfil the scripture, in *filling the antichristian kingdom with darkness*, at which the authors of the *judicial testimony*, with the believers of that testimony, are very much displeas'd; but if there be any believers of the gospel among them, it is no new thing to see them afflicted with that which is the ground of the greatest joy to them. Even the breaking of the dominion of the clergy by infidelity, now coming in place of the superstition that has supported that dominion since the days of Constantine, gives the believers of the gospel a glorious opportunity to *walk by the same rule*, and to *mind the same thing*, rejecting all the inconsistent doctrines that have divided them.

The UNLAWFULNESS OF BLOOD-EATING,  
shewed from a View of the Tenure by which  
the Christian Gentiles from the Beginning  
held their Liberty in CHRIST from the Yoke  
of the Law of Moses,

[First published in the year 1743.]

The P R E F A C E.

HOW rare is it to find a man, even in the Christian world, that will give himself the trouble to go to the bottom of a question about any doctrine or precept of revelation, when the question is only, What says God?

We love to reason on abstract notions of the Deity, and on points that can never be fixed by reasoning, as *liberty* and *necessity*, the *nature*, *first rule*, and *principle of moral virtue*, the being and nature of material and immaterial substances, and *the immateriality* and *immortality of the soul*. And the most ignorant of us are the most dogmatic on all these points; presuming that fine abstract reasoning has decided and determined all: while we do not perceive, that our various persuasions as to these things, are influenced the same way as we see the most stupid of mankind persuaded, to whom we sometimes appeal in these questions; as, when we have done our best, on the *simplicity of thought*, and the as great *simplicity of motion*, in the question about the immateriality of the soul, we at last appeal to common inward sense and feeling, for a principle of thought distinct from matter.

We have a mighty liking to pictures, and are fond to see nature imitated, but especially to behold human nature painted to the advantage. We search history to behold with admiration the heroes in warlike virtue, or philosophic virtue, or in political and govern-  
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ing virtue: for there we see what human nature is capable of. And when the dark side of it cannot but appear to us, in many horrible instances in fair history, that serves but as a shade in the picture to make the warlike, the philosophic, or political hero rise before us in all his glory, and so affect us with a sense of the dignity of our nature, as to set us on to shew it in ourselves. And how much have we been exercised in pointing out to one another the beautiful strokes of these painters, the *poets* and *orators*? We labour to understand all the languages wherein such philosophy, history, oratory, and poetry is preserved to us, and think our labour well bestowed in translating all those fine things in the best manner into our own language. And some of us break our heads all our days on the porch to learning, mere language.

In all this, every one of us, as severally exercised, imagines that he answers the great end of the human make: for, who denies that man is made for knowledge and reasoning, and that this is the grand thing in man? And as we are thus employed, we conceive ourselves to be rising high above the common ignorant herd of mankind, to see beauties and feel delights far beyond their reach, or to be diving into mighty depths for treasures hid there from the poor ignorant vulgar. Yea, and by this we conceive ourselves fitted to conduct the rest of mankind in the business they have to do with God.

But if our honour in life, our gain and pleasure, has no connection with the learned world, and lies rather in the common course of the busy world; a question or point of mighty moment among the learned, will be the merest trifle in the world to us. Shall I trouble my head about things that will never increase my stock, promote the credit and honour of my family, nor give me a sweeter relish of life? Let the learned break their heads about these matters; I leave them to their better judgements, to mind things of greater importance, substantial things that a man can get

between his finger and his thumb. Connect religion itself with these things, (for some religion we must have) and I will be as religious as you please.

But, says one, who launched as far as any other into the world of wisdom and knowledge, the world of pleasure, politeness, and grandeur, and even the trading world, and from the greatest experience of it all, declares it to be all vanity: *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man.* This is the proper use of him, this is all that he serves for.

If man was made to know and to love God, this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; to which we are told, that the course of the wise, the grand, and busy world is so opposite, that we must not be conformed to it, but transformed by the renewing of our minds, if we would prove what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God.

The learned have applied their learning to the book of God; and they are telling the rest of mankind, what is his will by their skill in language, by their knowledge of the philosophy about moral virtue, and by abstract reasoning; and after all, we hear rather from them what in their reason he ought to say, than what he indeed says. Much labour is bestowed upon the question, What God should in reason, and according to the fitness of things, say to us? how he should deal with us? where and how far it is proper for him to interpose his authority? and where he should lay the greatest stress in his dealings with us? But, aside from this, we are not much troubled about the fact: What is indeed his mind and will? what says he? and what would he have us to do? It appears in the common course of doctrine and religious practice, that this plain question is far from being the only one, as it ought to be; or else it is too plain, that we rarely seek to know in good earnest, in order to do.

As to the book of God in our hands; if we receive it as his from tradition, and the authority of the church, we never doubt to take the meaning of it from the same hand; and so we go upon the question, What says our church? and what said the fathers? But if we receive it, because to us it appears rational in the main scope of it, and agreeable to our principles of reason, then our reason, that led us to it, must give us the sense and meaning of it; and so, whatever appears agreeable to our reason, must be the revealed will of God. And if there be any thing in that book shocking to our reason, or any thing that appears trifling, or of no great importance, we are sure, God, the author of our reason, (and we have it right) cannot lay much stress upon that. So we enquire, What says our reason? and then the Bible gives us a fine system of moral virtue. And next we enquire, What is it in this book that appears of greatest importance, particularly, as to what it requires of us? and there we begin to cut and carve upon it, by distinguishing betwixt moral and positive precepts, to lay the greatest stress on the moral, while we neglect or observe the positive as we see cause; though the book plainly makes the whole misery of mortal man the consequence of his disobedience to a positive precept, and makes our salvation to depend on the command, to believe Jesus is the Son of God.

Few believe the Bible upon the evidence that God himself gives in that book, that has been kept indeed by the church, but is not committed to any men to give it its gloss; for it interprets itself: and there are as few who take it as its own interpreter, having no other question, but, What says it? and no other guard against a false gloss, but, *It is written again.* Say that this itself is good reason. If it be so, then I would be glad to see it more hearkened to and followed; but I would call it, hearing God speaking to us in the scriptures.

## The Unlawfulness of BLOOD-EATING.

THE revelation and divine grant of liberty to all the Gentiles from the yoke of the law given by Moses, is in those decrees which were ordained, Acts xv. see from ver. 22—30:

This happened in consequence of God's *opening the door of faith* to the idolatrous Gentiles by the ministry of Paul and Barnabas; as may be easily seen by any attentive reader of Acts xiii. 2. 3. and 44—49. xiv. 15. 21. 22. 23. and 27. and xv. 1. 2.

These decrees were delivered by Paul the apostle of the Gentiles, to churches of those Gentiles who had been turned to God from idols; as we see from Acts xvi. 1. 4. compared with chap. xiv.

And, long after this, when Paul had laboured much more among the idolatrous Gentiles, James, and the elders in Jerusalem, repeat this to him, as a standing law with respect to the Gentiles which then believed, after he had *declared* to them *particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry*. They say to him, *As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded, that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication*. See Acts xxi. 18. 19. 20. 21. and 25.

This was decreed in the church at Jerusalem, from whence, according to the prophecies, *the law and the word of the Lord* was to go forth to the Gentiles, to put an end to the enmity and strife betwixt them and the Jews, Is. ii. 3. 4. And it is the answer of a question that came from Antioch, moved there by certain men which went out from the apostles at Jerusalem, pretending their authority for what they said, Acts xv. 1. 2. 23. 24. This question was touching the necessity of bringing the believing Gentiles under the obligation of the law of Moses by circumcision,

in order to their being held and acknowledged as partakers with the believing Jews in the salvation that is by Christ.

The agreement of the *whole church* in Jerusalem with the apostles and elders, in their answer to this question, was influenced, first, by what Peter said of the testimony that God had given to the uncircumcised profelytes of the gate, who received the gospel at first from his mouth, putting no difference between them and the circumcised, Acts xv. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 14. with chap. x. and xi. 17. 18.; and then, by what Paul and Barnabas narrated concerning the uncircumcised who had been turned to God from idols by their ministry, among whom they had been labouring at the hazard of their lives, Acts xv. 12. 26. with chap. xiii. and xiv.; and likewise, by the application that James made of the prophecy of Amos to all the Gentiles that had *turned to God*, without any thing like a foundation for an exception of those turned from idols, Acts xv. from ver. 15.—20. Or, if we would go about to make any such exception, and restrain the decrees concerning the liberty of the Gentiles to the profelytes of the gate, and apply the answer of the question that came from Antioch to these only, and not at all to the Gentiles turned from idols, as some do, for no other reason, but because the church in Antioch at first consisted of such; we should find ourselves, in that case, plainly contradicted by James himself, who applies this answer of the question that came from Antioch, expressly to the idolatrous Gentiles converted by Paul, Acts xxi. 19. 20. 25.

The answer, then, of the question, comes to this, That there is no obligation upon any Gentile convert to be circumcised, and so to keep the law of Moses; but that all the believing Gentiles are brethren in Christ to the believing Jews, and sharers with them in his salvation, to all intents and purposes, without circumcision, or keeping that law: and, at the same time,

time, it is decreed by the same authority, and agreed to in the same manner, and in the answer to that same question, that these Gentiles are obliged to *these necessary things, viz. to abstain from pollutions of idols, ver. 20. i. e. from meats offered to idols, ver. 29. and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication.*

In this manner, therefore, did the Gentiles, from the beginning, hold the grant of freedom from the *burden* or obligation of the law; bearing the *burden* or obligation of these necessary things laid upon them in the charter by which they held their liberty.

I. They were bound to abstain from idolothytes, or meats offered to idols.

They were not to imagine, that this liberty from the law of Moses, (by which every thing pertaining to idolatry was abomination) gave them any more indulgence as to partaking with idolaters even in the meats they had offered to their idols: for, as eating, knowingly and wittingly, of idolothytes, was the worship of idols or idolatry, (1 Cor. x. 7.) it was no less contrary to the true Christian purification, than it was to the Jewish; the gospel being the clearest discovery of the true God against all idols, and all idolatry, calling the Gentiles every where to repent of it under the pain of eternal judgement.

It is true, some of the Corinthians reasoned themselves into the eating of idolothytes, by inferences drawn from this principle, opposite to idols, and agreed to by the apostle, viz. *That an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.* But the apostle declares himself much against their practice inferred from it, and condemns the practice two ways. 1. He supposes their inferences to hold so as they could eat with clearness of conscience, as being firmly persuaded, that the *idolothye is not any thing, seeing the idol is not any thing*; and that, after all that could be done in the way of offering the meat, it still remained the Lord's; because the *earth is his,*  
and



*and the fullness thereof.* But, even upon this supposition, that they did not forbear these meats, for the sake of their *own conscience*, he shews them, that, not only in regard to the conscience of the Gentile idolater, who hardened himself in his idolatry against the gospel, by their partaking with him in his idolothytes, and the conscience of the Jew, who was ready to stumble at Christ as an indulger of idolatry, upon this practice of the most knowing Christians; but especially for the sake of their weak brother's conscience, who, though turned to the true God from idols, did not know, as they, that an idol was nothing; they ought by all means to abstain from such meats: because their brother, who had not their knowledge to boast of, and could not eat with so clear a conscience as they, might be tempted, by their example, to sin against his own conscience in eating those meats. See 1 Cor. viii. and x. from ver. 23. to the end.

2. But then he affirms, that the things the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to dæmons, who affected the worship from men that is due only to God, or to the Divine Mediator, (pointing, as would seem, to Levit. xvii. 5. 6. 7.); and thereby he shews the unlawfulness of eating of these sacrifices, as being a partaking with dæmons, perfectly inconsistent with their partaking with the Lord, or having any part in his table, 1 Cor. x. 7. 14. 19. 20. 21. 22. He forbids the eating of idolothytes, as idolatry, in these words: *Neither be ye idolaters, as some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play; and, My dearly beloved, fly from idolatry.* He takes up the force of all they had to say for it, and of their evasion from the strength of his exhortation, in these words: *What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that the idolothyte is any thing?* And he answers it, and sets it aside in these words: *But, I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to dæmons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with dæmons. Ye cannot*

*drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of dæmons; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of dæmons. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?* Thus, he says, the sacrifices of the Gentiles went really to dæmons, so that they could not be partaked of, without partaking with those who were not at all gods, as their worshippers supposed and called them, but in reality wicked rivals to the Lord, whom the partakers of his table provoked to jealousy by partaking in their sacrifices. And thus, in the plainest manner, he makes abstinence from idolothytes a term of Christian communion; even as after this, in the epistles to the Asian churches, Rev. ii. the Lord declares his hatred of the doctrine that taught the lawfulness of eating idolothytes, and finds fault with the church in Pergamos for having such as taught it in their communion, ver. 14. 15. And by this we see, how it was a *necessary thing* to abstain from idolothytes.

II. They were obliged to abstain from fornication.

This has an extensive meaning in the New Testament, as we may see from 1 Cor. vii. 1. 2. *It is good for a man not to touch a woman; but, for fornications, let every man have his own wife, and, let every woman have her own husband.* This is according to the primitive institution of marriage to Adam, to which our Lord refers when speaking of divorce. And whatever is beyond, or beside this, in gratifying the natural appetite that the Creator gave to the male and female for generation, is fornication, according to the New Testament; as we see plainly from this text, that all other ways of satisfying that appetite, but by the benevolence due from the husband to his own wife, and from her, to her own husband, are called *fornications*.

And it appears from 1 Cor. v. that *fornication* takes in incest, even in the highest degree of it. See ver. 1. The Gentiles knew very well the evil of uncovering the nakedness of any one whose *nakedness* is called

zed our *own* in the law of Moses. They generally abhorred incest upon what we call the direct line; and so the apostle says, *that one should have his father's wife, is such fornication as is not so much as named amongst the Gentiles*: but they did not so well know the evil of incest upon all the other degrees forbid in the law of Moses, nor did they stand so much upon them. And, now when God declared that they were not obliged by the law of Moses, they were not to think that this gave them any more liberty than Israel had, as to the degrees of nearness of kin, or any more indulgence to such abominations as for which God said he cut off the Canaanites before his people, and would likewise cut off them, and the strangers sojourning among them, if they should be guilty of them, Lev. xviii.

When fornication is taken so largely, as to include incest as one sort of it, it must also comprehend in its meaning every sort, as is before said. And the apostle plainly excludes fornicators, without distinction, from the Christian communion, forbidding Christians (1 Cor. v. 9. 10. 11.) *to company with fornicators; yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or, &c. for then must ye needs go out of the world: but—if any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or, &c. with such an one no not to eat.* And the Lord says to the angel of the church in Pergamos, Rev. ii. 14. 15. *But I have a few things against thee, because thou HAST THERE them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication; so hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.* By this, again, we see how it was a necessary thing to abstain from fornication. But there is some ground for a question, If the sense that the Christian world has of this necessity be influenced from this authority? For,

III. They were the same way obliged to abstain from suffocated and blood, ἀπὸ τοῦ πνικτοῦ καὶ τοῦ αἵματος;

that is, from blood, either mixed with the flesh (as in creatures smothered), or separated from it. Thus the ancient Christians understood it, as Tertullian informs us in his *Apology*, chap. 9. *Erubescat error vester Christianis, qui ne animalium quidem sanguinem in epulis esculentis habemus, qui propterea quoque suffocatis et morticinis abstinemus, ne quo sanguine contaminemur vel intra viscera sepulto.* And so it is the same thing that was said to Noah, in the grant of flesh for food, Gen. ix. 3. 4. *But flesh in its life, [or soul] its blood, shall you not eat.*

Nature did not teach man to kill and eat his fellow living creatures; his reason could not shew him any right he had to do it; and therefore the practice took its rise from revelation; even that same revelation which we have in the 9th chapter of Genesis, where the grant of animal food to man is thus expressed: *Every moving thing that liveth, shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh in its soul, its blood, you shall not eat.* By the words immediately following, *And surely your blood of your souls will I require at the hand of every beast—and at the hand of man,* it would seem, that this prohibition of blood-eating; to men killing and eating flesh, is intended as a guard against the shedding of man's blood. But we must likewise observe here, that, in this grant of flesh for food, there is a plain reference to a former grant that God, the Lord of man's life, had made of food for him: for, when he says, *even as the green herb,* he plainly points to the first grant of meat to man, which we see, Gen. i. 29. *Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, to you it shall be for meat.* In that first grant there was a limitation, that served to shew man's dependence on his Creator and Lord, of whom he held his life and his food: for, Gen. ii. 16. 17. *The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat: but*  
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of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. As man could not be independent of his Creator, in whom he lived, and moved, and had his being, and who made *meats for his belly, and his belly for meats*; it was most meet, that he should live, not by what he did eat alone, but by the word of his Lord God, that gave him food for his life, with a restriction and reserve which declared his dependence, and manifested that he held his life of him. So that his breaking through this limitation, in eating of the forbidden tree, was a plain renunciation of his dependence; by which his life was forfeited.

When man was condemned to death for his disobedience, and when God had intimated his design of redemption, through the death, and shedding of the blood of that substitute, *the seed of the woman*, which was prefigured in the sacrifices, he gave to man another grant of food, for sustaining his mortal life more comfortably in the time of his long-suffering: and in this new grant of every living creature for meat, he reserves the *blood*, even as he did that *tree*, in the former grant of herbs and fruits of trees. So that this precept about blood, is of the same nature with that concerning the tree: only, whereas that declared man's dependence on God as the Author and Lord of his life, of which his disobedience deprived him, this declares the sinful mortal's dependence on God, as redeeming him from sin and death by atoning blood; and disobedience to this precept, imports disregard to that blood, as being in effect a renunciation of dependence on the Lord God, the Sovereign Author of redemption by blood.

For that this prohibition of blood-eating respected the atonement, is most manifest from the repetition of it to Israel by Moses, Lev. xvii. where the Lord gives charge about offering the peace-offerings (whereof Israel did eat with him) at his altar, in opposition  
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to sacrificing their meats to devils, ver. 7. And he forbids them, or *strangers* sojourning among them, to eat any manner of blood, under the pain of setting his face against the soul that eateth it, to cut him off, ver. 10. And he gives this reason for it, ver. 11. 12. *For the soul of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls; because, the blood, it shall atone for the soul.* Thus, he plainly tells them, that this precept, on which he laid so much, served to manifest their dependence on him the Sovereign God, giving them the blood upon the altar to atone for their souls; that, by observing it, they might shew their humble submission to his *sovereignty* in the *substitution*, and testify their reverence and awful regard to the atonement by blood. But the true atonement was not by the blood of beasts, which could not take away any real sin, and the respect due to it, was on the account of the true atonement, prefigured by it, which is only in the blood of Christ shed for the remission of sins: and in this alone, God's words concerning the atonement by blood are verified. Therefore, when the Gentiles are admitted to share in the salvation that is by this blood, without the typical sacrifices of the law, they are commanded to abstain from blood: for still the true reason of the prohibition remains. The everlasting atonement, whereby the Gentiles, as well as Jews, are eternally saved, is by blood that God hath given us upon the true altar. And so this prohibition of blood-eating was always, and still is of the greatest and highest importance.

It never had any relation to the distinction betwixt Israel, according to the flesh, and the Gentiles, which was established by the law of Moses. It had not the peculiarity of the Jewish people as the reason of it, like the prohibition of meats that God pronounced unclean to them. Nor was blood (by which almost all things by the law are purged) ever forbidden as unclean, like swines flesh, or like that which died of itself, or

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was torn of beasts, whereof a stranger might eat, providing the blood was separated from it: for the stranger might not eat blood, Deut. xiv. 21. with Lev. xvii. 13. 14. 15. 16. As men do not use to buy and eat that which dies of itself unblooded, so any thing that died of itself, or was torn, (however blooded) was unclean to the people of Israel by the law of Moses.

The Gentiles, therefore, were not to think, that the declaration of their freedom from the obligation of that law, which forbade the Jews the use of several meats as unclean, gave them any liberty from the obligation of the precept about blood, which was in the grant of flesh for meat to all mankind, and that with a view to the salvation of men from sin and death by blood. The apostles declared this precept to be still in force to the Gentiles, whom the law of Moses did not bind, and made the observation of it necessary, in opposition to indifferent, even as abstinence from idolothytes and fornication, and of as great importance as any of these: for, when they decreed against the necessity of circumcision, and keeping Moses's law to the Gentiles, in order to their being held as members of the church that is saved by Christ's blood; they did then, by the same authority, decree the *necessity of these things*: for this was the necessity pointed to in the question to which the decrees are an answer; and this is the necessity to be looked for in that answer, if we suppose, that, when the apostles and elders of the church in Jerusalem came together to consider of that question, they gave it an answer to the purpose.

It is odd, to say, that by *these necessary things* we are to understand, these indifferent things, made necessary at that time, only by the present disposition of the believing Jews; the same of which that church in Jerusalem then consisted, who, it seems, were well disposed to give up circumcision, and the keeping of the law of Moses to the believing Gentiles, but could  
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by no means be prevailed with to give up the article of blood! They who incline to talk at this rate, must say further, That, by *these necessary things*, we must understand, partly such indifferent things, and partly things necessary in opposition to indifferent: for some of those things that are here declared necessary, are owned to be very far from indifferent, and affirmed to be binding on all Christians, in all ages, to the end of the world. Yet all this passes current among Christians, as good sound interpretation of scripture.

But a necessity arising merely from the offence of the Jews, was full as great in the matter of *swines flesh* as in that of *blood*; and it was as necessary for the Gentiles to keep the *rest* of the *seventh day*, to which the profelytes of the gate were as much obliged, by the fourth command, as they could be, by any precept, to abstinence from blood; which yet, we see, is declared necessary, in the same decrees that make these not necessary. *Moses's being read in the synagogues every sabbath-day*, can never appear to be a proper reason for the necessity of the one, and not of the other. But a very good reason it was, why the apostles, elders, and brethren in Jerusalem, should write unto the Gentiles that had been troubled with a false gospel palmed on them, as coming out from them; a very proper reason why the apostles should begin in this manner to write the New-Testament revelation, that, as the law was read in the synagogues, so might the New Testament be also in the churches, and particularly this notable part of it, first committed to writing, concerning our liberty from the yoke of the law; which was accordingly delivered to the churches to keep, even as the law was kept in the synagogues.

And thus we may see, with what limitations we Gentiles, from the beginning, held our liberty in Jesus Christ, from the yoke of the law of Moses; and particularly, that we held it with an express obligation laid upon us to abstain from blood, which was  
never



never allowed to men for meat, neither before the law of Moses, when the grant of animal food was as full to Noah, and as largely expressed, as it is any where in the New Testament, nor under that law, nor under the gospel, which is the clearest discovery of salvation by atoning blood: for, in the New Testament, which takes away the Mosaic limitations of the extensive grant of animal food to Noah, blood is once and again, as expressly excepted as it was to Noah; and, unless some part of scripture-revelation can be produced, that particularly removes this exception, it will be impossible to shew the lawfulness of blood-eating.

They who would say that this notable exception is removed by the general terms wherein the New-Testament liberty to eat of all meats is expressed, may in the same manner assert, that the exception of blood is fully taken away by these words to Noah, *Every moving thing that liveth, shall be meat for you*; or, that the exception of the tree of knowledge was set aside by these words to Adam, *Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat*. And if their argument be good, so was the devil's argument to Eve, when he commenced interpreter of revelation, and went about to make void the exception of that tree, in this manner, *Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* It needs not, one would think, be told Christians, that he is not a fit pattern for them to imitate in the interpretation of their law. As for those infidels, commonly called *Deists*, or their enthusiastic brethren the *Quakers*, they can have no room to speak on this question, till first, from their principles of reason, and from the *fitness of things*, whereof they sustain themselves judges, both for themselves, and for *the only wise God*, or from their *light within*, their only standard of all scripture-interpretation, they be able to bring us their warrant for killing and eating the flesh of their fellow living creatures. And as for their beloved distinction of *mo-*

*ral* and *positive*, Christians should leave it with them, as unscriptural, and full of doubtful disputation, to make the best of it they can to help them out with their malignant sneer at positive institutions and precepts; that is, at the grand institution of atonement and salvation from sin and death by blood, and all the institutions and precepts relating to it and depending upon it; which must be of little or no consideration with us, in comparison with their moral wisdom, or *knowledge of good and evil*, if we hearken to their interpretation of scripture. But they have as little right to interpret scripture-revelation to us Christians, as their father the devil had to interpret the word of God to our first parents.

As for the arguments used commonly by Christians for the lawfulness of blood-eating, drawn from what is said in the New Testament, of things that were unclean (as blood could not be) to the Jews, and of idolothytes, that needed a question to be asked before they could be known to be such, and from the circumstances of the proselytes of the gate, and from the strangers being allowed by the law of Moses to eat that which dieth of itself; these arguments are fully obviated, by what is above said, to any attentive reader; and it is not worth while to write for any other.

Protestants who find many faults with the church of Rome, have not blamed her for making void the commandment of God concerning blood, and giving men a liberty to eat it; but, while they agree with her in this, against the Greek church, and all the eastern Christians, some of them have complained much of her taking upon her, by her authority, to establish a distinction of meats in her days and seasons of fasting, binding mens consciences where God hath left them free; and so have applied to her that prophecy concerning the apostacy of the latter times, which we have, 1 Tim. iv. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. yet, from  
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that same very passage, they can bring an argument to justify her in the eating of blood!

But the first Christians, (who were not the worst of the kind) knowing the import of the precept concerning blood, observed it most religiously. And though questions arose amongst them, about idolöthytes and fornication, yet we never read of any of them who had the confidence to say any thing in favour of eating blood, or to move any objection against the obligation of the precept about it, in any case. Yea, so notour was the testimony they gave of their regard to the atoning blood of Christ, in the strict observation of this precept, that, long after the time of the apostles, their persecutors distinguished them by it, even as the persecutors of the Jews had used to distinguish and prove them by swines flesh. Tertullian says, in his *Apology*, *cap. 9. Inter tentamenta Christianorum, botulos etiam cruore distentos admoventis, certissimi scilicet illicitum esse pence illos, per quod exorbitare eos vultis. Porro, quale est, ut quos sanguinem pecoris horrere confiditis, humano inhiare credatis? nisi forte juaviorem eum experti; quem quidem et ipsum proinde examinatore Christianorum adhiberi ut foculum, ut acerram, oportebat, &c.* And they appealed to this, as a most notour fact, to shew their enemies the falsehood of the accusation against them, of killing, and eating, and drinking human flesh and blood: for this is also the answer Minutius Felix gives that accusation, *Nobis homicidium nec videre fas nec audire; tantumque ab humano sanguine cavemus, ut nec edulium pecorum in cibis sanguinem noverimus.* And the confession of Biblis, one of the martyrs of Vienna and Lyons, is remarkable to this purpose, and should not be slighted by those who shew much regard to the testimony of martyrs in other cases. *Πως αν παιδια φαγοιν δι τοιουτοι, οισ μηδε αλογων ζωων κειμα φαγουσι εξου;*

And they who pay deference to the authority of synods and councils, should consider one of these ancient canons, commonly called Apostolic, *can. 63.*

Εἰ τις ἐπίσκοπος, ἢ πρεσβύτερος, ἢ διάκονος, ἢ ὅλος τοῦ καταλογου τοῦ ἱερατικοῦ φαγῆ κρεα ἐν αἵματι ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ, ἢ θηριαλωτον, ἢ θνησιμαιον, καθαιρισθῶ. τουτο γὰρ ἔνομος ἀπειπεν. εἰ δὲ λαϊκος εἴη, ἀφοριζέσθω.

For here they have ancient church-authority for abstinence from blood, and unblooded flesh, as being a precept of the divine law, and as a term of Christian communion, and it will be hard for them to produce as good authority of the kind to the contrary.

It was before observed, that there is a connection hinted in the precept to Noah betwixt the blood which is the soul of the beast, and the blood of man's soul. Agreeably to this, we see the ancient Christians in their apologies, and the martyrs, pleading and arguing upon this connection: and, therefore, it could not appear so ridiculous to them, as it may do now in the Christian world, to forbear the blood of beasts out of respect to the atonement in the blood of Jesus Christ. As it is without controversy, that all Christians, for several ages after the apostles, forbore to eat blood or unblooded flesh; it is evident, that they could not then believe the transubstantiation of the wine in the eucharist: but, in after ages, they who came the length of believing that, and offering the cup of blood as a drink-offering to God, had no more reason for abstaining from blood, than the Gentiles had, who offered drink-offerings of blood to their gods.

A Letter to a Minister of the Established  
Church, in Answer to one from him on  
FORBEARANCE.

S I R,

*June 24. 1740.*

**H**OW much am I obliged to you for the great pains you have taken to instruct me about forbearance, in your charitable forbearing letter to me? However little I profit by it, your labour and travel for me is nothing the less to be considered.

But, my hopes of being set right by what you say on forbearance; were much blasted, by your telling me, in the entry, that you cannot, let you do your best, gather what is my real sober sense and mind of that doctrine: for, then, thought I, my kind corrector labours under a great disadvantage in dealing with me. How hard a case is it, that the woeful darkness of my writing style lets nothing of my mind appear to my good friends, but a smothered fierceness, and exposes me so much to be mistaken; and even misrepresented by the most charitable men!

Through this lamentable defect in me, I am likewise rendered incapable of coming up to the fine terms you propose for my remarking upon yours to edification. I must write with the same plainness and openness, wherein you have given me your view, and, by all means, without fierceness. By what I am always told, it would appear, I am not at all fit for this; I was not made for it, and therefore I should by all means let it alone.

Nor is this all; I am afraid of remarking on what I do not understand. For, however plainly and openly you have laid before me the view and sense you  
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have settled in, after searching the scriptures the best you could; I would have manifold questions to ask before I could form any such notion of your forbearance, as would fit me for making agreeable edifying remarks upon it, or yet state it so in my own mind, as to be able to reduce it to a practice agreeable to the true uniting word of the apostles.

I have not the least reason to doubt, that charity imitates the divine long-suffering and kindness, the kindness and long-suffering of Jesus Christ, his long-suffering towards the elect, and the world for their sakes, whom he will have all to come to repentance and acknowledgement of the truth, his long-suffering toward every son whom he receiveth, and even in chastening them; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? And Jesus rebukes and chastens as many as he loves, that they may be zealous and repent, and so be preserved from being spued out of his mouth. And I am very clear, that forbearance among brethren in love, is not a temporary, but standing law of the gospel; whatever was the occasion of giving it out at first; and that this law of forbearance must be diligently observed in the whole instituted discipline, which shews much of the divine goodness and forbearance to his people. Both discipline and forbearance are standing laws of the New-Testament; though, as to use and practice, as much obsolete as several other commandments of the Lord Jesus, which having no other authority but his, appear in the Christian world, as if they had been calculated only for the time of the apostles. And now when forbearance comes to be taken for *forbearing discipline*, as to some commandments of the Lord Jesus, or some things that he once commanded the apostles to teach his disciples to observe; here, I begin to be a little fearful and cautious, for the sake of the instituted discipline and commands which Christ laid on his first followers, lest some such damage should follow upon this modern sense of forbearance,

as has followed on the modern sense of the law for *decency and order*; and, in stating my notion of forbearance, I would be not a little inquisitive and watchful, against hurting discipline by forbearance, or forbearance by the discipline, especially where the objects come to be the same, *viz.* the brethren.

I have not the least reason to question, that, after your best search of the scriptures, you are most firmly persuaded, your view and sense of forbearance is the very law of forbearance. But may I not expect, from your charity and forbearance, some pity and compassion to my fear and caution, at least for a while; and that you will not say of any thing that drops from me, inconsistent with your view, and sense of forbearance, that it is a setting aside of Christ's standing law, and making it temporary, and that it is a speaking evil of, and judging his law? For this would be a pretty severe way of imposing your view and sense of that law upon me, who must still distinguish it from that law, till I can see, by searching the scriptures, that they are utterly the same. You have searched the best you could, and so are fully fixed, I suppose; I am but searching, and by observing the use that is made of these great names *Charity* and *Forbearance* in the Christian world, and even the polite world, I own I have been put a little upon my guard in the inquiry; as I have been likewise, by taking notice how charity and forbearance have been made an engine to bind Christ's disciples, where he has left them plainly free, and to loose them where he has bound them by plain commands. My mind is indeed changed a little about the sense of his law of forbearance, so that I cannot settle in the common notion; and, for ought I know, it may change further, when I am more satisfied as to the many questions that offer themselves to me in my search. But I am resolved to hold by forbearance, as a standing law.

As to your forbearance of the discipline among brethren, I would need to be more plainly told your character of a brother, or object of brotherly love; and if that take in his appearing to be a believer in Christ through the word of his apostles, by the subjection of his conscience in all things to that word; and if that word be not the only rule we have for distinguishing and knowing the one spirit, and the least measure of true light.

I would need likewise to be more distinctly informed, than I am like to be soon, of the limits that must be set, according to that word, betwixt forbearable things and not forbearable; because, if this be left to the best judgement of every Christian and church, as answerable, how shall they answer to Christ upon what he has not determined to them? And if every one set his own bounds according to his degree of light in the one faith, here is such a source of differences about things to be borne with, that it would be very hard to say, what the bond of peace is; and it behoved forbearance itself to become a matter of forbearance. I can only say, I never see a law of the gospel so loose, and so perplexed, and puzzling, as this comes to; and when I see the gospel-forbearance as it is, I am sure I shall see a plain, simple, fixed, settled thing.

I would be content further to have my mind at rest upon this, whether forbearance attends upon revelation, and holds pace with it, as it is less or more clear and full? or, whether it hinges upon illumination, of manifold degrees, in the knowledge of that revelation? And if it shall be the last of these, in opposition to the first, a multitude of questions will arise in my mind about that illumination, and likewise the degrees of it; and with them many jealousies and fears; because, when I have heard the forbearables, on the footing of degrees of light, condescended on, and particularly mentioned, they have happened always to be such things as had nothing on their side to  
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recommend them, but only revelation; and I seldom hear forbearance demanded upon things that have some other superadded authority to support them, which makes them more generally acknowledged. But if bare revelation be thus in danger, what will become of that forbearance that has no other foundation to me but revelation? Though my fears may seem unreasonable and weak, you have Christian tenderness and compassion enough to bear with me in my weakness; nor will you, I am sure, take it amiss, that I hesitate a little upon this, whether the same regard and tenderness be due to a conscience bound by the doctrines and commands of men, as to one bound by an express law of the Lord, and not yet finding itself loosed by the same authority?

Because the forbearance of discipline, as to several commandments of the New Testament, serves to the beautiful purpose of making the access to the Lord's supper free to all the members of Christ's one body, in all their various degrees of light and measures of the same spirit, even as free as the access to the one baptism; I suppose every one that may be baptized, may, without more, eat the one bread, and receive it singly, and by himself alone, as in baptism; and, not having light (through the prejudices of education, &c.) to receive the cup, ought to be admitted to the bread without it. For would it not sound harsh, would it bear telling, to hinder a member of the one body, from the one bread, as his light allowed him to take it? And here, again, I begin to be apprehensive about the church-order instituted in the New Testament, and to be afraid, that I must give up with such churches as those to which the apostles delivered the Lord's supper, that every one of them might partake of it, all the members coming together, with one accord, in one place, to partake of that cup and that one bread, as one body, and so one bread. I say, I fear I must forbear this old institution, that few of the members of the one body

have now light for, and allow every baptizer to give the one bread, as he does baptism, to every member of the one body that will take it from him. This would indeed put an end to the divisions about the Lord's supper; and you know Christians are divided about nothing more, than they are about the manner of that ordinance. But loath am I to sacrifice my old churches to this forbearance and unity. Yet still there are churches of several sorts, where the members of Christ's body are eating that bread, in the way proper to the church in which they happen to be. And though these churches appear corrupt, and not like the first churches of the saints, yet it seems they are not so far degenerated, as that the members of Christ can agree to call them Antichristian or Babylonish, or deny them to be true churches of Christ. And, for my part, I am most firmly persuaded, there is not the least warrant or precedent in scripture for separating from a church, whatever corruptions be in it, while it remains a true church, and cannot justly be called Antichristian and false. As I am very positive in this, I am not able to see, how churches can be gathered out of these churches by those who cannot deny them to be true churches, nor dare to call them Antichristian. This would be the most heinous breach of your law of forbearance that I can possibly think of. And, according to any glimmering view I have of the law of forbearance, such have far less claim to be borne with, than they who separate from a church, and come out of it, because they are firmly persuaded, and boldly profess that it is Antichristian. But if these last shall be found to be also quite out of the way of charity and forbearance, we must, it seems, for forbearance sake, even be doing with any church where our lot is cast; and so farewell my dear old churches of the saints, where the blessed old charity and forbearance was not boasted of, but practised in its power. Permit me, Sir, here to drop a tear at the thought of parting with the most desirable thing

to me on the earth. My lovely churches of the faints ! how amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! O dwelling-places of Mount Sion, shall I forget you ? Yea, God do so to me, and more also, if ought but death separate you and me. Well, I think I am glad, I am resolved ; and may the most gracious and powerful Shepherd of these flocks keep me at it. And now, Sir, let any man of reverence and worth that pleases, glory over me with scornful pity, as being far nearer to Christ in charitable forbearance than I, I shall yet hope not to be quite out of sight of him in cleaving to his churches.

Now, Sir, I hope you will be so good as excuse my not answering your Letter, nor remarking upon it for the above reasons. And to shew that I am far from neglecting it, I have sent it to a friend of yours, who differs not much from me about forbearance ; and understands your way of reasoning far better than I can pretend to, and can lay before you his view in a far plainer and clearer writing style ; and I have desired him to give you his view as plainly and and openly as possible, and by all means without any thing of my fierceness. If you shall, by your penetration, discern any thing of fierceness in this scrap I have written, it must be very much smothered ; for indeed it has been the whole time of writing strongly bridled by,

S I R,

Your, &c.

# CATHOLIC CHARITY;

A View of the Scope of Rom. xiv.

Offered to the Consideration of Mr GEORGE WHITEFIELD, who preached the ANTINOMIAN CATHOLIC CHARITY, from verse 17.

*Non ego ventosi venor suffragia vulgi,  
Contentus paucis lectoribus.*

[First published in the year 1742.]

I. **T**HE apostle exhorts the Christian Gentiles to receive the believing Jew, zealous of the law of Moses, and so weak in the faith of the gospel, as their brother in Christ, to partake with them in all the privileges of the Christian brotherhood, notwithstanding his differing from them in judgement and practice, as to the law given by Moses.

*Him that is weak in the faith receive you, not to doubtful disputations.*

He that is *weak in the faith* here, is a Jew, believing in Christ risen from the dead, for justification; and therefore subject to him as the Lord of his conscience, studying to observe all his commands. So he is a believer. But this is *lacking* in his *faith*: he knows not, that the death of Christ abolished the law given by Moses, and is not persuaded of the grounds of that liberty from it which the believing Gentiles enjoyed: and, therefore, he is ready to judge them, using that liberty, as not regarding the authority of the Lord, who gave that law, and who, being made of a woman, and made under it, became obedient to it, to the death.

And, because faith in the blood of the Son of God, shews itself in obedience to him, the *weakness* of the *faith* of this believing Jew, appears in his readiness to be imposed on, by his more knowing brethren,  
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and to be tempted by them, to practise according to their faith, and not his own, and so to fall from his subjection and obedience to the Lord of his conscience. It is true, that his being *grieved*\*, when this happens in any instance, shews something of faith; but his readiness to stumble, and fall in this manner, manifests the weakness of it: for as far as the conscience is purged, by faith in the blood of Christ, so far it is subjected to his authority, and bound by his law; so that the *putting away of this good conscience, is making shipwreck of faith*, 1 Tim. i. 19.

The believing Gentiles are exhorted to receive this weak believer, *not to the doubts of disputations*.

It was clear enough beyond reasonable doubt, that the Lord had declared the Gentile converts, free from the law of Moses; but it remained yet a matter of doubt and dispute, whether the Jews were as free from that law as the Gentiles? Some of the most knowing Jews, strong in the faith, as Paul, and the believing Gentiles, might draw the liberty of the Jews also, as an inference from the death and resurrection of Christ, *the end of the law for righteousness to every believer*, and the Gentiles might infer it from their own liberty; but as the Lord had, in the most solemn manner, laid the law of Moses upon the Jews, it required an express revelation to loose their consciences from the obligation of it: for, though liberty was purchased for the Gentiles by Christ's death, they were not admitted to the enjoyment of it without the express revelation which we see written, in the 10th and 15th chapters of the Acts; and certainly the liberty of the Jews from the law wherewith the Lord had bound their consciences, did no less require plain and clear revelation. They must have a very slight notion of the authority of a divine revelation, who imagine that it can be set aside by any reasoning, without another revelation from God. Now, we do not see him making any such revelation to the Jews in  
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\* Ver. 10.

the New Testament, till the writing of the epistle to the Hebrews, when the destruction of the temple was *approaching* \*. And till that revelation came, the apostles, who were Jews, even Paul himself, the most zealous contender for the liberty of the Gentiles, (however much he might be persuaded, that there was liberty for the Jews also in Christ's death abolishing the law) did, in fact, observe the law, and countenanced the believing Jews in observing it †, till the Lord should *reveal* their liberty to them, as he foretells that he would, Phil. iii. 15. and this even while he would give no countenance to any thing like imposing that law on the Gentiles, and discharged them to observe it ‡.

The believing Gentiles, knowing the grounds of the liberty, wherewith Christ had made them free, were ready to press these grounds, in disputing, upon the believing Jews; who, though they believed on Christ for righteousness, could not see that he had freed them from the law of Moses; and therefore durst not do the things forbid there, for fear of displeasing the Lord, who gave them that law, and had never yet declared them free from it. The Gentiles might perceive much of their ignorance and weakness in the faith, as they disputed with them on a point in which these Jews could not find their consciences loosed by any reasoning, without express revelation: and, in this case, the Gentiles were ready to despise them, and slight the strait of their conscience, (though really bound by divine authority) because they did not appear to them to be influenced by the principles of the gospel, upon which they argued with them. Therefore the apostle, first of all, forbids them to trouble these weak believers with those disputations.

## II. Then

\* Heb. x. 25. and xiii. 10. 13. 14.

† Acts xvi. 1. 3. and xviii. 18. and xxi. 20.—26.

‡ Gal. ii. 3. 4. 5. and v. 2. 1 Cor. vii. 18.

II. Then he condescends on the things that ordinarily occasioned disputations among believing Jews, who were weak in the faith, and believers of the Gentiles, living together.

*One believeth he may eat all things ; another, who is weak, eateth herbs.*

They had frequent opportunities of friendly eating together, as in their *feasts of charity* \* ; and the Jews could not eat of the meats pronounced unclean to them, and forbid in their law, which the Gentiles used freely : so they were obliged, while the Gentiles were eating those meats, to put up with herbs, or any such meats easily come by, about which they had no suspicion. Compare Dan. i. 8. 12. The fear of sinning, that puts men upon their guard against all appearance of evil, can never be condemned ; but if they were so scrupulous as to confine themselves to herbs, this must be attributed to their weakness : for this was to carry the matter beyond the law.

As to the Gentile, who believed he might eat all things, it must be observed, that *blood*, was none of those things, about eating of which, the Christian Jews and Gentiles differed : for the believing Gentile knew, that the *decrees* † which made him free from the law of Moses, and acknowledged him a member of Christ's church without the observation of that law, did, at the same time, expressly ‡ make it *necessary* for him to abstain from blood, as well as from idolothytes || and fornication. Nor, was blood forbid in the law as an unclean thing ; for *almost all things are by the law purged with blood*, Heb. ix. 22. ; but this was the reason of the prohibition of eating blood in the law, Lev. xvii. 11. *For the blood, it maketh atonement for the soul.* And this reason holds as true in the New Testament ; yea, it is verified only there. And, from  
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\* 2 Pet. ii. 13. and Jude ver. 12.

† Acts xvi. 4.

‡ Acts xv. 28. 29. and xxi 25.

|| Rev. ii. 14. 15.

the time when God granted *every moving thing that liveth* to be meat for men, *even as the green herb*, long before the law of Moses distinguished clean and unclean meats to Israel, it was always unlawful to *eat the flesh with the life thereof, the blood thereof*, Gen. ix. 3. 4. ; and it still remains so, by the New Testament, that sets aside that distinguishing law.

*One man esteemeth one day above another ; another esteemeth every day.*

The believing Jew distinguished the days that were set apart to him in the law of Moses, and kept the seventh day appointed in that law as the sabbath ; but the believing Gentile made no distinction betwixt these days and any other days : the holy days of that law were no more holy in his esteem than every day.

It is true, he observed the *Lord's day*, the first day of the week, whereon the Lord *ceased from his works, and entered into his rest*, which is *another day* than the *seventh*, and was *limited* in the Old-Testament prophecy, and is *left* in the New Testament, as the *sabbatism to the people of God*, Heb. iv. 3.—10. But he did not keep this New-Testament sabbath-day, from any regard to the authority of the law of Moses : for it was not appointed there. And what the apostle says here of the days about which the Jews and Gentiles differed, can never be extended to the Lord's day ; because there was no difference betwixt them about that day. They who would apply what is here said of days, to the Lord's day, cannot reasonably differ from those who have applied what is said of *meat and drink*, ver. 17. to the Lord's supper.

But though the Christian Jews and Gentiles came together on the first day of the week to break bread, yet their daily conversation could not but be much interrupted by their different practice as to the holy days of Moses ; and this occasioned disputations, which issued in their despising and judging one another, or else in making the weak believer doubt, and



act against his conscience in submission to his more knowing brethren.

III. The apostle supposes, that all these believers, both Jews and Gentiles, weak and strong, were, in their different practices as to these meats and days, shewing regard to the Lord's authority in his word binding their consciences; and that, as they differed in their practice, each of them was acting as he should be answerable to him the great Judge.

*He that regardeth the day, regardeth unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord; for he giveth God thanks: and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord: and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose again and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.—We shall all stand before the judgement-seat of Christ.—Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

This could not be said, if there was no revelation of the Lord's mind and will obliging each of their consciences, or if their practices, as to these meats and days, were not regulated nor influenced by any word or law of his. The apostle, therefore, is not supposing that any of them was acting according to a persuasion of his own without respect to revelation; but the persuasion he speaks of, respects the law of the Lord to them, which directed and obliged their consciences. And so, when he says, *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*, he must be understood as saying, Let every one of you be fully assured, that the law of that same Lord, who ye believe died and rose again, obliges or allows him to act as he does, in keeping, or not keeping the law of Moses, as to unclean meats and holy days; and let none of you be any way obliged by another to practise ac-

according to the persuasion of his brother's mind, and not his own. And when he says, *To him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean*, he is not speaking of mens fancies aside from the law of God: for the Jews esteemed the meats forbidden in their law to be unclean, because the Lord had expressly pronounced them unclean to them.

And it is manifest, from ver. 22. 23. that the apostle is speaking of the persuasion of *faith*, which has always a respect to revelation, and depends wholly upon it.

If either of the differing parties acted according to any persuasion of their own aside from the divine law, then they were living to themselves, regarding or not regarding the day to themselves, and eating or not eating to themselves, and not unto the Lord: for, when we pretend to do any thing to the glory of God, if that thing be not done in *thankful* subjection to his word; or, if it be grievous to us, to be limited by his revealed will, in the doing of it, we are certainly doing it to ourselves, and our pretence of serving and glorifying the Lord Jesus is vain.

If we be not subject to the authority of the Lord Christ, in living and dying, but are directed by some other rule than his word, then we are not his *servants*, we are not living and dying to him, and so are not his; and, whatever we may pretend, we are none of them that believe in his death and resurrection for justification; because this is the very end of his dying and rising, (about which the faith of all Christians is especially exercised) that he might be Lord both of the dead and living: and, therefore, all who believe in him, must be subject to him as their Sovereign Lord, Lawgiver, and Judge; and this is the great evidence of their being his. Without this, faith cannot appear, nor can any be received to the Christian communion, and privileges of the brotherhood, without some appearance of this: for, when Paul bids the believing Gentiles receive the  
Jew

Jew weak in the faith, and not using the Christian liberty, but observing the law of Moses, he sets this weak believer before them, as subject to the Lord in that very thing: and, therefore, it is very far from his design, to oblige Christians to receive those as weak brethren, who, professing to believe in Christ, are subject to the doctrines and commandments of men, and refuse subjection to any of the commandments of the Lord Jesus.

They who pretend a commission from Jesus Christ to preach his gospel after the apostles, are obliged by that pretence, to *teach the disciples to observe all things whatsoever he commanded his apostles* \*, which things they taught the first Christians to observe: and, if they acknowledge any as disciples, who will not be taught to observe all these things, they are then plainly acting contrary to his instructions to his apostles, and to their own pretended commission.

IV. The apostle forbids the Jew to judge the Gentile, for not shewing the regard that he thought was due to the law of Moses, as if he were disregarding the Lord's authority: because, even in not keeping that law, he was serving the Lord who had *received him* into his church without it, and had declared his will, that *the Gentiles which believe should observe no such thing*, Acts xxi. 25. with chap. xv. 28. And, on the other hand, he forbids the Gentile to despise the Jew for keeping that law after Christ had abolished it by his death; because, even by his strict observance of it, he shewed his regard to the Lord's authority, who gave him that law, and had not yet, by express revelation, loosed his conscience from it.

*Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth: Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.*——But why dost thou

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judge

\* Matth. xxviii. 18. 19. 20.

*judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgement-seat of Christ.*

From this it appears most plainly, that he supposes both of them serving God and acting with a view to the judgement of Christ, the only Lord of their consciences, to whom they were accountable for their different practice.

But, as the Jew is forbid to judge the Gentile; using the liberty which the Lord had given him, and therefore serving him in the use of it; so, if the Gentile, upon his being judged by the Jew, should no more practise according to his own judgement and conscience, but according to the judgement of his weak brother; he would, in that case, be no more serving God, but his brother, nor regarding the judgement of Christ as his Lord, but his brother's judgement. And so we find this same apostle forbidding the Christian Gentiles to regard any man's judgement against them, or to submit to it, as to those very *meats and days* whereof he speaks in this place, when he says, Col. ii. 16. 17. *Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbaths: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*

And, on the other hand, if the Jew, by means of his brethren the Gentiles their setting him at nought, seeking to impose their liberty on him, or using that liberty in any such way as served to tempt him to use it with them, should be prevailed on to submit to them, and go along with them in their practice for peace sake, or to gain their esteem, or for fear of being rejected by them; he would then not be the servant of God, or the subject of Jesus Christ, but the servant and subject of his brethren, or of the church: and, in this case, both he and the church would be sinning against Christ; as we shall see from the following part of the apostle's discourse. For,  
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V. He speaks of this way of following our brethren against our own faith, or of complying with their practice, while we doubt if it be agreeable to the Lord, as a very bad thing, and a far greater evil than is commonly apprehended. He calls it *stumbling* and *falling*, and connects it with *condemnation* and *destruction*. And, therefore, he most earnestly exhorts the Gentiles to take the greatest care, lest they should so contend for their liberty, or even so use it, as to tempt the Jew to use it with them doubtfully, to the wounding of his weak conscience, and grieving him. And as every one should practise according to his own faith before God, he forbids any one of them to attempt the imposing of his faith upon another.

*Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing wherby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth, is damned if he eat, because not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith, is sin, &c. to ver. 8. of chap. xv.*

It must be the greatest grief to a believer in Christ, to find himself fallen from the subjection and obedience to him that is inseparable from faith in him. And if the Gentile, by setting his meats before the Jew; calling him to use the gospel-liberty, disputing with him; shewing contempt of his weakness, or even threatening him with rejection, or any other way, should prevail on him to doubt, and to eat with him; then it behoved the conscience of this weak believer, being still bound by the law of Moses, and not loosed from this obligation by the word of the Lord, to condemn him as fallen from his obedience to the Lord. This could not but *grieve* him exceedingly, and, at the same time, provoke him to *speak evil* of the Gentile liberty, which, though *good* in itself, was exposed to be *evil spoken of*, by the abuse of it, in imposing it on him whom the Lord had not declared free to use it, and by the sad condition wherein he found himself after using it: for, however good that liberty might be to the Gentile, and however *pure* these meats might be in themselves, and to the Gentile, he found to his sad experience, that taking the liberty to eat them was bad to him; and that not only his *flesh*, but what is much more, his *conscience*, was *defiled* by eating them: for he found himself fallen from *righteousness*, or from his conformity to the Lord, and from his obedience to his law; he found his true *peace* with the brethren, as a fellow-subject of the Lord Jesus, broken, by his falling from his subjection to him for the sake of peace; and he found himself deprived of that *joy in the Holy Ghost*, that attends upon a good conscience, and the obedience of faith.

The apostle shews to them that are *strong*, how uncharitable it would be in them, and how great a transgression of the holy commandment of brotherly love, to be the instruments of all this evil to their *weak* brother, through their not *bearing his infirmities*, but seeking to *please themselves*, by going about  
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to impose their faith upon him; for this is to pull down and *destroy* a brother, instead of *edifying* or building him up in his faith and obedience to the Lord Jesus; and this is to break the bond of peace with a fellow-subject of that Lord, in place of *following after the things that make for peace* with him, as charity requires.

Nor could the Gentile, by this, promote the good cause of his liberty, as he might suppose; but rather did it great hurt, by giving so great occasion for its being *evil spoken of*. Yea, the apostle tells him, it were much better not to use his liberty with the weak, than that so much mischief to them should be the consequence of his using it: for though he ought not to submit to the weak judging him; yet where the use of his liberty caused the fall of his weak brother, there it is *evil*; and it must be *good*, in that case, to forbear it.

And if the Gentile pleaded, it was a *good* thing wherein he wanted his weak brother to follow him, and that there was really no *uncleanness* in the meats wherein he would have him to eat with him; he did not consider that it was *evil* to his brother, and that those meats were *unclean to him* whose conscience found itself still bound by a divine law to forbear them as unclean.

And whereas the Gentile might pretend zeal for the kingdom of God, its unity and order, in his leading the Jew after him, and bringing him into subjection to himself in the use of these meats; the apostle lets him know, that the *kingdom of God* does not consist in uniform subjection of the weak to the strong *in meat and drink*, but in *righteousness*\*, or conformity

\* *Righteousness*. The following words, *He that in these things serveth Christ*, plainly shew, that this is not the imputed righteousness which is of God by faith, but our conformity to it in keeping Christ's commandments, even as he kept his Father's commandments, John xv. 10. See 1 John iii. 7. Heb. v. 8. 9.

conformity to the word of the Lord and obedience to his commandments, and in *peace* with one another as fellow-subjects to him who is the Lord our righteousness, and in that *joy in the Holy Ghost*, that is connected with righteousness and peace: for it is promised to them that keep his commandments, and particularly his new commandment of brotherly-love, John xiv.

Upon the whole, the apostle commands the believing Gentile to *have his faith to himself*, to guide his own practice *before God*; and this in opposition to his studying to impose it on his brother, and so tempting him to sin, by following him without a firm persuasion that his doing so is lawful by the Lord's word, and thereby exposing him to condemnation.

What an argument is here against *church-authority*, and the *Antichristian uniformity*! The *Christian uniformity* must lie in the joint profession of believing on Christ through the word of his apostles\*, and of observing all things whatsoever he commanded his apostles to teach the disciples to observe, even as we see them written in the New-Testament scriptures, to which no new revelation can now be added.

How desirable a thing is the uniformity that is pointed out to us in these texts: Rom. xv. 6.—*That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God*; 1 Cor. i. 10.—*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 judgement?* But, through the subtilty of Satan, this was used as a specious pretext to seduce Christians, and draw them away from the New Testament as the bond of peace and only rule of Christian unity, into union with the world, in subjection to church-authority in *creeds and canons*, really against Christ, though under colour of uniform subjection to him. This Antichristian uniformity, chargeable with the blood of the  
faints

\* John xvii. 20. 21.



saints and martyrs of Jesus, is now in a great measure broke, to the no small grief of all its lovers and friends. Every party of these would have their own uniformity established over all the Christian world, and they shew themselves inclined, to persecute all that would oppose it. But this cannot now take place, as it has done in the world. God has confounded the *lip* of the builders of Babel, so as they shall never more agree in a Catholic confession and form of religion. Satan therefore must go to work another way.

How agreeable is *Catholic charity* to every Christian heart, when we take it to signify, *love to all the saints!* How glorious a thing is that *forbearance* which the apostle recommends to the believing Jews and Gentiles! It can never be enough commended. But let us take care to keep our eye on the New Testament, as the bond of peace, and only rule of Christian charity, when we hear men launching out in the praises of Catholic charity and forbearance: for if we consider the various purposes for which this is now so earnestly recommended to us, we shall find reason to suspect a snake in this grass also.

The Christian Deist calls for Catholic charity, as due to *moral virtue*, more honourable to our nature, and more beneficial to human society, than the obedience of faith; pleads for our pity to the poor Heathen, that, as far as our compassion is moved, we may resent the severity of the gospel; and sets up Socrates to us, as an overcomer of the world by reason and philosophy, without faith, that the more we value him, we may think the less of revelation. And as far as we admit this charity, we must become moderate, or cool and indifferent about the faith once delivered to the saints: yea, and be haters of those who are most zealous of the faith of the Son of God, as the only principle of unfeigned goodness and true virtue in the world.

Arians, Armenians, and such like, plead for Catholic charity on the footing of sincere obedience to

the gospel, the best system of moral virtue, with the best motives and helps to the practice of it; and this in a sort of opposition to the person, the imputed righteousness, and exceeding abundant grace of the Son of God. When we hearken to these men, and get into the spirit of their charity, we shall despise and hate those who are zealous for *faith in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ* \*, and for the peculiar grace of his Spirit.

And even Antinomians now cry up Catholic charity on the score of grace, and the imputed righteousness, and of illumination in the knowledge of that, by which (for without it no man can be a Christian) they persuade themselves that they are Christians, without the observation of all things whatsoever Christ commanded the apostles to teach his disciples to observe. They make as little account of these institutions and commands of Christ, as they do of the law of Moses about meat and drink, and holy-days; yea, they place all differences, among the illuminated, about the words and laws of the Lord Jesus, to the same account with all the idle differences about the doctrines and commandments of men. If we get into the spirit of this charity and forbearance, we shall not be toiled with the work and labour of love; we need only love, in word and in tongue, the professors of faith without works: but then, if any adhere rigidly to the observation of all things whatsoever Christ commanded his apostles to teach the disciples to observe, these must be hateful to us, as enemies to this blessed Catholic charity.

It is not now to be expected, that the Christian nations, and their kings and armies, will ever be gathered together again in a Catholic uniformity. Yet who knows but the noise and cry for extensive charity may at last *gather them* † in some way of Catholic charity and forbearance? But, in such an union, the church of Christ must still be confounded with the world, and  
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\* 2 Peter i. 1.

† Rev. xvi. 13. 14.

it must take place at the expence of no small part of the testimony of Jesus, and not a few of the commandments of God; and the forbearance would be full as kind to them who should persevere in their vain conversation, received by tradition from their fathers, as to those who should be tenacious of the traditions of the apostles in the New Testament. And so this union of the Christian world, would be against *the remnant of the woman's seed keeping the commandments of God, and holding the testimony of Jesus Christ* \*. It behoved these to be hateful to the charitable forbearing Christian world, as enemies to the Catholic charity; even as they were before hated and persecuted as enemies to the Catholic uniformity.

\* Rev. xii. 16. 17.

**The RULE of FORBEARANCE Defended, in a  
Letter, dated October 5. 1744.**

M.

**I** Received yours, wherein it appears to me, you have not considered what is said by me, in the pamphlet on Catholic Charity, or in my reply to your first letter; so that I have little hope, that any thing I now write will have influence on you; and still the less, when I consider, that your rule is not revelation explaining itself, and applying to every man's conscience, but some inward light that men get in various degrees to understand it. You are bound by the authority of that inward light that leads you, and not by the authority of revelation, that cannot touch your conscience, nor lead you one jot further than the degree of your inward light goes. You cannot be convinced of sin, or condemned by revelation, in any thing that is beyond your degree of inward light. For it is not the word that Christ has spoken, but your degree of light, that must, it seems, judge you in the last day. And, if any man offer to deal with your conscience, and find fault with you, by revelation, beyond your degree of the light within, he must, in that case, be a transgressor of the law of forbearance, that leads you off from attending to revelation, to attend to the various degrees of the inward light.

When you say that Christ's doctrine of forbearance never depended on different revelations, you own, at the same time, that it was absolutely unlawful for the Gentiles to keep the law of Moses. And, will you say, that the same law made it lawful for the Jews, at the same time, to keep it? Or, if it was as absolutely unlawful for the Jews, as for the Gentiles,

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was forbearance then due to the one, and not to the other? But, if it was not absolutely unlawful to the Jews, was there then no difference in the revelation, as to them, and the Gentiles to whom it was absolutely unlawful? Did the same revelation make it lawful and unlawful to the Jews at the same time? Even forbearance must be bound on us by revelation, or it cannot oblige us as a law of Christ; and if so, then revelation must be the rule of that forbearance in every point: unless you would say, that God gave a revelation to men, and in that revelation, a commandment not to walk according to that, but according to the various degrees of inward light, and according to their different degrees of weakness and strength.

The question betwixt you and me is about revelation, as the rule of forbearance. And, as I see you pleading revelation against itself, in seven or eight heads distinguished in your letter. I shall follow you over these heads, to let you see, if you will, that revelation is the only rule of the Christian forbearance, and that your forbearance is not the Christian, because it goes not upon revelation.

1. As to your *first* head, you oblige me to tell you, once more, the law of Moses was a divine revelation, binding the consciences of the Jews, and from this obligation, nothing could loose them but another revelation taking it off by the same authority. The death of Christ could not in the least touch their consciences but by a revelation concerning it: for, though the death of Christ entitles the Gentiles to the privileges of God's children and peculiar people, without coming under the law of Moses; yet this end of Christ's death was not reached on them, they were not taken into favour, till it pleased God to reveal this: nor could the apostle Peter call them to it, with a good conscience, till it was revealed to him, though he had preached Christ by revelation to the Jews before. You may say upon this, as in the other case, this must land either in a deficiency of Christ's blood  
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bringing the Gentiles near, or in God's debarring and keeping them afar off, after his blood had brought them near. And the answer you may give yourself in this case, will serve you in the other. For neither could that end of Christ's death, the loosing of the consciences of the believing Jews, from the obligation to keep the particular precepts of their law, be reached upon them by any means, but by an express revelation of that very end of it. This was necessary to secure the regard due from men to revelation, and to the authority of divine precepts, in opposition to the wickedness of men that would improve even the death of Christ to countenance or encourage them in neglecting the commands of God. And the Jews, who believed in Christ for righteousness, could not forsake these precepts of Moses in faith, without divine authority in a revelation calling them to forsake them: for faith depends on revelation; divine faith cannot be without the divine authority in a revelation.

If, then, the Jews forsook the precepts of Moses in faith, or believing God that they ought so to do, certainly this was upon God's saying so to them in some part of the New-Testament revelation. But he cannot be found saying so to them in any part of that revelation, before the epistle to the Hebrews; so that, till that part of the revelation came, the believing Jews kept the peculiar precepts of Moses, acknowledged the fleshly brotherhood, and remained citizens of Jerusalem, and members of the commonwealth of Israel, and they could not till then forsake the precepts of Moses in faith. But after that part of the New-Testament revelation was received, it cannot appear to me, from any subsequent part of the New-Testament revelation, or from the earliest history of Christianity, that any Jew in the communion of the Christian churches, kept the law of Moses, or served the tabernacle.

As to your way of speaking about God's interposing his authority, and exacting obedience to the law  
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after Christ fulfilled it, it seems to import, as if I had said, that the authority of God, in the precepts of Moses obliging the consciences of the Jews, was interposed after the death of Christ, and their believing he had fulfilled their law: but I am not conscious of my having once imagined, let be insinuated, in any writing of mine on the subject, that this authority of God was any where interposed, but in the Old-Testament revelation, which obliged the consciences of the Jews, and bound them to keep those precepts, long before Christ's death, and before their believing that he fulfilled the law: and I only say, that this obligation remained, and ought to remain on their consciences, after they believed that Christ fulfilled the law, ay and until they also had ground to believe that God, who had once commanded them to keep those precepts, did now command them to forsake them.

2. On your *second* head, you own, that the ends of Christ's death cannot be answered without revelation, which is, in effect, giving up your first. But then you assert a great falsehood against the necessity of a great part of the New-Testament revelation, That when Christ was first preached, then all the ends of his death were revealed likewise. For this is to say, that there was no more revelation needful, after Peter's preaching to the Jews on the day of Pentecost; and that Peter himself, and all Christians after him, might have been left to understand the best way every one of them could, all the ends of Christ's death from that preaching, and so to forbear one another upon their different measures of weakness and strength of knowledge about it. For you lay this as a foundation of the distinction between weak and strong, upon which your forbearance goes; and by this, you let me see very plainly, how little your forbearance depends on revelation; yea, that it is not consistent with a complete revelation, but grudges the  
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the revealing of any thing beyond the first principles of Christ's doctrine.

Your forbearance will not let you see the necessity of any revelation but that of the first principles; but the Author of revelation saw more needful, and answered that necessity, as in the case of Peter, who was not himself able to see from his own preaching on the day of Pentecost, that it was lawful for him to preach the gospel to the uncircumcised, and call them into the church, till God revealed this end of Christ's death to him expressly. And thus the Holy Ghost, according to Christ's promise to his apostles, led them, as it were, step by step, into the whole truth of the New-Testament revelation: and they were Christ's ministers and witnesses, (as he said to Paul) both of the things which they had seen, and the things in the which he would yet appear unto them, ay and until the revelation was perfected; for until then, they knew in part, and prophesied in part. Can any thing then be said more against fact and the nature of the thing than this is, that New-Testament revelation was perfected at first, and that all that is said in the New-Testament scripture, after that beginning, might have been as well inferred by us, from the first notice of the first principles of Christ's doctrine?

The apostle, Heb. v. 12. speaks of the first principles to them, who, in place of growing in the knowledge of the revelation already made, according to the time they had been under it, so as to be teachers of what they had been already taught, were not well fixed in these first principles, but ready to swerve from them, so that they needed to be taught them again. This made them very unfit to hear the things he had to say concerning Melchisedek, in order to shew the disannulling of the commandment concerning the Aaronical priesthood, by the oath to the Melchisedecian priest, and to manifest the change of the priesthood and of the law, chap. vii. 11. 12.



17. 18. 19. They were not very fit to receive this oracle of God, while they were unskilful and wavering about the first principles of the divine oracles that they had been already taught. And he is so far from saying, that he is now to teach them again, those things that they had been taught before, that he calls them to hold these things fixed as the first principles, in order to their understanding what he had now further to acquaint them of, which he would build on these first principles of the oracles of God, as upon the foundation. And so he tells them plainly, that he is not to lay again the foundation with them; but that, leaving the first principles of Christ's doctrine, as fixed points, he is to go on with them toward perfection in that doctrine, if God would permit them to go with him, as he says, chap. vi. 1. 2. 3. *Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation;—and this will we do if God permit.* Will your teachers then, if they be apt to teach, say with you, that he tells the Hebrews, that, through their dulness, he was obliged in that epistle to teach them, what, by that time, they might have been capable of teaching others? But I leave you and them to consider the passage, as you are able, and go on to your *third* head.

3. Though it was revealed that the Gentiles were members of Christ's church without the law, and therefore no more to be looked on, or treated as unclean by the Christian Jews; yet it cannot appear that the Holy Ghost taught the Jews, when this was first revealed, that they ought not to observe the precepts of Moses, or that it was lawful for them to do the things that Moses forbade them to do. I know that it was contrary to the established custom of the Jewish nation, to keep company, or come unto one of another nation as being unclean. And they extended this to Publicans, though Jews, finding fault with our Lord for eating with them; nor had they any

dealings with the Samaritans. And, in this sense it was unlawful for a Jew to eat with the Gentiles. But I am straitened to find it unlawful, by any command or precept of Moses; far less can any doctrine or precept of Moses be found, that makes them unclean whom God sanctified, or common, after he had taken them from among men to be a people for his name. Peter's vision did not abolish the distinction of meats, but served to teach him quite another thing, *viz. Not to call any man common or unclean, i. e. not call a man of any nation whom God sanctified, common or unclean.* You speak of serving the tabernacle, without thinking that all the peculiar precepts of Moses related to the tabernacle-service, and that it was served in the observance of them. And you talk of one verse, (Heb. xiii. 10.) as if it were the only passage in that epistle that seemed to favour my purpose, or the only text that I can insist on there; which is a very great mistake. For, though that single verse indeed shews, with respect to the Hebrews, what another single text (Gal. v. 2.) shews, with respect to the Gentiles; yet, I insist upon it, that, without the epistle to the Hebrews, no man can shew me, from any part of the New Testament, that the believing Jews are called to forsake the sabbath of the seventh day, the distinction of meats, divers purifications, the priesthood, sacrifices, and worship of the first covenant, and the earthly holy place, and their citizenship in Jerusalem, with their part in the commonwealth of Israel; so instead of saying, my verse, you should have said, my whole epistle to the Hebrews.

4. For, after all you say on your *fourth* head, I cannot find Paul, in any epistle but this, any where asserting the liberty of the Jews from the law, except in the matter of righteousness and justification, of which he speaks expressly, in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians. And when you speak of the liberty from the law to the Jews taught in Paul's  
epistles,

epistles, in opposition to the Judaifers, you should think of the bondage to which this liberty is opposed: for, when you pretend to mention distinctly so many different respects, wherein you say the Gentiles were never under the law, and wherein the Jews were freed from it, as well as they; I am afraid, you do not well understand any one of those names of the law, by which you pretend to point out the different senses and shapes wherein they were freed from it.

But, I dare say, it would be worth your while, to consider wherein lay the bondage to the elements or rudiments of the world; because without that, you can have no just notion of that liberty of which the apostle there speaks. Now, the law, as it was pleaded for by the Judaifers, was, in Peter's account, a yoke, which neither the believing Jews, nor their fathers, were able to bear. And Paul shews, that believers under it were as children under a school-master, teaching them the rudiments or elements of the knowledge of Christ, or as a pupil under tutors and governors, differing nothing from a servant; and says they were kept under it, shut up unto the faith. Their bondage, pointed out in this manner, lay plainly in this, that they were under a law, that said, *He that doth these things shall live in them*; and, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*; and this law not yet fulfilled, this demand not yet answered.

They were under a law representing to them continually, the debt of sin not yet paid, nor discharged as fully paid; and though it pointed out a relief from this to come by the promised seed, the doer of the law, and redeemer from the curse, yet it pointed to this relief as rudiments or first elements of knowledge put in the hands of children. It shewed the relief as a shadow darkly, so that, when they were pressed with the demand of the law, the relief appeared to them only as through a vail darkening it in the way of representing it to them. And when they

were urged to look for that relief, by the rigour of the law as a schoolmaster, they could see that spiritual thing only in worldly rudiments, and know it no otherwise than children know a science in the elements of it, that they are forced to learn.

This was their bondage: for, if they had clearly beheld God reconciled, and the condition of life performed, as the word of faith, which the apostles preached, plainly shews, there was never any bondage in keeping the commandments of the law of God by Moses. And the commandments, as explained by Jesus Christ, are much harder to flesh and blood, than any precept of Moses, which the Jews observed in difference from the Gentiles. So that I cannot see the sense of that common way of speaking of the burdensome ceremonies of the law.

Now, the Jews who believed in Christ for righteousness, according to the word of faith, which the apostles preached, were freed from the bondage of the law, as it has been described, were delivered from the yoke of bondage, and received the adoption of children, by faith in Christ's having done the righteousness of the law, and enjoyed the freedom of heirs by the Spirit of adoption. And, in this liberty, the Gentiles partook with them, being delivered from the law as a wall of partition, whereby they were held far off.

For this was their condition before the faith came, that, by being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of circumcision, and the covenant at Sinai, they were without Christ, not having the hope of the promise, and without God in the world. Thus, they were afar off, and could not come near, without circumcision, and coming within the bond of the covenant of Moses, subjecting themselves to that law of commandments contained in ordinances, without which, they had no share with the peculiar people of God. But now it was revealed, that Christ's death had abo-

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lished the law, as a wall of partition, and broke it down; so that it could no longer debar them and keep them off, but that they had free access to God by Christ's blood without it; and that by faith in his blood, without the law, they were fellow-heirs of the same body, and partakers of the promise with the believing Jews, now delivered from the bondage of the law, and enjoying the freedom of heirs by faith in that same blood. These are all the respects wherein I can find the Jews and Gentiles delivered from the law, in those epistles of Paul that you mention.

But, though the Jews were justified by the faith of Christ, without the deeds of the law, as well as the Gentiles, it cannot appear from these epistles, that the believing Jews were no more obliged to observe the precepts of Moses; while, at the same time, it is manifest, that the Gentiles were obliged not to observe them; because they could not become circumcised, and keep the law, as the Judaifers called them to do, without seeking justification thereby, and so entangling themselves in the yoke of bondage, by keeping the law as the condition of justification by Christ.

It was manifestly revealed, on the one hand, that the Gentiles needed not become circumcised, and come under the law, in order to be justified; and it was as manifestly revealed on the other, that the Jews were justified by the faith of Christ, without becoming uncircumcised, and forsaking the precepts of their law; for the same God justified the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Thus far went the revelation concerning the liberty of the Jews and Gentiles from the law; and accordingly, the Jews remained in circumcision, and the Gentiles in uncircumcision, as Paul himself says, 1 Cor. vii. 18. 19. *Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised: Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not become circumcised. Circumcision is nothing*

*nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing ; but the keeping of the commandments of God.* And revelation proceeded no further than this, till the epistle to the Hebrews, which shews them, that they were now no more keeping the commandments of God, in keeping of the law, or the first covenant, now quite disannulled and made old to them.

5. But now it is time to proceed to your *fifth* head, which you may see to have been quite needless, if you but understand what I have been saying on the fourth. For you may see how I include the Jews, as Paul does, in that liberty, whereof he speaks in these epistles ; and I am satisfied that Paul, as a Christian Jew, had the same liberty, and no other than that, which God granted to every Christian Jew. But as to what you say of his classing himself with the strong ; I shall endeavour to open your eyes a little, by classing the Christian Jews to you, from the scripture-history, in this manner.

1. There were among the Jews, professed Christians, and even teachers, commonly called Judaifers. These insisted upon circumcision, and the keeping of the law, as the condition of justification by Christ to the Gentiles, and gave great disturbance to Paul's ministry among the Gentiles, even after the decrees that were ordained, Acts xv. in opposition to them. Paul shews no tenderness to this class, considering them as enemies of the cross of Christ, and wishing they were cut off as such.

2. Among the believing Jews, who were all keeping the law of Moses, though not Judaifers, there were some weak in the faith. These sought not to be justified by the deeds of the law, but by the faith of Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness to every believer, whether circumcised or uncircumcised ; and they believed, according to the revelation, that the blood of Christ brought the Gentiles near without the law, and acknowledged, that it was not necessary for them to observe it, as the Judaifers  
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wanted them to do, Acts xv. 22. 28. and xxi. 20. 21. 25. But though they had this faith, they were not so strong in it, but that they were ready to be influenced by the Judaifers; even as we see some of the Gentiles also were, after the decrees were published, in hazard of being entangled with the yoke of bondage, by means of Judaifing teachers. And besides the instances I have formerly given, of that which was lacking in their faith, and of the weakness of it, this is a plain evidence of the weakness of it, distinguishing them from the strong, that they were ready to judge the Gentiles, for shewing neglect to the precepts of Moses, which they themselves were nicely and scrupulously observing. As you may see from Rom. xiv. 3. 4. 10. *Let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?—Why dost thou judge thy brother?*

3. Among the believing Jews, who all kept the law, there were some, as well as among the Gentiles, strong in the faith of Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness, and strong in the faith of his blood bringing the Gentiles near without the law, and of their not being allowed to come under the law to observe it as the Jews. These were above the influence of the temptations of the Judaifers, and zealous maintainers of the decrees against them. And though they themselves walked orderly, and kept the law as Jews, yet they strenuously maintained the freedom of the Gentiles, from the observation of the law, and rebuked the weak Jews for judging them in the neglect of it. Among these, we may well class Paul himself, as the first of them, and the ringleader among them. But, however strong he, and other Jews, as well as Gentiles, might be in the faith of the revelation already made, they had, as yet, no ground for the faith of this, that the Jews ought as little to keep the law as the Gentiles; and accordingly, they kept it themselves, while

while they would by no means allow the Gentiles to keep it.

6. Having thus classed Paul to you, as he classes himself, I proceed to your *sixth* head. And here, what I have to say as to Peter, is shortly this: That his living as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, must be, according to the text, his eating with the Gentiles, contrary to the custom and established practice of the Jewish nation. And this is what he could very well do, without transgressing any law or precept of Moses, that I know of. Yea, in eating with them; that God had sanctified, he acted, not only according to the revelation to himself, but also according to the law of Moses. And as to Paul, speaking of his manner of preaching to the Jews and Gentiles, you make him live according to the law, or against the law, as his policy directed him, for making converts; and you give a rare gloss to these words: *Being not without the law to God, but under the law to Christ; as being under no law, but the law of Christ.* I would have you here again ask your teachers, if Paul be here affirming that he is really without the law of Moses, even as the Gentiles, and not under it any more than they; and you may likewise see, if, in the following verse, he be affirming that he really became weak to the weak.

7. On your *seventh* head, you perfect the character of Paul, which you began to draw on the 6th. But when I consider that passage you point at, (Acts *xxi.* 20.—26.) I find him, and not him only, but James and the elders, appearing in quite another character than that which you find there. For, first, it is manifest from that passage, the believing Jews were not offended with Paul, for teaching what had been written and concluded, and what James, and all the elders still maintained, *viz.* That the Gentiles which believe should not observe the law, (ver 18. 25.) In the next place, it is as manifest; that the ground of their offence was an information they had received



received concerning him, that he taught all the Jews which were among the Gentiles, to forsake Moses, saying, that they ought not to circumcise children, neither to walk after the customs. And then I find plainly, that James, and the elders, who had an account of Paul's ministry among the Gentiles from himself, (ver. 19.) do advise Paul to take an opportunity, that they put in his hand, to manifest, in the most public manner, and most openly to declare, that the information, at which the believing Jews were offended, was false, and that he was so far from teaching the Jews among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, that he himself, being a Jew, kept the law of Moses, (ver. 20. 22. 23. 24.) And Paul took their advice, and the opportunity they gave him, publicly and practically, to notify the falsehood of the information, and that he himself, walked orderly, and kept the law, (ver. 24. 26.) Now, if it was true, that Paul had not taught the Jews among the Gentiles, to forsake Moses, if it was true that he himself, being a Jew, had not departed from the observation of the law, as to which he taught the Gentiles, that they should observe no such thing: then James, and the elders directed him to a very proper way of shewing to the offended Jews, the falsehood of the information, upon which their offence went. And as they acted honestly in advising him, so did he act very honestly and fairly in doing as they directed him. But, what shall I think of Paul's character as an apostle, and of the truth of the New Testament; yea, I may say, what shall you think of him, if he was conscious to himself, that he had taught the Jews to forsake Moses, and that he himself had departed from the observation of the law, when he did what he did, that all might know he had never taught the Jews to forsake Moses, and had never forsaken him himself? And if James, and the elders were not also imposed on by him, in this gross manner, wherein all the believing Jews must have been imposed on, but privy

to the cheat, and art and part with him, by advising and directing in the vile plot that he executed; what account then will you make to yourself of them? And what account will you make of that forbearance that stands on such a foundation, and grows from such a root? But, as I believe Paul, the pattern of following Christ, and likewise James, and the elders, to have been honest men, and to have acted honestly in this matter, wherein the New Testament finds no fault with them: I find it very plain, in this passage, that James, and the elders knew as well as Paul, and acknowledged with him the revelation, that the Gentiles should not observe the law; and even the believing Jews, zealous of the law, had no offence at Paul on this head. And I find it as plain, from the manner wherein James, and the elders refer to that revelation, that James, and the elders knew of no revelation obliging the Jews to forsake Moses, and observe his precepts, no more than the Gentiles. And, by Paul's concurrence with them, it appears he himself knew of no such revelation; and nothing can be more evident in the passage than this, that he declared in the most solemn manner, before God and men, that he had never yet taught the Jews to forsake Moses, and that he had not forsaken him himself.

*Lastly,* If you have given me sufficient attention, in going along with me through all the foregoing heads, I think your way is sufficiently paved to the *last* head. For, as I have shewed you before, how the strong and weak were both among the believing Jews and Gentiles; so, by what has been before demonstrated, it must appear, on the one hand, that he who believed he might eat all things, and did so, who esteemed every day alike, and regarded not the days distinguished in Moses's law, and who was ready to despise the scrupulous exactness of the weak, in the observation of that distinction of meats and days, must have been a Gentile believer, and  
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that not a weak one, but strong in the faith of the revelation concerning the liberty of the Gentiles, like Paul himself. And, on the other hand, he who eateth not, and eateth herbs; who esteemeth one day above another, and regardeth the day, and is ready to judge him, who, being a Gēntile, regardeth not the distinction of meats and days, must have been a believing Jew, but not strong in the faith, like Paul, and others, who were so far from being in hazard of grudging the liberty of the Gentiles from observing the law, that they contended zealously against their observing it.

This being fairly fixed, we shall next see, upon what footing Paul would have the forbearance to go, betwixt these different persons, the weak and strong. He forbids the weak to judge the strong, who believed he might eat all things; (and believing goes on revelation) he calls him to forbear judging him that eateth, because God hath received him. And as God received him into his church, without the distinction of meats, by revelation, he forbids them to judge him, for not abstaining from the unclean meats, and not regarding the holy-days; because he was therein serving God, doing what he did to the Lord in thankful subjection to God, and living to the Lord whom he looked on as his Judge, who was to judge him; *i. e.* he was subject to the authority of the Lord in his word, who was to judge him by that word. Again, he forbids the strong to despise the weak believer, who did eat herbs, who abstained from the meats pronounced unclean to him in the law, esteemed one day above another, and regarded the holy-day, and calls him to forbear tempting him, by any means, to do otherwise, and to shew the neglect that he himself shewed to the distinction of those meats and days. And he lays this down as the foundation, and necessary supposition to his exhortation to forbearance, *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.* And this must be the persuasion

of faith; because the apostle expressly tells us, in this matter, *whatsoever is not of faith, is sin*. The exhortation to forbearance then supposes, that, as the strong Gentile was fully persuaded in his own mind, he ought to neglect Moses's distinction of meats and days, and this by revelation; so the weak was fully persuaded in his mind he ought not to neglect that distinction of meats and days, believing God who had interposed his authority in his law by Moses, commanding and requiring him, a Jew, to regard it, and who had never yet signified his will that he should neglect it. And so the apostle requires forbearance to him that eateth not, and regardeth the day, as doing so unto the Lord in thankful subjection to God, and as therein living to the Lord his judge, who was to judge him by that word which he was subject to, and studying to obey; so that if he should be any way tempted to act otherwise than he was doing, he would be tempted to fall from his subjection to the Lord. Now, let your own conscience, if it be at all obliged by revelation, draw the conclusion, and say, If the forbearance here required by the apostle goes not upon revelation, and the subjection of both parties, weak and strong, to it.

And now I also think I have stated facts fairly, and without offering any violence to them; and my conclusion, you see, must be the very reverse of yours. And having thus given you my mind directly on your *eight* points as you desire, I shall not add any thing further, but that I believe all they who believe on Christ through the word of his apostles, are one, and will be one, in distinction from those who profess to believe through any other word; and whoever departs from that word in any one point, departs from that unity in that point. And that you may become a partaker in this unity, is the desire of, yours, &c.

# Of the Unity and Distinction of the ELDER'S Office.

[Written in the year 1731.]

THE officers of Christ's institution are distinguished, first, into extraordinary and ordinary. The extraordinary, are those that were employed in the first joining together of the New-Testament church, the body of Christ, made up of Jews and Gentiles, reconciled to God, in one body, by Christ's death, and in laying the plan of gospel-churches, and in making the New-Testament revelation. Such were the Apostles, the chosen eye-witnesses of the Lord's resurrection; and the Prophets, inspired by the Holy Ghost, for explaining infallibly the Old Testament, by the things now written in the New; and the Evangelists, the apostles ministers. These can be succeeded by none in that which was peculiar to them; as the nature of their work, completed when the New-Testament revelation is complete, does abundantly manifest. And yet the churches of Christ may be said to have them still, as, in the days of our Lord, the Jews had Moses and the Prophets to hear. But they are succeeded in all that was not peculiar to them, by the ordinary officers; as we see the deacons in Jerusalem took a part of the work that at first was in the hands of the apostles, even that ministry that is distinguished from the ministry of the word. And then the elders were employed in the rest of the work of the apostles, that was not peculiar to them; so that the apostles, after the setting apart of elders, are distinguished from them also, no doubt by that which was peculiar to them\*.

The ordinary offices, or orders of ordinary offices, are these two, and no more; the order of elders or bishops, and the order of deacons. And beside the  
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\* ACTS xv. 2. 4. 6. 22. ACTS xvi. 4.

of faith; because the apostle expressly tells us, in this matter, *whatsoever is not of faith, is sin*. The exhortation to forbearance then supposes, that, as the strong Gentile was fully persuaded in his own mind, he ought to neglect Moses's distinction of meats and days, and this by revelation; so the weak was fully persuaded in his mind he ought not to neglect that distinction of meats and days, believing God who had interposed his authority in his law by Moses, commanding and requiring him, a Jew, to regard it, and who had never yet signified his will that he should neglect it. And so the apostle requires forbearance to him that eateth not, and regardeth the day, as doing so unto the Lord in thankful subjection to God, and as therein living to the Lord his judge, who was to judge him by that word which he was subject to, and studying to obey; so that if he should be any way tempted to act otherwise than he was doing, he would be tempted to fall from his subjection to the Lord. Now, let your own conscience, if it be at all obliged by revelation, draw the conclusion, and say, If the forbearance here required by the apostle goes not upon revelation, and the subjection of both parties, weak and strong, to it.

And now I also think I have stated facts fairly, and without offering any violence to them; and my conclusion, you see, must be the very reverse of yours. And having thus given you my mind directly on your *eight* points as you desire, I shall not add any thing further, but that I believe all they who believe on **Christ** through the word of his apostles, are one, and will be one, in distinction from those who profess to believe through any other word; and whoever departs from that word in any one point, departs from that unity in that point. And that you may become a partaker in this unity, is the desire of, yours, &c.

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\* ACTS xv. 2. 4. 6. 22. ACTS xvi. 4.

bishop or elder, and the deacon, with whom we may reckon the deaconess, or the widow ministering to the sick, there is no ordinary church-officer.

That bishop and elder are the same in the New Testament, is manifest from these scriptures, Acts xx. 17. 28. Tit. i. 5. 7. 1 Pet. v. 1. 2.; and they are made the same in that precious remain of antiquity, Clemens Romanus's Epistle to the Corinthians, written in the name of the Church Sojourning in Rome. But this is not questioned among them with whom we have to do at present, who acknowledge the division of ordinary church-officers into these two, and no more, the elder or bishop, and the deacon.

And this distinction is according to the scripture, where we find the ministry of tables, distinguished from the ministry of the word\*. In the church in Jerusalem, which is the first, and the pattern to the rest, we find elders and deacons †. And, after that example; in the church at Philippi, we see the bishops and deacons. The same distinction is observed in Paul's directions to Timothy, about church-officers, when he lays down the characters of the bishop, and then the characters of the deacon distinctly ‡. And, as was noticed before, concerning the distinction of the deacon's work from the ministry of the word; so it is the character whereby the bishop is distinguished, especially from the deacon, that he must be apt to teach ||. As all the work of church-officers is ministry; so we find the office and work of the deacon peculiarly called *ministry*, and so distinguished from the office and work of the bishop or elder. Thus we find that officer, in distinction from the bishop, called *deacon*, that is, minister, or servant. We find this same distinction in Paul's discourse of church-officers to the Romans, to whom he speaks, or the Holy Ghost in him, in the prospect  
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\* Acts vi. 2. 4.

† Acts vi. xi. 30. xv. xxi. 18.

‡ 1 Tim. i.

|| 1 Tim. iii. 2.



of that extravagant departure from the institution of Christ in this matter that was to come to pass in that church. For as it is the different gifts or powers granted by Christ for doing the work of the offices, that makes the offices different, so he distinguishes these gifts or powers only into two, *viz.* Prophecy and Ministry; and there is no church-officer but what is comprehended under the one or the other of these; so that every church-officer is either a prophet or a minister: *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, on ministering* \*. Where prophecy is not to be taken for the extraordinary gift, but, as the apostle defines it, for the gift of speaking unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort †. The same distinction is made by the Apostle Peter; and what he says, serves to illustrate what Paul says to the Romans. His words are: *As every man hath received the gift, minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, as the oracles of God; if any man minister, as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ* ‡. Paul condescends on the different ways of ministering these two gifts by different persons: but while they are all acting as good stewards of the manifold grace of God, they are ministering no more but one or other of these gifts, *i. e.* they are either speaking as the oracles of God, or ministering as of the ability that God giveth.

It is easy to understand which of these is the bishop's gift, and which the deacon's. For as the deacon's work is only a work of obedience to the word, so the bishop is distinguished, as has been observed, from the deacon, by his aptness to teach. And, therefore, the gift of prophecy, and of speaking as becomes the oracles of God, as distinguished from  
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\* Rom. xii. 6. 7.    † 1 Cor. xiv. 3.    ‡ 1 Pet. iv. 10. 11.

the gift of ministry, is the bishop's gift, whereby he is differenced from the deacon.

Our concern, at present, is not with the deacon's office, further than to take notice, that some class him that ruleth \* with the deacons, because mentioned among them, and because they are of opinion, that he cannot be classed with them that have the gift of prophecy. But, as the order wherein things are set down, cannot be always brought as an argument of their priority or posteriority; so we find him that ruleth among the elders, and expressly called *elder*, where he is distinguished from them that labour in the word and doctrine †: and, therefore, we are not to seek him among the deacons, where elder or bishop, and deacon, are distinguished; or where prophecy, and speaking as becomes the oracles of God, stands distinguished from ministry. He must be found among the bishops, or them that have the gift of prophecy, or of speaking the word of God, or he is to be found no where.

When we look to Matth. xviii. and the Acts of the Apostles, and the rest of the New-Testament scripture, touching elders or bishops, it is manifest, that, by the institution of Christ, there ought to be a plurality of elders in every church. For, as our Lord speaks of two or three as presiding in the church, to which he grants the power of binding and loosing, Matth. xviii.; so we find the apostles, that at first were elders to the church at Jerusalem, left a plurality of elders in that church; and, after this example, we read of Paul and Barnabas their ordaining elders in every church ‡. There was a plurality of elders in the Ephesian church ||; and that a plurality is intended in the designation, *Angel of the church*, in the epistles to the churches of Asia, appears from Rev. ii. 18. 24. There was likewise a plurality of bishops in the church at Philippi §. And Paul

\* Rom. xii. 8.

|| Acts xx.

† 1 Tim. v. 17.

§ Phil. i.

‡ Acts xiv.

Paul directs Titus to ordain a plurality of elders in every city in Crete \*. And in all the directions to elders, touching their duty toward the flock, and the directions to the people, as to their duty toward them, they are still spoken of as a company, and more than one †. And this is likewise evident from the distinction that is made among elders or bishops; as where we find elders ruling well, distinguished from elders labouring in the word and doctrine ‡, and him that teacheth, him that exhorteth, and him that ruleth §. Where any one of these is wanting in any church, there is a defect; and where there is but one of them, the want is such, that it would appear from Matth. xviii. the want must be supplied before a church can proceed formally to bind or loose in Christ's name.

The names and designations given to this order of church-officers, are, πρεσβυτεροι, § *elders*, επισκοποι, \*\* *overseers*, or *bishops*, ηγουμενοι, †† *leaders*, προεσotes, †† and προισταμενοι, ||| *presidents*; which designation, though it may be common to all elders or bishops, as presiding in the church whereof they are overseers, according to that of Tertullian, when speaking of a Christian assembly for prayers, and the reading of the scriptures, and the exercise of discipline, *Præsident probati quique seniores*; yet, in the distinction of elders, it is applied to him that is distinguished from him that teacheth and him that exhorteth §§. And though all elders be pastors, ποιμενεις, and commanded to feed the flock whereof they are bishops +; yet we find pastors in distinction from teachers: and where there are but these two branches in the distinction, we must understand by pastors, both them that exhort, and them

VOL. II.

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\* Tit. i. † 1 Thess. v. Heb. xiii. 1 Pet. v. ‡ Rom. xii.  
 || 1 Tim. v. 17. § 1 Tim. v. 17. Acts xx. 17. \*\* Acts  
 xx. 28. †† Heb. xiii. 17. †† 1 Tim. v. 17. ||| 1 Thess.  
 v. 12. Rom. xii. 8. §§ Rom. xii. 8. 1 Tim. v. 17. + Acts  
 xx. 1 Pet. v.

that rule well \* : so, though all teachers be governors, as being elders or bishops; yet where we find teachers and governments distinctly mentioned, there, by governments, *κυβερνησεις*, we must understand both him that ruleth, and him that exhorteth, if we look upon the distinction of elders to be there full and comprehensive of all elders †. We find the bishops or elders of a church thus designed, *τους κοπιοντας εν υμιν, them that labour among you; και προισταμενους υμων εν κυριω, and your presidents in the Lord; και νουθετωντας υμας, and that admonish you ‡*. And whether the distinction of elders be here pointed at, it may be a question. There is another designation utterly common to all elders or bishops, and that is, *θει οικονομος, the steward of God*; as appears from these words of Paul to Titus: *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst—ordain elders in every city.—If any be blameless,—for a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God §*.

From what has been said, it seems the bishop's office is one; and yet there is a distinction in that office. The unity of the office appears from the fore-said division of church-offices, and the gifts or powers given by Christ for exercising them, into two, and no more; and from the characters requisite in every one that is at all an elder or bishop, which we have in Paul's directions to Timothy, 1 epist. iii. and to Titus, chap. i. as to the ordination of elders; where, besides what relates to their disposition and conversation, there is no more required to qualify them for the highest parts of the work of that office, and no less is requisite to fit any man for being at all in that office, than this, that he be apt to teach ||, and that he be holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, *τω κατα την διδασχην πισυ λογου, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, εν τη διδασκαλιε υγιαιυση, both*  
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\* Eph. iv. 11.      † 1 Cor. xii. 28.      ‡ 1 Thess. v. 12.  
§ Tit. i. 5. 6. 7.      || 1 Tim. iii. 2.

to exhort and to convince the gainfayers. From this it appears, that the bishop's or elder's gift is, an ability freely granted by Jesus Christ for opening up and applying the word of God unto men. And thus it is that which is called prophecy, Rom. xii. and the gift of speaking, 1 Pet. iv. ; and is distinguished from ministry, the deacon's gift. The distinction in the elder's, or bishop's office, is chiefly manifest from these two texts, though there be also some insinuation of it in other texts before mentioned. 1 Tim. v. 17. *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they that labour in the word and doctrine.* Rom. xii. 7. *He that teacheth, on teaching ; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation ; he that ruleth, with diligence.*

How this distinction agrees with the unity of the office, and that unity with this distinction, is a question of some difficulty ; yea, and importance, to them that want to be acquainted with the mind of God in his word, that they may not swerve from his institutions, but keep them pure and entire. And such will not be satisfied in any explication of the distinction that overthrows the unity, nor of the unity that undoes the distinction : for, to explain one part of the scripture in an inconsistency with another, is indeed to corrupt the word of God, and wrest and pervert it. Thus, while men explain the unity of the Godhead, asserted in the scriptures, in such a manner as to destroy the distinction in the Godhead, there also asserted, or when they explain the distinction in such a manner as destroys the unity, they wrest and corrupt the word of God, and make it of none effect to themselves, while they study to reconcile it to their own prejudices, and do not subject themselves, as little children, to the authority of God in his word. Therefore we find our Lord, when Satan tells him, *It is written*, answering thus : *It is written again.*

The opinion, of a ruler, or ruling-elder, that has no power granted him by Jesus Christ, for teaching and preaching, or administering baptism or the Lord's supper, that pleads a foundation in the fore-cited texts, establishing a distinction in the elder's office, seems to overthrow the unity of that office. For such an officer must be of another kind, than those elders or bishops whose commission we have, Matth. xxviii. 19. 20. there being no authority granted there to rule without teaching: *Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I command you: and lo, I am with you alway, to the end of the world.* And truly, if we consider the nature of the rule and government of a church, as distinguished from the government of the civil magistrate, and as it touches the consciences of men, and as it is the government of Jesus Christ among his willing people, who has afforded the overseers of a flock of his no other instrument of government but his word, we will easily see, that a ruler that is not capable to teach or preach, or to open up, and apply the word of God unto men in a constant way, is indeed a very inconsistent piece of work, and an idol shepherd. Neither is there any authority granted in that commission to any to teach and preach God's word, or to teach his people to observe all that he has commanded, without an authority to baptize the disciples. So, if there be such a bishop as rules without a power of teaching and baptizing, he must be of another kind than that bishop whose commission is in that text. 2. Such an officer must be of a kind different from him that is described and characterised 1 Tim. iii. and Tit. i. For that officer is the steward of God, and so the dispenser of the ordinances of Christ to the flock: that officer is apt to teach, and holds fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, so as to be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gain-sayers. And if this be not the qualification of a minister of the word, or of him that bears the com-  
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mission, Matth. xxviii. where are we to seek his qualification in the New Testament? But this is the qualification of every elder, as is manifest in these passages. Therefore he is no elder that is not qualified for the ministry of the word, and is not a steward of the mysteries of God. 3. This officer seems to be of a different kind from the elders or bishops whom Paul exhorts, Acts xx. and Peter, 1 epist. v. : for these were all pastors or shepherds, feeders of the flock of God. For, as Peter, who was an elder of the church in Jerusalem, received commandment from the Lord to feed his sheep and his lambs, so he gives the same commandment to all the elders, and exhorts them to feed the flock which is among them; as Paul exhorts the elders of the church in Ephesus, *to take heed to themselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost made them overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.* And from Paul's setting himself before them as an example in his teaching, and the reason he gives, ver. 29. 30. for his charging them to take heed to themselves, and the flock, to feed the church; it is most evident, that the feeding there spoke of, cannot be but by men to whom the word of God is committed, as able to teach others: for, he speaks to them of a feeding of the flock, in opposition to false teachers, and to some of themselves that might arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. And as there must be two kinds of rulers, or feeders of the flock, the one ruling by the word of God, committed to him as able to teach others, and the other ruling without having that word committed to him, as able to teach others; so this last is not among the pastors exhorted by Paul in that passage, and must be a strange kind of a ruler of a flock of Christ, or of his sheep, that hear his voice, and follow him. 4. The manner wherein the institution of this ruler, that has no ability to teach or preach, is sought in the texts that  
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speak of the distinction in the bishop's office, seems to cut off the ministers of the word, acknowledged to be elders and bishops, from ruling. For as to Rom. xii. by that same rule by which he that ruleth is said neither to teach nor exhort, it must be said, he that teacheth is not an exhorter, and he that exhorteth is not a teacher, and neither of them rules. And, as to 1 Tim. v. 17. by the same rule by which it is asserted, that there is a ruling elder that is not a minister of the word, it must be also asserted, that the ministers of the word are not rulers, or that the elders that teach and preach do not rule. For the text makes them one in this, that they are elders; but distinguishes these elders, by ascribing ruling to some of them, and the word and doctrine unto others: so that ruling is hereby made as much the property of the one elder, as the word and doctrine is made the property of the other elder. But the text only distinguishes the elders that *rule well*, *καλως προϊστοις* from the elders that *labour*, *κοπιωντες*, in the word and doctrine; and it does not distinguish elders merely by ruling on the one side, and by the word and doctrine on the other. And if it should be alledged, that especially *καλιστα*, which imports the distinction, reduplicates not merely upon *elders*, but upon *elders that rule well*; so that the text cannot be understood to run thus: *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially the elders that labour in the word and doctrine*; but thus: *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially the elders ruling well, that labour in the word and doctrine*. Then it must be manifested, that the text is not capable to be taken the first way, but must be understood as running in the second manner; and if it should be taken that way, then we shall be to seek as to the necessity and use of the mere ruling-elder. For, if the ministers of the word, notwithstanding their labour in the word and doctrine, do not only rule, but rule well, then the work of ruling may

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not only be done, but well done, by the elders that labour in the word and doctrine: and so the need and use of mere ruling-elders, to assist the ministers of the word in ruling, that it may be well done, without taking them off too much from giving themselves as much as they ought to the word and doctrine, or from labouring in it, is utterly taken away.

On the other hand, they that deny the mere ruling-elder to be of divine institution, and own no bishop or elder but him that is apt to teach, and yet think, that a particular church or congregation may be sufficiently taught, exhorted, and ruled, by one bishop, as having power to do all these, or that all the bishop's work may be done to full purpose in a church without three bishops, seem to overthrow the distinction in that office plainly pointed out in the scriptures, and to make void Christ's institution of a plurality of elders, or bishops in every church. Though the whole exercise of the bishop's gift be called teaching, Matth. xxviii. 1 Tim. iii. 2. Tit. i. 9. yet there is a branch of that work that is designed teaching, in distinction from exhorting and ruling. We must therefore consider, how the bishop's gift, which is one, admits of this distinction in its exercise; and what we are to understand by teaching, exhorting, and ruling, as each of them are ascribed to different persons, who yet can each of them teach, exhort, and rule. As the apostleship was one, and yet is distinguished into the apostleship of the circumcision, and the apostleship of the uncircumcision \*; and as the deacon's gift is one, and yet we find him that sheweth mercy distinguished from him that distributeth †; so, in the bishop's office, we find him that teacheth, him that exhorteth, and him that ruleth. And this distinction ariseth, not from any difference in the nature of the gift, nor from such different degrees of that same gift, as may be found in different persons, or in the  
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\* Gal. ii.

† Rom. xii.

same person at different times ; but from the different objects upon which it is exercised, and the different matter contained in the word, applicable to these different objects ; and from the extensiveness of the bishop's work, which is such, that though any one bishop may be employed in all the parts of it, yet he cannot excel in all the parts, and he is denominated and distinguished from others, by that part wherein he excels. The bishop has to do with the understandings of the flock, to inform their judgements in the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, and to instruct them in the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus ; and much of the word of God is applicable this way : and he that excels in this, though he can also exhort and rule, is called the teacher. For one may be excellent at this, that is not so very excellent at exhorting and ruling. The bishop has also to do with the wills and affections of the flock, to engage or disengage them, in a suitableness to the gospel-revelation, and with the various postures wherein these are to be found ; and much of the word of God points this way, and tends to this purpose. He that excels in this, though he can also teach and rule, is called the exhorter ; and one may excel in this, that is not so excellent in teaching or ruling. The bishop has also to do with the outward conversations of all the flock, to order them as it becometh the gospel : and, as the glory of Christ's name is much concerned in this, so much of the word of God is taken up in this, and is applicable this way. He that excels in the application of the word to this purpose, though he can also teach and exhort, is called the *ruler* ; and one may excel in this, that is not so very excellent in the business of the teacher and exhorter. The elders that excel in ruling, and therefore bestow their greatest diligence in that, are the elders that rule well ; and the elders that excel in exhortation, and in teaching, and therefore exert their utmost, or labour in the word of exhortation  
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and in doctrine, are the elders that labour in the word and doctrine. And they that excel in ruling, and give themselves mainly to that, are not worthy of blame, though they do not give themselves most to the teacher's and exhorter's business, but are to be honoured, in bestowing their greatest diligence in that part of the elder's work wherein they excel. So likewise they that excel in teaching, and in exhortation, and labour, or exert themselves most in that, are not worthy of blame, for not exerting themselves most in ruling, wherein they do not excel, but are to be honoured for labouring in that wherein they excel. The Apostle orders, that double honour, or maintenance, be given the elders that rule well; double the honour that belongs to the deacons: and he appoints, that this double honour should be especially given to them that labour in the word and doctrine, and they should be especially attended to in the giving of this honour; because their labour requires yet greater intention of mind and heart, and calls them yet more off from labouring with their hands\*, than the diligence of them that rule well does: even as the master in some handicraft, having several workmen under him occupied in that same craft, while, as he finds needful, he can employ them all in any one part of the craft; yet, for ordinary, sets each of them to that part of it wherein they excel, and gives best wages to them that work in the nicest parts of the craft; and so every part of his work is handsomely done, and his business is managed to such purpose, as it could not be, if, for ordinary, he employed them all indifferently in the whole of the occupation.

The Lord Jesus hath appointed a plurality of bishops in every church, all of them apt to teach, and able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gainsayers, all of them stewards of God: but because the work for which they are thus qualified, consists of several parts, and though each of them

VOL. II.

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\* Acts xx. 17. 18. 34. 35.

can act in each part, yet no one of them can excel in every part; he hath appointed each of them to give himself chiefly to that part wherein he excels, that all the parts of the great and good work of a bishop may be excellently done, unto the glory of his name, and the good of the flock whereof they are overseers. Supposing, then, only one minister of the word in a church, applying himself to all these indifferently, no part of the work could be done excellently; or, supposing him to give himself mostly to one of them, as he readily will, then the rest cannot go well forward. Again, if we suppose two, or three, or more ministers of the word, all of them labouring in that part which is peculiarly called *teaching*, the judgements of the flock would, in that case, be excellently informed, errors and mistakes corrected, and they would grow in knowledge; but the exercise of their hearts and affections would not be answerably lively: and it is not likely, that the love of Christ and his people, and the hatred of self and the world, would grow exceedingly, while they are not plied with the diligent exercise of that which is peculiarly called *exhortation*; nor would their conversation among themselves, and toward all men, hold pace with their growth in knowledge, or be attended to, and directed with that diligence that might serve to make them shine as lights in the world, that others seeing their good works might glorify their Father in heaven. Growing in knowledge, without the other two, would make monstrous Christians. The like may be said of them labouring in exhortation: for, in that case, the flock would hardly grow in knowledge, nor in zeal of good works, and in an outward conversation becoming the gospel, while they would be mainly taken up with inward impressions on their hearts and affections, and the various postures of these. And this also could not stand, or make any right progress, without the other two. And if more ministers of the word than one in a church should give themselves  
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mainly, in their preaching and other exercises, to the direction and correction of the conversations of the flock, and to the business of presiding in the discipline of the church; this, without the influence of that which is peculiarly called *teaching* and *exhortation*, presupposed to it, and keeping pace with it, would tend to formality, and issue in something like Pharisaical righteousness; yea, it could not long subsist without the other two. And if we suppose several ministers of the word in one church, giving themselves indifferently to all these, none of them could be done to such purpose, as by every one of them his giving himself most to that wherein he excels. And as each of them would do that part best, so they would themselves most readily grow and improve in that, and be helpful and profitable to one another, as well as to the flock; so that one of them could not say he had no need of the other.

It was through the pride and indolence of bishops, and the people's negligence, in holding fast the apostolic institution, that this wise and beautiful order was broke through, and way thereby made for the revelation of the man of sin. And now, since men have found the wisdom of words, or the wisdom of the Scribe, and of the disputer of this world, to be a necessary or useful (as they reckon usefulness) qualification of a bishop, a minister of the word, and that it required much expence to train them up in that wisdom, and then to support them, when trained, in such state as might serve to beget respect to them in the minds of such people as are not so much affected with that authority that is proper to the Christian bishop, they think they do well, when they get one bishop in every congregation, with a company of such elders as can neither teach nor preach, nor administer baptism and the Lord's supper, nor excommunicate, without a classical presbytery; and these they call *ruling-elders*. And of such elders there is no footstep to be found in the New Testament, nor in

all antiquity ; for after the rise of one bishop in every congregation, all the presbyters or elders in his presbytery, had power of preaching and administering the sacraments under him. And whereas some of the most knowing in this matter, do not insist for such elders as church-officers of divine institution, perceiving the inconsistency of that with the scriptural distinction of the orders of church-officers into two, and no more ; but contend for them as the representatives of the people, (whose consent in binding and loosing, they find in the writings of the ancients, as they might also find it in the scripture), to preserve their rights against the encroachments of the bishops : It must be considered, that the scriptural bishops or elders, and the primitive elders, among whom the one bishop presided, were, in the matter of binding and loosing, presiding in the church, or the whole flock, of which they were presidents, which was the binding and loosing society. So that the people themselves having a right to be personally present, and to consent or dissent, this right is taken from them by such a representation, as cannot be manifested to have any foundation, either in the scriptures, or in primitive antiquity.

The Right of the CHRISTIAN PEOPLE,  
and the Power of their PASTORS, in the  
ORDINATION of Ministers of the Gospel  
asserted. With some Directions for RE-  
FORMATION.

[First published in the year 1733.]

**I**F one would know the truth in any point, touching religion that is in controversy between parties contending for the pre-eminence in this world, the keenness of each faction must be far from him, and the less concern he has in the temporal interests of either side, he is the more fit to judge of the strength of their arguments, so far as these are able to instruct him in things that have a reference to eternity. In the heat of contention, every party snatches the readiest weapon for self-defence, or for the hurt of the adversary. And, in this case, something of the truth may be found on both sides, but mixed with a deal of falsehood; and in that field of battle it appears not like itself; it drudges there to the ambition, avarice, or fleshly ease of a set of men, and serves to promote the temporal interest of one faction upon the ruin of another; and is ready to be treated by either side, according to the appearance it makes against their interest. Yet truth, where-ever it appears, demands regard; and it is not the least part of the duty we owe it, to contribute to our power to deliver it from the slavery it is put to by them that want only to serve themselves of it.

Would it not move the indignation of any man, that indeed believes the holy scriptures to be the words of eternal life, the words of God's grace, that teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly  
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lusts, and to look for that blessed hope, to see these scriptures wrested by all parties of men, contending for worldly pre-eminence in one shape or other, to answer their designs, and serve them in their malice and guile, hypocrisies, envies, and evil speakings against one another? In opposition to this, it becomes us to study the exhortation given us by the Apostle Peter, when he tells us, *That all flesh is grass, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever*, and calls us to lay aside all malice and guile, and, as new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby, if so be we have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

There is no controversy more famous among us, at this time, than that concerning the right of the Christian people to elect their pastors, and the power of the pastors in that matter.

The people's right was not long ago debated with no small heat among the Episcopal dissenters from the Established church; and these of them that found their interest in it, pleaded most zealously for it, with all the criticisms on *συγκαταψήφισμα* and *χειροτονία*, and all the quotations of the ancients, that their reading could furnish them with; for all sorts of clergymen will stand up for the rights and liberties of the people, when they find this necessary to raise themselves; though, aside from that, it will take a power of grace to make a clergyman a hearty friend to the liberty of the Christian people. After much contention among these clergymen, they at length saw their interest lay in coming together, and such union of the clergy is not the most friendly thing in the world to the liberty of the laity. But we are now again amused with a very hot debate in the Established church on the same subject. And one would think, there must be something in this right of the people, when no sort of church-rulers are ashamed to have recourse to it on proper occasions; yea, they can glory in patronizing it, though, at the same time, it must be owned,



ed, there is a principle (not very Christian) in the people, that inclines them to give good heed to those teachers that zealously proclaim their right, and make the loudest complaints to them of their superiors as encroaching upon it. And this contention in the church, is not very unlike the strange bustle and confusion in the state about the Excise-bill. Yet, because it pretends an interest in the scriptures, and a concern in religion, it demands the attention of them that believe the scriptures, and would not desire to be utter strangers to any thing that pertains to true religion, let the interests of the differing parties be what they will. For, whether this debate issue in their separation from one another, or their coming together on some general terms of agreement, (in both which cases, we may suppose, from what has hitherto appeared, the clergy will see to themselves) yet the truth is the truth still; and something ought to be said for their sakes who may be honestly enquiring after it, let the number be never so small. For, however whimsical they may appear that seek the truth without any worldly design, but with a respect to the world to come, no man's labour is ill bestowed in contributing to their satisfaction.

The question about the call to the ministry of the gospel, or word of faith, supposes the truth of that gospel; and they that are so unhappy as to disbelieve it, cannot plead any concern in the question. They can go no further than this, that every man has a right to instruct his neighbour in every thing that is good for him to know, as far as he is able, and as is consistent with the good of the body politic, wherein they enjoy privileges together; and so it must be in the power of that body, to take care that it suffer no damage by any pretended exercise of this right among the members. But as to the church or kingdom of Christ, his officers, and the whole order of that society, they have nothing to do about it, except it be to shew their greatest dislike and contempt of whatsoever

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ever appears most agreeable to the gospel ; though, after all, it cannot be reckoned exceeding discreet in them thus far to meddle with other mens matters, whereof they are not the most fit to judge. They are, indeed, sometimes called upon, and appealed to by both parties, in this, and other questions about the Christian institution, when they plead reason and nature's light against one another, where they have least to say from the scriptures ; but this is their folly and weakness, to enquire at the light of nature, what a positive institution should be.

It is not a sign of the greatest regard to the gospel, in them that profess to believe it, to speak as if what the New Testament says of the ministry of the word, and such things served only for that age wherein it was committed to writing. For, if this were the case, why had we any thing but the essentials written to us in that book? And why do we observe and admire the divine providence in the preservation of that book, in a society that corrupted the whole of Christianity, and in the bringing of it again forth to the view of the nations in their own languages, as his testimony against all the corruptions of that same society? And may not these of that Roman church as well alledge, that the New Testament served indeed for the time wherein it was written ; but as for after-ages, it belonged to them to adapt Christianity to these, as the New Testament was suited to that age? However, it is manifest, they speak lies in hypocrisy who make insinuations this way, to the discredit of the only rule of Christianity, and yet pretend, that the New Testament, and the practice of the first Christians recorded there, is the rule of their consciences as to this matter of the people's right.

That the writings of the Old Testament, and the New, contain a complete revelation of the will of God to men, cannot be denied, without the highest reflection on the truth of that revelation, that plainly sets itself out as a declaration of the whole counsel

fel of God, to which nothing can be added. The Old Testament plainly promised, in its conclusion, a further revelation, and the New Testament declares itself to be that revelation, while it concludes with a curse on them that add to it, as well as on them that take from it. If, therefore, the New Testament say nothing on this question about New-Testament ministers, that depends entirely on the gospel, no man can say any thing of it, that can be submitted to as a divine institution, unless it could be proved, that the New Testament has lodged a power in any man, or society of men, to say in this matter what they think fit, or to act in it as they please; and till this be done, which in all appearance will never be, we must rest ourselves content with what the scriptures say, and examine every thing that men tell us by that.

And, seeing the holy scriptures contain a complete revelation of the will of God to men, no man can now pretend to be so called of God to the ministry of the word as the inspired men, whom he chused to give out that revelation, and to whose mission he bore witness in an extraordinary manner. But what these men were to them that had the divine oracles from their mouths, that their writings are to us, as our Lord said of the writings of Moses and the Prophets; *they have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them: and if they will not believe Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

The question then is, How the holy scriptures declare that men are called to the office of sceding Christ's people by his word fully contained in these scriptures? For, if the whole counsel of God be declared in them, and the ministry of the word of revelation depend wholly on that revelation, no man can lawfully pretend a call from God to give out the least addition to that revelation; and as little can any pretend to be called of God to the ministry of the

word already contained in the scriptures, but according to these scriptures; and every man that is called according to them, has his call.

The New-Testament law speaks not so clearly of any thing, touching that ministry of the gospel which the apostles left behind them on the earth, as of the characters of them that should exercise this office, which are express in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, and of the manner wherein they ought to exercise it, as is to be seen in Paul's discourse to the Ephesian elders, in Peter's exhortation to elders, and in our Lord's commission to ministers, with whom he promises to be present to the end of the world.

It was most necessary, that the Christian law should be express on the characters of the persons that should exercise this sacred office, seeing it is not confined to any fleshly seed or particular family, as was the priesthood under the Old Testament. And if we may not be as certain whom we are to receive as ministers of the word, by the description that the Christian law gives of the persons, as the church of the Jews might be of the descent of their priests from Aaron, we are at a considerable loss beyond them; especially, when the New Testament requires such duties to be done to them, as cannot be done unless we know them, and contains such threatenings to them that reject them, and such promises to them that give them suitable reception, as must make every true Christian anxious to know who they are; and for what end are these characters so express and particular, if it be not, that we may by them know who are called of God to that office, and who not? And can it then be said, without a reflection on the Christian law, that this end cannot be reached by it? Or, that we cannot thereby have as great certainty as the nature of the thing requires, concerning them whom we are bound to receive as ministers of the gospel? If the rule of the New Testament were in all things followed, there could be no difficulty in this matter.

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For no new convert could enter upon the exercise of this office, till he was well known in the Christian society whereof he was a member, and wherewith he assembled, and daily conversed, and which compared him with the description given of a minister of the word by the apostles and evangelists; and this description was the same that is now written to us in the New Testament. In such a society did a man then enter upon the exercise of this office, having the apostolic description of a minister applied to him by a people professing subjection to Jesus Christ, in submitting to the oversight of an elder or bishop, called by him to that office. The case of Apollos was a little extraordinary. He had been a teacher among John's disciples, and was privately instructed by Aquila and Priscilla, who were well known to the church in Corinth; and they, upon intimate acquaintance with him at Ephesus, where there was yet no church, recommended him to the church in Corinth, where he first exercised the office of a minister of the gospel. However, even in this case, the church where he began his ministry had enough of certainty about his character.

It is not in the power of any to add to, or diminish from the description given of a minister of the gospel in the New Testament, so as to insist on any qualification as needful that is not mentioned there, or to make any qualification there spoke of needless. Neither has Jesus Christ, the lawgiver, given to any ministers or people any power or right whatsoever, to call, send, elect, or ordain any person to that office, who is not qualified according to the description given in his law; as he has not given any power or right to reject the least of them that are qualified according to that law. Let a man have hands laid on him by men that could prove an uninterrupted descent of imposition of hands to him from the apostles, let him be set apart to that office by a company of ministers, the most conformable themselves, to the scrip-

ture-character of ministers, and let him be chosen by the most holy people on earth ; if yet he do not answer the New-Testament description of a minister, (which is possible, if the scripture be not the rule of their judgement in this particular case) he is not called of God to that office, and is indeed no minister of Christ, but runs unsent. And if this be the case, they boast in vain of any manner of election and ordination, who study not conformity to the scripture-description of a minister in the exercise of that office. For no manner of ordination of ordinary ministers can pretend such a clear foundation in the New Testament, as the description of the persons that should be ministers. And they that do indeed study conformity to that description, can securely hear their ministry called in question, and rejected by all sorts of men, on grounds whereof the Christian law makes no mention : yea, their ministry cannot be rejected, without disobedience to Jesus Christ.

Thus, whoever is conformable to that description the Christian law gives of a minister of the word, has all the call and mission that the Lord gives any man to that office ; and whoever wants that, whatever he have, has not God's call.

The only part, therefore, that any sort of men can claim in this matter, is that of obedience to the Christian law.

Ministers, elders, or bishops, in this, as in all other things, wherein they preside among the Christian people, are to teach them to observe what Christ has commanded them, and to go before them as their leaders, by doctrine and example, in the way of faith and obedience to the word of Christ contained in the scriptures. They have no power to separate any man to that office whom God has not called. His law gives them only the power of obedience, in separating the men who are called by him, according to his word : and in this they are not lords over his heritage,

tage, but ensamples to the flock which is among them, of obedience to their only Lord.

No people have right to elect any whom God has not called, or to reject those whom he calls; but they must obey him, in receiving and doing all that he requires of them in his word, toward them that are by him qualified according to the description given in his law. If they be not capable to discern, by that description, who are called of God to the ministry of the word, they are not capable to give obedience to the Christian law on that head. The only part of the character as to which they are supposed incapable to judge, is that of aptness to teach, or holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gainsayers. If pastors be to judge of this by their skill in the wisdom of words, or the wisdom of the Scribe, and disputer of this world, which cannot be brought down to the capacity of the Christian people, how can they persuade the people, that any man is called of God to the ministry of the word? Or, how can the people perceive, that their pastors are leading them in the way of obedience to Christ, in separating a man to that office whom they cannot know that Christ has called? In this case, it is impossible for them to profess obedience to Jesus Christ, in receiving one of his ministers according to his law: they must inevitably give a blind obedience to their pastors instead of Christ, if these pastors do not instruct them in that wisdom of words, so far as to enable them to perceive that a man is thereby apt to teach. But the New Testament makes the widest distinction betwixt that wisdom of words, and the faithful word, which he that is separated to the ministry of the gospel must be holding fast, that he may be able both to exhort in sound teaching, and to convince the gainsayers; so that a man may be very learned in the one, and very unlearned in the other. And since the Christian law plainly sets aside  
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this wisdom of the Scribe, and disputer of this world, as being no part of the description it gives us of a minister of the word of faith, neither pastors nor people have any more to judge of on this head, but the soundness of the doctrine, and aptness to communicate it to others for their instruction, conviction, and comfort. If the people may err, and be mistaken as to this, so may ministers: and what error is there among the people, that has not been maintained by ministers? But still, if they be not able to know this in any measure, they are in no measure capable to obey Jesus Christ, in receiving and submitting themselves to the oversight of his ministers.

The people cannot take impressions made on them by the doctrine, for their rule of judging in this case: for there are wrong as well as right impressions, and these must be judged of by the scriptures, and the faithful word contained in them. There are various impressions, according to the variety of the situations of the people, yea, and oft times according to their humours: so that it is scarce possible they can agree in judging by this rule, as they can in perceiving that a man brings sound doctrine to them: and if the faith once delivered to the saints be preached to them, whose fault is it that they are not edified? Yea, and if they were to judge by impressions in this matter, they might come to reject that part of the scripture-doctrine that they did not find impressed on them, as well as the minister that holds fast the faithful word; at least, this could not miss to produce the same thing that the Apostle condemns in the Corinthians, that went into parties and factions on their experiences, by means of different preachers of the same doctrine.

A people cannot pretend to be obeying Christ in this thing, who are not shewing a regard to all his commands, nor living in subjection to the discipline expressly instituted in the scriptures. Zeal for the good work of obedience to one of his laws, while there is



no respect shewed to other as plain laws of his, is utterly inconsistent with the scripture-character of a Christian people. And how can a people pretend a regard to the word of God, in contending for their right of election, who shew not the same zeal for as clear a right of theirs, even the profession of subjection to Christ, in contributing of their substance for the maintenance of their pastors, that so they who preach the gospel may live of the gospel, as they that ministred about holy things eated of the temple, and they that waited at the altar partaked with the altar? Why do they suffer this right to be wrung out of their hands, and yield it up peaceably to any that please to take it from them, while they are so jealous of the least encroachment on the other right?

And as no people can pretend to be obeying Christ in this matter, but they who are studying an universal conformity to the description of a Christian people in the New Testament, so no ministers of the gospel can act in it as pastors, but among a flock hearing the voice of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Their commission beyond that is only to preach the gospel to every creature: neither can they pretend to be the representatives of the people in the part that the Christian law calls them to act here; and as little can any part of the people represent another in their obedience to Christ, as to which every one of them must give an account of himself to God. And why may not the people be as well represented in all the other parts of their obedience to the laws of Jesus Christ?

When a people studying conformity to the scripture-description of a Christian people, shall happen to want pastors, and have the Christian law, this want cannot render them incapable of obeying that law, in receiving and submitting to any as their ministers, that are evidently qualified according to that law.

law. For they have the apostles ; and though they want elders, they should hear them, and so have elders.

The turning of the part that men have to act in the ordination of ministers, out of the channel of humble obedience to the plain word of God, has been the spring of all the confusion and disorder that has taken place in the world about the ordination of ministers. When the wisdom of man made bold to make the least alteration in one point of the divine institution, it was for this end, to recommend Christianity more to the world : and this end was steadily pursued by the covetousness and ambition of the clergy, and the carnal zeal of the people for the worldly honour of Christianity, and their own ease, till it became a worldly religion. One alteration in this point, as well as on other heads, made way for another to support that, and so on, till the world was filled with usages, regulations, constitutions, and laws, which came to be more attended to than the word of God, that was in effect made void by the keeping of these. And while such wise regulations came in, upon pretence of unity, order, and decency, but served mainly to the worldly exaltation of the clergy, and carnal ease of the people, they have filled the world with such envying and strife, such wars and fightings, as could never have happened to them that contented themselves with the scripture-rule. Yea, these regulations have plainly appeared at length to be proper engines of war to parties contending for the pre-eminence in this world. And, therefore, if men be in earnest to reform in this matter, they must lay aside every invention of human wisdom, and give over proudly contending for a right that clergymen, who cannot prevail in ruling the church, are persuading the people that they have, and their superiors are taking from them ; even as the mob is enraged continually against the government in the state by them that cannot prevail at court ; and they must return to the old course of humble subjection and obedience to  
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the plain word of God, the word of eternal life, without adding thereto, or diminishing from it. “And this is the right of the Christian people, and the power of their pastors.”

While the confusion remains that has flowed from a falling away from the scripture-rule, and has come, by mens pretending to be masters, instead of obedient servants to the Lord Christ, we ought not to deny their ministry, who, in any tolerable measure, answer the scripture-description of a minister; nor need we be afraid to disown the ministry of any sort of men, of the greatest name, who do not, in any tolerable measure, bear a conformity to that description. This is a far surer footing to go upon, than that of the manner wherein a man comes into the possession of the stipend in a parish, and becomes the public teacher there. It cannot be told, where the New Testament speaks so clearly of parish-ministers, and of stipends provided by law, and of elders not apt to teach, ruling the people, and representing them in the election of a parish-minister, or of the majority of heads of families, or communicants chusing a minister to all the rest of the parish, and to the stipend, as it speaks of the characters of a minister of the gospel, and calls us to receive such. Neither can it be so well told, where the New Testament says, that it is my election that makes a man my minister, as where it forbids me to reject a minister of Christ, and obliges me to receive a man because he is one, according to the description of a minister in the Christian law.

But if men will not thus live at ease, in a disorderly corrupted state of things, and want to see a true reformation, then let them seriously deliberate on the following proposals.

1. Let the holy scriptures be attended to, and held fast, in opposition to every other rule that men walk by; as, the imaginations of their own hearts, the course of this world, the traditions of the fathers,

and commandments of men, and seducing spirits, speaking beside the scriptures, speaking of the world, and denying directly, or indirectly, that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is what Paul recommends to Timothy as a preservative against the perilous times in the last days, 2 Tim. iii. He sets before him the things he had learned of him, his doctrine and manner of life, now written to us in the New Testament, and this, with the scriptures of the Old Testament, which, he says, Timothy had known from a child, he points out to him as sufficient to manifest the folly of them that resist the truth, and to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. And, by what he there says, their folly may be manifest, who, for the sake of other rules that they would have us to walk by, reflect on the holy scriptures, as dark and of doubtful interpretation, as the common resort of heretics, and as fitted only to the first times of Christianity; and not proper for the times we live in. And yet, by such like insinuations as these, from men professing that the scriptures are the only rule of Christianity, are poor people frightened from searching the scriptures, and cleaving close to them in their practice, lest they should fall under delusion, against which, the scriptures are not, it seems to them, so proper a preservative as other rules that they are called to walk by. The Apostle, forewarning the Thessalonians of the man of sin, and of the strong delusion that God was to send on professors of Christianity that received not the love of the truth, gives them this direction against the beginnings of this evil, *stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle*, 2 Thess. ii. These traditions which he calls them to hold, were partly written in his epistle, and partly delivered to them by word of mouth: for the New-Testament scripture was not then completed; but they had the whole counsel of God declared to them by the Apostle, which is now so fully declared in the writings

writings of the New Testament, whereof the epistle to the Thessalonians is a part, as nothing can be added to it. If, therefore, we would escape the corruption of Christianity that was then beginning to work, and the strong delusion there foretold, we must firmly hold the things delivered to us in the New Testament, without adding to them, or taking from them. We must not satisfy ourselves with an idle confession, that the New Testament is the word of God, but we must hold fast by it, as our only rule, in opposition to all other rules that have been added to it, or come in the place of it; we must hold fast the things delivered there, in our practice, without turning to the right hand or to the left. And, in order to this, let us hearken to the advice the Apostle gives to the church in Rome, which, if it had been always attended to, might have prevented all the abominations of that worldly kingdom, at the head of which that church came to be in after-ages. He says, *Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*, Rom. xii. Let them that are ministers search the scriptures diligently, and with a single eye, clear of worldly respects, and however much they know of them, let them yet be persuaded, they are able to make them wiser, and let them still be disciples of Christ, depending on him, as little children, for instruction from him, by opening their understanding, to understand the scriptures. And let them not shun, for the fear of the people, or for any hope in this world, to speak all the words of eternal life, and to declare the whole counsel of God keeping nothing back; knowing this, that the word is not committed to them to give it out as they please; and that now, since the revelation is finished, there is no part of it but what is profitable for making the man of God perfect, or thoroughly furnished unto all good works. They must not only take care of handling the word of God deceitfully, and study to

teach Christ's disciples to observe all he has commanded, but they must also go before them, as examples of holding fast the things delivered in the scriptures, in a diligent observation of them, the least of them not excepted. *For he that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.* And let the Christian people also to their power, search the scriptures, and examine every part of the doctrine of their ministers, and their example by the scriptures, comparing scripture with scripture, that they may be followers of them only, as they can see them following Christ; and so profess subjection to the gospel of Christ in following them. Let them bring all their former thoughts and opinions in matters of religion to the standard of the scriptures, ready to give up with every principle and practice that has no foundation there, and to take up with every doctrine and practice that shall be found there, and without delay, to observe all things whatsoever Christ is found requiring there, however little they have been observed before. Even as the captive Jews, returning from typical Babylon, reformed themselves by the written law, which, thro' the good providence of God, remained among them, notwithstanding the captivity, and all the corruptions that had prevailed among them, and after they no more enjoyed many of the glorious things that attended the first giving out of that Old-Testament revelation. The Lord encourages them under their wants, with this, that they had his word and his spirit remaining among them; and they diligently read that word, and what they found written there, they forthwith practised, though some of these practices had not been in use from the days of Joshua the son of Nun. Though we cannot now pretend to many things, that accompanied the giving out of the New-Testament revelation, and behoved to cease when it was completed, as the Apostle expressly declares they should cease, 1 Cor. xiii.; yet, by the wonderful providence  
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of God, we have the writings of the Prophets and the Apostles of Christ-preserved, and brought into our own language, so as all have access to know them: and, in this case, is not the practice of the returning reforming Jews written for our learning, that we may take them as our example in this thing? Let us therefore, as they did, give attendance to the reading of the scriptures, to exhortation and to doctrine, that we may be by them furnished unto every good work, and hold fast the things written there, so as not to let them go, or add any thing to them, in confession or practice, for any hope, or for any fear wherewith we can be moved.

2. Let the description that the New Testament gives of a Christian, as well as of a minister, be carefully observed; so as all they, and none else, may be acknowledged as Christians, who are in some measure conformable to that description. Our obedience to Jesus Christ depends, at least, as much on the knowledge of this, as on our acquaintance with the scripture-character of a minister; and as great evils have followed upon a departure from the rule of the New Testament, on this head, as on the other. It is impossible for us to search mens hearts, and to know who is a true Christian in the sight of God, so as to distinguish him from one that is a hypocrite only in his sight. But there are such peculiar duties required of us towards the children of God, and the brethren of Jesus Christ, on account of their relation to him, with such promises and threatenings annexed, that we had been in the greatest difficulty about our obedience to Jesus Christ, if his law had not also described to us the persons to whom it obliged us to do these duties. Shall we think that the Christian law hath made our peculiar esteem and regard to a people whom we cannot know, to be the grand evidence of our love to Christ himself, and of our interest in him? Or, are we to stand or fall at the judgment-seat of Christ, and is it to fare with us eternally according

according to our behaviour to a peculiar people whom we cannot by any rule distinguish from other people?

The New Testament leaves us not at this uncertainty; but gives such a description of these whom we are to look on as the brethren of Christ, as will serve to convince Christ's enemies at his appearing, of their neglect and hatred of him, by their neglect and hatred of the least of these his brethren, whom they saw in this world, and as will serve, on the other hand, to manifest his peoples love to himself, by their deeds of love to one another, while they lived together in the world. The description given in the New Testament of these to whom we are to behave as the children of God, and brethren of Christ, is so clear, as to leave us at as little uncertainty as the Jews and the nations their neighbours could be in, as to them that were of the seed of the Jews. We may take these few texts for instances on this subject, which is one way or other touched on throughout the New Testament, Matth. xi. 48. 49. 50. 1 John iii. 23. Matth. vii. 21. 22. 23. Heb. vi. 9. 10. Matth. xviii. 3. 5. 6. and x. 36. 37. 38. Luke xiv. 27. John xiii. 34. 35. Rev. xii. 17. 1 Thess. i.

The extraordinary signs that appeared about Christ's disciples at the erection of his kingdom, and whereby the Lord bare witness to the first fruits of the Gentiles, when he visited the nations, to *take out of them a people for his name*, are now ceased, because there is no more use for them; but that *work of faith*, that *labour of love*, and that *patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ*, that was the product of the gospel in the first Christians, must remain as long as Christianity remains in the world. And, as the distinguishing character of a Christian was made up of these three from the beginning, so it must be still to the end of the world. *For, says the Apostle, whether prophecies, they shall fail, whether tongues, they shall cease, whether knowledge, it shall vanish away. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest*



*greatest of these is charity*, 1 Cor. xiii. And therefore where the work of faith appears not, nor the patience of hope, but especially where there is no appearance of charity, in that labour of love shewed towards his name, in ministering to the saints, as he requires in his word, there, let men think what they will, there is no appearance of Christianity.

We are not to take the description of the children of God from our own fancy: For, through our self-liking, we are ready to fancy, that likest to God, that is likest ourselves; nor are we to take the description of a child of God from the esteem and approbation of the world, as if these who are highly esteemed among men for holiness, were so likewise in the sight of God; for by that rule, the Pharisees, who were *an abomination in the sight of God*, would have been his children, and his son a Samaritan, having a devil: but let us take the description of a Christian, with whom we are to behave as with the brother of Jesus Christ, only from his own word in the New Testament. Let all our notions of a Christian's character be examined and corrected by that infallible rule. Let the greatest names of men that *could speak with the tongues of men and angels*, if yet they be not conformable to that description, fall in our esteem before that rule. And let the least of Christ's brethren be acknowledged by us, according to that rule, though the *base, weak, and foolish things of the world*, and though they should be *hungry and thirsty, naked, strangers, and in prison*, or whatever their circumstances be in this world, and however they be despised among men.

There is the more need for cleaving strictly to the scripture-description of a confessor of the name of Christ, that the New Testament foretels a false profession of Christianity coming in place of the true one, and setting it aside: for Paul, forewarning Timothy of the *perilous times to come in the last days*, points out the danger of these times, in describing the people that

that should then have a *form of godliness, denying the power of it*; and, as a guard to us against the peril of these times, he gives this charge,—*From such turn away*, 2 Tim. iii. By this new form of godliness, or of Christianity, suited to the people there described, the *outer court of the Lord's house came to be troden under foot of the nations*, and the *man of sin rose to his seat in the temple of God*, and the *power of the people*, whom God took out of the nations for his name, was scattered, when, by this *form of godliness*, they came to be mingled again with the people of these abominations; and so that took place which was pointed at in the prophecy of Ezekiel, chap. xxxiii. 17. 18. 19.

The Apostle likewise gives Timothy a sample of these, that, in the last days, should have the form of godliness denying its power, in them who, at that time, under the name of *Christians*, went about craftily among the disciples, to subvert the true profession of Christianity, and prevailed on them that had not attained to that knowledge of the truth, whereby they might be delivered from the dominion of their lusts; and therefore wanted a profession of Christianity, under which they might have some more ease in the fulfilment of them. And these were, on the one hand, the Judaisers, largely described in the epistles of Paul; and, on the other hand, they that were confident of their justification, by a knowledge and a faith that they said they had, which did not shew itself in works of obedience to the gospel; for they came to know their justification a shorter way, as we see in the epistle of James, and in Jude, and the second epistle of Peter.

The Apostle compares them whom he thus shews to Timothy, to the Egyptian magicians, in their opposition to the word of God, to keep his people in bondage whom he made free to serve him. And thereby he insinuates, that, as the true Christian profession was at first established in the world by signs, so that other form of godliness should have signs on its  
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side also, whereby men would harden themselves in cleaving to it, in opposition to the true profession of Christianity described in the scriptures, to which God bare witness by all the signs recorded there. But he says these men shall not proceed the full length, even as these Egyptians, though they held pace with Moses so far, did not go the full, and were obliged to own themselves outdone by the finger of God. So none of the men that ever gloried in any signs that they imagined to be wrought in favours of the modern form of Christianity, in any shape of it, can so much as pretend, that the signs they talk of ever proceeded the length of the signs whereby God bare witness to the profession of Christianity that is described in the New Testament. How shall we then turn away from them that *have a form of godliness, denying the power of it*, as the Apostle charges us, but by turning to the Christianity described in the New Testament, and there exemplified to us in the way of the first Christians, to which the Lord bare witness by such signs as no other Christianity in after-ages could ever pretend to.

If we would indeed be so much as scriptural professors of Christianity, let us every one seek to be conformed to the scripture-description of a Christian, without cutting or carving upon it, or seeking to bring it down to us, but to have ourselves brought up to it, without adding to it, or taking from it. And let as many as are thus minded, separate themselves to the law of God, from these that shew no such purpose of heart, but are willing to rest in the form of godliness, denying the power of it, or denying the ancient work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope, which is the power of godliness. And herein also we may study the example of the typical Israel, in their reformation, when they returned from typical Babylon. They not only refused the Samaritans, offering to incorporate with them and build the temple, though that refusal brought no small

trouble upon them, but long after that they found, in reading the law of God, that the seed of Israel should not be mingled with strangers; and particularly, they found it written, that the Ammonite, and the Moabite, should not come into the congregation of God for ever; and when they had heard the law, they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude. They trembled at the words of God, and were not afraid to depart from the practice of their fathers, that had departed from the law of God on that head, though they themselves had been before following them in that departure: for they separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. If Christians had trembled as much at the word of God, on this head, as they did at separation, when the form of godliness, without the power of it, was taking place, Christianity had never been so much corrupted in the profession of it, as it has manifestly been. And there has not been one true step of reformation from that corruption taken at any time, but by them that were more afraid of the word of God, and shunned a departure from it, more than separation or departure from their former courses, and the courses of their fathers, or from the fellowship of any sort of men in the world. Let them, therefore, that seek to be conformed to the scripture-description of a Christian, be separated to the law of their Lord, confessing their sin, and the iniquity of their fathers, in having fellowship in that form of godliness with them that denied the power of it. And whereas they and their fathers in this nation have been zealous contenders for such a form; and have sworn to it, and, for the sake of that, expressly abjured Christ's own institution, under an odious name, let them confess the iniquity of that also; and so study reformation according to the New Testament in Christ's blood, which can both direct and enable them to all the reformation

formation that God requires of them, and is the only everlasting covenant that shall never be forgotten.

Let them assemble themselves together, in the confession of the faith that is in Christ the Son of God, the Mediator of that covenant, and in obedience to his law in that covenant, to observe all his institutions of worship, continuing stedfast in the doctrine, and in the fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers, praising God, and to obey his new commandment in all the branches of it, and to observe all things whatsoever he commands, as they find them written in his law. And while they are thus separated to the law of God, let them be in the diligent use of every mean there prescribed, for keeping up the study of conformity to the scripture-character of a Christian among them, as these mentioned, Matth. xviii. and 1 Cor. v. Heb. iii. 12. 13. and x. 23. 24. 25. and xii. 15. Lest they again swerve from the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, and return to a form of godliness, denying the power of it.

And when the Christian people thus separate themselves to the law of God, let none be acknowledged as ministers of the word, or elders, but according to their conformity to the scripture-description of a minister; even as, among the captives returned from typical Babylon, these were put from the priesthood as profane, whose descent from Aaron did not appear.

3. Let the connection betwixt Christianity and the cross, of which Paul speaks to Timothy, when forewarning him of the perilous times, be carefully observed. When the Apostle sets his doctrine and manner of life, in opposition to them that have a form of godliness, denying the power of it, he insists on his patience, and sets forth his sufferings; and, lest any should imagine this was peculiar to him, or the time wherein he lived, he says, *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* Men may have the form of godliness, of which he

speaks without persecution; yea, it was the proper fruit of an endeavour to separate Christianity from the cross; but live godly in Christ Jesus without the cross, they cannot. This living godly in Christ, is not a manner of life utterly hid from the world's view, as they that are gainers by the form of godliness without the power of it, would have its power to lie unobserved, lest, being as light set on a candlestick, or as a city on a hill, it should create them disturbance; and so they tell the deluded people pretty tales of this sort, that it is the best way of going to heaven, to go with the sound of their feet unheard. But the godly living that the Apostle speaks of, is a manner of life that provokes the hatred of the ungodly, and brings on persecution from the world.

It is true, the first Christians had sometimes rest from public persecution, as Acts ix. 31.; and Paul himself was not always in the hands of the magistrate; yea, our Lord, the great pattern of suffering, did not suffer publicly from the powers of the earth till the end; but he has foretold, that a man's foes shall be they of his own house, and private persecution from friends and neighbours, and all sorts of men that we live among in the world, for the sake of Christ and his word, is no such light thing as they that look on it at a distance may be ready to imagine; yea, the trial of cruel mockings for his sake cannot be made easy, but by that same grace that acted in Christ when he patiently endured the cross, despising the shame. The Psalmist, in his name, complains of hypocritical mockers in feasts, gnashing upon him with their teeth, and of his becoming a stranger unto his brethren, and an alien to mother's children, and of the men that sit in the gate speaking against him; and his being the song of the drunkards, &c. Different parties of worldly men, contending for pre-eminence in this world, will be ridiculing and reproaching one another; but it is another thing, and requires more self-denial, to be suffering from all sorts  
of

of men for the word of God, than to be enduring for the sake of a man's self, in pursuing and hoping to attain the honour, gain, or ease of a present world. The clergy have endured much to raise themselves in the world, and maintain what they have gained; but the sufferings of the first Christians were not attended with any worldly hope, and they were supported under them with no hope, but that which is proposed in the gospel. Paul declares his disposition in this matter, and his expectation of the concurrence of every confirmed Christian, when he says, *Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.—Let us therefore as many as be perfect be thus minded.*—Phil. iii.

As he there states an opposition betwixt his way and that of the Judaisers who minded earthly things, so here he states an opposition between living godly in Christ with suffering, and the way of the men contending for the form of godliness without the power of it: for he says,—*But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.* He tells the Galatians how much men were shunning the cross by corrupting the gospel, reconciling it some way to its enemies, especially in points whereat they were most enraged. And, in after-ages, the desire of conformity to the world, and of friendship with it, worked in that same way, and produced the form of godliness with a denial of the power of it; and so men went farther and farther from the old purpose of conformity to a humbled Christ, and from the Christian patience of hope, till they began to think not only of escaping persecution themselves, but even of persecuting others; so that at length the form of godliness became an engine of persecution against the power of godliness, as well as a proper mean of strife and bloodshed among themselves, differing

fering about the several parts of that form as their interests led them. And all this was carried on with the fairest pretences of zeal for the honour of Christ and Christian prudence; yea, it became a principle of Christianity to persecute; and the ancient doctrine of love to enemies, and patient bearing of wrongs, and the like, came to be as an old almanack, calculated only for the time of Christ and his apostles. Therefore, says the Apostle, *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer; but evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

Let them, therefore, that have reformation indeed at heart, shew the same temper of mind that the Apostle opposes to that of the Antichristian generation. Let them separate themselves to live godly in Christ Jesus, desiring conformity to him in his humiliation, and shewing the hope of conformity to him in his glory. And let not these men speak of their suffering as Christians, who are, at the same time, shewing the hope of large contributions for their life in this world, from an enraged multitude, and boasting in this, and in the hope of a numerous following, and a strong party to make head against another faction, yea, and professing the principle of persecution, and of the extirpation of all sects but their own out of the nation, as soon as it shall be in their power, and that, they hope, will be after this evil day is over. For such men will have a form of godliness suited unto these things wherein they boast, and shun every confession and practice in religion that appears inconsistent with these things, let it be never so clear in the New Testament. So their separation cannot be a turning away from them that have a form of godliness denying the power of it, but a division from that form in one shape to establish it in another.

Let such as want to see gospel-reformation look on every opportunity of separating the cross and Christianity, by abating a very little of its rigour, as a strong temptation and guard against it. Let them treat every  
 occasion



occasion of rising in this world, and being avenged on their enemies, as our Lord treated the vogue of the multitude, and their purposes of making him a king. And while they give the strictest obedience, and pay the greatest deference to magistrates, as the New Testament commands, and reject all them that are not afraid to speak evil of dignities, let them beware of all the tricks the clergy have been playing with the magistrate from the days of Constantine. But let them reckon themselves, as every first church of the saints did, complete in Christ, the head of all principality and power, head over all the heavenly hosts, powers of heaven, powers of hell, and powers of the earth, unto the church which is his body, unto whom, therefore, every member of that body has a readier and more immediate access than to any of his vassals, on whom they must not depend, but hold that head under whom they are all working together for the good of his body the church; and whatever way they behave under the conduct of his providence, they are working together to bring the nations of them that are saved into the new Jerusalem, who have their dependence on none but their head; and all the powers in the creation, good or bad, are serving them, while they hold that head.

These three directions, given by the Apostle, against the perils of the last times, are thus laid before the consciences of them, especially that shew any desire to escape these perils; and, however these may treat them now, their consciences will one way or other answer upon them before the judgement-seat of Christ.

A Letter to Mr JOHN WILLISON, on a  
passage in his Synodical Sermon, concerning  
ILLITERATE MINISTERS.

*He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.—*

*And he gave some pastors and teachers,—for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come, &c.  
Eph. iv. 7.—14.*

*—And ye are complete in him, Col. ii. 8. 9. 10.*

[First published in the year 1734.]

S I R,

**I**T no way surprises me, that when the cry of the danger of the church is popular, you should appear as the author of a sermon, or pamphlet, bearing that title; but I confess, I cannot so easily understand how you imagine that your church is in danger from a sect which you say “is lately risen among us, who decry the knowledge of human arts and sciences, and of the languages, as unnecessary for gospel-ministers, and therefore make choice of illiterate men for that office.”

This complaint of Illiterate Ministers would have come more seasonably to your church, when they deposed Mess. Colvil and Ramsay, and licensed John Gillone, than at this day, when your sect is every where complaining of the church's danger, from men in respect of whom you yourselves are illiterate men. Your fathers, the covenanters, that abjured Independency, deposed two able ministers, and exceeding peaceable members of society, and set up an illiterate man to preach the gospel: but the men of letters, of whom you stand in fear, have only declared a few turbulent members of their society to be none of that society, of which they pretended to be a considerable part, while they would not walk orderly in it. And you cannot charge these men of  
letters

letters with the crime of palming illiterate men upon you.

The sect that makes choice of illiterate men for ministers is none of your society: their ministers are not, pretend not to be ministers of your church, and they impose their ministry upon none. It cannot be easily believed, that you are seeking to promote the welfare of that sect, in the warning you give of the danger of Illiterate Ministers: and as little can it be perceived, what is the danger of your church from such insignificant useless persons as you represent them to be. What have you to fear from such men as have neither skill nor power to handle against an adversary the only weapon they pretend to use? Or, is your church in danger from the weakness of her adversaries? Yet if, while you are giving warning of your church's danger, you are also so good as to point out to that sect its danger likewise, that sect is certainly obliged to you.

After all, who knows but perhaps you have a secret fear, that through these Illiterate Ministers "your craft may be in danger of being set at nought;" and while you are far below the prevailing party in the knowledge of letters, and seek to excel in popular preaching, they may some way rival you in that, among the people that know not letters, on whom you have the greatest influence? Yet I am of opinion, you need have no great fear on this head; when I consider the subject of their preaching, *the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom that is not of this world*; which can never take with the multitude, as does the preaching of your covenanted kingdom; and when I think on the strictness of their discipline, to which your followers, that can be esteemed good Christians at an easier rate, will not easily submit; especially, when they must lose all their esteem among you as Christians, and become the objects of universal contempt the moment they submit to it.

Perhaps you have a suspicion, that, as it sometimes happens to the best fencers in duelling, even so it may possibly fare with you in a conflict with these same illiterate men. A literate friend of yours (for so we must call you) made a scornful attack not long ago, upon some of these ministers; and all the authority he could display, all the grimace he was master of, was not sufficient to bear them down; Impudent fellows that they were! They handled their weapon in defence, till he thought he had enough of it, if he be capable of such a thought. But you are a little wiser. Your way, as far as it is above board, is, to shew in your *concio ad clerum*, That the church is in danger from a set of men, to whom it is a great loss they want letters.

It had been still a question with me, if you indeed apprehended any danger to your church from these men, if your insinuation of a comparison to Julian, that infamous apostate, had not betrayed your inward fear, or inclination to fill others with the greatest fear of danger from that airth; that all whom your comparison may touch, may be abhorred as haters of Zion; and that none who would be reckoned lovers of Zion, may join issue with any whom you have been able to class with that infamous apostate. That this good end may be reached, you take care to make that Julian no better than he was. You say, the devil learned Julian to take away the maintenance of ministers, and put down their schools of learning; that he was guilty of robbing of ministers and schools of learning of their maintenance and revenues; and hereupon you agree with the observation of your fathers and predecessors, that he did more mischief to the church and her ministers than the bloody Dioclesian: And you give this reason for it, That hereby he hindered a succession of able ministers in the church, while, when Dioclesian took many eminent men away, there still arose others in their stead. The inference must be, that the church is in greater danger  
from

from the sect that you represent as joining issue with that Julian, than from the most bloody persecutor. This ancient observation, and the reason you bring to support it, comes very natively from clergymen; but you must excuse people of another character, if they cannot perceive the justness of it. For they cannot think, that the church and her ministers enjoyed any of these things by Dioclesian, whereof you say Julian robbed them; and if the taking away the maintenance that they had not under Dioclesian, hindered a succession of able ministers in the time of Julian, which the taking away of their lives also could not hinder in the time of Dioclesian; it must be inferred, that these who desired the office of the ministry in Julian's time, were men of a very different sort from these that desired it in the time of Dioclesian. It may be a question, if Julian deprived the Christian ministry of any thing the gospel gave them; and it has been also observed, that Constantine did more harm to the church than Julian and Dioclesian were capable to do, by their different ways of opposition to it: for that which ambitious covetous ministers reckon to be their interest, is not the interest of the profession of the name of Christ. It is certain, no true clergyman will join issue so far with Julian, as to declare these things unnecessary for them of which he deprived them; but no lover of Zion, or the true church, if not abused by the clergy, can be offended, that their covetousness and ambition is not gratified. Your sort of men applaud Constantine, whose moral character is as disagreeable to the rules of the gospel as Julian's; and Jovian, a debauched man, but a firm friend to that sort of Christianity, and Christian ministry that was in those days, is as famous among you as Julian is infamous.

Because it may tend to your instruction, I shall take the trouble to transcribe a passage concerning Julian, from the author of *The Fable of the Bees*. The passage is as follows:

“ ——— When Emperors were once become Christians, the clergy received such power, and other worldly comfort from their authority, that they could not think of living without, and therefore lost all patience when Julian was advanced to the empire. They did and said against him every thing that rage and hatred could inspire, and fixed upon him the surname of *Apostate*, to render him odious, which has stuck by him to this day. Julian had been differently educated, as well at Pagan as at Christian universities, and at one time he had Heathens, and at another Christians for his tutors : but I never saw it proved, that he adhered to Christianity at a time he might with safety have refused it. It must be confessed, that as soon as he was master of his choice, he made the worst, and unfortunately embraced Paganism, because it was the religion of his ancestors.

“ But let him be called Heathen or Apostate, or what the clergy pleases, to judge of him impartially from history, we must own, that he was a virtuous and gallant prince, endued with wit and humanity, and more steadiness and moderation than any of his Christian predecessors. In his letters, he appears to have been a father to his people ; and one of them I will take leave to insert here, which will make us perfectly well acquainted with the tolerating temper of that prince, and, at the same time, point at the real cause of the clergy’s animosities against him.

*Julian to the Bostrens.*

“ I Should have thought, indeed, that the Galilean leaders would have esteemed themselves more indebted to me, than to him who preceded me in the administration of the empire : for, in his time, many of them suffered exile, persecution, and imprisonment ; multitudes of those, whom in their religion, they term *heretics*, were put to the sword ; insomuch, that in Samosata, Cyzicum, Paphlagonia, Bithynia, Galatia,

Galatia, and many other countries, whole towns were levelled with the earth. The just reverse of this has been observed in my time. The exiles have been recalled, and the proscribed restored to the lawful possessions of their estates: but to that height of fury and distraction are this people arrived, that, being no longer allowed the privilege to tyrannise over one another, or persecute either their own sectaries, or the religious of the lawful church, they swell with rage, and leave no stone unturned, no opportunity unemployed, of raising tumult and sedition. So little regard have they to true piety, so little obedience to our laws and constitutions, however humane and tolerating. For still do we determine, and steadily resolve, never to suffer one of them involuntarily to be drawn unto our altars. \* \* \* As for the mere people, indeed, they appear driven to these riots and seditions by these amongst them whom they call *clerics*; who are now enraged to find themselves restrained in the use of their former power and intemperate rule. \* \* \* They can no longer act the magistrate, or civil judge, nor assume authority to make people's wills, supplant relations, possess themselves of other men's patrimonies; by specious pretences, transfer all into their own possession. For this reason, I have thought fit, by this public edict, to forewarn the people of this sort, that they raise no more commotions, nor gather in a riotous manner about their seditious clerics, in defiance of the magistrate, who has been insulted, and in danger of being stoned by these incited rabbles. In their congregations, they may notwithstanding assemble, as they please, and croud about their leaders performing worship, receiving doctrine, and praying according as they are by them taught and conducted: but, if with any tendency to sedition, let them beware how they hearken or give assent, and remember it is at their peril, if, by these means, they are secretly wrought up to mutiny and insurrection. \* \* \* Live therefore in peace and quietness,

ness, neither spitefully opposing, or injuriously treating one another. You misguided people of the new way, beware on your side! And you of the ancient established church, injure not your neighbours and fellow-citizens, who are enthusiastically led away in ignorance and mistake, rather than with design or malice. It is by discourse and reason, not by blows, insults, or violence, that men are to be informed of truth, and convinced of error. Again, therefore, and again, I enjoin, and charge the zealous followers of the true religion, no wise to injure, molest, or affront, the Galilean people."

These were the sentiments of this Emperor, whom the clergy make such a monster, and whose very clemency they make a handle of for slander, complaining, that, by his mildness and unlimited toleration, he had done more prejudice to the church than others with persecution. He was a politic prince, yet the clergy proved too hard for him, and never ceased plotting against him, till at last, to the great joy of the orthodox, he was assassinated by one of his own Christian soldiers.

Thus far my author. And, as his story tells, if the devil was teaching Julian this method with the Christians of those days, you may see he was not his only scholar at that time: for, according to the scripture-account of the devil's teaching and influence, the Heathens, whom Julian was restraining from injuring, molesting, or affronting the Christians, and not they only, but the Christian clergy especially, seem to have been very good proficient at his school, for the time they had been at it; and Julian did not think they deserved to be so treated by their fellow-disciples of another class. The mystery of iniquity began to work, even among the illiterate men that were set apart to the office of the ministry, in the days of the apostles; but when they got these things  
from



from Constantine that Julian took from them, you see how they behaved.

Your warning of the danger of an illiterate ministry, begins with an advice to your brethren, to be as the well furnished Scribe, that bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old. Where you point to our Lord's saying to his disciples, after he had been instructing them in the nature of the kingdom of heaven by parables, and enquiring, if they understood them, Matth. xiii. 51. 52. when they answered, that they did, he says to them, *Therefore every Scribe, which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.* You give us some explication of this text, so far as you quote it; the Scribes treasure, you say, is a stock of necessary and useful knowledge, out of which variety of provision may be brought for the entertainment of people's souls: *The priests lips should preserve knowledge.* But this explication is more general, and less clear than the text itself, as it stands in connection with the context: the text says, *Therefore every Scribe which is instructed (or taught) unto the kingdom of heaven.* And you also go about to enlarge the text of the Old Testament that you cite in confirmation of your gloss, by forbearing to mention the latter part of it, which, as it stands in that context, Mal. ii. would have told what *knowledge* it is that the *priests lips should preserve.* If by *the law* there you will not understand only *the law of truth, the law of the Lord;* but will extend it to signify the law of the Roman empire, and the municipal laws of the nations, then you ought to have given that law a place among the sciences, your handmaids to scripture-knowledge: and I am sure it deserved a place in your catalogue as well as any of them. Next, for an explication of *things new and old,* you have a variety of provision for the entertainment of people's souls, which variety you distribute under two heads. 1. Their souls must be entertained with  
scripture-

scripture-knowledge, the knowledge of God, his perfections, the mystery of the Trinity and of Jesus Christ our surety and sacrifice. Here you are a little more particular, but take care never to mention *the kingdom of heaven*, of which the text speaks. 2. The people's souls must be entertained with the knowledge of human arts and sciences, and of the languages, especially these in which the Bible was first written. And here again, you are more copious than on the first head: you have a great variety here of provision for the entertainment of people's souls; history, philosophy, mathematics, geography, astronomy, and polemic divinity. And thus we have your sense of *the things new and old*, which serve to shew, that illiterate men cannot be *the Scribes* of whom the Lord there speaks. But, after all, you have said, the illiterate may find you very lame, both in quoting and explaining the words of this text; and that you have wrested this scripture in such a manner as to bring a sort of Scribes out of it that was never in it. The Scribe of whom the text speaks is a *Scribe instructed in or unto the kingdom of heaven*; but this is not once mentioned in the instruction of your Scribe. The *things new and old* that the text speaks of are the things of *the kingdom of heaven*, which *began to be spoken by the Lord himself*, and were preached by his apostles to the nations, and committed to writing in the books of the New Testament. These were the Scribes whom Christ told the Jews he would *send to them*, Matth. xxiii. 34. 35. And when they came to them, their doctors *perceived, that they were unlearned and ignorant men*, but *took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus*, Acts iv. 13. as the Jews before marvelled when they heard himself teach, *how he knew the scriptures* (*γράμματα* compare 2 Tim. iii. 15.) *being unlearned*, John vii. 15. They knew he would read the scriptures as other Jews did in the synagogues, but how could the *Son of the carpenter*, without the education of the Scribes, take upon him to do their office; or, in a more modern  
stile,

stile, jump from his trade into the pulpit? Now these Scribes, whom he first instructed and sent forth to make out the New-Testament revelation, and commit it to writing, *said none other things than these which the Prophets and Moses did say should come, Acts xxvi. 22.* And thus the things brought forth out of the treasure, committed to these earthen vessels, were new, and they were old. These Scribes brought forth the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, that had been of old shewed through a veil by Moses and the Prophets. These stewards of the mysteries of God spake the wisdom of God, that was hid in mystery, and not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, who knew not the wisdom of God that was hid in mystery; which wisdom these Scribes spake, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but, with great plainness and simplicity, took the words of the Holy Ghost in the Old Testament, from a translation then in common use, and applied them to the things of the kingdom of heaven in the New Testament, according to the prime extent of these words, which was *revealed to them by the Holy Ghost* that indited them. The Lord spake by figures concerning the kingdom of heaven, and explained these to his Scribes; and the New-Testament revelation, which he gave them to bring forth to the world, is the plain declaration of the same things that had been foreshewed of old in the dark prophecies and figures of the Old Testament: wherefore he says, *Every Scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.* Whosoever is skilled in this wisdom that is taught in the New Testament, so as to be able to teach it to others, is now the Christian Scribe; and what a difference is there betwixt this and the knowledge of your Scribe? which is *the wisdom of words, the wisdom of this world, the wisdom of the Jewish Scribe, and of the disputer of this world, and mans wisdom, which is foolishness with God, and was manifested by him to be foolishness,*

before he brought forth his wisdom that was hid in mystery to the view of the world, in that preaching which was a stumbling-block to the Jewish Scribe, and foolishness to the Grecian disputers and orators: but unto all whom *he called, the wisdom of God, and the power of God.* whatever difference the scriptures make betwixt these two kinds of wisdom, you still affirm, *the wisdom of the Jewish Scribe, and the wisdom of the disputer of this world,* is a good handmaid to scripture-knowledge, and serves to promote the welfare of your church. Your reason is as wide as the explication of your text. For, say you, an ignorant ministry is a reproach to any church. If you be punning on the word *ignorant*, and punning be reasoning, you have hit it; but if you indeed say, that ignorance of the human arts and sciences, before mentioned, is a reproach to any church, this will need another reason to confirm it. I hope you do not mean, *that the man Christ Jesus, (suffer the expression, because it is scripture) the head of his body the church,* (without which, he could not be its head) is a reproach to that church, because he never was taught, nor did teach in his church, these arts and sciences taught in your schools, wherewith you would have your expectants to be trained for scripture-knowledge. Neither can I persuade myself, that you think the fishers of Galilee, who were not skilled in these sciences, were a reproach to the church that is built on their doctrine, or Paul, a Jewish Scribe, but a babble<sup>r</sup> at Athens, where Jesus sent him, when he did not allow him to stay and preach in Jerusalem, the place wher<sup>e</sup> his learning would have served him best, and who *came not with excellency of speech, or of man's wisdom, declaring the testimony of God;* yea, whatever force was in his inspired writings, some that were Christians and teachers in his day, reckoned *his bodily presence weak, and his speech contemptible.* By your skill in ecclesiastic history, you can tell us, if the ministers that the apostles left behind them in the churches, and who lived in the age next to them, were

were generally men skilled in the arts and sciences of which you give us a catalogue ; and if they were not for the most part knowing in those sciences, I have reason to think you will not call them a reproach to the church. Neither can I believe that you think it a reproach to the Christian Lawgiver, that, in condescending on the particular qualifications of that ministry, which he instituted to continue to the end of the world, he does not so much as mention the knowledge of these arts and sciences, the ignorance of which, you say, is a reproach to any church. And, therefore, I must reckon you mean churches have been reproached with this ignorance of their ministers. This is true in fact : the *disputers of the world* laughed at the preaching of the gospel, till there came up a philosophical ministry : but then they departed from the *simplicity that is in Christ, and corrupted the gospel*, and so they gained that esteem in the world which they could not have *till the glory departed* from them. If it be your mind, that your expectants should avoid the old reproach, and seek that esteem which has come in place of it, by qualifying themselves for the ministry with these sciences ; it is my mind, on the other hand, that these illiterate ministers should be content it be perceived *they are unlearned and ignorant men*, and to be called babblers, that God's name may be *excellent, in ordaining strength out of the mouth of babes*, while *he confounds the wisdom of the wise*, and, *by the foolishness of preaching, saves them that believe*.

After all that you have said of the necessity of these sciences, are you well skilled in them yourself? And if you be, is it not a great neglect in you, that the souls of your people are not entertained with that knowledge? I only wonder, that when you commend so many arts, wherein you have not instructed your people, and wherein few have perceived you to be very knowing, you have not mentioned the politics, or rather that which by itself possesses the

name *art*? I plead for a room to this in your catalogue of sciences; because it is, at least, as necessary to a governor of your church as any of them: for at no time was it governed without it; yea, you know how useful it is to you in the conduct of your flock in Dundee. All your collections from your orthodox books, in the disputes you have had with Episcopalians and Independents, and your collections from practical writers and the sermons of your brethren, will not manifest you to be so far above the illiterate in the knowledge of human arts and sciences, as you are in *art*. The very rise of that sect of which you now complain, was owing to your *art*, as one mean in the hand of holy Providence, and after an application of all your *art* in the rise of that sect, your silence and forbearance of open opposition to it, was a piece of *art*, that, for ought I know, you learned from Julian: for no man will believe it was intended for the prosperity of that sect, any more than his forbearance to the sect that differed from his established church, was intended for the prosperity of that sect. And now that you have broke silence again, there is certainly *art* in that also. There is more art than reasoning in what you say against the illiterate ministers; and I fear it is not so much your meaning, that the people's souls should be entertained with the sciences of which you speak, as that they should be fed with the fancy that you have them, and so are only capable to teach them scripture-knowledge; and that, being ignorant of those mighty sciences, they may not dare to differ from your glosses on the scripture, nor hearken to illiterate men, who, for want of the sciences, cannot explain the scriptures. These illiterate ministers, if letters could do their business, have far more need of them than you, who are already in the esteem of the multitude, far wiser than you really are, and who, according to your own principles, can never have much use for philosophy and criticism in confuting heretics: for you know  
you

you have no more to do, but to sit down in a presbytery or synod, and vote against heresy, and then call on the magistrate to extirpate it, or root out the heretics; whereas, the illiterate have nothing but the word of God, and if they cannot manage that, as it is *mighty through God*, and not through the sciences, they can do nothing. Yet if they prevail in the least against error, God will have more honour than in those that need less dependence on him, and use means to keep themselves off from that dependence; and if the fruits of their ministry in Angus, and the works of their disciples be compared with yours, it may possibly appear, that the word of God alone is *the power of God to salvation*, and that there is no reason *to be ashamed of it*, without your sciences.

You tell us, that, for acquiring these arts and sciences, there ought to be schools of learning, as there were schools of the Prophets of old. But were these arts and sciences taught in the schools of the Prophets of old? And do you imagine that your expectants, and young preachers are the successors of the young prophets, and you, or the teachers of the sciences; the successors of the old ones? And if pastors and teachers be to be trained up in schools, as were the prophets, what schools do you read of for them in the New Testament, but the churches of the saints? The pure *word of God sounded out* at first from the churches; but the first heresies came in from the schools of the Jewish Scribes, and from the schools of the Heathen philosophers; and the first Christian school at Alexandria produced Arianism. When the ministry of the gospel came to be attended with worldly honour and gain, all that sought to be employed in it for the sake of these, were not fitted by Jesus Christ to *be pastors and teachers*, and his gift alone, though sufficient for its end, was not sufficient to bear them out in the figure they behoved to make in the world, as the successors of the Heathen priests: and therefore, they behoved to have such qualifica-  
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tions as could be attained the same way that men attain qualifications for other worldly employments. Thus men came to be ministers of the gospel, as they came to be lawyers and physicians. The Heathens at first ridiculed Christianity; but as it grew upon them, in spite of all the methods that use to be taken with such as are not to be reasoned with, they began to exercise their skill in disputing against it. This proved a temptation to such Christians as had letters, to lay aside the old *weapons*, that were mighty *through God for casting down imaginations, and every high thought exalting itself against the knowledge of Christ*, and contend with *carnal weapons*, or oppose the *wisdom of words*, and defend the gospel against it, by *the wisdom of words*. But instead of maintaining the cause of the gospel this way, they in effect gave it up, and corrupted the doctrine of Christ, by an endeavour to reconcile it as much as might be to the *wisdom of the disputer of this world*. Thus the gospel became a science, instead of a *word of faith*, and the old difference betwixt these two, stated by the Apostle, 1 Cor. i. and ii. was in a great measure done away. And thus, *as Satan beguiled Eve through his subtilty, their minds were corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*. This went on, and continues to this day, under all the various shapes of the profession of Christianity, where-ever expectants, as you call them, instead of *holding fast the faithful word in teaching, that they may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers*, are professors of oppositions of science falsely so called, or of polemic divinity.

When you have stated the opinion and practice of the sect lately risen among us, you make a supposition, that the devil should stir up Arians, Socinians, and Deists, to attack our holy religion. This supposition may be allowed; for it is matter of fact, books written by men of letters against the faith of the Son of God, and against the truth of Christianity, are in the hands of your people, and taking with them.

Infidelity



Infidelity is growing and spreading apace; and the course of the world that has been in the channel of superstition, under the Christian name, to the great dishonour of that name, (from the days of Constantine, but especially from the time the clergy came up as the *eighth head* of the Roman empire, and *the ten kings gave their power to the beast to make one opinion*) is now turning into the channel of Infidelity, to the great grief of the clergy of all sorts; because it shakes their throne, and fills their kingdom with darkness. When you have laid down your supposition, you propose your argument in a question, *What could such men do to defend it?* And they will perhaps enquire again, seeing your temporal interest and your authority in the world lies at the stake, *What are you doing to defend it?* Men of letters, both in the church of England, and your church, have been writing defences; but what have any of your sect in this church offered that is worth the reading? You can in your manner find fault with the writers for Christianity, and charge them with betraying the cause, while you cannot say it is through their want of letters. You contend for the evidence that the testimony of God in the gospel carries in itself, and is beheld by them whose understandings he opens to understand the scriptures, and behold that evidence in them, and you do well. But is that evidence to be seen only in the original Hebrew and Greek text? Or, could they at Rome perceive it, where, I suppose, Paul spoke it in Latin to the Romans, as they of Athens did, to whom, I suppose, he spoke Greek? And could the Greeks perceive any evidence in his references to the Old Testament, which he cited to them in Greek, as did these to whom he spoke in the Hebrew tongue? Next tell us, is this evidence, that the word of God in the scriptures carries in itself, to be perceived only by the *Scribes and disputers of this world*, the critics, philosophers, astronomers, mathematicians, polemic divines, geographers, histori-  
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ans, &c.? Or, also by the *babes*, the *foolish*, *base things* of this world? And is it to be communicated to others by *the wisdom of words*, or in that plain simple manner wherein it is declared in the scriptures? Then let us understand what advantage you have here with your letters beyond the illiterate? We are still at a loss to know what you can do to defend the Christian doctrine by your letters against the adversaries. What adversary have you baffled? Or, whom have you converted by the power of your learning, or otherwise, from Socinianism, Arianism, or Deism? You have had Infidels to deal with in Dundee; but what did you, beyond raising an use of lamentation in the pulpit, and telling them in private, that they should be hanged? An illiterate man would have taken another course; he would have plainly told them the evidence that he himself saw in the gospel, and how the atheism and infidelity of his own heart was quelled by the word of God; and if he prevailed not, he would pray for them, and shew them the truth of Christianity in his life, and even in deeds of good will to them; while, at the same time, he would suffer no member of the Christian society, wherein he is concerned, to lead a life of contradiction to any part of the gospel, but *take heed to himself, and the whole flock*, to have *a conversation becoming the gospel*. This is the sect lately risen, against which you seem so much displeas'd; but why should it displease you, that, while there are so many of you trained up in letters, and well hired to defend your gospel, a set of people should engage in this way of the defence of Christianity against their worldly interest? Or, what kind of men are ye, that neither defend Christianity yourselves, nor suffer the defence that either the literate or illiterate are offering to it?

Next, you enquire how they would do with Jesuits? to which they will readily answer, even the same they do with you, while you subvert the gospel

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*of the kingdom of heaven*, in many instances, and mislead the people. Your little stories and your arguings in the mouths of your agents, come to their hand. They see through your arts and disguises, they discover the fallacies of your arguings by the word of God, they maintain the truth of that word, and set some of your misled people right; so would they do with Jesuits.

You put their answer to your questions in the shape of an objection. O, say they, we have the word to oppose them; which is not ill said. But what is your answer to this objection?

Had there not, say you, been men of learning before you to have translated it, you even would not had that. Well, they have it; and I hope you do not grudge them this, as your fathers of the Roman church did, when the Lord, in his marvellous providence, brought the scriptures to light in the languages of the nations. The illiterate adore the wisdom, goodness, and power of God in this, as they do in the first publication of the gospel by the gift of tongues, before it was written, and likewise in the writing of it. And from this saying of yours, they have reason to think, that if you had been a clergyman, when it began to be translated into the modern languages, you had at least refused to use your learning that way, for fear of the consequence and the danger that might come to the church thereby. The sect of which you complain, do not, as you here insinuate, decry the knowledge of the languages that is necessary for translating the Bible, as they do not decry the art of printing, without which, you men of letters would have laboured under a vast disadvantage; but as they will not say that no man but a printer can be a minister, neither dare they affirm, that none but a translator is fit for that office. They suppose a man may be capable to translate the Bible, and yet not qualified for the ministry, as the word of God directs, as another may be qualified for that office ac-

according to the scriptures, and yet know the word of God only in his own native language. The reading of the scriptures was much attended to in the first churches, and they could not all hear or know them, without being read to them; so they had readers who were not ministers, fitter for that than for the ministry; yea, and perhaps fitter for reading than the ministers themselves: for, no doubt, you can inform us by your skill in history, if there were not ministers in the first churches that could neither read nor write. But do you in earnest affirm, that none are fit for the ministry but such as are capable to translate the Bible? And if you do, are you persuaded that yourself is a minister, or many more with you, who content themselves with as much knowledge of the Hebrew, for ordinary, as carries them through their trials? I remember of a letter that came to your presbytery from one for whose ministry you had not a great regard, but he was a noble Hebrean. He insulted the reverend presbytery, by writing to them the words of a language which they were supposed to know, and he understood they knew not, and that was the Hebrew. This was a reflection upon them full as severe as any you have made on the men that are willing it be perceived they are unlearned and ignorant men. Further, you know how many of you are rusted as to the little knowledge you had of the Greek Testament when you came off the irons. And are your consciences so far seared, as not to give you the least uneasiness, when you make your people believe, that others cannot be ministers for the want of that knowledge of the sacred languages which you yourselves least of all study?

Then you enquire, what they would answer a Jesuit, when he says the passage is not justly translated? For it seems, though they have unhappily got that weapon, the word of God, in their hands, you still hope they have not skill to use it; and your hope is  
founded

founded in what you propose by way of question to them. But how would you, though well skilled in the languages, defend your people against that Jesuit, that have not letters, and are not capable to judge of what is said of the justness of the translation, by the knowledge of the language? What could you answer him, to the satisfaction of your people's consciences, that an illiterate man could not answer? And seeing you have taken up the Jesuitical argument, for the honour of the church and the clergy, against these illiterate men, and their English Bible, could you blame any of your people that should go off to the Roman church, because they know not if the translation be just; and when the question came, whether they should believe you or the learned Jesuit, a clergyman of a more ancient church, in the knowledge of letters, with a pretence of infallibility, they chused to believe the Jesuit? You know the strongest thing you have to say in this case against the Jesuit, is what the illiterate may say as well as you. Or, are you indeed for the people's believing in your church, instead of their English Bible? Or, perhaps you'll come next to a question, if a man can be saved without skill in the sacred languages, yea, without the original manuscripts? And clergymen have played the like of this, to keep souls in dependence on their authority.

But if these illiterate leaders be so ignorant of the word of God, their only weapon, and unable to use it, why do not you men of letters, by your ability to handle the word against them, reduce the people that are misled by them to your obedience? And if you be not able to do that, why do you proclaim your own shame, by crying your church is in danger from men that want letters?

Your description of the New-Testament minister, comes not well in immediately after your discourse of the necessity of the arts and sciences to the ministry of the gospel: for it will agree full as well to

the illiterate, as to men of letters. It is true, your description is deficient, as to a main part of the character of such a minister, which cannot be declared, without such an understanding of the difference betwixt the Old Testament and the New, as you might learn from the illiterate men, the preachers of the kingdom of heaven. You speak of a New-Testament minister his making Christ all, and self nothing; and yet you train up your young Christians, by the questions you put to them, in the way of self. For an illiterate man would easily see him that could readily answer them as they are proposed, to be a self-righteous Pharisee, and leaning, through self-conceit, on the good dispositions expressed in your questions, instead of the good pleasure of God's goodness, and setting up to be a Christian, in the confidence of a good disposition toward it that he finds in his heart. You propose a great many things to your catechumens, who may be ignorant of the fundamentals of Christianity, which are but supposed in your questions, and yet answer these questions; which he may also do without having the word of God for the only rule of his Christianity. And yet these questions contain a covenant, which you say he must make with God. And who are you that would give us another covenant, and another ministry, than that we have in the scriptures of the New Testament?

It is not my province to point out the inconsistencies of your sermon, in the things you offer against your brethren. That belongs to them, if they think it worth their while to take any notice of you. But if no other regard you, I hope you will accept of this, as a piece of service done to you, and the truth which you oppose, by,

S I R,

Your wellwisher,

and humble servant,

JOHN GLAS.

EDINBURGH,

Jan. 8. 1734.

POST.

## P O S T S C R I P T.

TAKE the following copy of a summons from the Session of one of your brethren, as an evidence of the success of your preaching to them against Illiterate Ministers. You need not question if it be the effect of your warning, when you consider how much ear he gave to your first warning, and how active he was upon it in the rise of that sect, which, to your great grief, is lately risen among you. And you see him as sensible of his own call and mission, and of the necessity of human arts and sciences in the mission to the office of the ministry, as you can desire, and as far from joining issue with Julian as you could wish.

*Ketins; the sixteenth day of December, One thousand seven hundred and thirty-three years.*

THE said day, the Kirk-session considering, That, by the wholesome constitutions of this national church, and by the word of God itself, no man ought to intrude into the sacred office of the ministry, without being called and sent of God; nor ought they to be received into Christian houses, nor bid God speed: Yet it is of verity, that you Alexander Morice weaver in the Gask, in this parish, upon the 30th day of November, have invited, welcomed to your house, and bidden God speed to

Don and Cant, pretended preachers, and encouraged them to make a shew of preaching, upon one or other of the days of this present month, in the barn of Patrick Ritchie in Paty; and this parish, as common fame goes; for which, if found true, you ought to be censured according to the demerit of your scandal.  
Extracted by,

ROB. CHRISTIE, Sess. Clk.

**I** James Watson officer, by warrant from the above Kirk-session, summon you Alexander Morice, to compear before the Kirk-session Sabbath next, the 30th instant, to answer to the points of the above libel, with certification. This I give you December 21. 1733.

J: W:

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A SUPPLEMENT to Mr EBENEZER  
ERSKINE'S Synodical Sermon,

[First published in the year 1732.]

AFTER many loud complaints of the evils and corruptions of the day we live in, have been made to no purpose; because that which lay at the bottom of them was not found out, and before that, no effectual remedy could be proposed; Mr Erskine has at length made a discovery in his Synodical Sermon, that deserves some consideration from them that are not satisfied in a zealous indolence, always complaining and doing nothing; but want to be directed into the course they ought to take for reforming these evils and corruptions. His words are: *Syn. Serm.* p. 26. "I am persuaded, that carnal notions of the kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world, lie at the bottom of many of the evils and corruptions of the day we live in." This is but a hint; and it were to be wished, that he himself had taken time to lay open the grounds of his persuasion, even though he had thereby prevented himself as to some things that follow in the sermon. But seeing it is not probable, that he will do this so quickly as the evils and corruptions call for a remedy, it should not offend him, that his thought is pursued by another that is of the same persuasion with him in this matter. And while this is done, it is necessary, that the scope of his sermon should be attended to as far as is consistent with the proposition that is proposed to be illustrated.

It comes in upon the reasons he gives, why the Jewish builders rejected Christ, p. 25. 26. where he says, 1. "This fatal error of theirs proceeded from their ignorance of Christ in the excellency of his person, and of the glorious mystery of redemption and salvation through him, Acts iii. 17. 1 Cor. ii. 7. 8. They were men of no despicable parts, capable enough

to toss an argument ; they thought themselves the only seers in Israel in their day ; *Are we blind also ?* Yet Christ declares them blind like moles in things relating to his kingdom. The least of Christ's babes, whom they reckoned among the accursed mob, had more of the saving knowledge of God, and of the things of God, than they ; and the blind leading the blind, both stumbled on the-stumbling stone, and fell into the ditch together. 2. Mistaken notions of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom was another cause of their rejecting this precious stone. They had formed a notion to themselves, without any real ground from scripture-prophecy, that the Messiah was to appear in the form of an earthly monarch, and that he was to lift up the head of the Jewish nation, and make the Romans, and all the nations of the world their vassals and tributaries ; but finding themselves mistaken, they disown and crucify him as an impostor ; which, by the by, serves to discover what a dangerous thing it is not to have right conceptions of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom." Having thus far introduced himself to the subject by the Jewish builders, and declared the danger of wrong conceptions of the nature of Christ's kingdom, he solemnly applies what he had been saying of the Jewish builders to this day, in the remarkable words before noted. And by the same rule it is applicable to any day wherein Christianity is corrupted : for it is of the corruptions of Christianity that he is speaking. The corruption of Christianity has succeeded in the room of the corruption of the Jewish church, which was chiefly owing to the builders. And from thence the rejection of Christ, in his ministers and people, in his truths and the profession of his name, as the Prophet, Priest, and King of his church, has proceeded, even as the rejection of Christ himself flowed from the corruption of religion among the Jews : And both had their rise from a mistaken notion of Christ's kingdom as set forth in the prophecies. Thus far we have Mr Erskine. But 'tis pity he did not

not go farther than merely to point out the way. However, keeping his direction in view, and minding the warning he has given of danger in mistaking the nature of Christ's kingdom: Let us go on to consider, *first*, How the Jewish builders that dealt so much in the Old-Testament prophecies, and explained them to the people, came to form such a notion of the Messiah's kingdom: and, *next*, By a suitable application of this, to some of the corruptions of the day we live in, what he says of the cause of the evils and corruptions of the day, may appear with some evidence to them that want to know the truth in this matter.

As to the *first*, Mr Erskine says, It was without any real ground from scripture-prophecy, that they formed that carnal notion of the Messiah's kingdom to themselves; and when he says, there was no real ground, he does not deny, but rather insinuate, that there was some appearance of a ground for their notion of the Messiah's kingdom in the prophecies. And so there was; so it behoved to be. The prophecies of the Messiah, and his kingdom behoved to be involved in figures; otherwise they could not have been fulfilled by men professing to believe them, as they were fulfilled by the Jews. Even as the New-Testament prophecy concerning Antichrist could never have been fulfilled by men professing to believe the New Testament, if it had been spoken plainly, and without any proverb. God set up the kingdom of David in the prophecies, as a figure of the kingdom of Christ, and spake of it accordingly. The kingdom of heaven is a mystery, the hidden sense of a figure; and it has many such mysteries, which the Jewish builders were not made to know. They did not know the wisdom of God in a mystery; and so they took up with the figure, and neglected the hidden sense. Yea, it was not so easy for them to perceive it, as it is for them that have the New-Testament revelation, making these things very clear that were dark unto the prophets themselves: and, therefore, they are yet more inex-

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cusable than the Jewish builders, who have the New-Testament revelation complete, and profess to believe it, and yet entertain carnal notions of the kingdom of Christ. Not only the Jewish builders, but our Lord's disciples, in the days of his flesh, while he was speaking parables, and before he ascended to the throne of his kingdom, and poured down the Holy Ghost, to make the New-Testament revelation full and clear, understood the prophecies of a worldly kingdom. But after the New-Testament revelation, the only infallible explication of the Old, is completed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, it is more criminal in them that profess to believe it; to imagine still, that, according to scripture-prophecy, Christ's kingdom must be some way of this world. And Mr Erskine believes there are some such imaginations in the minds of Christians at this day, when he is persuaded, that carnal notions of the kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world, lie at the bottom of the corruptions of the day. The Jewish builders, according to the view they had of the prophecies, which yet had not a real ground in them, imagined, that the Messiah was to sit on David's earthly throne, which the New Testament makes the figure of the heavenly; but Christians, so called, set the kings of Europe on that throne, even as the Christian builders in the days of Constantine set him on that throne: and in this the Jewish builders had plainly the better of Christians, according to the prophecies; for they gave David's throne to the Messiah that they were looking for. The expectation that some have of a temporal reign of the Jews in their old land, when once they are converted in a national way, and that in their land will be the visible seat of Christ's kingdom over all the world, before his second coming, is very like the notion that the Jewish builders had of the Old-Testament prophecies; and they that think they have a real ground in the prophecies for such expectations, need not be surpris'd at the great blunder that

that the Jewish builders committed in explaining the prophecies. If we consider the application that some make of the prophecies touching Christ's kingdom to Scotland, we cannot be surpris'd at the application that the Jewish builders made of them to the land of the Jews: for, it is manifest, that, by the style of the prophets, the Jewish application had some way the advantage. And if there was enough said in the prophecies to confute the Jewish notion of them, and to render them inexcusable in rejecting the kingdom of Christ in the appearance it made to them, much more are they without excuse, by these prophecies, who have, and own the New Testament that explains them.

This sense of the prophecies was the more agreeable to them, that it flattered their pride, and did not remarkably cross any of their worldly lusts; but rather made way for the hopes of getting them fulfilled. This gave it a vast advantage in their carnal minds, and in the minds of the people, over the sense of the prophecies that our Lord and his apostles contended for. This made them overlook every thing in the prophecies that seem'd to cross this carnal sense of them, or reconcile it the best way they could with this sense. Yea, with what difficulty were the disciples at first perswaded to give up with this carnal sense of scripture-prophecy, and embrace the spiritual one? It required that mortification to the world and heavenliness of mind, that was wrought in them by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, to reconcile them to the true interpretation of the prophets.

But the sense of the scripture-prophecy that did not bear so hard on mens lusts as our Lord's interpretation of them did, was not maintained by the Jewish builders without a zeal of God and his worship and service. They shewed the greatest zeal for the law of Moses, and for the glory of God, as the author of the Old-Testament revelation, in contending for their sense of the prophecies against Christ,

and in rejecting him and his spiritual heavenly kingdom. They did not imagine, that, in the kingdom of their Messiah, wickedness and profanity was to take place ; very far from it : They expected he would reform the corruptions that were complained of among them ; and that, in exalting their nation, he would revive and confirm the covenant made with their nation on Sinai, in all the articles of it, and establish the law of Moses over all nations who were to be blessed in the observation of that law, and in coming within the bond of that covenant, at the same time that they came in subjection to the Jewish nation. And in this they had by far the advantage of any of them that now profess the greatest zeal for national covenants, or any national form of a church, that can pretend to no more of an interest in divine institution, but as they are a copying after that national covenant and church which the Jewish builders opposed to the kingdom of Christ, that was the end of that covenant and church ; and can pretend to no other divine institution, but such a sense of the prophecies of the Old Testament, as that whereby the Jewish builders rejected Christ and his kingdom.

Though this seems plainly inconsistent with some part of Mr Erskine's sermon, yet it agrees not ill with a private letter of his, some time ago published, and is perfectly consistent with the sense and true scope of the passage in the sermon that was proposed in the beginning to be illustrated. And it has likewise some countenance from another part of the sermon, where he says, p. 36. inference 6. "See from what is said, what it is makes a flourishing church. It is not her external peace and plenty, or prosperity, not her connection in politics with kings or parliaments, patrons, heritors, or any other set of men: but her connection with the chief corner-stone. This, and this only, is what beautifies the whole building, and makes her increase with the increase of God." It will not be very easy to declare how far



far a national church and covenant, and shutting the door unto places of civil or military trust on such as are not well affected to that church and covenant, can take place without some connection in politics with kings and parliaments, or with the legislative civil power. And seeing this connection at least adds nothing to the beauty of the building, there can be no real loss in dropping it, that we may give ourselves wholly to the maintenance of the connection with the chief corner-stone, which alone beautifies the building, and makes the church increase with the increase of God. The natural tendency of a national covenant, and a national church, depending on that connection with kings, parliaments, and armies, is external peace, by the destruction of sects, plenty or riches to the clergy of that church, and worldly prosperity; which, Mr Erskine says, is far from being that which makes a flourishing church. And he reckons that the increase of the church that comes that way, is not the increase of God; that only is with him the increase of God, that comes by holding the head, which was the kind of increase before any king or kingdom of this world owned Christianity.

Here is a question, If there be any real ground in scripture-prophecy for this sense of the words of the prophets, that the nations of this world are to be churches, and in covenant with God as Israel was? And the Apostle James seems to determine it, in that speech he made, Acts xv. in the church in Jerusalem, to which the other apostles and the elders of that church, with that whole church, agreed; he says, *Simcon hath declared how God at the first did visit the nations to take out of them a people for his name, and to this agree the words of the prophets.* If we consider these words, with the words that follow, we cannot be at a loss to understand the Holy Ghost's sense of his own words in the scripture-prophecy, when he speaks of the nations being brought into the church, and called by God's name, or having his name called

led on them; and among all the private interpretations and different sentiments of men about what it is that the words of the prophets agree to about the nations, this is the mind of the Holy Ghost, the inspirer of the prophets. We may also see from that context, that the kingdom of Christ, as it stood when James made that speech, was the antitype of the kingdom of David: and that the subjects of that kingdom were but a remnant of the Jewish nation, and a remnant of every other nation where he had any subjects. This is Christ's kingdom, his church, of which the prophets spake; and for this sense of the prophets, the apostles contended against such as would not admit the nations upon whom God's name was called into the church, without the Jewish national covenant.

Another reason of the mistake of the Jewish builders about the Messiah's kingdom, spoken of in the prophets was, that they took not the scripture by itself to compare it with Christ's doctrine, but according to the tradition of their fathers. And the tradition of the fathers about the Messiah's kingdom being more agreeable to their worldly lusts, wherewith their zeal, for their religion was not inconsistent, than Christ's doctrine was; this, with the high esteem they had of these fathers, laid them under such a bias against Christ's kingdom, which is not of this world, as nothing but the power of God's grace could conquer. The gratifying of their pride and other lusts, in a connection with zeal for their religion, and the authority of their worthy ancestors, whose greatness and goodness, and capacity to understand the prophecies, it was not lawful to call in question, made up a three-fold cord, not easily to be broken.

And thus were Jewish builders led into that fatal carnal notion of the Messiah's kingdom, wherewith our Lord's appearance and doctrine was so inconsistent, that they could not bear it, but rejected him. They could not endure a Messiah destitute of world-  
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ly honour and wealth, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, a pattern of self-denial in all respects, and calling all his followers to deny themselves, and take up their crosses and follow him; and, instead of a worldly kingdom, telling them of the kingdom of heaven, a kingdom not coming with observation, a kingdom within men, and a kingdom that they could have no part in by virtue of that birth of which they boasted, as they were the seed of Abraham, and which gave them a part in the Old-Testament kingdom, unless they should be born again of the Spirit, born from above; and, instead of these great things they were looking for on earth by the Messiah, promising nothing in this world without persecution, and raising mens expectations from this world to the world to come. This was as alien from the Jewish sense of the prophecies, as the following questions are alien from the prophecies and the New-Testament sense of them, *viz.* Whether these called *malignants* should have places of trust civil or military? Whether a national church should be governed by a subordination of courts, composed of presbyters acting in parity, or also by a subordination of officers? and, Whether the national clergy should manage the king and parliament, &c. or the king and parliament manage them? And there has been as much zeal as the Jews could boast of, spent upon these same questions.

Now, as the carnal notion of Christ's kingdom lay at the bottom of the rejection of our Lord by the Jewish builders, so, thinks Mr Erskine, lies it at the bottom of the rejection of Christ in the day we live in. And, when we come to the application of what has been said of the Jewish builders unto the evils and corruptions of the day we live in, it is needless to go further than that instance that gave occasion to all the zeal expressed in the sermon; which is, the depriving of the Christian people of their right of chusing their own pastors, by the late Act of Assembly, whereby it is put in the hands of heritors,

many

many of them disaffected to the church, and of elders, or representatives of the people, the majority of both together; and this, together with patronages, by law established, which the church calls a grievance, and yet submits.

Mr Erskine is of the mind, that a carnal notion of Christ's kingdom lies at the bottom of this evil and corruption of the day we live in; but how? is indeed the question; which, till he do it to better purpose himself, must be answered by way of inference from the hints he has given. And how should this evil come, but by the church's connection in politics with the powers of the earth, that serves unto the external peace, plenty, and prosperity of the church? This connection began in the days of Constantine, when the man of sin was brought forth. The churches had been pregnant with this conception of iniquity before; but then it was brought forth, and from thence nursed up by the Christian emperors, till the Roman empire was broke into ten kingdoms, and yet remained united in the one clergy when the man of sin being come to age, sat down on his throne, and began to have possession of the superiority over the nations, in the bounds of the Roman empire, that the rulers of the empire had before.

In the days of Constantine, the Christian builders, seeing a door opened for worldly honour, riches, and ease, and forgetting the old doctrine of self-denial, mortification to the world, and of the spiritual heavenly nature of Christ's kingdom, which they could not but think of under the cross, began to insist on the old Jewish sense of the prophecies, and to compliment Constantine, a Christian catechumen, with David's throne, and so to call upon him to act such a part about the church, as the good kings of Judah did about the temple: and the good man accepted the compliment, complied with the exhortation of his teachers, and thought he could not do too much for the church, to make her flourish with  
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external peace, plenty, and prosperity; and that was all that was in his power.

The Christian builders had men of divers occupations professing Christianity before; but they never imagined, that the profession of Christianity made any further change in these occupations, than to make the men more upright and self-denied in them: so that there was no difference betwixt a Heathenish and a Christian physician or mechanic, but in the principles and ends of their actions in these occupations. But they made another kind of distinction betwixt a magistrate, and a Christian magistrate. He had such duties incumbent on him as the kings of Judah had, about the worship of God; as, to cut off heretics and schismatics, to establish Christianity as the religion of the empire, in the room of Heathenism, and to suffer the open exercise of no other religion, and to make provision for the maintenance of the clergy.

When such duties were incumbent on the Christian magistrate, and such services to be done by him, he behoved to have some privileges connected with these services. The nature of the thing required it; yet it was not disagreeable to the nature of the Christian law, that always connects privileges with services: so that if Christ's law required these services of the magistrate, and if the New Testament made him the executor of the laws of Christ, it is very peculiar, if it granted him therewith no privilege. It is certain, at least, it was not so in the case of the kings of Judah.

When the earth helped the woman at the Reformation, or when some of the powers of Europe interposed, no doubt, with political views, to stem the tide of Romish persecution, the preachers and professors of the gospel, being thus eased, began to do the same thing with the kings and princes of the earth, that the ancients did with Constantine, and required of these kings, and states, that there should be a legal provision for the maintenance of the ministers

set in the room of the parish-priests ; and this after the church-lands had been alienated. It was, no doubt, every way reasonable, that, in consequence of this, the legislative power of the state should have something to say, as to these that should enjoy that maintenance which the law provided.

The connection of the church with the powers of the earth, could not but make a different outward state of the church, from that which was before there was any such connection, and produce effects, that all the influence of the-gospel, and the ablest ministers of it, and the connection of the church with the corner-stone, did not produce before. For it made the people of the nations come into a profession of Christianity, not of free choice, nor by the influence of the gospel itself upon their minds, but by the influence of the powers of the earth. And in consequence of this, the most of the people born and bred in a country, so made and called *Christian*, are Christians the same way that people born and bred in a Heathenish or Mahometan country, are Heathens or Mahometans. Thus we have heard of a great church, and lesser churches also come of her, and separated from her, boasting of being the spouse of Christ, and the mother of God's children, while, at the same time, the most of the children appear plainly never to have been begotten by the seed of God's word, but by the influence of the kings of the earth, standing in connection with the church. And this is very like what the New Testament speaks of the mother of harlots, committing fornication with the kings of the earth. And in consequence of this, the children of the true church, that appeared to be begotten by the word of God, have been seen living with that mother of harlots, and with these harlots sprung of her, and separated from her, as children in the same family with that spurious brood ; yea, and so far imposed on, as to call any of these harlots their mother ; and yet this is nothing  
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else but the daughter of Zion dwelling with the daughter of Babylon. And the Lord's call to them now is to come forth, that they share not in her sins, and in consequence of that, of her plagues: for he that scattered Israel, will gather him, and feed him as a shepherd doth his flock, and bring his sheep out of all places, where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark Antichristian day.

The native consequence of this conjunction of the church and the kings of the earth, to bring forth Christians, was such a form of the Christian profession, as is consistent with a visible denial of the power of it, or such as under which men might visibly seek themselves, and follow the course of this world, and fulfil the lusts thereof, and so Christianity become a broad way, wherein all the people of a nation might walk with ease, as Christ foretold false prophets would make it, and not a strait and narrow way, as our Lord and his apostles made it: for the nations, peoples, and multitudes, begotten between the church and the kings of the earth, could not walk in that way: The gate was too strait, and the way too narrow for them. And it can be no wonder, to see even a great multitude stirred up to great zeal for the strictest form of national Christianity, while others are for a more easy form; because the strictest form of it must still be so easy as to admit of a whole nation under it: and men must be fond of a way wherein they may walk with some ease to their lusts, and yet believe they are in the narrow way that leads to eternal life. Though the disappointment will be hard upon them in the issue, yet, in the mean time, it gives their consciences some more ease, and it soothes their pride too.

Another consequence of this connection of the church with the powers of the earth, is that which is called the *coercive power of the magistrate about the church*: for by the same influence behoved the nations to be kept in subjection to the national form of

Christianity, by which they were at first brought under it: and as this was not owing to the influence of the word of the gospel, so neither could the clergy trust to it for the other. And as the sanctions of Christ's laws were not sufficient, and he not sufficient to make them effectual unto all their ends, the magistrate behoved to annex sanctions of his own to the laws of Christ, and so make them effectual upon a people that would not be influenced by the sanctions that Jesus Christ had annexed to his laws: So that the professed subjection of these people to these laws, was not a profession of subjection to Jesus Christ and his authority, as was the professed subjection of men to the gospel at the first; but a profession of subjection to the magistrate instead of Christ. Thus, Mr Erskine, in one of his sermons, cannot be defended from bringing an unrighteous charge against these potentates, that take upon them to grant a toleration to any doctrine, or any worship, inconsistent with the doctrine, worship, and government, that Christ hath instituted; when he ranks them among these that jostle Christ out of his place, as he on whose shoulders the government of the church is laid: for if these potentates he may mean did otherwise, they would then stand in his place, and take his government upon their shoulders, and rule the fear, or worship and service of God, instead of him who is the ruler of the fear of God; yea, and bring in their own fear in the room of the fear of God.

By this power of the kings of the earth about these national churches, they stood adorned with the furniture of the kings of the earth, who also shielded them in the enjoyment of the privileges that they bestowed on them, and defended them against heretics and schismatics: whereas, Jesus Christ is the shield and glory of the true church, that is cloathed with him, and has this world under her feet, and wears the doctrine of his apostles as her crown.

And



And this is also another fruit of the connection of the church with the kings of the earth, that a church so connected with them laboured under difficulties, in keeping up the pretence of her connection with Jesus Christ, in a consistency with her connection with the legislative powers of the earth, whereby she was established. And no wonder if hereupon should ensue two parties in such a church; some, as their interest led, chusing to insist on the pretence of her connection with Jesus Christ, unto the weakening of the other connection, and others insisting on the real connection with the legislative power that established her, unto the weakening of the other pretended connection; and these that are at the helm in church-courts going this last way, while others, that cannot get into the management, strive to stir up the people the other way. And if they that manage the church should, at any time, insist vehemently on the pretence of connection with Jesus Christ, unto the weakening of the other, it could not miss to produce such convulsions in the nation, as the contention of a man and wife for the pre-eminence makes in a family. But, however it be, this connection of the church and the kings of the earth makes it some way necessary for the members of the church, as such, to be politicians as well as Christians, and to be let into the affairs of the state, as well as into the affairs of the kingdom of heaven.

Further, when, by the legislative power of the nation, the maintenance of the ministers of the church is provided for, and their authority over the people of the nation raised and secured, this must, in the nature of the thing, be an allurements to worldly men to seek into the ministry, that seek nothing but their own honour, gain, and ease, and to lay out themselves for it, as men do for any honourable, gainful, and easy worldly employment. And whatever professions or subscriptions be required of them, when connected with such temporal advantages, these will

will be complied with by multitudes that have nothing but these advantages in view.

When there are several candidates for the oversight of a parish, and contending parties, there is a necessity for some standing rule to go by, to avoid utter confusion; and this rule must be consistent with the connection betwixt the church and the legislative power of the nation, whereby alone that set of clergy that possesses parishes has the possession of them.

In this case, it is not possible, that this stated rule can be agreeable to the rule observed by Christians, when there was no connection between the church and the powers of the earth, and no worldly advantages secured unto the ministers of the gospel, or connected with the ministry of the word, by the legislative power of any nation of this world, and no maintenance provided for them by any law but the law of Christ that influences only his willing people. And it is easy for the party that finds not this rule calculated for them, to raise a cry against it, as not agreeable to the practice of the first Christians, recorded in scripture, and therefore disagreeable to the law of Christ. But was there a national church, and a national covenant, and the coercive power of the magistrate about the church, cutting off heretics, and giving no toleration to any but the right sort of Christians; or, was there a national church by law established among the first Christians? And why then do not these men cry out on these things also, as disagreeable to the kingdom of Christ? The answer is, Ay, but that was the infancy of the church, when there was no Christian magistrate, and so no legal establishment. And this answer will serve in the other case also: so that, if our worldly honour, gain, and ease, will not suffer us to be conformed to that infancy of the church in these things, why will we be conformed to that infancy in this thing, that behoved to alter with the other alterations, and as a consequent of them? But even then, when it is said, the  
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church was in infancy, they that contributed to the maintenance of the pastors chused them; church-members chused them: so that the alteration is at least no greater here, than it is in the other things. To tell a man, in those days, that he would be obliged to maintain the teacher, though he had no liberty to chuse his own teacher, would have been then an odd story. And yet we have not heard any outcry or scruple at taking stipend from a disaffected heritor, or raising an augmentation from his estate by law; though the ground of scruple, in this case, be the same as in the other.

As to the liberty of the Christian people, it cannot be said to be more taken away by this Act of Assembly, than it has been by all the acts and methods of doing about settling parishes that have been in Scotland: for the majority of heads of families destroyed the liberty of the minority, and the greater part of all societies is not always the best, the head of a family representing the family, and yet at last differing from them in his choice, destroyed the liberty of the persons in his family capable to chuse, and perhaps better Christians than himself; and lay-elders representing the people may do the same. And if a master of a family may thus represent his servant, a better Christian than himself, what is the difference, as far as Christ's law is concerned, betwixt this and a landlord's representing his tenant? So that unless it be reduced to the old consent of the whole church, (without the lording of any one church-member over another, either as to the receiving or rejecting of a minister) when there was no connection between the church and the kings of the earth, and every Christian professed subjection to Christ in supporting his pastor, it is no great matter which way men be put in parishes, and in possession of the benefice afforded by law, providing it be still in the greatest agreeableness to the legislative power of the nation, and to the connection between that and the national church.

But

But the ancient Christian liberty remains entire, notwithstanding patronage, as it now stands, and the present Act of Assembly: for, while they provide teachers for people that would neither chuse nor maintain them, if left to themselves, there is nothing in these acts, under the present government, that offers violence to a man's conscience, to hinder any that are not satisfied with the public teachers to chuse their own teachers, and contribute to their maintenance, as they chuse their own physicians. But it is far easier for the people to make grievous complaints of the want of liberty to chuse teachers, whose maintenance is otherwise provided for, without any foundation in the scriptures, than to chuse them, and be at the charge of maintaining them according to the scriptures. And it is easier for ministers to be popular, by contending for the liberty of the people, while they enjoy the public maintenance, than to leave their worldly advantages, to serve the Christian people in the ministry, and live as they are capable to enable them, and on the providence of the head over all things to the church. Though yet, if none of these that are bred for the legal maintenance, will deny themselves, and serve them in the ministry of the word, it is still agreeable to Mr Erskine's sermon, that they should chuse from among themselves, men not educated for the stipends that the law provides, but knowing more of God, and of the things of God, than even the builders that reckon them among the accursed mob. And these may be as easily maintained as the first Christian elders, before whom Paul set himself, at the same time, as an example of great labour in the ministry, and of labour with his hands: and if his example be to be followed by elders, or ministers of the word, to the end of the world, in the first, why not in the last? seeing he commends it to elders, and calls them to follow it as well as the other. Thus the people may have their liberty, if they were delivered from that carnal notion of Christ's  
kingdom,

kingdom; that has no more real ground in the Old-Testament prophecies, than the notion of the Jewish builders. This, and no present Act of Parliament or Assembly, holds them in bondage; and till they be delivered from it, complain as they will, they will never have true liberty to serve Christ according to the New Testament, and follow the footsteps of his flock set before them there. If Mr Erskine would be so good to them as tell them this, it might perhaps get a better hearing from them: but it is still better they hear the truth from any body, than not at all.

A LETTER to Mr RANDIE, from his Friend,  
occasioned by a Letter lately published con-  
cerning FREQUENT COMMUNICATING.

[First published in the year 1749.]

S I R,

I Looked on the synodical overture about more frequent communion, as a project set on foot for restraining and confining the influence of your popular preachers; which has been always greatest on the solemn occasions of communicating. And perhaps you, who know my thoughts of these *demagogues*, will be surpris'd when I tell you, that, for that very reason, I did not like the overture; and that I agree so far with the *letter*, scrupling upon that part of the overture that tends most directly to this purpose.

In this view of the thing, I did not wonder to hear a cry rising against that overture from among the people that are influenced by such preachers. I shall rather be surpris'd, if the *letter*, writ for it, obtain a hearing among them. The *letter* labours in vain to silence this cry by the primitive institution; going upon the foolish supposition, that Christ's laws command the people, who must be satisfied about the overture. In vain does it labour to shew, how much it would be for the interest of religion, to have frequent communion, according to the overture, or even according to Christ's institution; while the people, whom it means to persuade, are not more certain of any thing than this, that the success of their gospel, and the prosperity of their true religion and godliness, has been owing to the preachings of their good ministers at sacraments, from the day of the kirk of Shots, (their Pentecost) unto this day.

But you must suspend your surpris'e at my dislike to the overture on this account, till you hear what I  
have

have to say for it. The overture breathes the same spirit toward the popular clergy of the church, that had before shewed itself against Mr Whitefield, after he had served a turn for the church against the Seceders. But as, in all establishments of religion, Heathen, Mahometan, and Christian, their *devotees* are cherished; I am far from thinking the declaimers at solemn occasions of communicating, and their followers, useless in the establishment of our country, or that they ought to be discouraged by synodical authority. I shall look on the Established church, or clergy, as they do on themselves. They are public leaders in religion; and that happens to be a sort of the Christian. In this view, their use is, to make good Christians of their own sort. Again, They are established in all their temporal rights and privileges, on the footing of the Revolution-establishment in the state: and, in this view, their use is, to make good loyal subjects to the present government. Will I find you differing from me, when I say, that if they should be found serving neither of these purposes, they must be a very idle and useless set of men? Now, I do not expect you will deny, that the religion pointed out in the *letter*, and there supposed to be among the people that flock to sacramental occasions, has been chiefly owing to popular preachers, as the instruments; and especially to the influence of their most fervent discourses to the multitudes, gaping upon them at these solemn occasions. Or, if you deny it, the experience of all your devotees will rise up against you, and give you the lie. And next, As to the other use, to speak of our own country here, set aside the Seceders, (classed in the *letter* with your religious people, though reckoned the weakest of them) and set aside the people in the church influenced by popular preachers at sacraments; how many people will you find on whom you could depend as good loyal subjects amongst the commons? And I reckon you will not talk much to me of the influence of the

clergy amongst the gentry. In this view of things, let me say, the tendency of the overture taking place here, is, to render our clergy the most useless set of beings under heaven.

When I heard of this *letter* before it was published, on occasion of its being recommended in a former pamphlet on the subject, which I have not seen, I found two objections rising in my mind against it.

First, I heard of this principle well laid in it, That Christ, the lawgiver of his church, hath appointed the communion of his people in his supper to be once a-week at least; and of this, as the inference from that principle, that a synod of our clergy should appoint the communion of their people in that supper to be four times in the year at least. What is the connection, thought I, betwixt this principle and this conclusion? If Christ has appointed it once a-week at least, the inference is, That all who regard his authority, must do it even so as he says. And if we have not a mind to this, but will do it otherwise, let us not then speak lies in hypocrisy, pretending a zeal for his institution, in doing it otherwise than we say he has instituted. Now, that I have seen the *letter*, my objection remains as it was. For, indeed, nothing can be said to it, but something like this: Though we cannot get fully up to the institution, yet we may come nearer it than we do; and as four times in the year is oftener than once in the year, and so nearer the institution, our regard to that should move us to chuse this rather than the other. But I know of no law in the church of Scotland, to hinder any minister from having the Lord's supper in his parish every first day of the week, if he will. And if this overture become a law, it may seem to limit the matter more than it is now limited by the laws of the church, and breed a necessity that shall prove a hinderance, rather than a step toward the primitive institution.

When



When church-authority was first interposed to oblige people to communicate once a-week according to the institution ; was not this supposing the church-rulers now governing a people, who could not be obliged by Christ's authority, but might be bound by their laws ? And when it appeared they could not, by these, be brought up to the instituted time, did they then right, in changing Christ's law, and in place of that, giving them a commandment to communicate at least thrice in the year, at solemn times, like the Jewish feasts ? And when even that could not be well obeyed, did they well in commanding them to communicate at least once a-year, *viz.* at Easter, about the time that the Jews ate the *passover* ? You will say, They were then *changing the times and laws ; they were taking away the daily, to set up the abomination that maketh desolate.* Be it so : Yet, in these ordinances about the frequency of communicating, they were doing no more, but keeping as near the institution as they were able, when their situation would not allow them to keep fully up to it. There might be some pretence of a regard to Christ's institution in the first of these ordinances ; but none in the following, wherein his law was manifestly changed. And pray, Sir, what is the difference, as to the institution of Christ, so well proved in the *letter*, betwixt these ordinances, and this ordinance proposed to be made for four times in the year, or even Calvin's once a-month ? We say, Christ has made it once a-week at least. He has solemnly ratified from heaven the constant practice of his churches assembling to his supper every first day of the week, without making one sabbath more solemn thereby than another. And shall we gravely infer from this, that we ought to hear Calvin, or any church after him, making it once a-year, once a-quarter, or once a-month, and so distinguishing that monthly, quarterly, or yearly sabbath from all the rest ? The *letter*, however strong for the institution, is yet obliged to yield to the force of this commonly

monly received maxim, that gives not a little ease to the consciences of many in reading the New Testament, *viz.* That the primitive institution was for the primitive time, the infancy of the church; and not calculated for this our time, to which it should be accommodated as tends best to edification. And so, after all the fine things said about the institution, it leaves us to regard it, as we do an old almanack.

My other objection against the design of the *letter* was this. The primitive constant communion was in churches where Christ's discipline was exercised and submitted to by the communicants; and to set about reviving the first of these without the other, which is as its fence and guard against the profanation of it, tends manifestly to profanity, and must necessarily land there; especially when the solemnity, and its influence, supplying in some sort the place of the sense, is also taken away. As I could not expect to see the primitive discipline, without a primitive church, like those to which the Lord's supper was originally delivered; I could hope for nothing from more frequent communion in another situation, but more profanation of that most holy ordinance.

The *letter* is very far from satisfying me on this head; even where it seems to propose an answer to this same objection. It owns, indeed, that the discipline commanded by Christ, is not, yea, cannot be exercised in the present situation; but contends, that this can be no reason for neglecting also his other commandment, requiring us to communicate often; and that we should not neglect to obey this as the first, though we cannot observe the law of discipline; because we break but one commandment, neglecting the discipline; and if we also neglect the eating of the supper often, we are guilty of the habitual neglect of two.

There is something new to me in this doctrine. For, considering the connection, in the primitive institution, betwixt the supper and the discipline, it is the same thing as if it were said, That a man must eat  
the

the Lord's supper, though he neglect to examine himself; or that a man must name the name of Christ, though he be not departing from iniquity; seeing the neglect of the one command cannot justify the neglect of the other. And so the Corinthians might have told the apostle, Though we cannot come together but in divisions, yet we can eat the Lord's supper: for though we are not able, as matters now stand, to attain the commanded unity, yet we may come together to that eating. And yet the apostle tells them, that coming together in that case, *is not to eat the Lord's supper*. As the *letter* says, there appears a real distinction between the duties that arise to Christians from these two commands; so may a real distinction appear between *faith* and *holiness*. But if, upon this distinction, we shall establish a separation of the two; this will justify the separation, that has been now of a long time appearing in the Christian world, between the *saints* and the *faithful*, between the *sanctification of the spirit* and the *belief of the truth*, in the most open contradiction to the *most holy faith*, the *faith which was once delivered to the saints*. Indeed there is no more in the objection but this, That the primitive communicating often, without the primitive discipline, would be the same thing as doing it in the manner wherein the apostle says it cannot be done; the same thing as eating of that bread without self-examination, and as naming the name of Christ without departing from iniquity. And though the neglect of one command be no reason for the neglect of another also; yet, to establish more frequent communion, as the overture proposes, without establishing therewith any reparation of its broken fence of discipline, is, by authority, to separate commands that Christ's authority has joined together; and so to make it lawful to neglect the one, while the authority that tolerates this, permits not the neglect of the other. But if the tendency of joining these two commands together be holiness, the tendency of separating

separating them in this manner must be profanity, as the objection says. For as naming Christ's name without departing from iniquity, is to profane that name; and eating of that bread, and drinking of that cup, without self-examination, is to eat and drink unworthily; and to come together into one place in division, and without the unity of brotherly love, is not to eat the Lord's supper: even so to frequent it, neglecting the discipline, or keep it without purging out the old leaven, is to keep the feast with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, and without the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth: and is not this to profane it? The Jews had these two commands, both binding on them, to eat the paschal lamb, and to put away leaven: and might not the same account be made of these, that the *letter* makes of these two, *Do this in remembrance of me*, and, *Purge out the old leaven*?

The reformers, it is said, were for frequent communion, once a-month at least: but it appears they were far from this profanity; for, at the same time, they held this, as one of the marks of the true church, *discipline uprightly ministered as God's word prescribes*. And surely they could not, by the doctrine of the *letter*, have justified themselves in making the withholding of the cup from the laity, one of the reasons of their separation from the communion of the Roman church. For could they not answer themselves, on this head, by the doctrine of the *letter*? There are two commands here; the first, to eat of that bread; the next, to drink all of that cup. Now, it is indeed a great sin against a plain command of Christ, that we do not all drink of this cup; but, however much we, the faithful remnant, desire to do so, we cannot attain to it as things stand, and must stand in our church, for all that we can do: and this is a great burden to us. Yet this is no reason for our neglecting also the other command, to be observed in the first place; we are not by this loosed from our obligation to obey the Lord's command, to eat that bread: the one is evil,

as a breach of a commandment; the other worse, as the habitual neglect of two. You may perhaps think here of the *entireness* of the ordinance; but then you must also consider, whether the ordinance be entire without the visible communion of saints eating that bread, as one body, and so one bread. If we may eat the bread without this *sensible sign*, may we not also eat it without that other sign of drinking the cup? And here I refer you to the *Confession of your Faith*, Chap. 26. *sect.* 2. Chap. 27. *sect.* 1. Chap. 29. *sect.* 1. and the scriptures there referred to.

But the *letter* insists upon it, That the scripture establishes this separation of the two commands, and countenances what I have been calling profanity; and it brings instances of facts in scripture, which are said to be directly in point. And, for this purpose, the church in Corinth, and the churches in the Revelation, are compared with the church where this quarterly frequency of communion is pleaded for, and which is acknowledged to have received a wound under the fifth rib in the discipline, and to be bleeding there; and this wound is declared to be deadly. I am very attentive to the *letter* here. The similitude of a mortal wound under the fifth rib, and bleeding there, leads me to think of a church that eats the Lord's supper under the notion of a living body, the body of a man. And I cannot deny, that this is scriptural: for the apostle makes much use of it with application to the Corinthian church. And let the Lord's supper be the food of this body; even as the Holy Catholic church, which is invisible, and is also called *one body*, is fed by Christ's flesh and blood, the meat that endures to everlasting life: and supposing a visible church, that represents this, to be a living body, formed for eating the Lord's supper, as its proper food; it is, without doubt, that this food must be continued while the body lives, and is capable of it, though it be wounded. But if care be not taken to stop bleedings, and heal dangerous wounds, food will

will soon be to no purpose. Yet this is what the *letter* proposes for the body, in the case of a mortal wound: let it bleed, as it cannot be hindered; and though the wound be deadly and incurable, yet be sure to give more frequent meals, and let not full food be neglected. Do you really think, Sir, the apostle had ever such a prescription as this in his thoughts about the wounds of that body, the church in Corinth?

But let us seriously and attentively consider that church as a body; and see how it was originally formed for eating that bread, and drinking that cup, appointed for it as its food; and how all the members stood in union, as one living body, for joint partaking in that food which nourished the whole. And do we not see it to be a company of all sorts of sinners at Corinth, called together by the apostolic gospel, and united only by its influence, in the joint profession of the faith of God's testimony, that he is well pleased in Jesus Christ his beloved Son, whom he raised from the dead, of the hope of eternal life from the dead through him, and of love to one another for that truth's sake, which was so confessed by them, that it appeared to be dwelling in them? Being thus as one living body, animated by that same Spirit, without which no man can call Jesus Lord, as they did, professing to believe on the name of the Son of God, and love one another, as he gave them commandment; they had this commandment delivered to them, To come together, as one body, into one place, to eat the Lord's supper. And all the glorious things said of the Lord's supper in the *letter*, boasting in it against the infidel vain talk of the dignity of human nature, and the fitness of things, will apply to it, as observed by such a society, a body thus framed for eating that supper, as they will never apply to it in any other sort of society. But, because this same body was still liable to many evils opposite to its union, tending to its dissolution, and serving to render it unfit for being nourished by this appointed food, the  
discipline

discipline was appointed as a remedy to these evils, which otherwise would destroy it. And, from the epistles to the Corinthian church, we see that body affected with these evils; we see it wounded and bleeding, though not mortally, as long as it was capable of cure by its discipline. But I cannot say, and I fear you will never be able to shew me, that the church where the *letter* proposes more frequent meals, is, or ever was such a body. And if it never was such a body as could, like that in Corinth, be called *the body of Christ*; it was never capable of Christ's discipline exercised there, it could not receive any wound in that discipline, it could never bleed there; and so it was never a body fit for eating the Lord's supper at any time, let be frequently. The *letter* goes upon the false supposition, that the society of which it speaks with respect to the Lord's supper, is the body of Christ, like that in Corinth, or like any of the churches in Asia; while the only things wherein it is represented as resembling them, are those evils which were in the world, as well as in the churches, though the world could not be so affected with them as they were.

Another thing supposed against fact, in this reasoning upon the scripture for communion without discipline, is, That the church in Corinth, and the Asian churches, were become incapable of the discipline, and so of being cured of these evils, either in the way of repentance, or cutting off the impenitent; and, being thus mortally wounded in their discipline, were allowed to go on in eating the Lord's supper. Unless this be supposed, there is no instance in scripture directly in point. But the falsehood of this supposition is manifest from the very passages referred to, both as to the church in Corinth, and those in Asia.

The church of the Corinthians was wounded in its one faith, by heresies; and in the love of every one of them all toward each other for the truth's

fake, by schisms; and in both these, as well as in their one hope, by those lusts of the world, from which they had been once purged, prevailing again in some of the members, again intangled in the pollutions of the world, which they had escaped through the knowledge of Christ. And in this case discipline was neglected: they were not diligently applying themselves to the cure of those wounds, either in the way of repentance, or of putting away the impenitent. When this church came together in this condition, the apostle told them, it was not to eat the Lord's supper. He allowed them not thus to eat that supper: for that is what he said they could not do. They might profane it, they might assemble to their own condemnation; but they could not eat the Lord's supper. Yet he allowed them not to forbear assembling to the Lord's supper; for he did not unchurch them. He would have them still come together to eat. What then must be done? They cannot eat the Lord's supper. They must not forbear it. What would the apostle have? Why, he would have them repent, coming together to eat; he would have them keep the feast, purging out the old leaven. And if this was not to be obtained, if this could not take place; their wound was mortal; the apostle had done with them, and had no more to say to them as a church. He is very far from supposing them incapable to keep the feast, purging out the old leaven: for he speaks to them as capable of it, and that as soon as they come together. And he is as far from supposing, as does the *letter*, that they were so much as once to eat the Lord's supper, and after that to set about purging out the old leaven: for he would not have them keep the feast with old leaven. And when do you think he appointed the discipline to be exercised on a very notorious wicked person among them? Even when they are gathered together. And where is the foundation for the supposition "of a faithful part in this church, capable of being



being reprov'd, because they had not abstained from that command, of eating the Lord's supper, till the other command, about discipline, had been fully obtemperate as to him?" For, whatever the Searcher of the hearts in the churches has to say of faithful and unfaithful in his sight, in the communion of his supper; yet his apostle says nothing like this of the Corinthian church, where he accounts all the members faithful, and would have any one forthwith put away, upon his appearing so as to be accounted otherwise among them. There is no such thing appearing in the apostolic churches, as a faithful remnant wrestling against a prevailing party of faithless men, lying as a burden upon them: far less can we perceive in the communion of any of these churches, one part looking on another as ungodly, and that other part looking on them again as hypocrites.

In the second epistle, it appears, that the church in Corinth was far from being incapable of the discipline, and far from being incurable of the evils complained of in the first. They did not hasten to the supper, delaying to purge out the old leaven. Their diligence in coming together to eat, was not attended with negligence of the called-for repentance, or with putting off the reformation of discipline till afterwards: for the apostle acknowledges they had obeyed his directions with great carefulness and zeal. But, in that second epistle, (chap. xii. 20. 21.) he again fears, now when he is about to come to them, lest he find divisions amongst them, and lest he find many impenitent still, who had sinned before in the way of fleshly lusts. And he had reason to fear this, from the ear he found them now giving to the Judaizers against him. But does he propose, that such impenitents, if they were found, should be tolerated in the communion? See what he says, compared with what he had said about the incestuous person in the former epistle. There he said, *You are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, κατακατα, that he that*  
*hath*

*hath done this deed, might be taken away from among you.* And here he says, *Lest, when I come, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail,* *πενθησω,* *many which have sinned before, and have not repented.* For that he intends putting away from among them by the exercise of discipline, is manifest from the context, chap. xiii. 1. 2. 10. where he tells them, that what he now writes, is to prevent his behaving, when he comes in the way of cutting off, *αποτομως.* Is not this then to say, that if he shall find such as he fears to find when he comes, he will certainly have them cut off? And what were they to be cut off from, if not the communion? Does he then allow the Corinthians to go on in communion with such impenitents, if such should be found among them?

When I observe the churches in Asia, to which the *letter* also refers for instances of facts directly in point, surer than reasonings; I am not able to see any fact to this point at all, either directly or indirectly. It cannot appear to me, that the Lord allows any of these churches to go on in communion without repentance, and reformation from those evils among them that he reproves; because he threatens, if they repent not, to unchurch them. And when he finds fault with any of these churches, for *suffering* the open transgressors he describes, or for *having them there*; I cannot take it otherwise, than that he is displeased at their having them in their communion. And they who are thus blamed, are not those transgressors whom he would not have there. Shall I then think, that he allows them to go on in communion with such transgressors? For what is he blaming them for, if it be not for this very thing? And surely he is not angry with them for the same thing that he allows. The *letter* has these remarkable words: “Yet it is not made a charge against the so much commended faithful, who, though sometimes very few, had to their power withstood, but it seems had not prevailed to cast these gross offenders out, that they  
had

had not abstained from obeying the command in the supper, even when those evil persons were there; though it doubtless had been a great burden to them." Here is a fact made out of suppositions, supported by no manner of evidence, but that *it seems*; and is said to be *doubtless*, without the least foundation in the scripture referred to, and in direct opposition to the true fact. And is this to bring instances in scripture directly in point, instances of facts more sure than the reasonings of men, that are endless? In place of bringing instances against separation in the stated case, the *letter* demands instances of separation, upon causes of complaint and charges against churches from him whose eyes are as a flame of fire; as if men could either exercise discipline, or separate, according to the sight of his eyes who searches the hearts and tries the reins in the churches. And when these causes of complaint and charges stand in the sight of the churches, we have seen before what he says of going on in communion, continuing in them, and bearing with them there.

It will not be easy to find a foundation in the New Testament for a society partaking of the Lord's supper, wherein his rule of discipline, Matth. chap. xviii. and 1 Cor. chap. v. cannot be observed. We shall not see any thing like such a society in that scripture, except we turn to the *nations treading under foot the holy city, and the court which is without the temple*. But as to that society, it is said from heaven, *Come out of her, my people*. Such a society is no more a church, but a *synagogue of Satan*. And you know it is an article of your faith, That some churches of Christ have so far degenerated, as to become synagogues of Satan, *Westminster Confession, chap. 25, sect. 5*. The churches to which the apostles delivered the ordinance of the Lord's supper, could not become such societies till they became incapable of Christ's discipline; and then they were no more churches of Christ, as they were in or near the time  
of

of the apostles. But the argument of the *letter* proves, if it prove any thing, that Christ's people ought to partake of his supper in such societies, and that frequently.

While the Christian churches continued stedfastly in the Lord's supper once a-week at least, the Christian discipline continued with it as its fence. And there was no occasion for separation while that discipline remained, according to the institution, receiving the faithful, forgiving the penitent, and rejecting the unfaithful and impenitent, with the consent of the whole church, unanimously obeying the law of Christ in discipline, as well as in the breaking of that bread. The first thing that served to set aside the primitive frequency of communion, was, the admission of such men into the communion as could not be influenced by Christ's command to eat his supper often: for the keeping of such as members of the churches, or having them there, must have been at the rate of tolerating more seldom communicating. The superstitious fear of separation gave way to the prevalency of this corruption. And without this same dread of separation, (while there was no fear of separating Christ's commands) the churches could not be corrupted, as they were by degrees, till they became quite antichristian, especially in the Lord's supper and the discipline. From this corruption of Christianity there never was, nor ever can be, any step of true reformation, but in the way of obeying that command of the apostle, *From such turn away*. And what is that but separation? Yet they cannot well pretend to be obeying this command of Christ, who are not, as the captives returning from Babylon, *separating themselves from all strangers,—to the law of their God*, and so returning to the primitive institution of the Lord's supper, and the discipline, as they find it written in the scriptures of the apostles, teaching Christians to observe all things whatsoever Christ commanded

commanded them, in all times, to the end of the world.

You see, Sir, I have considered the *letter*, of which you was pleased to send me a copy, especially the 60th and 61st pages of it; where, finding some things said, in my view, repugnant to God's holy word, I have, according to the earnest request in the Latin sentence on the title-page, notified it by writing to you. And as I suppose you not ignorant of the *excuse* for one person, and the *reproof* to another, intended in those pages, I reckon you cannot be surpris'd at my giving myself and you the trouble of this.

I am,

S I R,

Dundee, April 11.

1 7 4 9.

Your old friend, &c.

A Letter on NATIONAL FASTS appointed  
by the CLERGY.

S I R,

*Aug. 18. 1735.*

**T**HE clergy are not insensible of several things at this day, that have a manifest tendency to weaken their authority; nor can they bear them with that patience wherewith they endure the contempt of the authority of Jesus Christ, in his law, that appears daily among their most trusty friends and followers. The lives of these can easily shew you, they are not spending their zeal for more honour to Christ, in a strict obedience to his laws in the New Testament, or in our conformity to him in humility, truth, and love, and in that which he calls pure and undefiled religion. Nor are they indeed contending, that we should give him more honour, in a firm belief of his testimony in the scriptures, and in a self-denied dependence on his merit. But the thing for which they so earnestly contend, is, that we should give him more honour in their leaders, the clergy, his representatives and ambassadors, as they call themselves; though they can neither shew their commission, as did the apostles, nor prove themselves to the conviction of mens consciences, to be his ministers in any shape, by the characters he has expressly given of such in his law.

The kingdom of the clergy is a little darkened in this age of polite Christianity, and they are in no small pain about it. But it would be a far greater distress on them, if none should profess the gospel, but they who see the evidence of it with their own eyes, and are willing to shew subjection to the authority of Jesus in it, as the only Lord of their consciences: for this would destroy their kingdom altogether. It is not the decay of the worship of Jesus Christ that gives pain to the clergy, for that has appeared but very little in the world these many ages; but it is the visible

sible decay of the worship that has been of a long time paid to themselves in the Christian world, that gives them the greatest disquiet.

This is the true cause of our national fasts, that come now to be kept yearly. The government has no reason to be fond of them, and the polite clergy are too complaisant to give the court any uneasiness on this head. But the managers of the two last assemblies are true clergymen, to whom nothing can be more delightful, than the homage paid to them by a whole nation, in keeping a holiday of their making. In the midst of the contempt they groan under, they have a sweet refreshment in this display of their authority and power.

There have been, long before now, complaints among them of the want of national fasts; and they earnestly desired that the General Assembly would manifest their prerogative in the appointing of such a fast, that the nation might have a sense of the intrinsic power of the church. But it was matter of lamentation, and a very great grievance, that the leading men in the assemblies were like betraying the power of the church, in that matter to the court. The late assemblies have come under another management, by ways and means of which you cannot be utterly ignorant, considering the noise that has been in the nation about them; and those who have got to the helm, have revived national fasting; yet they had not courage enough to appoint it in the face of the King's Commissioner; they left it to their commission. Though this be a sort of condescension, in the manner of the appointment, that they could wish they were not obliged to, they have, notwithstanding, the satisfaction to see the whole nation, one way or other, bowing the knee to them on their appointed day; yea, and to behold their brethren, out of whose hands they have wrested the power, and who do not love their fast, nor the grounds of it, yet obliged by their own interest to pay them ho-

mage, in observing it religiously; while they, on the other hand, have an excellent opportunity of rendering them odious to the people.

Do you think, Sir, it is an afflicting sense of the dishonours done to God, and of the universal disobedience to the laws of the gospel in this Christian nation, that is the great moving cause of the appointing or keeping of these fasts? If this were the case, would we not see, that, after the zeal shewed in the fast of the last year, the most zealous, at least, would have altered the course of their lives to the better, in bringing forth more of the fruits meet for repentance required in the gospel, than we could see before? Or would not the clergy, their leaders, have been perceived, by this time, going before them as examples of more self-denial, and mortification, to the honour and power, the wealth, the ease, and pleasure of this world; more charity, more forgiveness to enemies, and patient bearing of wrongs, and more mercy to the poor, than could be observed in them before? Yet I scarce suppose their practice has shewed you that any thing of this ever came into their minds.

When men were roused by any thing extraordinary in the Heathen world, and their fear awakened by threatening providences, they were stirred up to greater fervour and diligence in the worship of their idols; but never thought of reforming their lives. As we Christians interpret their conduct, they offended the true God the more by the sacrifices to their idols, the more he afflicted them with his judgements; and for his goodness bestowed on them they multiplied sacrifices to his rivals.

But our national fasts are not stirred up by any thing extraordinary befalling our part of the Christian world, to awaken religious fear in the multitude. Yet a nation of this world can never miss to afford sins and causes of God's wrath in abundance. While this cannot be denied, the clergy can never be

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at a loss for causes of a fast. There are, indeed, a great many of the people, that are not to be wrought up to any kind of religion; but by what concerns the crop of the year, and the weather, on which it depends: and, therefore, to make them easy under the command of abstinence from their labour, whereof they find more sensible benefit than of the keeping of the holy day, you will seldom miss something of the crop, and the weather, in the appointment of a fast; and then the poor people think they cannot seek a good harvest, and neglect the fast.

Barrenness and unfruitfulness under clear gospel, and excellent means of grace, is another thing that goes of course in the appointments of fasts; but it is not very clear what they mean by it. When you read the gospel, you will be ready to imagine, they are complaining of the want of that fruit required, Luke iii. 9. 10. 11.; and if this were the case, you would see the poor and needy, the widows and fatherless clothed and filled by means of their fasts; at least, the hungry would get the bread they abstained from on their fast-day; but the poor are not made very sensible of this, and you cannot give me many instances of a diligent observation of Isa. lviii. on these days. I would rather take the true barrenness and unfruitfulness that is chiefly intended, to be the little revenue of honour that rises to the clergy from the fine sermons they preach; which I take to be the great mean of grace among them; because they take more of it than of any other mean. They have trained the people to expect more good of hearing one of their sermons, than of hearing the very words of God, and the preachings of the prophets and apostles in the holy scriptures read to them, or in reading them themselves. They will not read the Bible to the people without glossing it by a sermon as far as it is read; and yet I dare say the discourses of our Lord and his apostles are clearer than many of their sermons, and would make a man sooner bring forth  
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the fruits of the gospel, if he had but liberty to hearken to them. Yea, they will not administer the supper, without the mighty noise of a sermon, filling the ear and exciting the passions, perhaps engaging them in party-quarrels, in the very time of partaking. Thus, I think, we need have no doubt of the mean of grace they chiefly intend, nor of what they mean by the gospel, when they lament unfruitfulness under it; and in this case, the want of fruit must be a notable deficiency in the reward the clergy expect from the people, for their labour in their sermons.

Some foolish people about Glasgow happened to say they were more edified by the history of the passion represented in a picture, than by many sermons; but what a work has been made about this! Here was unfruitfulness with a witness, when a fine picture was laid in the balance with fine sermons, of which there have been so many made at Glasgow, by the worthiest of men, who had been highly honoured there. What a terrible off-falling must have been in that place, when the very professors of the worship of the clergy had come the length to prefer a picture, an idolatrous picture, to the sermons! The clergy, in other parts of the Christian world, managed their business by pictures or images, more than by sermons; but here it is otherwise. In the true extensive sense of idolatry, there may be idolaters by sermons as well as by pictures. The clergy have no heart-hatred at idolatry in the general; but they contend here, that men should adore Christ in their sermons, which they must believe to be the very true gospel; and elsewhere, they demand worship to Christ in their pictures. And how would a man be looked on, think you, that should stoutly refuse to worship him in either of them, but at the same time, adore and worship him as exhibited in the New Testament? I fear the clergy of all sorts would reckon him a fruitless branch in their vineyard, and cast him over their hedge.

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But what need I explain to you the phrase *unfruitfulness under the gospel and means of grace*? You can easily perceive they mean themselves and their sermons, when they make the contempt of the gospel, and gospel-ministers, a cause of fasting. And you will not doubt, that it requires something else on their part, to cure us of this evil, than the exertion of their power to make us fast on this account.

They remember the time of the solemn league and covenant, when they sat in full power, and ruled the nation in all respects; and they most earnestly wish it again, pretending that religion was then in a flourishing condition. If they mean the true Christian religion, I cannot believe it, for this reason, because their kingdom was then in its full strength; and this is the reason for which, I am convinced, they so earnestly wish it again, and so much lament the nation's backsliding from that covenant, which was then forced upon it: for the clergy can never be mighty in this world, merely by their own power. However, you see the breach of that covenant, is one never failing cause of their fasts. But they must not, for this, break with the present government, established on the ruins of that league; so they will not so much as name the word *covenants*, but engagements; *solemn engagements* is the word, at which it seems, the state cannot take such umbrage. You will be ready to reckon this a solemn juggle, like that in the solemn league, *according to the example of the best reformed churches*. They lament the breach of their covenants, and they oblige the nation, which is not yet fully sensible of their weakness, to lament it with them; but they dare not give their covenants their proper name. Their zeal gives them courage, where there is no fear. The word *engagements* puts them in mind, that there is an engagement, whereby they stand bound, in the first place, against the Independents, the old enemies of their power. And they have got a new kind of them, not capable, yea, nor inclinable

clinable, to do them such mischief, as did the old warlike Independents; but they love them the worse, that they are not like these old ones: and their zeal for the broken engagements can vent itself with abundance of freedom against them, when they refuse to join them in any shape in their fasts for broken engagements: for they have nothing to fear from them. It is true, they cannot hurt them, for as weak as they are, without the help of the inferior magistrates; nor can they touch them without going beyond the law, and acting contrary to the very nature of the government we live under. But if these magistrates shall yet give the clergy their power to knock down these Independents, their principles lead them to outbrave the clergy's rage and violence, with the Christian meekness and patience; and when they resist them in this manner, with the true courage of the Christian hero, the clergy may come in the issue to be more distressed, than they could be by the warlike courage of the old Independents. When we resist the devil himself, we see his weakness; he is no better than a noisy bully before the spirit and courage of a true Christian. When force and violence is the clergyman's argument, the Christian's answer is patience; and the sufferer gets the victory, and gains his prize.

The famous four brethren ought to be very much considered, in the late turn of the affairs of the national church. The neglect shewed them, especially by the last assembly, was intolerable; and some of them have repented it in such a high degree, that you may wonder how they condescended to keep their fast. But you must think they are not quite desperate, and without hope, that the time may fall, when they may be at the helm in the church; and as the authority and power of the clergy over the nation is not capable of appearing more evidently in any thing, than in this affair of the fasts, they cannot yet think of letting it down.

Now,

Now, Sir, you see a set of men calling themselves Christ's ministers and ambassadors, sitting as lords over a nation of this world, and the whole nation subject to their authority, one way or other, bowing before them on their appointed day. This is a post that, you know, Jesus Christ refused when it was in his offer; but how these his ministers came by it, and upon what condition they hold it, will appear fully at the end of their kingdom, and it draws to an end. In the mean time, if you would sleep in a whole skin, hold your peace, and eat your loaf. But if you will at any rate be free, then you must endure hardships.

I am, &c.

A SERMON Preached in the CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH of DUNDEE, January 9. 1740, the Day appointed by his Majesty for a National Fast.

[First published in the year 1740.]

i TIM. ii. 1. 2. 3. 4.

*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty: for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

THIS passage comes as an inference from what Paul had been, a little before, saying of himself, as a prime instance of the Lord's grace to the greatest of sinners, and a pattern of his long-suffering to them who should thereafter believe on him to life everlasting. As if he said, Let the Lord's mercy and grace to me, the chief of sinners, in consequence of his great long-suffering, encourage you to pray with all prayer and supplication, for all sorts of men, giving thanks for that long-suffering that made way for the manifestation of his mercy and saving grace in me, the pattern of all long-suffering to them who shall believe through that same grace.

And whereas Christians, at that time, were ready to look on kings, and all in eminent place, as set farther out of the reach of the saving truth, and placed at a greater distance from salvation, than any other sorts of men whom they saw converted to the faith;  
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the apostle recommends them, in a particular manner, to the fervent and instant prayers of the Christian church. And he tells them this must be very agreeable to God, their common Saviour, who will have, not only men of every nation, without difference, but also of every rank, the highest as well as the lowest, to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the saving truth, which he hath ordered to be preached to all, without excluding any sort or rank of men. The children of God should imitate the benevolence of their Father, and follow the revelation of his grace in their prayers. And seeing his secret purpose with respect to any particular man, cannot appear to them to direct their prayers, they may see, from the instance of Paul, that they who stand at the greatest distance may be the nearest, and they who abuse the Lord's long-suffering in the highest degree, and to the greatest length, may yet prove in the issue, the most eminent instances of his saving grace. In the view of this long-suffering and grace, we ought to continue instant in prayer for all men, and especially for kings, and all in eminency; and this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, as it is an imitation of his grace revealed in the gospel, and manifested toward ourselves, and a very proper fruit of that grace in us.

But what I chiefly notice on this occasion, is, the end the apostle here proposes to Christians, as he points out kings, and all in eminent place, to them, to be particularly prayed for, with thanksgiving. He says, *That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*

*That we may live a quiet and peaceable life.* The import of this may be taken up in the three following heads.

1. Their office is the ordinance of the gracious long-suffering God, whose ministers they are, for maintaining peace and quiet in this sinful world, till all the ends of his long-suffering be reached. And

it is one of his great judgements upon mankind, and a prognostic of wrath to come, when this his ordinance is rendered ineffectual, by nation rising against nation, or by the tumults of the people.

Government and magistracy is the valuable pledge of the divine goodness and forbearance to this wicked world, that, without it, would be *filled with violence*, as before the flood; in consequence of which, the Lord gave this ordinance to Noah, among other things that served to make man's life more comfortable than before, *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.* This is pointed to, and explained by the apostle, Rom. xiii. where he calls the power that is, and the ruler, the ordinance of God, and the minister of God to us for good, who bears the sword as a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil to his neighbour; and he declares tribute to be due to these powers and rulers, as the ministers of God. The peaceable life that men enjoy at any time under the powers that be, which God hath ordained, is the effect of the divine goodness, upholding the power, and blessing it to the end for which he ordained it. But supposing the entrance of sin, and the corruption and wickedness of human nature, which made this ordinance necessary; it is not to be expected that it can be uncorruptly administered, or that perfect quiet can be obtained among sinners, by that which was only ordained in forbearance to them, as a restraint upon their wickedness, and an alleviation of the miseries of their sinful mortal life. Yet supposing the government of a nation administered in the worst manner, it must still be better than none; and the divine long-suffering appears more in any government, than it can do in anarchy, which must fill the earth with violence. And when God withhold his help from the power that he hath ordained in any nation, and so lays it open to the calamies of war, and of the tumults of the people, this is his scourge to that nation, and it obliges



obliges them to think of his just displeasure against them.

But here it may be asked, Seeing Christians cannot gain or lose as to their peculiar interest, by the wars or tumults of this world, and their Lord has bid them not be troubled at wars, or rumours of wars, what concern have the prayers of Christians in this quietness and peaceableness of life; or, what connection has this with the main scope of the apostle in this passage, touching prayer for the salvation of all men, and of rulers?

*Ans.* The Lord, who forbids his disciples to be troubled or terrified at the wars, bids them pray that they might be as little disturbed as possible in that time of distress that was certainly coming on the Jewish nation, where they lived; and he tells them, that those days of great tribulation should be shortened for the elects sakes. And the concern that Christians have in this common peace and quiet, for which the powers that be ordained, is, that by means of the divine long-suffering therein expressed, grace may be manifested in bringing the elect of all sorts of men to the knowledge of the saving truth; so that they ought to pray for it because of the connection of this long-suffering with the elects salvation. For as, not long-suffering, but righteous judgement, appears in scourging the nations by war, sweeping thousands suddenly off the stage of life, so the time of peace and quietness is a time more fitted for mens attending to the saving truth, and coming to the knowledge of it, than the time of confusion and the noise of war. And, therefore, when the saving truth was first published to the nations, the Lord made way for the publication of it, by ordering a profound peace among them, though sin and wickedness was at a great height every where; that so the gospel of his grace might be attended to, as it cannot ordinarily be in the disorder, and in the spirit and temper of mens minds that is proper to war. And ever since, times of peace  
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have been the times of the greatest success of the gospel: Yea, the enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, appears more distinctly in the time of peace, than ever it did in any of the wars of Christendom. And Christians have the best opportunity in peace, to hold forth the word of life to the world, in their godly and honest lives, and to make their light so shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven.

2. If we be heartily praying for kings, and all in eminent place, with thanksgiving for the divine long-suffering toward them, then we ourselves will be far from an unquiet disposition toward them, or from having any hand in making confusion, and giving disturbance to their government. The temper and disposition of mind that is proper to these prayers that the apostle here enjoins to be made for all men, and for kings, and all in eminency, must be a principle of quiet and peaceable life toward those for whom we thus pray with thanksgiving, and can by no means lodge in a heart where disaffection toward them prevails. And, therefore, how great an inconsistency is it, to pretend to pray in public for the king, and all in eminent place, as the gospel requires, and yet take pains, in private conversation, to stir up the people, and make their minds evil affected toward them? How could this be vindicated from *speaking lies in hypocrisy, having the conscience scared?* And what sort of obedience to this command of the gospel would it then be, to insinuate disaffection to the powers that be, and move sedition against their government, by the very manner of praying for them? If we can be persuaded that this is reconcilable to the spirit of the gospel, or to the strain of the Christian law with respect to the powers that be, we may next believe that we would be far better ruled by the men of this unquiet spirit and temper, if they were set in authority over us. But the Christian spirit will lead us, as it did the first Christians,  
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to trust God with our prayers for the powers that be, and not meddle with those that are given to change.

3. If our prayers should be answered in their coming to the knowledge of the saving truth, the effect must be, that they will not employ their power to persecute the church, or the believers of that truth; and so we Christians shall have the benefit of God's ordinance of magistracy, in being protected from open and public violence, and suffered to live in peace and quiet. I say, from public violence, because Christians cannot expect to be free at any time from the more private effects of the world's hatred, the enmity of their nearest friends, and the reproaches of their neighbours, and the like.

This is all the benefit the apostle would have Christians to expect from Christians in power, *That we may lead quiet and peaceable lives*; even as when the public persecution, wherein he himself was a ring-leader, ceased by his conversion, *then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria.* He does not propose that we should be a prevailing faction of this world, or directors of the government, capable to make the lives of other men uneasy, (toward whom the Lord is shewing long-suffering, as he did to ourselves before we came to the knowledge of the truth) and employing the magistrate to disquiet the lives of them who deny and hate the truth; but that we ourselves should lead quiet and peaceable lives. Nor does he propose, that we, by means of the conversion of them in power, should arise to more worldly honour and wealth, and more fleshly pleasure, and so fulfil the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, (which has been done to us great perfection in the world called *Christian*, as ever it was done in any other world; but that we should lead quiet and peaceable lives *in all godliness and honesty.* Even as the churches throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, when they had rest, *were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort*

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*of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.* They led quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty, and so propagated the gospel, and promoted the salvation of men by their lives, and so had the answer of their prayers for the salvation of men by the truth.

Before I speak more particularly of this godliness and honesty, I must take notice, that we in this kingdom have long enjoyed good opportunity for the profession and practice of all godliness and honesty, through the religious liberty, or liberty of conscience, that takes place under the present administration, as much, if not more, in this kingdom, as any where else on the globe. And what part of godliness or honesty, pointed at in the Christian law, have we not liberty to profess and practise? For though the world that goes under the Christian name here, hates the power of godliness, and denies it as well as elsewhere; yet such is our present constitution, and the spirit of our government, and the general sense of the benefit of liberty of conscience under this administration, that men of all sorts have the best outward opportunity for coming to the knowledge of the saving truth, and there is nothing to hinder us from obeying it, but worldly mens hatred, that will be inseparable from it, while the world stands, and our own worldly lusts. And this religious liberty must be very agreeable to them who are well affected to the divine long-suffering that is connected with salvation to all sorts of men, and who pray heartily for all men, as the apostle commands.

And now, seeing this kingdom is engaged in a war with a nation where the very government is animated by the spirit of persecution, and of destroying mens lives with cruelty for Christ's sake, and where tyranny over the consciences of men is exercised to the greatest perfection; and seeing the experience of all ages abundantly declares, that *the battle is not to the strong*, and it has been the way of providence, in the issues of war, to humble proud boasters;

ers; for *the battle is the Lord's*, and, *a horse is prepared against the day of battle*, but *safety is of the Lord*: it is therefore time for us now to enquire what use we have made of the religious liberty we enjoy, and see if we have not provoked God, by our abuse of it, to shew his just displeasure *against* us; by depriving us of the precious opportunity we have enjoyed, for leading quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.

If we observe how this valuable privilege is used by the nation, we shall see it misimproved, and greatly abused, especially by two sorts of men.

1. Some of the most zealous of the strictest sect of the national religion, while they take the common benefit of the present liberty, are making this use of it, to fill the minds of the people that hearken to them with prejudice against it, and disaffect them to the government, by means of solemn fasts and prayers against toleration, as a great evil, and cause of God's wrath against the land where it takes place. They fast, because their own form of religion does not prevail in the nation, to the extirpation of every other form. They fast, because they have it not in their power to knock every one on the head, who finds himself obliged, in conscience, openly and obstinately to dissent from them. They fast, because every man has the same freedom with them to judge for himself, how he ought to worship God, and to practise accordingly; and, because a solemn conspiracy, in the last age, against this freedom, and for uniformity and extirpation, has been defeated. And they pray most earnestly, that it may be again revived; that so they, being again possessed of a religious dominion over the nation, may be able to make every man's life uneasy that refuses subjection to them, and will not pay them homage. And thus these men requite the Lord, thus they give him thanks for his goodness, and the long-suffering he is shewing towards all sorts of men, and the opportunity he is

giving them to come to the knowledge of the truth, in the time and place of the world where they live! Were it not most just, that such men should be made to know the benefit of toleration by the want of it? Would it not be a righteous thing with God to bring them under the uniformity and extirpation of the kingdom that is at war with us? But when we consider the Lord's long-suffering towards Paul, the persecuting Pharisee, and his grace manifested to him, in consequence of that, we should be moved to pray for the continuance of the divine long-suffering toward them, that so they, as well as other sorts of men, may come to repentance, and the acknowledgement of the truth, which they are now ready to persecute as error and delusion.

2. The religious liberty that takes place in this nation, is grossly abused by another sort of men, who have taken occasion, from it, to blaspheme the saving truth, the truth of the testimony of God in the gospel, the person and righteousness of the great God, even the Saviour Jesus Christ, and the grace that saves us, in its glorious sovereignty, freedom, and power. And these blasphemies are daily published, and gaining ground, and prevailing every where; so that we see every day before our eyes, the fulfillment of Peter's prophecy concerning the *scorners in the last days*. Every one that knows and loves the truth, must own that it would be a most righteous judgement from the Lord, upon these men, to deprive them of the liberty that they so horribly abuse, and bring them under the tortures of the Inquisition. But, as many of this sort give sufficient evidence, that they will comply with any form of religion, and subscribe to it, rather than suffer, and persecution cannot touch them so easily as the believers of the truth; so when we consider our Lord's patience toward the Sadducees, and think of his long-suffering toward Paul, while a blasphemer of the truth, and the name of Jesus, we should be  
excited

excited to pray likewise for this sort of men, with thanksgiving for the divine long-suffering toward them, and desire the continuance of it, if so, peradventure, God may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

But it concerns us, especially on this occasion, to enquire how we ourselves have improved the precious opportunity we have now, of a long time enjoyed, for proving what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, and for obeying it. And cannot our consciences tell us, that we have not used the time of rest, as did the first Christians, *walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost?* Is not this aggravated by our pretense of following them, in opposition to the course of this present evil world? For, while, through the riches of the divine goodness and forbearance, we have had access to observe the footsteps of the followers of the Lord Jesus, pointed out to us in the New Testament, and have been pretending to go forth, by these footsteps, from all the ways of apostasy that are followed in the world called *Christian*, we are yet, after all, in the course of our lives, more conformed to this world, by our unmortified self-love and worldly lusts, than we are to the first churches of God, which were in Christ Jesus in their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope. Alas! we are far from being so like them in these glorious things, as we are in those things that we see condemned in them, to be carefully avoided by us. And where is that zeal for the salvation of all men that our text requires? How little do we promote their salvation, by holding forth the word of life to them in the practice of all godliness and honesty; yea, how far do we come short of the primitive fervency in prayer, either for our own salvation, or the salvation of others?

It becomes us, therefore, to acknowledge our iniquity, to lament and abhor our lukewarmness, and want of the zeal of good works, and to say, the Lord is righteous, if he deprive us of the riches of his goodness and forbearance, which we have been, as well as others, despising. Let us come to the propitiation, the throne of grace, sprinkled with the blood that speaks better things than that of Abel, with the prayer of the Publican, calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, the Prince exalted, to give repentance and the remission of sins.

And, if we be thus in earnest about our own salvation, we will likewise be concerned for that long-suffering toward the nation, that is connected with the salvation of all sorts of men. Let us pray earnestly for the lengthening out of the tranquillity of this kingdom, and that our King's arms may be strengthened for this end. Yea, who knows but the Lord may be entreated to open a door for such liberty as we enjoy, even in that kingdom that is at war with us? for he may yet have a people there, whom he will have to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Now, if we do indeed repent on this occasion, our repentance will appear in the godliness and honesty of our lives, which is the effect of the grace that gives us repentance and remission of sins. And for our direction,

Godliness may be described by delighting in God. And as drunkards, whoremongers, and men of honour, are denominated from the things they delight in, so as the course of their lives tends toward them; even so the godly man is named from that delight in God, which draws the course of his life toward him. The godly man loves God, as the covetous man loves money, and delights in gain. He delights in beholding the glory of the just God the Saviour, as other men do in beholding their own worth and excellency; and therefore he cleaves, with his greatest  
care,



care, to the means of knowing and enjoying his greatest delight, his chief good, Psal. xxvii. 4. while others are perhaps diligently using the same means, but for other purposes.

If we enquire how this godliness must shew itself in life; the only rule of godliness for sinful men; now, is the word of God in the scriptures of his prophets and apostles, and there can be no standard for it but that; so that whatever is beyond that, has nothing to do with godliness.

All the godliness pointed out in the scriptures, is to be regarded by them who would live godly, without neglecting or despising the least thing that pertains to it. But the great proof of godliness in the New Testament, (which is the spirit of the Old) is the keeping of Christ's new commandment of brotherly love, in all its branches, as we see from our Lord's last sermon to his disciples, and from the whole first epistle of John.

And honesty may be viewed in the exhortations that Peter gives Christians, 1 Pet. ii. from ver. 11. to the end, and chap. iii. If we would lead our life in honesty, we must be true and faithful in our words, and our lips speak no guile; we must be just in all our dealings, giving to all their dues, and we must be followers of that which is good, full of mercy and good fruits. He that leads not a life of good works and almsdeeds, is so far from leading an honest life, in the scripture-account, that he is declared an unfaithful steward of the unrighteous Mammon.

We may see what reckoning God makes of fasting without alms, Isa. lviii. And now is the time for all men to hearken to that advice, Dan. iv. 27. *Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.*

A SERMON Preached in the CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH of DUNDEE, February 4. 1741, the Day appointed by his Majesty for a National Fast.

With a Note on the History of Mordecai and Haman, in the Book of Esther.

[First published in the year 1741.]

I TIM. ii. 1. 2. 3. 4.

*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty: for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

THESE words may not only be an inference from the Apostle's account of himself, (as was noticed before on an occasion of this nature) but likewise from what he had immediately said of his delivering Hymeneus and Alexander to Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme. There was a peculiar aggravation in their case, whom he had been obliged to declare the subjects of Satan, the prince of this world, debarring them from the privileges of Christ's subjects, because, having put away a good conscience, they had made shipwreck of the faith they once professed, and had become some way reproachers of the saving truth, the word of God's grace. And yet so extensive was the view of the Lord's long-suffering and saving grace, which he had by his own conversion, that

that he hopes the sentence passed on them may be a mean of reclaiming them: for this was the end of it, that they might learn not to blaspheme. And in this broad view of the grace of the gospel, he exhorts and encourages Christians to pray for all men, and particularly for them who they might think lay farthest out of the way of being saved.

This is one remarkable way wherein the benevolence of the gospel shews itself in imitation of God's saving grace, to pray heartily and earnestly for men of all sorts; and, as the Lord Jesus expressly commanded blessing and praying for our enemies and persecutors, Christians had at that time an opportunity for obedience to this command, with respect to rulers who were then adverse to them. Paul had once some kind of authority, and exercised it to the utmost against the church; and his conversion may be looked on as the answer of Stephen's prayer which he made, in obedience to the Lord's command, at his death. And how proper was it then for Paul, to press this duty upon Christians, toward all in authority, however opposite to them?

My design is to bear home upon myself and you, a sense of the obligation of this command, that is so warmly pressed upon Christians by the apostle in this text.

But it must first be observed, That, as the whole obedience of the gospel, where-ever it takes place, is owing to the supernatural grace of the gospel, so is it in this particular instance, as we may easily see, by looking into ourselves, or observing the general practice of the world called *Christian*, with respect to this command of the gospel. We know how far our hearts are from the benevolent temper that is necessary to this duty toward all in authority, if they appear against us in the use of their power; and we need not be urged to bless and pray for them with thanksgiving, when we see their power serving our interest: we do it naturally. When our interests  
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are connected with them who are in authority, we wish the government well; but when we stand connected with the discontented out of power, and pushing to be in, we are, from the same principle, as ready to wish ill to our rulers, and more disposed to curse than to bless them. In this we have had an example set to us by the clergy, the greatest flatterers of rulers that serve them with their power to crush their adversaries, and to maintain their pretended spiritual, but really carnal rights and privileges; for such rulers, they can pray heartily, and zealously preach up subjection to them; but when princes have shewed them neglect, or wanted any way to reduce them, or bring them a little under, they have as zealously prayed and prophesied against them, as wicked men, and enemies to the church, sanctified evil-speaking of them, and turned rebellion into a point of religion. And if they have been put in mind of the commands of Jesus Christ in this case, they never wanted distinctions, to evade the force of any thing that could be said to convince them. Thus the corruption of our hearts has made this commandment of Christ of none effect, to the bulk of us that go under the Christian name, and the still small voice of the gospel is drowned amidst the noise and cry of parties eagerly pursuing their worldly interests; so that it can scarce be heard even by them to whom it shews a better interest to be pursued. But Christ's sheep must hear his voice, and follow him. And, for their sakes, something must be said, to set aside the perversion of his gospel, and make way for a conscientious and hearty obedience to this his commandment.

And to this purpose, as I have often observed to you, that the gospel distinguishes itself by a peculiar simplicity, and that the corruption of Christianity is but a departure from this, so now I would have it laid down as a principle, That the commands of the gospel are plain and simple, and as to the obedience of  
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them, do not depend on doubtful disputations. For, whereas *not many wise men after the flesh are called*, the generality of true Christians are not capable to judge of nice questions; and the gospel speaks to us as learning from it, that same *simplicity and godly sincerity* wherewith it was at first preached by the apostles. Therefore we see, it does not make a coward a philosopher, or fit to rule a state, when it saves him by the knowledge of the truth; and it humbles the wise men of this world, as to their pride of knowledge, declaring their wisdom foolishness, while it makes them wise to salvation. The gospel was never intended to solve the questions, and satisfy the rational enquiries of the philosophers, of whom it says, that *professing themselves wise, they became fools*: for they lost the truth in a maze of speculations and questions about what the conscience of every man knows in the most simple manner. Nor was it ever intended to satisfy the politician about the preferable form of civil government, or to enable him to decide his questions about the right and title by which kings should hold their kingdoms, and about their prerogatives, and the rights of the people, and concerning the constitution of a kingdom or common-wealth. But as nature teaches us in the simplest manner, so likewise does the gospel teach us its superadded light and law.

Of this we have a remarkable instance in the case now before us: for when we are bidden pray for kings, and all in authority, we have no other question left us to ask, but this plain one, Who is in authority? For, if we should enquire further, whether they be in authority according to right? we shall not find a solution for that question in the gospel. And therefore it commands us to be subject to the *powers that be*, to pray for them and to pay them tribute; seeing, if it had left any room for a doubt about a right or a wrong form of civil government, or about rightful and lawful, or unlawful kings and rulers,

that might make us halt as to our obedience, it would certainly have given us some direction as to this matter of doubt, and told us something that might satisfy every Christian; for every Christian is bound to obey what it commands with respect to kings and all in authority. And if it hath not done this, Christians are left free from any scruple on this head, free to obey what the Lord has commanded them, with respect to any form of government they happen to live under, or with respect to any king whom they see God (who pulls down and sets up kings as he pleases) has in his providence set over them. How then can Christians make conscience of not praying for a king, because they are not satisfied of the justness of his title to the crown, though they acknowledge him king, by using his protection and paying him tribute? Is such a conscience under the direction or influence of the gospel? If it be, then certainly the gospel has laid some foundation for a scruple about the rights and titles of kings to their crowns. But we shall find no insinuation there, of any such distinction, as *a king in fact, and a king by right*: it belonged not to the apostles, but to them who have corrupted the minds of Christians, from the simplicity that is in Christ, to deal in such distinctions.

Nor has the gospel given Christians any occasion to hesitate, as to what it requires of them toward the powers that be, by putting them upon judging of the measures of government, and whether those in power govern according to the spirit of the constitution, and honestly seek the true interest and good of the nation. For besides a general view of the end of their office, and the purpose for which God ordained it, laid as a foundation for our subjection to them, we have no direction in the gospel about this either. Now, that end and purpose must be reached under any government, as much as it was by those rulers to whom the apostle at first required subjection on  
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this account. Even under any of the then emperors, (suppose Nero) it was better for the world, that there was government in it, than if there had been none at all: it was by means of this same government, that Paul was not murdered by the Jewish mob, nor scourged by the chief captain at Jerusalem; and it was owing to this, that he was rescued out of the hands of his enemies the Jews, by his appeal to Cæsar, and that he had liberty to preach the gospel for two whole years, in his own hired house, no man forbidding him.

Shall we then say, that Paul (Rom. xiii. 1.—7.) suspends our subjection, and paying of tribute to the powers that be, upon our being satisfied in our consciences, that the power is exercised in a good and upright manner?

If this be the case, it must be owned, that Paul's exhortation was of little use to those Christians to whom it was at first directed: for how could the Christians at Rome, in this case, be satisfied in their consciences, that subjection and tribute was due to the rulers there at that time?

And we must next say, that Paul first supposes the world so wicked, that it needs the restraint of government, and then alledges, that this government cannot be exercised by wicked men, as he believed all men to be without the saving grace of God. And yet our text, that bids pray for kings, and all in authority, is far enough from supposing them to be already partakers of that grace; and he never tells us, that the grace of the gospel is given to qualify men for ruling a kingdom of this present world.

And then we must certainly take him to be subjecting the measures of government to the judgment of *every* Christian *soul*, and leaving it to them to be subject or not, as every one of their consciences is satisfied that the government is administered for their good. That is, he is subjecting the power

that be to every soul of them, and not every soul of them to those powers.

But what shall we then think of the subjection of the first Christians to persecuting rulers, not only in the time of the apostles, (who, though they were the chief sufferers, pressed this subjection upon them) but for two hundred years after? Though the writers in that time signify, that it was not out of their power to repel force by force, as being very numerous in all places, except the temples, and as being the greatest contemners of death, yet had they then such a view of the nature of their religion, that they thought it obliged them rather to suffer themselves to be killed than to kill others. They could say, they were enemies to no man, and least of all to the Emperor, for whom they prayed heartily, very well knowing that it was their God who had established him. This they said, according to Rom. xiii. And from this it is manifest, they took it so, as to find themselves obliged, by it, to be subject for conscience sake, even to the emperors that persecuted them. And though they had more reason to complain of injustice, than any sort of men in the empire, and there were manifold plots, insurrections, and tumults, in their time; yet none of them could be charged with having any part in these; and upon this they could appeal to their adversaries. Here was the supernatural grace of the gospel, clearly manifested in the obedience of the gospel; a notable proof of the truth of Christianity; for thus it was *the will of God, that with well-doing, Christians might put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, as free, and not having liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God, honouring all men, loving the brotherhood, fearing God, and honouring the king.* And here I would have this practice of the ancient Christians attended to, and seriously considered, by those who distinguish themselves by their zeal for the testimonies of martyrs, for their form of national religion in former times: for these ancient  
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Christians were indeed *they who overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

Some suppose that they take off the force of all that was said by the apostles, on this head, to the first Christians, and of all that can be alledged from the agreeable practice of the primitive Christians toward the powers of the earth, by telling us of the great alteration in the state of things that has happened since that time: for, from the time of Constantine the Great, the profession of Christianity stands quite in another situation, wherein what was before unlawful, or at least very unfit and improper, may be very just and right. There are now Christian kings and Christian nations; and nations may do, and certainly ought to do, what could not be proper to private men, not in a national capacity, nor having any such rights to plead, as arise from a legal establishment. And some alledge, that kings and rulers, by being Christians, are under such obligations, and have such duties laid on them in the exercise of their office toward the church, as wholly alter the case from what it was in the time of the apostles; so that what the apostles said to Christians as to the then powers, cannot answer the case of Christians now with respect to their Christian rulers.

But, unless it be said, that this new situation has quite made void all that the gospel commands with respect to rulers, we must grant, that we labour under one disadvantage as to our conduct toward the powers that be, in this our situation, that the first Christians were altogether free from in their situation: for they had express direction in the gospel; whereas we have none. We must go through a long train of perplexing questions about the constitution of the state, the rights of the rulers and of the subjects, and the titles of kings, before we can be conscientiously subject, and pay tribute for conscience sake, or before we can know whom to pray for as  
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rightful kings, or in lawful authority, and our consciences must give their verdict upon the justness of the clamours and complaints of every discontented party against the measures of the government, in order to our praying heartily, as the gospel requires, for kings, and for all in eminency. So that, if Jesus Christ had framed his religion for being national, it looks like a great defect in his gospel, in this case, that it has not referred to the Jewish constitution and judicial law, or else given us some other form of civil government, in the place of it, for our direction, or, at least, left us more to our discretion than it does, as to subjection and tribute, and benevolent prayers for kings, and all in authority. But the gospel must not lie under such an imputation.

The Lord Jesus testified before Pilate, that his *kingdom is not of this world*. His subjects, who hear his voice, are *a people whom God takes out of the nations for his name; strangers and pilgrims on the earth, having no continuing city here, but seeking one to come*. He addresses them as *a little flock*, in distinction from *the nations of the world*; forbids a government among them like that of the nations; discharges them to *seek those things which the nations seek after*; and commands them to *seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*. He tells them, that they *shall be hated of all nations for his name, and that to the end*; and so calls them to follow him in that obedience which he learned from the things that he suffered, and in the exercise of those graces and virtues that have no place but under the cross: for, he says, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me*.

As it is impossible to reconcile all this, and more of this kind in the gospel, to the state of a nation of this world, we see, in fact, that whenever the profession of Christianity was shaped for a nation, and became national, the primitive practice, which was truly Christian, failed, and was set aside, like some plant that  
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grows in dry ground, and decays when transplanted into a richer soil. We have often heard this much lamented; but the cause of it has not been sufficiently considered: for still the national state of Christianity is rather looked on as a great advantage. But however profitable it be to those whose worldly interest lies in it, and whatever good Providence has brought out of it; one thing seems pretty certain, that the ancient proof of the truth of Christianity, arising from the practice of its professors in distinction from the men of this world, had its end where it began: and, particularly, the professors of Christianity cannot be distinguished from other men, and from the nations of the world, by the primitive Christian practice, with respect to rulers of this world. If any would revive that practice, they must be distinguished by it from the bulk of the professors of Christianity, and from Christian nations: for what tumult or sedition happened in the Heathen nations, or speaking evil of those in authority, and having liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, that cannot be paralleled in the Christian nations? These things must be, and will be to the end of the world, in the nations of this world, whatever name they go under, and whatever religion be established among them. And is not the conduct of the clergy with the Christian powers, and the practice of the Christian world in consequence of that, an inexhaustible fund of reproach to Christianity from infidels? Though it be true, that their speaking evil of the way of truth, on this account, is itself a confirmation of the truth of the gospel, which foretells the occasion of it, as a very great evil that would befall the Christian profession, by means of its leading men, whom it points out, at the same time, as *despising government, presumptuous, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities.*

It is true, Christ is head over all things to his body the church; and, therefore, over the Grand Signior, or Emperor of China, as well as over the powers cal-  
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led Christian; and so was he head unto his church, over the Heathen Roman Emperor, and all in authority at that time, who were certainly bound to obey the gospel on pain of damnation, and so to do every thing that the gospel requires of any Christian magistrate: but notwithstanding their disobedience, and their acting likewise, in many gross instances, contrary to the great design of government, especially toward Christ's people; the gospel, nevertheless, obliged the consciences of their Christian subjects to give them honour, to pay them tribute, and to pray heartily for them. And shall it be said, that Christians are loosed from this obligation to magistrates, by their becoming Christians? Or, does the gospel speak of any peculiar new headship of Christ over them in that case, distinct from his headship over his whole body the church, and from the headship given him over all things unto it? Or, how shall it appear from the gospel, that Christianity makes any further alteration in the business proper to the civil magistrate, than it does in the practice of physic or navigation? For Christ and his apostles gave as little direction about the one as about the other.

No doubt Jesus Christ has all power in heaven and in earth, and power over all flesh given him, that he may give eternal life to as many as the Father has given him of all nations, without difference: and so he has ordered his gospel, the word of eternal life, to be preached to all nations without distinction. He pulls down and sets up kings, in what manner, and by what means he pleases; turns kingdoms into common-wealths, and these again into kingdoms; and makes absolute governments limited, and the limited absolute, as he sees best to answer his whole design about the people to whom he gives eternal life. His commandment to his people, with respect to government, and civil governors, supposes his subjects among all nations, and so makes no manner of distinction nor exception as to any form of civil government. Nor  
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has he any where left the carrying on of his grand design, by disposing of kingdoms, under the direction of Christians, or their leaders. He has not given his ministers any other instrument in their hand, for serving his great design, but preaching the gospel, and teaching to observe all things whatsoever he commanded his apostles, to whom he gave no commandment about any form of civil government, nor any special direction to those in authority, concerning the administration of it. He has wholly reserved in his own hand the exercise of his power in heaven and in earth, and the disposal of the powers that be in the earth, in order to his giving eternal life to his own church and people. Nor did he command his apostles to teach Christians to observe any thing with respect to magistrates, in any nation where they happen to live, but to be subject, and pay tribute for conscience sake, to honour them, and be afraid to speak evil of them, and to pray for them, as in the words of the text.

Have we any ground then to say, that a magistrate, by becoming Christian, is put under the direction of Christian ministers or people, as to how he ought to rule a nation, and that they are made judges by the gospel, how he should govern as a Christian, and employ his power for the good of the church? Indeed it has been so thought from the time of Constantine. But their management of this matter, from that day to this, may open the eyes of them that will see, and shew them the vanity of such a thought. Is not this the very source of Antichristian power, which the Apocalypse makes to be the power of the kings of the earth given to the beast against the Lamb? We may take a view of this monstrous power, by setting it over against what Paul speaks to the Romans, of the powers ordained of God, when he says, *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.* By virtue of the foresaid notion about the Christian magistrate, they first thought the Christian emperor had more power about the church, than the gospel had declared to be-

long to the Heathenish ones, and then, (as one step out of the road makes way for another) when the empire was broke into about ten independent kingdoms, and these kings became Christian, they subjected themselves with one accord to the clergy, or *church representatives*, and gave them their power and strength to make the Christian world uniform in subjection to them, in whom they were united as one empire. For, because it was supposed that the power and strength of these Christian kings ought to be employed for Christ and his church, it was thought very proper that the exercise of this Christian power should be under the direction of Christ's ministers, who were now looked on as the *church representative*, and as representing Christ on the earth; and therefore these kings gave their kingdom, and became subject to this visible head of the church, supposing that they gave their kingdom to Christ the head of the church, in this his representative, but it was really to Antichrist. Here was a Christian *soul*, or as many *souls* as made up this visible head, set above the powers to which the apostle commanded every *soul* to be subject, and having these powers in subjection, which God ordained to be higher. And the clergy, having these powers thus ordained as their ministers, employed them to execute their wrath against all such, as evil-doers, who refused subjection in any thing to Christ, *i. e.* to themselves, his representatives on the earth.

After the gospel had so severely enjoined the conscientious subjection of every Christian soul to the higher powers, as God's ministers, it is no wonder to find subjection to this power of the clergy discharged under the highest pains, as quite opposite to Christ, and to his kingdom, that is not of this world: for there is a beautiful consistency in the gospel; and if we be subject to the higher powers, as it commands, we cannot be conscientiously subject to the very reverse; we cannot be well affected to any pretended spiritual rulers, setting themselves above them,  
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and making their power and authority drudge to theirs, to make the world obey them.

The Lord has been now, of a long time, *consuming* this Antichrist, and is even now, according to his word, *filling the kingdom of the beast with darkness*; so that *they gnaw their tongues with pain*, but they *repent not of their deeds*; for if the power that is, seems, in any instance, to strike at the independency of the national church, or established clergy; and if that power shew itself higher than they, as to the privileges of their establishment, we see how they rage and cry out of wrong, and some of them go the length to bode ill upon it, if not to the King, at least to his minister, wishing him Haman's fate. And if the King be not disposed to give them his power to make all his subjects abstain from their labour in their employments, to attend upon them on any day, and for any cause they please to appoint, but takes it upon himself to call his subjects to fast, and to set a time for it; we hear a party of them raising a loud cry against their brethren who incline not to dispute this point with him, and condemning them in the most solemn manner, as base betrayers of the right and prerogative of Jesus Christ to an usurper. This is to them a notable ground of fasting and humiliation: and, indeed, if the grounds of fasting peculiar to this party, be well examined, they will amount to this, that the power of the clergy has come under a great decay, since the days of our forefathers, when the nation swore allegiance to them, and that they themselves are not the reigning clergy, and have it not in their power to keep Britain and Ireland to that allegiance. And, as far as the word of God, concerning the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world, is set in opposition to this worldly kingdom that they are contending for, they are ready to treat it with reproach, and so blaspheme the God of heaven.

As for the nations of this world, and the men of the nations, who have their portion in this life, they have been, and will always be finding fault with their rulers; and they are never readier to tumultuate, than in the times of greatest fulness and ease; because this provokes them to pursue more of their happiness, which is in this life. And it is observable, that the philosophers, in their doctrine, laboured this point hard, to make a kingdom or common-wealth happy and flourishing. They amused themselves, and those who hearkened to them, with the hopes of effecting it by their fine rules. And thus they humour-ed the general foible of fallen mankind, seeking happiness in this mortal life. But how vastly does the gospel differ here! It is, indeed, the word of life and true happiness; but this life is life from the dead: it calls men to be crucified to this world by the cross of Christ, and to look for eternal life thro' the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, in the way of following him, bearing their cross: and it shews Christians, that they are not so much concerned as other men, in the risings of nations against nations, and need not be so anxious as they, about wars and rumours of wars, because their life and happiness lies not in this world, and cannot be taken from them by these things. And very agreeably to this, (for still it is a most consistent doctrine) it forbids Christians that speaking evil of dignities, and hating of one another, that is common among men, and that proceeds from our finding ourselves hampered by government, and tribute in the fulfilment of our lusts, and thwarted by one another in our various cross pursuits after the happiness of this life, which yet we could not enjoy in any tolerable measure without society and government. It is rare to see us always pleased, and finding no fault in any of the relations wherein we are placed in this world; and the faults of others are not hateful to us because they are faults, (for we ourselves would do the same things)

but



but because they cross us : and, for the same reason, the seasons seldom so please the husbandman, that he finds no fault with them ; for all proceeds from the same source with murmuring against the divine providence, and charging God foolishly.

Now, the end of all that has been said is reached, if we are disentangled from the vain thoughts that have served to render the commands of the gospel, with respect to the higher powers, of none effect, and particularly the plain command in the text, that so we may find the obligation of it in our consciences, and see the need we have of the grace of the gospel, to engage us in the practice of this same duty of praying heartily, as the text directs, for the King and all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. This commandment cannot be grievous to us, if we have any thing of that view of the Lord's grace, which the apostle gives us when he delivers it unto us. And they who are otherwise minded, may indeed pretend to act in the spirit of the philosophers, or to imitate the Roman virtue ; but they can have no pretence in the gospel, in the example of Jesus Christ, the pattern of Christian virtue, or in the practice of his first and truest followers.

And if it be enquired, What is it that we lament on this occasion, and what are the causes of our fasting ? let this have the first place, That we have lived so much in the neglect of the duty that is so much pressed upon us in this text. Is not disobedience to Christ, in any of his commands, a just cause of fasting, especially to them who distinguish themselves by a profession of obedience to him ? For why call we him Lord, and do not the things that he says ? And can we say we have been doing what he requires, according to the spirit of this passage ? Have we been in that gracious benevolent disposition to all men, and especially all in authority, that is necessary to the making of these supplications, prayers, intercessions,  
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and giving of thanks for them? Before we complain of our rulers, let us first see if Jesus Christ has not somewhat against us, as to our duty toward them. And if we cannot clear ourselves of sin in this matter, we can have no solid hope of escaping the divine judgment against this, or any other sin, but by the shedding of Christ's blood for the remission of it. And shall it then be a light thing to us, to live any longer in it? Or, will we pretend to call him *the Lord our righteousness*, who became *a servant of rulers*, and yet not let the same mind be in us that was in him, nor be ashamed of the contrary disposition?

And therefore let it be matter of shame and self-aborrence to us, that we have had ever any part in the general apostasy from the commandment of the Lord Jesus, with respect to kings and all in authority, and from the glorious primitive Christian practice, in obedience to him, which was so good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour. Is not the gospel lamentably perverted, when, under the Christian name, reproaching and cursing of rulers comes openly in place of blessing and praying for them, and when Christian ministers can confidently complain to God of those whom he has set in authority over them, and speak evil of them, and revile them to their subjects in the name of Christ?

Let me say, That I cannot see any thing that threatens more ills to the nation at present, than the ferment that the minds of the people have been put into against those who are in authority: And, therefore, I would earnestly exhort you, my brethren, who pray for the peace of the nation where you dwell at this time, to make intercessions, prayers, and supplications to the Lord, *who rules the raging of the sea, and when the waves thereof arise, stills them*, that, in the riches of his goodness and long-suffering, he may be pleased to avert the evils that naturally arise out of this to the nation. And as, in every case about which we are ready to be careful, we  
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ought to *make our requests known to God with thanksgiving*; so let it be in this case: in which, if the grounds of thanksgiving be enquired for, I would condescend on these.

1. The mildness of our present government, and the liberty we have been, and still are enjoying under it, to lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. What sort of Christians in the nation is it, that can complain on this head, but they who would make it a point of conscience and religion, to deprive others of their religious liberty? Yea, even the very manner of the present opposition and management of the plea of civil liberty, demonstrates the mildness of the administration.

2. As the Lord, in his holy providence, has been giving occasion to the nation to shew mercy to the poor and needy, the more than ordinary disposition to almsgiving that has appeared in the nation, is matter of thanksgiving; and may it be a token for good! May the Lord dispose all ranks of men to break off their sins by righteousness, and their iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of the nation's tranquillity! And let us not be unthankful for this, that the necessities of the poor are not so great with us as we hear they are in other kingdoms, and that the present season seems so promising.

3. The weakness and decay of the Antichristian power at this day in our nation, however much it be lamented by some, is ground of joyful thanksgiving to them who love the kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world. May our King, and all the other Kings, hate the whore, and make her more and more desolate and naked, and burn her flesh with fire! May the Lord more and more consume that man of sin, by the spirit of his mouth, till he destroy him with the brightness of his coming!

Let us be grieved for the prevalency of the Antichristian power in the nations of Europe, and cry to the head of the true church, that he may over-rule  
the

the present war, and rumours of wars, for the great purpose of breaking that power, that the gospel of the kingdom of heaven may have free course every where, and that all things may work together for saving his elect from among all ranks, by the knowledge of the truth, and so hasten the appearing of Jesus Christ our life, that we may appear with him in glory; to whom be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### A Note on the History of Mordecai and Haman, in the Book of Esther.

**T**HE Old Testament foretells the things of the New, not only in express words, but also by facts recorded in its history. Thus, the story of Joseph is not considered only as a narrative of facts, affording useful remarks upon the conduct of providence, but, at the same time, as a prophecy of the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ: and the apostle, speaking on that great subject, Philip. ii. 9. 10. gives some countenance to this, by pointing to a passage in the history of Joseph, Gen. xli. 4. 3. *They cried before him, Bow the knee.*

In like manner, his style, Col. ii. 14. 15. (which has occasioned several speculations among the learned) favours much of the story, of making the decree that was written to destroy the Jews, of none effect, and of Mordecai's triumphing over Haman, having spoiled him of his power, and making a shew of him and his sons upon that very tree which had been prepared for himself: *Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and, having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

By this reference to the history of Esther, we may see a beauty in the apostle's style, which cannot be so well perceived otherwise; and, at the same time,  
behold

behold in that history, a very fit emblem of our deliverance from the condemning law, and from him that had the power of death, by the cross of Christ, and of his spoiling Satan of his power, and triumphing over him and all the powers of darkness, in the tree where he who had the power of death, had set himself to destroy him.

The exaltation of Mordecai may, no less than that of Joseph, be considered as a figure of Christ's exaltation. The words wherein it is expressed, are as applicable to Jesus Christ as any thing that is said of Joseph. What shall we find in the story of Joseph's exaltation, that hits more exactly than these words, *For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Abasuerus, and great to the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed?*

And thus the book of Esther, as well as the history of Joseph, may be looked on as a prophecy; a prophecy of Jesus Christ destroying him that had the power of death, by his cross, and so delivering his people; a prophecy of his being given to be head over all things to the church of his brethren, his willing people, for whom he has obtained everlasting peace, which he bestows on them, by preaching peace to them which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

But if we shall consider it merely as a history, giving us a notable instance of the wonderful providence of God about his church or peculiar people, which we may apply to any time or case wherein we shall find it useful; then it behoved Haman to stand for some great enemy of the church, high in power, and using all his interest to authorise and enable the enemies of the people of God to exterminate them. And Mordecai, again, must be one who never would have any connection with this Haman, nor go into any of his measures; a hearty stedfast friend, and loyal quiet subject to the king, even when unrewarded for his services; but as steady and uniform in shew-

ing disrespect to this prime minister ; yea, our Mordecai must be such a friend to the church, as to stand or fall with it, and its ruin must begin at his destruction.

If the application be not to some case of this nature, it cannot have much foundation in the text. And even in this case, it would be hard to reconcile the revenge on Haman, his family, and the many thousands of the enemies of the Jews, to the spirit of the New Testament, as the Lord distinguished it to his disciples, when they sought the destruction of a city that would not receive him. But if we should take upon us to pray, that *they who tread in Haman's steps may share in his fate* ; how then could we answer to him who said, *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy : But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you,* Matth. v. 43. 44. See ver. 19. and chap. vii. 26. 27.

And if we should attempt to apply the story of Haman to any prime minister in a government so tolerating, that all sorts of pretenders to the title of the church, have liberty to serve God as they judge best, without fear, the application would be manifestly contrary to the text. The Jews were not the established church in the kingdom of Ahasuerus ; nor do we hear of the independency of any established religion, or of the Jews, upon the king, maintained by Mordecai.

The application would be yet more ridiculous, if either the case of Joseph, or of Mordecai, prime minister to an absolute prince, when he *laid a tribute upon the land, and the isles of the sea*, should be set in opposition to any prime minister in a free nation, even supposing him to be raising himself and his master at the expence of the nation.

The story of Mordecai, or of Joseph, would be very ill chosen to humour the complaints of the people, and the fears suggested to them of the danger of their liberty

liberty in our time. If any of them should be thus applied, it would either shew a defect of judgment in the applier, or manifest, what is very true, That little use can be made of the scripture, to encourage the common practice of *speaking evil of dignities*, or to support ministers of the gospel in *bringing railing accusations against them before the Lord*.

# A Dissertation on INFANT-BAPTISM.

[First published in the year 1746.]

## INTRODUCTION.

*Making an observation on several questions and disputes about baptism.*

THE great Christian truth, concerning salvation by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the Son of God, in whom the Father is well pleased, and the purification of sinners by his blood shed for the remission of sins, is so expressed in the institution of baptism, and so signified in it, that all the differences about that institution have arisen from different persuasions as to that great truth; and there is no remarkable error about baptism, but what has a foundation in some great error as to that truth which is signified in baptism.

Some even deny the Christian institution of washing with water, which they call *water-baptism*; and they would have all the instances of it recorded in the New Testament, to be no other than those *divers washings*, belonging to the first covenant and worldly sanctuary, which are set aside, Heb. ix. 10.; though, after the setting aside of that first covenant and sanctuary, with the divers washings proper to it, the *washing our bodies with pure water* be expressly enjoined, as belonging to the new covenant, and to our access unto God in the heavenly sanctuary, Heb. x. 16.—22. And because Peter declares, (1 Pet. iii. 20. 21.) that this sign in baptism does not save us, but the thing signified therein, they have the confidence to deny, that it belongs at all to baptism; contrary to the plain scope of Peter's words, which set forth *the putting away of the filth of the flesh*, as the sign in baptism, in distinction from the thing signified, wherein  
he



he says our salvation only lies, even *the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*. For he says, speaking of Noah's ark, *Wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto, baptism, doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is gone into heaven*. But the true reason of this opposition to the sign in baptism, is a disaffection to the thing signified, even the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is gone into heaven, affording the answer of a good conscience towards God, (compare Rom. viii. 33. 34.) and his blood sprinkling our hearts from an evil conscience.

And some pretended zealous contenders for the glory of the Father, while they plainly shew they know him not, by their opposition to the glory of the Son, would have baptism to be but a temporary institution, for the beginning of Christianity, or designed only for converted infidels, as the Jews and Heathens, and not to be continued among Christian nations. But this is because, while it is continued, it is a standing declaration of the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and a standing sign of the purification from sin by the blood of the Son; and because what is commonly called the *Trinity*, and the *satisfaction*, is so manifestly signified in baptism, that men cannot be brought to think of denying this doctrine, without thinking of renouncing their baptism.

But, on the other hand, the doctrine of the necessity of baptism to salvation, and of *making Christians by baptism*, is an old error that has prevailed much in the Christian world: though the making of Christians by baptism must be later than the ancient *delay of baptism*, that was pleaded for as the safest way, upon this principle, *That entire faith is secure of salvation*. However, when this deviation from the scripture-way once prevailed, a foundation was sought for

for it in the scriptures: and so they would prove the necessity of the putting away of the filth of the flesh unto salvation, from John iii. 5. *Except a man be born of water, and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*: though it be manifest, from the words immediately following, that the stress there is laid on the Spirit: *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth;—so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* And they further plead these words, Mark xvi. 16. *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved*; though it be as manifest, from the following words, that the stress there again is laid on believing: *But he that believeth not, shall be damned.* And so both these texts concur with 1 Pet. iii. 21. testifying against this necessity that is pleaded for: *Baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* No doubt, baptism is of the same kind of necessity with the observation of the other precepts of the gospel, or of all things whatsoever Christ commanded his apostles to teach all Christians to observe; but to place our salvation in any thing beside Christ's blood purifying us, is evidently contrary to the very design of the institution of baptism, and is, in effect, denying the faith of that great truth signified in baptism. To place salvation thus in the sign, is to set it so far instead of, and in opposition to the thing signified, and to make the dispensers of the sign our saviours.

And the denying of infant-baptism comes likewise of making the salvation by baptism to lie in something else than the thing signified; even that, whatever it be, which distinguishes the adult Christian from his infant: though our Lord expressly declares, that we must enter his kingdom even as infants enter it. The first opposition that we hear of, to infant-baptism, turned salvation upon an entire sort of believing, whereof

whereof infants are incapable: whereas, there is not any true faith, or sincere confession of the faith, but that alone which acknowledges, that salvation lies only and wholly in the thing signified in baptism. And, if we enquire how that thing saves us? our Lord answers us, Just as it saves our infants. The denial of infant-baptism must have always proceeded from a disbelief of this.

## S E C T. I.

*Containing a scheme of the controversy and state of the question about scripture-precept and example.*

THE whole plea against baptizing the infants of Christians comes to this, That there is neither particular express precept nor indisputable example for it in the New Testament, where baptism is inseparably connected with a profession of the faith, which infants are not capable to make.

All this may be owned at the same time that the inference from it is denied. For, as the question is not about the institution of baptism, but only about those to whom it should be applied or dispensed, we must not say, that a thing of this nature is not warranted in the New Testament, merely because there is not such a precept or example as some require for applying the institution of baptism to Christian infants. For instance: We cannot deny a warrant in the New Testament for womens partaking of the Lord's supper, though there be no such precept or example there for it, as is sought for infants partaking of baptism. We can no more shew, by express particular precept, or indisputable example, that Christian women are included in the precept, *Do this in remembrance of me*, and, *Drink ye all of it*, than we can prove, by such precept or example, that Christian infants are comprehended in the precept, *Baptizing them*. We may indeed go about to prove, that Christian

stian women must eat of that bread, and drink of that cup in the Lord's supper, by shewing them to be members of that body, the church, which all partakes of that one bread, and so is one bread, and which has communion in that cup of blessing, whereof all the members drink. But in the very same manner it is shewed, that Christian infants must partake of the one baptism, by proving them to be members of that same body, the holy Catholic church, into which all are baptized; even that one body to which that baptism belongs, as the Lord's supper belongs only to a visible church coming together in one place to eat it. Now, as soon as we begin to seek a warrant for any such thing in this manner, we must depart from the principle that every opposer of infant-baptism sets out upon, *viz.* That such an express precept, and such a plain example, is necessary to shew the warrant for it.

As to the connection betwixt the confession of the faith, and baptism, it may be owned, that baptism cannot be administered to any but upon a confession by which the baptized can be called disciples according to the scripture: for it can well be said, that infants are to be baptized upon a profession of the faith by which the scripture warrants us to account them disciples with their parents, as well as to look on them, with their believing parent, as holy, and of the kingdom of heaven, or the true church, into which all Christians are baptized. Disciples are made by teaching. And when a parent is taught to profess the faith, according to that which is spoken, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house*; this makes his infant a disciple with him in the scripture style and way of speaking. For, when the Judaisers sought to have the Gentile Christians circumcised, to keep the law, as necessary to their salvation by Christ, Peter said to them, *Acts xv. 10. Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the DISCIPLES?* But the Judaisers were seeking to have this yoke laid on the infants of the believing Gentiles,

Gentiles, whom it behoved to be circumcised with their parents : and therefore Peter, who received the command to baptize disciples, took that designation to comprehend infants, and called them disciples with their parents. So that they must go more nicely and precisely to work with the name *disciple*, than Peter did, who would deny that the precept to baptize disciples, is a precept to baptize infants.

According to the commission, in Mark's gospel, to preach and baptize, infants must either be reckoned with the believing or the damned. For, as to the believing there connected with baptism, it is expressly said, *He that believeth not shall be damned* : and therefore, if we cannot look on the infants of the faithful, dying in infancy, as damned ; we must look on them, according to this scripture, as believing ; and so entitled to baptism, here connected with the believing that includes them, in distinction from the damned. For it cannot be thought that infants have no share in that salvation that comes by the gospel, which the Lord ordered his apostles, going into all the world, to preach to every creature. For, like as the Lord said to Noah, *Come thou, and all thy house into the ark*, Gen. vii. 1. wherein he and his house were saved through water, (Heb. xi. 7. 1 Pet. iii. 20. 21.) ; even so the the apostles, in executing their commission, preached salvation in Christ to a man and his house, and baptized a believer of this preaching and his house. And, according to this preaching, he that believed on Christ for his own salvation, believed on him also for the salvation of his house ; for so his belief answered to that which was preached : and so baptism signifying and sealing that which was preached, and which he believed, was applied to him and to his house. Now, it is undeniable that the apostles preached thus. See Acts xi. 14.—*Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved* ; and Acts xvi. 31. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house* And

it is no less manifest, that they baptized the believer and his house. Thus Paul says, 1 Cor. i. 16. *And I baptized also the house of Stephanas.* And it is said of Lydia, Acts xvi. 15. *And when she was baptized, and her house;* and of the jailor, ver. 33. *he was baptized, he and all his.* Surely then, we cannot say, according to the preaching of the apostles, that there is no more connection betwixt the salvation of a believer, and the salvation of his house, or betwixt his believing and the baptism of his house, than that of his neighbour's house, or any other house. And if it cannot be said, that salvation to a man and his house excludes his infants, neither can it be said that baptism to his house excludes his infants. If we would deny scripture-example for baptizing of infants, we must first deny, that there were any infants in these baptized houses. And as we can plead no foundation in scripture for that, it is too bold to say, that there is no scripture-example for baptizing infants; as it is likewise to say, that there is no connection betwixt the confession of the faith, and their baptism.

## S E C T. II.

*Shewing that infants must partake in baptism, from their having part in the promise of the Holy Ghost, unto which Christians are baptized.*

AS soon as the apostles began to execute their commission, to make disciples of all nations, by teaching, baptizing them, they plainly took in the children with their parents, as partaking with them in that great salvation which they preached, and which is signified in baptism. For we see, in the very first call to those in Jerusalem, to *repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins,* the promise of the Holy Ghost, unto which they were baptized, was to them and to their children; even them who had said, *His blood be on us,*  
*and*

*and on our children.* Peter said to them, Acts ii. 38. 39. *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, (to you who are presently called) and to your children, (who are connected with you in the condemnation) and (in like manner as to you and your children, so also) to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* For as that promise of the Holy Ghost was to as many as the Lord then called in Jerusalem, and to their children; so it must be to as many as the Lord calls afar off from thence, and to their children.

Now, if they who repent be baptized unto the promise of the Holy Ghost, Acts xix. 2. 3.; and if that promise unto which they are baptized, be to their children as well as unto them; then, certainly baptism, as far as it is connected with that promise, must belong to their children as well as to them. For though their children cannot yet be sensible of the remission of sins, whereof they are assured when they receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, or are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise; yet that same promise is expressly declared to belong to them. And if those who heard and obeyed the call, were baptized unto that promise which they should afterward receive; so might their children. Though the children could not in themselves know any thing of repentance or remission at the time of their baptism, as did their parents; yet they were, even then, as capable as they of the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and saving change from which repentance flows, and as capable as they of justification, by remission, and by the imputation of righteousness without works. And, just so, though they cannot answer in their own persons, but in their parents, at their baptism; yet they are as capable as they of justification by Christ's resurrection, and of the operation of God, who raised him, from which that answer of a good

conscience proceeds : for they are as capable of being justified by Christ's obedience, as of being condemned by Adam's disobedience ; and as capable to partake of Christ's holiness, as of Adam's corruption.

According to this view of infant-baptism, it serves to shew, that we contribute as little to our salvation by baptism, as do our infants. They enter the kingdom of God by the same title as we do ; and we contribute no more to our entrance there than they.

Whereas, the contrary opinion serves to lead us to lay the stress of that salvation upon something that we do in the profession of the faith, and some holiness about us, whereof infants are incapable. But our Lord stained the pride of all this sort of glorying in his disciples, by saying, concerning infants whom they were forbidding to be brought to him, *Forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of God, or, of heaven ;* and by assuring them, that none can enter that kingdom any other way but as infants enter it, Matth. xix. 13. 14. 15. and xviii. 1. 2. 3. 4. Mark x. 13. 14. 15. Luke xviii. 15. 16. 17. And when Peter first opened that kingdom, on the day of Pentecost, to the Jews enquiring what they should do, he opened the same door to them and to their children ; declaring, that the entrance would be the very same to all whom the Lord should call ; they should enter where the children enter, who can do nothing. And how can one place any kind of merit in his holiness who believes that infants are holy as well as he ? He cannot entertain any Pharisaical notion of holiness, who believes infants to be fellow-members of Christ's holy church, for which he *gave himself that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word ;* even the word whereby a man and all his house is saved.



## S E C T. III.

*Clearing the argument from 1 Cor. vii. 14.*

THESE words of the apostle, (1 Cor. vii. 14.) *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy,* serve to shew, that the infants of one believing parent are members of Christ's church, for which he gave himself, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, which is the only church whereof they can be members; and that, therefore, they must partake in the washing of water, which belongs to that holy church; and signifies admission and entrance into it.

But there is an objection against this. For some alledge, that this text makes the children no otherwise *holy* than it makes the unbelieving parent *holy*, and so no more members of the church than the unbelieving parent, who is said to be *sanctified*: for, if it proves the children to be members of the church, by calling them *holy*, it also proves the unbelieving parent to be a member of it, by calling that parent *sanctified*.

This objection arises from not looking well into the text; which makes the effect of the sanctification of the unbeliever to the believer, to be the holiness of the child: for the sanctification of the unbelieving wife is not to herself, but to her believing husband; to whom she is sanctified, even as the creatures he eats are sanctified; or, according to the Greek, she is not sanctified *in* herself, but *in* her believing husband. And this sanctification in her believing husband terminates in his children: so that it is the child, and not she, that is declared to be holy by that sanctification; for, whereas *sanctifying* is *making holy*, this sanctification of the unbelieving parent in the believer, makes not the unbeliever holy, but the be-  
liever's

believer's children. When this text, therefore, is considered, we may easily see, it is very far from calling the unbelieving parent holy, as it calls the believer's children holy.

The opposers of infant-baptism, who perceived the force of this argument for the church-membership of infants, could find no evasion from it, and from the consequence, for their partaking in that *washing of water*, but this ridiculous gloss on the text, *viz.* Else were your children *bastards*; but now are they *legitimate*! But let us put as grave a face on this gloss as we are able, and it will bring us back to the very same thing that this text always served to demonstrate.

Let us say, That the apostle here declares it consistent with the nature of the separation of Christ's church from the world, for its members to be joined in marriage with aliens from it, and that it is not now lawful for those who are so married to be separate on that account. Which is far different from the nature of the separation of Israel after the flesh, from the rest of the world, as the church and peculiar people of God, whereby it was unlawful for an Israelite to marry a stranger: and therefore, when they married strange wives, it behoved these to be put away; and likewise the children begot upon them by Israelites were to be put away, as not being members of the commonwealth of Israel, or as not being a holy seed, or *seed of God*, but unclean, as other Gentiles then were. But, says the apostle, it is not so in the New-Testament church: for its members being joined to aliens in marriage, are not to be separated from them, who are sanctified to their use in that state; so that their children begot with such aliens are now to be accounted holy, as well as the children begot by both believing parents; and are to be acknowledged, as well as they, to be those little children whom the Lord declares to belong to his kingdom, in distinction from the world.

S E C T.

## S E C T. IV.

*Shewing how baptism comes in place of circumcision.*

THE argument for infant-baptism from circumcision, has a foundation in these words of the apostle, Col. ii. 11. 12. 13. *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.*

Here the thing signified in baptism is called the *circumcision made without hands*, the same with the circumcision of the heart, whereof the uncircumcised in their flesh are now made partakers; and, in place of the circumcision made with hands, they are buried with Christ in baptism, and risen with him in baptism, and so have the circumcision of Christ. Now, if the apostle gives us baptism with the thing signified in it, in place of the circumcision of the flesh, and calls it the circumcision of Christ; then baptism must be to the true Israel, who are born of the spirit, as circumcision was to the typical Israel, who were born of the flesh. And, as Peter said to the Jews, who were first called to be baptized unto the promise of the Holy Ghost, *The promise is unto you and to your children*, baptism belongs to the children of the spiritual Israel, unto whom that promise is; even as circumcision belonged to the children of the fleshly Israel, who had the promise of Christ to come in the flesh, and of the earthly inheritance. For they are as capable of being born of the spirit, as they were of being born of the flesh: for who can deny the operation of God on them, that raised Christ, and that

that begets the adult to the faith, to which they contribute as little as their infants? Or, who can say, that they are not capable of being made alive with Christ by the Spirit; through which he was conceived holy in the virgin's womb, and raised again from the dead?

When it is asked, How can infants appear to be of the spiritual Israel? it may then be asked, How does a parent appear to be such an Israelite, upon the very first profession of his faith, by which he is admitted to baptism? And when it shall be said, That the word of God calls us to acknowledge him as such, by that profession; then it shall also be said, That the same word calls us to acknowledge his infants as such, by that same profession: for it is by that we know them to be the children of a believing parent, and therefore to be holy. It is true, they may yet be really irregenerate, and when adult appear to be so; and even so the parent, notwithstanding his baptismal profession, may be really irregenerate, and become at last an apostate. But, as the apostate professor is not now in that state wherein the word of God called us to account him holy; so, when the baptized in infancy prove irregenerate in the adult state, they are not then in the same state wherein the word of God called us to account them holy: for they are not then the infants of believing parents. They are now in that state wherein they must be looked on according to their own profession; and, according to that, be added or not added to a visible church that comes together in one place to eat the Lord's supper.

There is no ground in the scripture for thinking, that any one is acknowledged in baptism as a member of any visible church. It only declares the baptized to be members of the body of Christ, the true church, into which all Christians are baptized, tho' it be invisible; even as they are baptized into Christ, the head of that body, who is also invisible. So that  
they

they who are baptized according to the scripture, may be called visible members of the body of Christ, and so far fit for becoming members of a visible church wherein that body of Christ is represented, like as he himself is represented in the bread and cup whereof it partakes. But they cannot be called members of that visible church, till they be added to it upon the declared purpose of their heart to cleave to the Lord in it: for baptism, in the scripture, goes before *adding* to any such visible church; being always immediately connected with the very first appearance of union with Christ, and with that one body, the true church, of which he is the head; and to which we may see it belongs, from such scriptures as these: 1 Cor. xii. 12. 13. *For as the body is one, and hath many members:—so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.* Eph. iv. 4. 5. 6. *One body, and one spirit,—one hope,—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.* And chap. v. 25. 26. 27.—*As Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it: that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, &c.* Accordingly, we find the eunuch was baptized without waiting for his becoming a member of any visible church coming together in one place to eat the Lord's supper. For the Lord's supper belongs not, thus immediately, to this holy Catholic church; it being from the beginning delivered by the apostles, who received it from the Lord, only to a visible church continuing stedfastly in assembling together in one place to eat it; as to the church in Jerusalem, Acts ii. and the church in Corinth, 1 Cor. xi. Adding unto such a church, was from the beginning the consequent of baptism, and of teaching the baptized to observe all things whatsoever Christ commanded the apostles. And hence came the practice of what is called confirming the baptized,

before their partaking of the Lord's supper in any visible church.

This being admitted, as it must be according to the scripture, we shall never be able to infer the communion of infants in the Lord's supper, from their being partakers of the one baptism. Nor, if we consider what is now said, shall we be able to ascribe the corruption of Christianity to the baptism of Christian infants, as it may be ascribed to the *making of Christians by baptism*. The corruption of the Christian religion came by departing from the scriptural profession of the faith, upon which baptism was administered from the beginning to a man and his house, and by substituting another profession in the place of it; a profession that cannot entitle the professors to the scriptural brotherly love as saints and faithful in Christ Jesus, or as the spiritual Israel. Whereas, the true primitive profession of the faith gives the professor and his house, his children, the character of *holy*, and admits them to baptism. And we see unfeigned faith descending from a parent to her child and grandchild, 2 Tim. i. 5. Yet, if the parent apostatize, he forfeits that character, as many did from the beginning: and, if the children become adult, not adhering to the baptismal profession, they have no more the character of *holy*; but then they are no more the infants of a believing parent; while, according to scripture, we must look on the children of believing parents, dying in infancy, as dying in the Lord.

## S E C T. V.

*Shewing that the apostles, minding the Lord's admonition as to infants, and primitive Christians long after them, did not scruple upon baptizing them; and that it was the practice in the first ages.*

**I**F we believe Christ faithful as the Son over his own house, we must take the revelation of his mind

mind and will as he is pleased to give it, without prescribing to him the manner in which he should make his will known; like the Jews, who, being unwilling to believe him to be the Messiah, said to him, *How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly?*

When the same temper from which the scruples at infant-baptism now proceed, shewed itself in his disciples, he was much displeas'd at it. The disciples rebuked those who brought infants to him; and their reasons for this could be no other, but such as are still used by those who now forbid them baptism. And, in the foresight of their self-righteous and unmerciful principle touching infants, forbidding them the first sign of union with him and his church, out of which there is no salvation, and perverting the scriptures that shew their church-membership, he said, *Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.* And he took them up in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them. Thus he secured the church-membership of infants before his institution of baptism, and thus he prevented the disputes that have arisen since about infants; shewing himself as the first patron of their cause, against disciples opposing their being brought to him.

The apostles kept this in mind when they executed his commission to them for setting up his kingdom in the world: for they took in the children with their parents, as we have seen; they preached salvation by Christ to men and their houses; and they baptized believers and their houses, them and all theirs. And they left Christian infants (as holy) so in the possession of this privilege of Christ's circumcision, that there was never any scruple moved about it, till the end of the second century. And, when we consider the opposition then made to it, we shall see how

much it serves to confirm it. We shall see, that Christian infants were then in possession of the privilege of baptism; and that the first objection made to it arose out of a manifest departure from what the scripture teaches most plainly about baptism, as well as from the scripture-doctrine of the grace of God.

Tertullian \*, who wrote in the conclusion of the second century, is the first that moves an objection against infant-baptism. And he does this when pleading for the delay of baptism even to the adult: for he would have the unmarried professors of Christianity to delay baptism, whether they be virgins or widows, till they either marry, or be confirmed in their continency. He pleads for this delay of baptism, from the prohibitions to lay on hands suddenly, and to give that which is holy to swine; and this against the plain scripture-instances of baptizing straightway upon the first profession, which he sets all aside as extraordinary cases; and, therefore, he would have baptism delayed according to the condition, disposition, and age of each person. And he insists for the delay, especially as to infants, arguing for it in this manner: "What necessity is there," (says he) "for bringing the sponsors into danger, who, being themselves mortal, may fail of performing their promises, or may be beguiled by the growth of an ill disposition? The Lord indeed says, *Forbid them not to come to me*. Let them *come* then when they grow up: let them *come* when they learn; when they are taught to what they should *come*. Let them be Christians when they shall be capable to know Christ. Why does the innocent age hasten to the remission of sins? We would act more cautiously in secular affairs: that to whom the earthly substance is not given in trust, the divine should be instructed! Let them know to seek salvation, that you may appear to have given it to one that seeks." And, for the delay of baptism in general, he further says, "If any understood  
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\* De baptismo, quæst. 5.



the weight of baptism, they would rather fear the attaining of it, than the delay. Entire faith is secure of salvation.”

Now, was not this delay of baptism as expressly contrary to the scripture-example as any thing can be? and did, then, the first opposition, that we hear of among Christians, to infant-baptism, arise out of the scriptures, or out of a flat contradiction to the plainest scripture?

And did not the objection of this forefather of the forbidders of infants to come to Christ, proceed upon the denial of original sin, and the need of remission to infants? And did it not plainly suppose, that our salvation lies in that about us which distinguishes us from our infants? and that it hinges upon a knowledge, and a seeking of salvation, and an entireness of faith, whereof infants are incapable? If it shall be alledged, that he was not in this a forefather to those few commonly called *Free-grace Anabaptists*, who are only to be regarded in this question; may we not then say, if these indeed believe, that they cannot enter the kingdom of God but as the infants enter, he was far more consistent with himself than they?

But, passing this, does it not most plainly appear, from the words of this first opposer, that Christian infants were then in possession of the privilege of baptism? And do not his own words also shew the fact, that it was maintained at that time by the Lord's saying to his disciples, *Forbid them not to come to me?* Which saying, this man had the boldness to turn off in a manner wherein the disciples durst not, nor any one that trembles at the word of God dares yet do.

Though the delay of baptism took place, contrary to the scripture, and gained much ground among Christians after the end of the second century; yet it is manifest, from Cyprian's \* writings, about the middle of the third century, that the infants remained still in the possession of this their privilege. Cyprian,  
and

\* Lib. 3. epist. 5.

and a council of sixty-six bishops with him, differed from one Fidus, who questioned if infants ought to be baptized before the eighth day, as it was in the case of circumcision: and he contended against this Fidus, that they may be baptized before the eighth day; the observation of which was a type that had its end in the coming of Christ. On both sides of this question, the fact is evidently supposed, that infant-baptism was the common practice of that time: for upon this fact the whole question goes. And from this it appears likewise to be fact, that, in this time, before they had any notion of framing any national church, like the church of the Old Testament, they held baptism as coming in place of circumcision to the church of Christ.

### A P P E N D I X.

*Containing a dissertation on the manner of baptism, and the scripture-sense of the word baptism.*

THE opposers of infant-baptism contend likewise for a different manner of baptizing from that which is commonly practised: which, according to them, cannot be called baptism: because it does not at all signify and represent union or communion with Christ in his death and burial, by immersion, or plunging or dipping in water; nor in his resurrection, by emerging or rising up from under the water: and because it does not at all answer to the very sense and use of the word *baptism*, which signifies dipping, immersion, or plunging.

But, on the other hand, it is pleaded, That this cannot appear from the scripture to be the very sense and use of the word *baptism* there. For the best way to find the sense of this word, as applied to the case of baptizing Christians, is to observe how the scripture applies it to other cases; and, by this way, the scripture-sense of it is found to be washing, however

ever that be done. For thus it is applied, Mark vii. 2. 3. 4. 5. *And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with common, that is to say, with unwashen hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except with the fist they wash hands, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And from the market, if they are not BAPTIZED\*, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, the BAPTISMS of cups and of pots, and of brazen vessels, and of tables, or beds. Then the Pharisees and Scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? Who sees not, that baptism here has the very same import with washing, and that it is placed in this passage as another word for washing? And how can it then be said, that washing is not to be called baptism, except it be done by immersion? For were not the prophet's hands washed, by his servant's pouring water on them? and are not the divers purifications of the first sanctuary called baptisms, Heb. ix. 10.? See the Greek.*

In the case of the Christian baptism, washing stands often in the New Testament as another word for it, and as declaring the import and sense of it; which may be seen in these instances: Eph. v. 26. *The washing of water.* Heb. x. 22. *Our bodies washed with pure water.* Tit. iii. 5. *The washing of regeneration.* 1 Pet. iii. 21. *The putting away of the filth of the flesh.* Acts xxii. 16. *Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.* 1 Cor. vi. 11. *But ye are washed.* From these it may appear, that, according to the scripture-use of the word *baptism*, immersion cannot be called *baptism* any otherwise than as it is a mode of washing with water.

The ancients, who added several ceremonies to the simple institutions of Christ, and found out spiritual meanings to them, amongst other rites added to baptism, used this of *dipping thrice*. But they did not proceed

\* Compare Luke xi. 38. in the Greek.

proceed so far in this way, as to deny, that washing with water in any other way is baptism: for they used *clinic* baptism; and surely baptizing a sick man in his bed, was not burying him under water. Washing with water, then, was from the beginning the sign in baptism, in whatever way, or after whatsoever mode it was done.

The common way of baptizing is not by sprinkling, as has been always falsely alledged in this controversy; but by pouring water from the hand of the baptizer upon the baptized. And this answers exactly to a scripture-sense of the word *baptism*: for, in the scripture, pouring the Holy Ghost on men is the same as baptizing them with the Holy Ghost; as, when the disciples were *baptized*, on the day of *Pentecost*, *with the Holy Ghost, and with fire*, according to the prediction of John Baptist, and of the Lord, Peter said upon it, *This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel,—I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh:—and on my servants, and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my spirit.—And having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost; he hath poured out this, which ye now see and hear.* We may also perceive baptism with water, and with the Holy Ghost, both foretold by the prophet *Isaiah*, (chap. *xliv.* 3.) in these words: *For I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up, &c.* For our Lord points to this passage, when speaking of that spiritual seed springing up, *John iii.* 5. he says, *Except a man be born of water, and the Spirit.* Now, if the scripture calls pouring forth the Holy Ghost on men, baptizing them with the Holy Ghost, then pouring forth water on men, is baptizing them with water in the scripture-use of the word *baptism*. Again, the scripture says, *Christ was baptized with a baptism, which was at his death; but that baptism was by water and blood, poured forth from his pierced side upon his*  
dead

dead body ; and there was no dipping there. And our communion with Christ, and conformity to him in his death and burial, and in his resurrection, is by the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*, which is *poured out* on us, as the water in the *washing of regeneration*, Tit. iii. 5. 6.—*He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ; which he poured out on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

If it can be inferred from the thing signified in baptism, (as expressed, Rom. vi. 3. 4. 5. and Col. ii. 11. 12. 13.) that the washing must be by burying under water, and raising up again ; then it can also, by the same rule, be inferred from the thing signified in baptism, (as expressed, Heb. x. 22.) that the washing must be by sprinkling ; because the thing signified, as expressed there, together with the sign of washing with water, is *sprinkling our hearts from an evil conscience*. But if we look on the will of the institutor, expressed in his word, as the sole ground of the relation betwixt the signs in baptism and the Lord's supper, and that which is signified by them ; we will not look for any such similitude in these instituted signs, as we do in pictures or images. The similitude or likeness that the apostle speaks of, Rom. vi. is not at all said by him to lie in the sign or manner of washing : for he tells us plainly, wherein lies the likeness of Christ's resurrection, wherein we are planted by baptism ; he says, *That like as Christ was raised up from the dead,—even so we also should walk in newness of life*. And, just so, according to the apostle, the likeness of his death must be our being dead with Christ to sin, having *our old man crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed*. But let us suppose, that *being buried with him in baptism*, is an allusion to the mode of washing by immersion ; and what shall we then make of it ? seeing we also find even the way of purifying by sprinkling alluded to in the case, and yet more frequently the manner of washing, by pouring on water. Shall we say upon

it, that the scripture confines us to any one manner of washing, that another way of it cannot at all be called baptism? And when our communion with Christ in his death and resurrection, whereby we are saved, is only by pouring out on us the renewing of the Holy Ghost; shall we say, that this cannot be signified in baptism by pouring water on us? and shall we deny that this is baptism?

The confidence of some in this matter is the more unaccountable, that they cannot be ignorant, it is impossible to shew, from the particular accounts of the Lord's baptism, and the eunuch's, that either of them were baptized otherwise than by pouring water on them from the hands of the baptizers. For, if it should be inferred, from the eunuch's going down into the water, and coming up out of it, (as it is also said our Lord did) that he was plunged; the same must also be said of Philip the baptizer; for the words are, *They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water.* If these words say any thing of dipping the baptized, they say full as much of dipping the baptizer. But, to any man that is capable to understand any words, these words plainly say, That being baptized with water, is another thing than going down into the water, and coming up out of it.

# The SABBATISM of the PEOPLE of GOD :

O R,

The First Day of the Week shewed to be the Christian day of Rest, from Heb. iv.

[ First published in the year 1747. ]

## The P R E F A C E.

**I**N the question, Whether the scripture, as its own interpreter, be the only rule of the Christian religion, without tradition, and the authority of the church? the contenders for tradition, plead the observation of the first day of the week as a sabbath, and infant-baptism, always practised from the apostles still downward, and even by the opposers of tradition; for which usages, they alledge, there is no evidence of any scripture-authority, without the help of tradition, and the authority of the church.

This objection has induced some to reject infant-baptism, as not being able to shew any ground in the scripture for that practice; though it can be traced up to the days of the apostles in the way of tradition. And some, though they could prove from scripture, that Christians assembled for worship on the first day of the week; yet, finding themselves unable to shew from that authority, that the first Christians, under the direction of the apostles, kept that day as a sabbath; though they may allow it as a holy convocation, they reject it as a day of rest, in order to hold by the scripture as the sole rule of Christian religion.

And they who oppose to tradition the scriptures, as interpreted by their reason or philosophy, by which alone they know the truth of them, looking on these usages as not very rational, nor evident in the scriptures, may also deny them to belong to the Christian institution.

institution. They cannot see how the death and resurrection of the Son of God should save any one upon his believing its sufficiency to save him; nor can they understand how this faith should avail to the salvation of another than him that believes. But the scripture shews us this manifestly in the case of the faith of miracles, which were signs of eternal salvation by the remission of sins, even as that faith was also a sign of the faith which is to the saving of the soul. For we see men saved from these temporal miseries, upon their believing that Jesus was able to save them; and not only they who believed this for themselves, were thus saved, but their children and slaves were healed upon their believing the ability of Jesus to heal them. Accordingly, we are eternally saved, believing the power of Christ's resurrection to save us. And, when we are called to believe even so for our houses, the salvation of a man's house is as much connected with this belief as his own salvation.

Having already shewed the foundation for infant-baptism in the New Testament, and the warrant there for our believing in Christ for the salvation of our children, as well as for our own salvation, and receiving baptism to them in confirmation of this faith; let us next see if the practice of sabbatizing on the first day of the week has a foundation in the New Testament. And, if it shall appear founded there, we need not trouble our heads about the reasonableness of such an institution, or labour to satisfy those who are disaffected to the meaning of this significant practice, that it is reasonable for them to observe it.



# THE SABBATISM OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

HEBREWS iv. 4.—11.

*For he spake somewhere of the seventh in this manner, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works; and here again, If they shall enter into my rest:— Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying, in David, To day, after such a long time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Joshua had made them rest, then he would not, after these things, have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a sabbatism to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath rested from his works, as God from his own.*

## S E C T. I.

*A note on the word sabbatism.*

**T**HE word *sabbatismos*, for which we have *rest* in our Translation, and on the Margin the *keeping of a sabbath*, is not the same that is translated *rest* throughout this passage. And *Ainsworth* on the Pentateuch gives the best account of this word. He translates Exod. xvi. 23. in this manner: *This is that which Jehovah hath spoken, To-morrow is the sabbatism, the sabbath of holiness to Jehovah.* And he comments upon it thus: “*Sabbatism, i. e. rest or cessation. But as the Hebrew Shabbath is retained by the Holy Ghost, in Greek Sabbaton, Matth. xii. 5. 8. so the Hebrew Shabbathon, here used, is by the apostle Sabbatismos, a Sabbatism, in Heb. iv. 9. The same word occurs also, and stands the same way in his translation, Exod. xxxi. 15. But in the seventh day of the sabbath of sabbatism, holiness to Jehovah. Lev. xxiii. 3.—The seventh day a sabbath of sabbatism. And Lev. xxv. 4. And in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of sabbatism unto the land; a sabbath for Jehovah.*

S E C T.

## S E C T. II.

*The plain scope and sense of the text.*

**I**N this whole passage (from chap. iii. ver. 7. to chap. iv. ver. 11.) the apostle is applying to the Christian Hebrews these words of David, in the 95th Psalm, from ver. 7. *To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in heart, and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, If they shall enter into my rest.* And, by these words, he exhorts the Hebrews to take heed, lest, by their unbelief, they come short of the rest into which they had the promise of entering lest them; even as the Israelites in the wilderness (their fathers and examples) came short of the promised rest in Canaan's land by their unbelief.

In doing this, he makes the *voice* which God's people are called, in David, to hear, *a promise of entering into his rest*: a rest different from his rest at the creation, and different from his rest in Canaan's land, into which Israel had entered a long time before the call came, in David, to *hear his voice*, under the pain of *not entering into his rest*. And this divine rest, which is yet to be entered into by God's people, to whom the Israelites in the wilderness are examples, he makes to be, the rest of Jesus Christ, who hath entered into his rest, having rested from his works, as God did at the creation.

And he makes the *day* of which David spake with reference to this *rest*, to be a day of *rest*, *another* than the *seventh*, a *sabbatism*; even that same day on which he who is entered into his rest, hath rested from his works.

S E C T.

## S E C T. III.

*The divine rests pointed out to us in the text.*

**W**HILE the apostle directs this prophetic call to the Hebrews, he supposes, that the rest of God's people, the true proper rest for man, consists in partaking with God in his rest: for he says we enter into *his rest*; and speaks of God's swearing, that we shall not enter into his rest, as the greatest evil we have to fear. Now, as God rests, and is infinitely happy in the perfect consciousness of his own self-sufficiency, his boundless perfections, and his eternal glory; we can have no knowledge or sense of that, but in as far as it is brought within our view by some work of God for us, manifesting his perfections and his glory, wherein he rests: and, therefore, our resting with him, must be by partaking with him in his rest from some work of his.

There are three such rests mentioned in this text.

1. The rest from the works of creation, which were finished in the making of man, and placing him in Paradise; where he partook with God in his rest, till he forfeited it, and was cast out by his disobedience to God.

2. The rest from the divine works in redeeming the house of Israel from the Egyptian bondage, bringing them forth with a strong hand, leading them through the wilderness, and settling them, as a nation, in the land of Canaan, their inheritance: by which works, he manifested himself as the Creator of the world, the true God, in distinction from all idols and false gods. The nation of Israel enjoyed this rest in that land of promise; their settlement there being the effect of those works of God that were finished in planting them there by Joshua.

3. The rest of which David prophesied, as yet to be entered into, long after the works of creation were finished, and after Joshua had led Israel into Canaan,  
and

and that people had already entered, and been so long a time in possession of that rest. This rest, of which David spake, is the same into which Christians have the promise of entering left them in the New Testament; and is the rest of the Son of God, who, having glorified the Father on the earth, by finishing the work he gave him to do, and having made an end of offering for sin, sat down for ever on the right hand of the Father, glorified there with him with that glory which he had with him before the world was. Jesus Christ is *he that is entered into his rest*; who *also hath rested from his works*, in like manner, as it was said, *And God did rest the seventh day from all his works*. This is he that said in the days of his flesh, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*; and called himself *the Lord of the sabbath*. His rest from his works is the true heavenly and eternal rest, which was prefigured by the rest in Paradise, and the rest in Canaan's land. And the apostle calls us to study to enter into this same rest, lest any man fall after the example of Israel's unbelief, depriving them of entering into their earthly rest.

Whereas, this rest from the works which Jesus the Son of God wrought, is set forth here as the most glorious divine rest, into which we are called to enter; some, perhaps fearing, lest his true deity should appear manifestly from the text in this view, have laboured to pervert the words, or turn them away from him, in this manner: *He that is entered into his rest*, say they, "is any man that is entered into his rest." Thus the haters of the light shut their eyes, and say they cannot see?

And others, willing to smother the evidence for the Christian sabbath in this text, have not been so careful as they ought to apply these words to Christ; in whom they would yet have all keeping of a sabbath-day to have an end. Any one that can read the Greek text, may say, that even Calvin has not dealt fairly

fairly with this passage. And this appears too evidently by his translation of ver. 8\*.

#### S E C T. IV.

*The days of rest, or sabbaths, the seventh day, and another day.*

WHEN the apostle is discoursing of the divine rests, he also speaks of the days of rest, or sabbaths; and he points out two of these, *viz.* the *seventh day*, and *another day*. The seventh day belonged to the first rest, which was again some way represented in that rest into which Joshua led Israel; even as the works from which God then rested, served to shew him to Israel as the God that made the world in six days, and rested the seventh. And because the rest in Canaan's land, resembling that of Paradise, was not the true eternal rest, but a type of it, an earthly figure of the true heavenly rest to come afterward; therefore, the seventh day served for that rest also. But, when the true rest comes in place of the figure of it, then comes another day of rest in place of the seventh. For the apostle says, *If Joshua had rested them, then he would not after these things have spoken of another day.* That earthly rest was not the true rest. The promise of entering into it, was a figure of the promise of entering into the true rest; the faith of that promise, was a figure of the faith in the promise of entering into the true rest; and the fall of the Israelites in the wilderness through their unbelief, debarring their entrance into that rest, was the example of our falling and coming short of entering into the true rest through unbelief. If that had been the true

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\* That translation is, *Nam si Iesus requiem illis prestitisset, non de alia loqueretur post illos dies.* And the Greek words are, *Ει γαρ αυτης Ιησους κατεπαυσει, ουκ αν περι αλλης ιλαλει μετα ταυτα ημερας.* What would Calvin have said of the Papists, if he had found them playing such a trick upon the scriptures?

and full rest that God designed for his people, he would not, after their entrance into it, have spoken of another day of rest: but, speaking of another rest to be entered into in place of that to which the seventh day belonged, he also speaks of another day than the seventh. And this is the day that *remains* in place of the seventh, *a sabbatism to the people of God.*

## S E C T. V.

*This other day than the seventh, must be, as it, a weekly day of rest.*

THE apostle makes this other day than the seventh, to be, in like manner as it was, a day of rest, a sabbatism, *a certain day, or some day, limited,* in David, for the rest to be yet entered into by them, to whom it is said, *To-day if ye will hear his voice:* for this is the inference he makes from what he had said of the Holy Ghost's speaking in David, of another day than the seventh, *There remaineth therefore a sabbatism to the people of God.*

This day, wherein the people of God have a sabbatism, or cessation from working, cannot be the eternal rest of Jesus Christ that they shall enter into; because it is a certain limited time, as the apostle expressly tells us, *Again, he limiteth some day, saying, in David, To-day.*

Nor can it be a certain season and time, consisting of many days; such as, *the accepted time, the day of salvation,* and *the day of judgement;* because it must be such another day as the seventh, by the apostle's manner of speaking of it, saying, *the seventh day,* and *another day.*

And this day can be no other, but that same on which Christians constantly assembled from the beginning, exhorting one another to steadfastness in the faith of the promise left them of entering into Christ's rest,

rest, according to chap. iii. 13. *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day*, with chap. x. 25. *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,——but exhorting.* For their assembling constantly, and exhorting on each weekly set day of rest, answered to the call, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day*; seeing the apostle makes the Holy Ghost's saying, in David, *To-day*, to be his limiting some day, another than the seventh, a sabbatism. And the Holy Ghost, in the apostle, is the best interpreter of his own words in David.

So then, this other day of rest than the seventh, is that same weekly day, on which Christians from the beginning assembled together, exhorting one another when they came together in one place to break bread; that is, *the Lord's day*, the day of his resting from his works.

## S E C T. VI.

*And this is the first day of the week distinguished in the text.*

THE apostle plainly enough points out and distinguishes *the first day of the week* as the sabbatism, when, giving the reason why another day than the seventh remains, or is left, a sabbatism to the people of God, he says, *For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath rested from his works, as God from his own.* He here describes this day, as he had done the seventh before, in these words: *For he spake some where of the seventh in this manner, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.* Now, whether we reckon the Son of God's resting from his works at his resurrection, or at his sitting down on the right hand of the Father, which was instantly notified on earth by the pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, they to whom the apostle here writes, are supposed to know very well, it is still the

first day of the week, the morrow after the Jewish sabbatism; which is therefore the sabbatism that remains to the people of God. And so, as the seventh day is described and distinguished by the divine rest on that day, in like manner, is this day described, and distinguished from other days, by the divine rest that took place on this day.

It was on the morrow after the sabbath of the passover, that the first ripe sheaf was waved; and Christ, *the first fruits of them that slept*, arose from the dead on that very day: and on the morrow after the seventh sabbath from thence, was the feast of first-fruits; and *the first-fruits of the Spirit* came that same very day of Pentecost, when Jesus, *being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, shed it forth* on his disciples; and thereby assured them, that he was now entered into his rest, having rested from his works: and, from thence forth, the morrow after the Jewish sabbath, (even that eighth day on which Christ our Priest was perfected, Lev. ix. 1. Ezek. xliii. 27.) was the sabbatism, or weekly day of cessation from work, as well as of holy convocation kept by the Christian church.

## S E C T. VII.

*By which the seventh day is here set aside to the Jews, as it had been before to the Gentiles.*

**T**HE Gentiles, who were received into the church of Christ, without being obliged to observe the precepts of Moses, did not regard the days distinguished in his law: and, as it was clearly revealed to them, that they should not observe the peculiar precepts of Moses, being brought near to God by Christ's blood without that differencing law, they had no regard to the seventh day; as knowing, by express revelation, that the coming of Christ had set it



it aside to them, together with the other shadows of things to come. Col. ii. 16. 17. *Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a feast, or of the new-moon, or of the sabbaths: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is Christ's.* And, indeed, the very divine rest to which the seventh day belonged, was but a shadow of Christ's rest.

But, though the Gentile Christians were not allowed to regard the seventh day, while they observed the first day of the week; yet the Christian Jews, together with the Lord's day, still regarded that seventh day, as well as circumcision, the sacrifices, feasts, and distinction of meats; their consciences remaining obliged by the divine authority in these peculiar precepts of their law, till the same authority loosed them from that obligation, in a revelation, shewing them, that the coming of Christ had abolished these precepts to them, so that they ought no more to observe them than did the Christian Gentiles.

And this is that part of the New-Testament revelation which we have in this epistle to the Hebrews. For this epistle shews them, that Christ's one offering, once made, and never to be repeated, had put an end to all offering for sin, and to the whole service of the tabernacle; so that this whole service is no more lawful for them, than it was for the Gentiles. See Heb. xiii. 10.—14. with Gal. v. 2. And, in like manner, it shews the Hebrews, in this passage, that Christ's resting from his works on the first day of the week, had set aside the seventh day with the earthly typical rest to which it belonged; and that the sabbatism now remaining to God's people, is that same other day of the week, on which he entered into his rest, having rested from his works.

## S E C T. VIII.

*The heavenly rest setting aside the earthly, with the seventh day, sets not aside the keeping of a weekly sabbath-day.*

WE must not think, that our being called to study to enter into the heavenly rest in place of the earthly, and the setting aside of the seventh day, takes away the keeping of a weekly day of rest on earth; even as we are not to think, that our worshipping in the heavenly sanctuary in place of the earthly, with the setting aside of that worldly sanctuary, and its ordinances of worship, and the ordinances of *meats* and *drinks*, and divers purifications called *baptisms*, takes away *the assembling of ourselves together*, or coming together in one place on earth, to eat and drink the Lord's supper; or takes away *the washing our bodies with pure water* in the Christian baptism: because the apostle expressly connects that *assembling* and that *washing* with our drawing near to God in the heavenly sanctuary, by faith in Christ's blood, chap. x. 19. 22. 25. And just so here, our sabbatizing on the day of Christ's resting from his works, is connected with our studying to enter into his heavenly rest, lest we should fall and come short of it by unbelief.

For, as the faith in Christ's blood, whereby we draw near to God in the heavenly sanctuary, is professed in baptism, and the Lord's supper, which are also the means of our holding fast the profession of that faith; even so Christ's sabbatism is an instituted sign to the people of God, in the observation of which they profess the faith of the promise left them of entering into his rest; and the keeping of this sabbath is the mean of their holding fast this profession. So that this sabbatism belongs as much to the profession which the Hebrews are here called to hold fast, ver.

14. as the washing our bodies with pure water, and the assembling of ourselves together, belong to the profession they are called to hold fast, chap. x. 23.

## S E C T. IX.

*The first day of the week must be distinguished from other days by sabbatizing.*

**W**HEN the apostle calls the keeping of this other day than the seventh a sabbatism, he plainly shews that it must be distinguished from other days of the week by sabbatizing; that is to say, resting from our own works that we work on the other days. For this reason the seventh day was called the *sabbath*, and was a sabbatism. And if the day of Christ's entering into his rest were not to be distinguished from other days by sabbatizing, there would be no sabbatism in the case; that name could not be applied to it; nor would that day have any relation, even in the way of a sign, to the rest to which it belongs.

As to the sabbatism of the seventh day; when the Israelites, in their habitations in the wilderness, had no such works to work on any day, as those their works which are pointed at in the fourth command, and which they wrought when they came to dwell in the land of Canaan, and so could not distinguish the seventh day by resting from those works; then they were ordered to distinguish it, as the sabbath, by ceasing from the only daily work they had; which was about the manna, gathering and preparing it by fire for eating. And the Lord assisted them in that sabbatizing by a miracle. See Exod. xvi. 22.—30. and xxxv. 3. But when they came into the land of Canaan, then they rested on the seventh day from those their daily works, to which the fourth command has respect: for they could not then suppose, that the rest excluded the dressing of their victuals, and kindling of fire for that purpose, as in the extraordinary

traordinary case of the manna, when that was the only daily work they had to rest from in their habitations, and from which they could not rest without a miracle. Therefore, though the Pharisees, in the time of our Lord, were exact to superstition about the rest, they had entertainments in their houses on the sabbath; for he was entertained in the house of one of the chief of them on that day. See Luke xiv. 1. 7. 12. 13. And neither that, nor any other work of necessity or of mercy, is excluded in the rest of a sabbath-day; as appears plainly from the doctrine and practice of our Lord, who perfectly kept and fulfilled the fourth commandment.

And we must here take care to observe, that abstinence, in fasting, from our profitable labour and business, is not to be held in the same view with the rest from our works in the sabbatism: for that abstinence from our works required in fasting, is, as abstinence from meat and drink, to afflict our souls, and must be considered as a sort of mortification; but the cessation of the sabbath must be rather thought of as an ease and refreshment, and ought to be an expression of our joy and thankfulness, for that our Lord Jesus has wrought all our works for us, and has entered into his rest, into which we hope to enter through those works from which he has rested.

## S E C T. X.

*This sabbatism is the privilege of God's peculiar people.*

THE apostle says, this *sabbatism remains*, or is left, *to the people of God*, together with the *promise of entering into his rest*. It is their peculiar privilege, even as baptism and the Lord's supper. And they who from the beginning *came together on the first day of the week to break bread*, are the sort of people to whom this sabbatism is left. We may see, that the sabbatism of the seventh day was the privilege of  
God's

God's peculiar people Israel after the flesh, from Exod. xxxi. 13. and Ezek. xx. 12.; where he says, he gave it to be a sign betwixt him and them, that they might know, that he is the Lord that sanctifies them, *i. e.* separates them from other people, to himself, to rest with him. And if it was kept before he gave it them, then it must have belonged to the peculiar people: for, after the first promise of Christ, distinguishing the two *seeds*, and from the time of Seth, there always was such a people. Tho' it were given to Adam while he rested with God in Paradise; yet, when he was cast out of that rest for his sin, he had no more right to the day of rest, than he had to the tree of life after he forfeited his life. And if the grant of the sabbatism was renewed to him after the promise of *the seed of the woman*, it behoved it then to go upon the footing of that promise which distinguishes the two *seeds*, and so belong to the peculiar people, even as it did afterward to Israel.

The apostle points out the people of God, in the context, prefigured by Israel after the flesh, and describes them, in distinction from that Israel, by the true rest into which they are called to enter. See chap. iii. 1. 6. 12. 13. 14. and iv. 1. 3. 11. 14. And indeed none but Christ's disciples, taught by him to profess the faith of the promise of entering into his rest, can keep his sabbath. A man that is openly self-righteous and worldly, cannot profess, in resting from his works on that day, that he is studying to enter into Christ's rest, or fearing lest he should come short of it by unbelief. He who sabbatizes as the Pharisees did, going about to establish their own righteousness, and seeking a rest in this world, an earthly rest, cannot profess, *That he seeks not rest by his own works of righteousness\**, but only by the works from which he believes the Son of God hath rested; and that he seeks not a rest in this present world, but a share with Jesus in his heavenly rest, which is the reward

Vol. II.

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\* Deut. ix 5. 6.

*of his works.* Seeing this is the plain significancy of sabbatizing on the Lord's day, and is the very profession that is made in it, it cannot be thought proper for any people, but those who assemble voluntarily on that day, exhorting one another to hold fast this Christian profession, and who look on this sabbatizing as a blessed privilege.

The Lord supposed, that his believing Jews would reckon the enjoyment of his sabbath-day as a great privilege, when calling them to pray that they might have safety and rest at the destruction of Jerusalem; he said, Matth. xxiv. 20. *Pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day.* He bids them pray, that their flight, in that time of tribulation and wrath upon their nation, might not disturb their rest on his sabbath: for it can only be that he meant by the sabbath; because he knew the seventh-day sabbath, would be set aside to the Jews as well as Gentiles, before that flight from Jerusalem. And even they who will not acknowledge the institution of Christ's sabbatism in this passage of the epistle to the Hebrews, must allow, that it sets aside that sabbath of the seventh day, and that this was done before the Christian Jews left Jerusalem.

Now, though professors of the Christian faith may be cut off, by Christ's discipline, from the congregation of his people, for forsaking the assembling to the Lord's supper, or breaking his sabbath, even as they who did not eat the passover, and brake the sabbath, were cut off from Israel after the flesh by the carnal discipline; yet the constraining of other people, by secular power, to sabbatise, who know not, nor love the meaning of it, and cannot profess what is professed in it, has laid them under a necessity to lie to God, and to hypocrise in resting from their works, and has served to the profanation of the Lord's sabbath; even as his supper would be greatly profaned by compelling those who are not his disciples to eat it.

PREDESTINATION IMPUGNED and DEFENDED,  
in Two Letters, the First Impugning,  
the Second Defending that Doctrine.

L E T T E R I.

[From the *Weekly Miscellany*, April 14. 1739, as reprinted in  
the *Scots Magazine* for April that year.]

A Discourse on Predestination, which is still professedly maintained by several of our Dissenters, and likely to spread at present amongst the ignorant people of the church of England by the means of some enthusiasts lately risen up in this kingdom.

MIR HOOKER,

**T**HE doctrine of *absolute predestination*, and *irrespective reprobation*, is an objection to God's impartiality. That God should, as some assert, out of mankind, fallen and beheld in an equal degree of demerit, give his Son to die for the redemption of some of them, and those a small part, and leave the rest without a Redeemer; that, antecedent and without any respect to what they can, or shall do, he has determined some of them to be eternally happy, and some to be as eternally wretched; that, accordingly, he gives so much grace to the former, that they cannot miss of heaven, and so little to the latter, that they cannot possibly attain it: this is a scheme of doctrine entirely irreconcilable with the divine impartiality; but then it is also irreconcilable with reason, our natural notions of God, plain passages of scripture, and is only supported by broken fragments and texts of the Bible considered by themselves, without regard to their context and true meaning, misunderstood and misapplied, and therefore cannot be true.

Our natural notions of the Deity are those of a wise, good, and just being; the Maker, the Preserver of men; who shews his good will to all his creatures, and delights in communicating existence, and the benefits of it! Now, reason says, such a being cannot be fanciful, cannot be hard, cannot be injurious. He who made all men, cannot but love all men, so long as they endeavour alike to please and obey him. God is a Sovereign, but not an earthly one, surrounded with prejudice, ignorance, error, humour, or weakness. We bless his almighty power, because it delights not in doing mischief, because it is sweetened with mercy, regulated by justice, directed by wisdom. Can such a being shew unequal favour, or unequal severity, to objects that are alike? Can he love a man for doing what he could not help doing, or hate a man for doing what he could not but do? Is it the part of wisdom, is it the part of equity, to make a difference in creatures, alike the objects of his wrath or mercy? Is it goodness, is it justice, to bring a person into being without his consent, without allowing him a possibility of making himself easy, without a possibility of avoiding wretchedness, and that for ever? How could a creature deserve to be put into such circumstances, before he existed? How then could God place him in them, when he did not deserve it, unless he delights in shewing his power, at the expence of all his other perfections? This is the idea of a sovereign tyrant, not of a wise, a good, a just, a perfect God. But perhaps it will be said, "These are depths too great for shallow reason to fathom: *Who art thou that repliest against God?* Search the scriptures, and see what revelation has discovered in this matter." Let us search them, then.

Here we find God represented as a master; but not an hard one, *gathering where he has not sowed, or reaping where he has not sown*; but requiring of every man, and *accepting every man, according to what he has, and not according to what he has not.* We be-  
hold



hold him as a Sovereign, different in his administrations, but always just and good: putting mankind under various dispensations, the Jew under a law, the Gentile under nature; but then taking account and judging them accordingly, the Jew by his law, the other without it. We see him figured out as a Father, tender, compassionate, declaring he delights not in the death of him that dies, setting life and death before men, courting them to the one, deterring them from the other, and weeping over those who would not be persuaded to be happy. The sacred page sets before us God so full of love and mercy to mankind, that he sent his only begotten Son, to the intent, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Does the scripture confine the benefit of this Redeemer to a few? No, but quite otherwise says, that *he died for all; that God laid on him the iniquity of us all.* The apostle to the Romans puts this beyond dispute, where he teaches, that as the gift of God in Christ in some things exceeded the offence of Adam, so in nothing it fell short of it: And therefore, as this brought *judgment on all men, so the free gift of life through Christ came upon all men: for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.* As therefore, if man had kept his integrity, every one would have had it in his power to please God; so by the gift of Christ every one must have it too: since the consequences of redemption extended full as wide, as those of Adam's transgression; that is, to all men. These are plain passages of holy scripture, which represent to us an universal God and Father of all, an universal Redeemer of mankind, the offers of life and death made to every one of them; and, consequently, a possibility of attaining the one; and escaping the other in every one; unless we can suspect God of practising the greatest mockery and derision to his creatures, as well as injustice.

I proceed to examine the passages brought in support of the contrary opinion, and shew the misinterpretation and wrong application of them. And, previous to this, I must lay down a rule or two necessary to be observed in explaining passages of scripture, if we have not a desire to be deceived. One is, to consider the occasion, connection, and drift of the place in question, and give it the meaning proper to the argument the writer is engaged in. Another is, to resolve difficult and doubtful texts by plain and certain ones. If in these lights we examine the 29th and 30th verses of the 8th chapter to the Romans, we shall find scripture consistent with itself and reason, in this point, as well as in all others. The apostle, in this chapter, as almost all through the epistle, sets himself to prove, that the distinction of Jew and Gentile was now ceased; that other nations had an equal share in the Messiah, with the Jewish; that, in order to have the benefit of Christ, faith was necessary, and obedience to the new covenant; but not circumcision or other legal performances, as the Jews contended; who would allow the offers of the gospel to be made to none till they became Jews; and those who would not comply with them in this matter, they persecuted and afflicted; and the Gentile Christians by this means were distressed and contumeliously used, even to death. To convince the Jews of their error, and beat them out of that fond conceit, that they were the only people of God; and to comfort the suffering Gentiles, he tells them, that God had attested his acceptance of the Gentile converts by the gifts of his Spirit to them: *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the Sons of God:—and if sons, then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.* The way to this glory is this present state of suffering: *I reckon the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* We shall be delivered  
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in God's good time, and shall be comforted above our affliction. We hope for this deliverance, and pray for it. But, in this case, as in all others, *the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God; who knows better than we ourselves, what is good for us, and therefore has sent you these present afflictions, to make you more glorious and more happy by your behaviour under them. For we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose; that is, whom he has called to this state of affliction and suffering for the sake of the gospel, according to his design of putting those into the post of danger, who, he foresaw, would be able to stand it: and whom he did thus foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, viz. in suffering for him and like him, that he might be the first-born among many brethren, the captain of salvation made perfect through suffering. Moreover, whom he did predestinate for this purpose of suffering for the gospel at that time, them he also called to it; and whom he called, them he also, upon their good behaviour under afflictions, justified; that is, acquitted, received into favour; and whom he thus justified and approved, them he also glorified; that is, rewarded with the triumphs of his grace in this life, and, if they persevere in duty, will give them glory in the other. Here is an account of some who were foreseen fit for suffering for religion, who therefore were destined for that office, called to it, acquitted for their good behaviour in it, and rewarded for it. Not a syllable appears, that can give the least support to the doctrine of an absolute determination of any man to happiness or misery, without his having the power to obtain the one, or avoid the other. It is the condition of all mankind, to be called to some sort of duty and station in life. Whom God foresees fit for one, according*

according to his purpose of governing and conducting the affairs of the world, he predestines and calls to it, and acquits and rewards them for behaving well in it. An eye, tinged with the rigid predestinarian tenets, can read the whole scheme in every word of this paragraph, and dream of secret purposes, hidden wills, inward efficacious calls; and what not? but an unprejudiced reader will see nothing of all this, nor will suffer a meaning to be drawn out of it, inconsistent with the apostle's declaration in the verse almost immediately following, that God *spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*; therefore not for a few only, whom he predestinated, happen what will, to eternal life.

Having done with this chapter, proceed we to the next, the 9th to the Romans, which has been thought to contain many passages in favour of the doctrine I am overthrowing: but, upon examination, we shall find they are just as little to the purpose, as that I have already explained. The apostle begins the chapter with good wishes and hearty desires for his countrymen the Jews, and mentions some of their privileges, *the adoption, the glory of God in their temple, the covenants, the law, the service of God, the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came*. But he bids them not be vain of all this, or trust in it: for the promise, as far as it was a promise of salvation and eternal life, was not to all Abraham's seed, or indeed to any barely for descending from him; but to the seed of his faith, those that were like him in goodness, whether Jew or Gentile. For so he expressly says, *They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of promise are counted for the seed*. Then he proceeds to instruct them, not to think it hard, that God now for their sins rejected the Jews from being his people, and chose other nations in their stead, to the like honour: for to raise or depress a people, outwardly to favour and prosper  
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the inhabitants of one country, and not those of another, was the undoubted prerogative of the Great Sovereign of the world, without any injury, and therefore without any ground of complaint to any man, beheld in the whole of his existence. Thus he once selected the Jewish people under one covenant, and now he chuses others, with whom to place his name, and to whom to reveal himself; not determining one to damnation, or the other to salvation, upon any other terms, than those of having, or wanting faith and obedience. If God was at liberty to adopt the Jewish nation, why is he not at liberty now to adopt another to like or greater privileges? For consider, says the apostle, *when Rebecca had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, (the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* In this passage two things are certain: First, That by Jacob and Esau we cannot understand their persons, but the nations descended from them. Secondly, That *loved* and *hated*, here, does not mean the one to be saved, and the other damned; but one to be outwardly favoured in this life, and the other not so; that is, that one should command, and the other obey him. The reason for the first observation is plain: because what was said of them, was not true of them in their own persons; for Esau never served Jacob, that we read of: but it was true of the nations descended from them; for the posterity of Esau did serve the posterity of Jacob, till at the time foretold he shook his yoke from him: agreeably to what the Lord said to Rebecca, enquiring why the children struggled within her, *Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall*

*shall be stronger than the other people and the elder shall serve the younger.*

Since then, it is certain, we are to understand by Jacob and Esau, in this place, not their single persons, but the nations sprung from them; it is also equally certain, that the words *loved* and *hated*, here, do not imply the one to be eternally saved, or the other eternally damned; but only, that the one should bear rule, and be more favoured than the other, in the present life. For, since by Esau, we must mean the Edomites sprung from him, will any one in his wits say, that all the Edomites were damned? and, since by Jacob, is meant the Jews derived from him, a man must be still as much out of his wits to assert, that all the Jews were eternally saved. And yet both these assertions must be maintained by him, who interprets *loved* and *hated* in this text, as relating to the future states of heaven and hell. Since, then, the sense I have given to Jacob being *loved* and Esau *hated*, can be the only true one, the meaning of this often objected passage is no more than this, That when Rebecca was with child of twins, Esau and Jacob, before the children were born, or had done good or evil, God said to her, *The descendents of Jacob shall bear rule, and be more honoured in this life, than the descendents of Esau.* And this he told her before they were born, that God's raising the Jewish nation to greatness, and depressing the Edomites, might appear to be by virtue of his prerogative; and that his purpose of electing this people to execute his designs, and not the other, might stand; not of works, for one people was not better than the other; but of God, who was pleased, for his own secret reasons, to call the one his people, and not the other. For in such cases, of bestowing outward favours and revelations of himself, God is accountable to none; but *will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion,* as he told Moses with respect to his choice of the Jewish

Jewish people. So, then, it was not Esau's running and crying for the blessing, which could entail it on his posterity: for God was pleased antecedently to shew mercy on the descendants of Jacob, and raise them above the other; which he might do, for wise reasons, which we have no right to enquire into.

The apostle goes on to tell the Jews, that hardness of heart had happened to them for their sins and unbelief: that this also was the undoubted privilege of God, to remove the light from those who shut their eyes, and harden them who went on to harden themselves: that, in this case, as *he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, so whom he will, he hardeneth*. When men have sinned themselves out of God's favour, and made themselves ripe for judgment and punishment, God will in anger sometimes defer the execution, suffering them, in the meantime, to go on in wickedness, that his justice on impenitent sinners may more signally appear. Thus he did to Pharoah and his nation: he had hardened his heart against many messages and many plagues, till at last he made himself ripe for destruction. But God was then pleased to keep him a little longer alive, that his punishment might be more evident in the destruction of him and his people in the Red sea. "I had determined," (says God) "to destroy thee and thy people with the pestilence; for ye had deserved, and I had resolved your death: but *I raised thee up from that bed of sickness for this very purpose, that I might shew my power in thee; and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.*" This the apostle intimates to be the case of the Jews, who had sinned themselves out of God's favour, and deserved his anger long before he poured it on them; but he *endured them with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, that he might make his power more clearly discerned, and might take that opportunity of making known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared to*

glory, even the Gentiles, whom he called to be his church and people. The murmuring Jews reply, “If this be the case, if we are cast off from being God’s people, because he hardens us; *why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?*” The apostle answers such a bold questioning of the ways of Providence, in the disposal of its favours in this life, in its chusing this, and rejecting that people, with great indignation, and a passage out of one of their prophets, *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?* that is, Hath not God power to raise one nation to the honour of being called his people, and reject another from being so, when they grow unworthy that name? That this is the meaning of the passage; and that by *vessel*, we are to understand, not a single person, but a nation; and by *honour* and *dishonour*, outward privileges and advantages in this world; is plain from Jer. xviii. whence this allusion of the potter is taken. For thus it stands there: The prophet went by God’s order to the potter’s house, who wrought a work on the wheels, and the vessel that he made of clay, was marred in the hand of the potter, so he made it again another vessel as seemed good to him. Then the word of the Lord came to the prophet, saying, *O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.* What follows there, confirms this explication where God says, *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, to pull it down, if it turn and repent, I also will change my purpose: and when I speak of building a nation, if it do evil, I will not benefit them.* The full import of the passage, then, is no more than this: That mankind are in the hand of God, as the lump of clay in the potter’s; as he  
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can frame out of that a vessel of more or less honourable use, so can God out of mankind make nations with more or less privileges : and as, when the vessel designed for honour becomes marred in the turning, the potter can apply it to another form ; so, when a nation, favoured and privileged, has rendered itself unworthy such honour, God can dispose it in a less advantageous manner.

These are the principal scriptures brought to prove, that God, with respect to another life, has had no regard to what men could do, or have done ; but has chosen some men to be happy for ever, antecedent to their birth, and reprobated some to be miserable for ever, and that before they were born ; so that it never was in the power of the one to be saved, or the other to be damned. But these texts appear to have no such meaning ; and therefore this doctrine is not founded in, but is contray to plain passages of scripture, as well as reason : and, consequently is not true ; and, therefore, cannot be made an objection to the divine impartiality ; which I have been contending for.

Yours, &c.

L. E. T.

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Yours, &c.

L. E. T.

L E T T E R II.

Addressed to the Author of the preceding Discourse.

[From the *Scots Magazine*, November 1739.]

S I R,

Edinburgh, June 13. 1739.

THE complaint in the title of your discourse surprised me a little, when I reflected, that the *predestination*, which is *still maintained by several Dissenters, and likely to spread among the ignorant of the Church of England, by means of some lately risen enthusiasts*, must be much the same that is professed in the articles of the church, and subscribed by her clergy. This should be the doctrine of the church, if she have any doctrine; and can it be, that no body in the church holds it, but those lately risen enthusiasts, and the ignorant people that hearken to them?

One who views this doctrine in the light wherein you represent it, with the character it gives of the Deity, would need a great deal of charity to make him think well of the English clergy, who have subscribed articles containing a scheme of doctrine *entirely irreconcilable with the divine impartiality, with reason, our natural notions of God, and with plain passages of scripture*; a scheme that sets forth God as *delighting in shewing his power, at the expence of all his other perfections, and as a sovereign tyrant,—practising the greatest mockery and derision to his creatures, as well as injustice.*

It is hard to believe, that men of integrity or common honesty would, upon any consideration, subscribe such a horrible scheme, or submit to it, even as a condition of ecclesiastic peace. Certainly these subscribers, many of them wise and good men, must have seen this doctrine in a more favourable light, and looked on it as far more tolerable than you would have

have it appear; or I cannot say what should be thought of them.

Nor will the learned clergy of England altogether approve of your high assurance, in determining a question in point of reason, that has exercised the wits of the greatest disputers of the world, ancient and modern, Heathen and Christian. The ancient philosophers, who professed to follow reason as their guide, were divided upon the question about liberty and necessity; and so are those men who would now appear entirely devoted to their natural notions of God, against revelation; and the Christian philosophers, both Popish and Protestant, differ upon it in like manner. And would you class all the great reasoners on the side of necessity with your late enthusiasts and ignorants? Or, are you confident you have done enough to make all their reasoning appear entirely inconsistent with reason and our natural notions of God?

Your great confidence seems founded on a supposition which could not well be made, at this time of day, by a skilful writer on your subject. You seem to suppose, that your arguments, which, to give them the more force, you put in the form of questions, cannot be turned back upon yourself by your own scheme, which still includes the Creator and his *prescience* and providence. That does not indeed make necessity, but it certainly supposes and takes it in. If you had but thought of a possibility of retorting your questions, about *bringing* such persons *into being*, and *their deserving to be put into such circumstances before they existed*, &c. you would have put them with a little more caution and reserve, and made your inferences touching the divine character in softer and more decent expressions. I might here recommend you to Bayle, not to teach you scepticism, but a little more modesty, as very becoming upon a subject that has hitherto defied human reason to fathom it.

Allow

Allow me, after this friendly admonition, to observe, with the like freedom, your way of searching the scriptures, to see what revelation has discovered in this matter.

The rules you lay down, as necessary to be observed by them who would not be deceived; are, 1. *To consider the occasion, connection, and drift of the place in question, and give it the meaning proper to the writer's argument.* 2. *To resolve difficult and doubtful texts, by plain and certain ones.*

Very good rules! but I am afraid, the second especially, will be of little use betwixt you and a rigid predestination. For a text that is plain and certain to him, because he thinks it plain on his side of the question, may be difficult and dark to you, as requiring some art to make the words of it ply to your scheme; and therefore you would explain it by texts, plain and certain to you, for the same reason for which they will be difficult and dark to him; whose eye, you will say, *is tinged with his rigid predestinarian tenets*; as he, on the other hand, will not fail to tell you, that your eye is tinged with a vain conceit of your own sufficiency, and with the pride of your knowledge and merit; from which, till you be converted, and made as a little child, you shall never truly know the gospel of the grace of God. However this debate end betwixt you and him, I may venture to say, that few of us look into the scriptures with untinged eyes; and till they be cleared, rules for seeing will be useless; but then, needless.

Now, let us see how you observe your own rules. You begin with the character of God, which you give, not from that remarkable passage of the Old Testament where he himself gives it to Moses, which is pointed to by Paul, Rom. chap. ix. nor from any passage of the New Testament that serves expressly to declare or explain that name of God, but from *broken fragments* of a parable and of a passage about acceptable alms: and, after a slight touch on the  
topic

topic of the sanctions of the divine law, and Jesus's weeping over Jerufalem, that was to be destroyed according to the old prophecies, you put the character of God as standing in the relation of a God and Father to all of mankind without any difference, upon the unconfinedness of the benefit of the Redeemer; which you prove by these expressions, *He died for all,* and, *God laid on him the iniquity of us all*: though you cannot be ignorant, how the predestinarians would shew, from the connection and drift of these and other such texts, that they cannot be taken to mean all of mankind, but of the elect and the church of every nation of the world, and sort of men without difference. And if they could perceive any difficulty or doubtfulness in such texts, they would, according to your rule, resolve them by texts that speak plainly and certainly of a distinction made by Christ's death, according to the divine purpose about it, intimated beforehand in the prophecies, and of the redemption of a peculiar people out of every nation, for whom Christ prays, as he does not for the world: and they will be sure to tell you, if your eye were not deeply tinged, you could not but see this distinction, carried from the third chapter of Genesis throughout the scripture to the end of the Revelation, and behold a beautiful consistency betwixt the universal expressions and the particular.

But you are positive, "the apostle to the Romans puts this beyond dispute, where he teaches, that as the gift of God in Christ in some things exceeded the offence of Adam, so in nothing it fell short of it: and therefore, as this brought *judgment on all men, so the free gift of life through Christ came upon all men: for, as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.* As therefore, if man had kept his integrity, every one would have had it in his power to please God; so, by the gift of Christ, every one must have it too: since the consequences of redemption extended full as

wide as those of Adam's transgression, *i. e.* to all men."

This will put the predestinarians in mind of your complaint against them for *supporting their doctrine by broken fragments and texts of the Bible considered by themselves, without regard to their context and true meaning*; and they will be ready here to turn it against yourself. They will alledge you give an idea of the consequences of Adam's transgression, and of redemption, that could not come originally from the apostle's words, or the drift of the place. Whatever dispute may be about these consequences, one thing is plain and certain in the text, that *death* is the consequence of Adam's transgression, and *eternal life* the consequence of redemption. And the words of 1 Cor. chap. xv. that you join to the words of this text, serve to let us see, that it is life from the dead. But that whole chapter to the Corinthians speaks of no other resurrection but that of the just, and plainly restricts the *all*, who are to be *made alive in Christ as they died in Adam*, to them *that are Christ's*, who, as they have borne the image of the earthly man, shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now, if death be the consequence of Adam's offence, and eternal life from the dead the consequence of redemption; then, by your argument, the resurrection unto life eternal through Christ, must come upon all them upon whom death passed through Adam. The consequence of the offence was not a mere possibility of dying, but certain and unavoidable death, even on *them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression*; and if the gift of righteousness by Jesus Christ bring no more but a possibility of attaining life from the dead, this will be one thing very remarkable wherein the gift of *Christ falls short* of the offence of Adam; and yet the apostle is declaring how much more efficacious it is to those to whom it extends, in these same words from which you draw your argument, *by one man's offence, or one offence, death reigned by*  
*one,*



one, much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ. What does he mean by this limitation, they which receive the abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, while he is shewing how far the gift exceeds the offence? He delights to speak universally, in opposition to the Jewish limitation; but he always takes care to debar your universality, equally opposite to the freedom and abundance of the gift with the Jewish restriction.

Having finished your scripture-proofs with a reproach on the divine character, if it should not answer to this your draught, you next come to answer objections from two passages of scripture.

The first is, Rom. viii. 29. 30. where you make the word *foreknow* your key to open the whole, taking this *foreknowledge* to signify no more but bare *fore-sight*; without noticing how the predestinarians compare this text with 1 Pet. i. 20. where this word is taken to signify *foreordaining*, as importing more than speculation. Then, for *foreknowing them*, you put, *foreseeing their fitness for suffering*. But the text says, *he did foreknow them*, even as it lays, *he did predestinate them conformed to the image of his Son, and called them, and justified them, and glorified them*. The predestinarians, you know, observing the common use of the word *knowledge* and of *foreknowledge* in scripture, take God's foreknowledge to be *the counsel of his will, according to which he worketh all*, Eph. i. 11. and they take it for his gracious eye and preventing regard to them, who did not first chuse or love him independently of his purpose, but he them. And when he predestinated them conformed to his Son in the state of suffering, this conformity to which they are predestinated, must take in likeness to him in the disposition and fitness for suffering, and in their behaviour under it: and further, they insist upon it, that those who are foreknown and predestinated to this state, are, according to the text, most certainly glorified without

without exception or reserve. Now, it was your business to make all this appear false, otherwise than by telling them of their tinged eyes.

Your sense of the passage comes to this: "Here is an account of some who were foreseen fit for suffering for religion, who therefore were destined for that office, called to it, acquitted for their good behaviour in it, and rewarded for it, *i. e.* with the triumphs of grace in this life, and, if they persevered in duty, with glory in the other."

Thus you, 1. Ascribe their being destined to the office of suffering for Christ, and like him, unto their ability and fitness for this, foreseen. But I am afraid it will take great stretching to reconcile this to the putting of Paul himself in the post of greatest danger, or to his ways of speaking upon his own case, or even to these words of his to suffering Christians, *Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.* 2. You ascribe their being justified, to their good behaviour in their suffering state; and take no notice how the apostle in the context ascribes it to Christ's death, resurrection, and intercession. If you mean the same thing with him in this epistle on justification, I dare say your choice of words to express it is vastly different. 3. You seem to make the perseverance of the justified elect uncertain, and loose the connection betwixt justification and the reward; against an express affirmation in the text, and against the apostle's assertions in the following words, to the end of the chapter. He makes the victory certain through him that loved them, and speaks the certainty of their perseverance in his love in the strongest terms imaginable, and that by way of inference from God's *foreknowing them.*

However your manner of expression may differ from Paul's as one of our countrymen said, he differed only in words from his minister, when being asked, What is sin? he answered, Saving grace; your sense is the same, by the following words, *God spareth*

*spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*; which you would have to be all of mankind; without any regard to the whole context, which, too plainly for you, fixes this *all* to God's elect and the predestinated. And the *all things* that God gives with his Son, must be those great things of which the apostle had been speaking, as free and unmerited by us as the gift of his Son.

As to Rom. chap. ix. you first notice, that the apostle sets himself against the boasting of the Jews, by shewing them, that "the promise, as far as it was a promise of salvation and eternal life, was only to the seed of Abraham's faith,—whether Jew or Gentile." Then you allow sovereignty, as the prerogative of God, in bestowing temporal privileges, and preferring one people or nation to another. But here you lose sight of your first purpose, touching the promise to the true Israel, as it is a promise of eternal life. And when you speak of sovereignty with respect to nations and bodies of men, I cannot see how the whole of any one man's existence comes in as a salvo: for I suppose your vessels, the nations, exist only in this present world; and I hope you are not saying, that God is the Great Sovereign of this world only, and not of the next world.

However, you allow as much sovereignty as any predestinarian can desire, in the choice (shall I say?) of the typical Israel. But then, far aside from this purpose, you talk of hardening, as the punishment of sin, without the least occasion for it in your text; yea, by this you cut off all occasion for that objection, which comes immediately against it, *Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?* which it behoved you to repel by sovereignty; yet still holding by your foresaid distinction, and laying the whole stress of your defence on the sense of the word *vessels*; which you must have to signify, not single persons, (as Paul, or as those mentioned 2 Tim. ii. 20. 21.) but *nations*; and you will have *honour and dishonour*,  
only

only to respect outward, *i. e.* national privileges and advantages in this world. And even here again, your bias carries you from the point of sovereignty, and sways you to prove, by the text in Jeremiah, merit or demerit, as to the disposal of nations with respect to national honour or dishonour.

But, unhappily for you, the very next words of the apostle determine most plainly and certainly the sense of the word *vessels*. His words are,—*The vessels of mercy, which he hath afore prepared unto glory; even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the nations; as he saith also in Osee, &c.* Were these vessels nations! And what were their national privileges? Or, does not the apostle look upon these (the small remnant of the Jewish nation, together with them of every other nation who believed on Christ for righteousness) as the seed of Abraham's faith, unto whom the promise was, as it is a promise of salvation and eternal life? And does he not shew, that these were pointed out beforehand in the prophecies as the people of God, whom he would save by the faith of Christ; while the bulk of the Jewish people were cut off from that salvation, and fell short of the right to eternal life, through their stumbling at Christ, who was before appointed as a stumbling-stone and rock of offence to them?

You would vindicate God, by denying this fact, plainly enough asserted by Paul; who, at the same time, rejects with the greatest indignation the inferences from it that you allow, and justifies God. And by comparing what he says for him, Rom. ix. 20.—23. and xi. 33.—36. with your vindication, it may appear which of you have most studied the glory and honour of the Deity.

I am, &c.

R E.

REMARKS on Dr BENSON'S Doctrine of  
PREDESTINATION Reviewed\*.

BEVEROVICIUS might have practised the art of physic, though he had been satisfied that the end of mens lives was unalterably fixed. He could not propose by that art to make their lives without end. And supposing the time of the end unalterably fixed and determined, he could not know but the recovery of patients by his practice was as unalterably determined, as the continuance of their lives to their fixed ends. For did that learned physician suppose, in the question about which he wanted satisfaction, that the end of mens lives might be fixed, without fixing the means whereby they should be continued to that end, and without determining the means of bringing them to that same end? The practice of physic has, in fact, served to both these purposes; and men have been as effectually both cured and killed by practisers who have held the side of necessity in this question, as by those who take the side of liberty. We shall charitably say for both sides, that their great design and chief study in practising that honourable and profitable art, is the recovery of the sick. And, with respect to that, this same learned doctor could not possibly know, but his practice might be the same thing to the recovery of his patients ordained to recover, as the sailors abiding with Paul in the ship, was to the saving of all the lives in that ship. And his practice might have the same sort of certain connection with the recovery of a patient ordained to longer life, that Paul's keeping under his body, and bringing it into subjection, had with his not being a reprobate

\* Dr Benson says, "That Beverovicus, a learned physician, would not practise physic till he should know whether the end of mens lives was unalterably fixed." This introduces the remarks.

reprobate in the judgment. It was unalterably fixed, that there should be no loss of life, but of the ship; but this was in certain connection with the sailors abiding in the ship, which was as unalterably determined. And it was in like manner fixed, that Paul, whom nothing present or to come, could separate from God's love in Christ Jesus, should not be a reprobate in the judgment; but this was in firm connection with his keeping under his body, which was as unalterably fixed as the other. As therefore it might have been said to Beverovicus, very agreeably to the fixed side of the question, that if he did not practise the art of physic, some men's lives would be shortened; he might have set himself to practise that art, without being satisfied on the other side of the question. But the case of a man induced to practise that art, by being satisfied in this question, may be looked on as somewhat extraordinary.

And much like this, was the case of that learned divine, Dr Benson. He also wanted to be satisfied, whether the actions of men and their final state were unalterably fixed. And this he wanted on a twofold account. The first is, to regulate his own actions, if free, and prepare himself for happiness, if decreed conditionally; or, if otherwise, to acquiesce in what was not to be resisted or avoided.

But, though his actions were as unalterably fixed as their connection with his final state; this could make no difference as to his regulating his actions, unless he were also satisfied to what actions he was unalterably determined; which he could never be, on that supposition, till the actions were done. And so it was the same thing to his regulating his actions, whether these actions and his final state had been unalterably fixed by his Creator or not. He says, on the other hand, if they should be so fixed, he wanted to acquiesce, as much as possible, in what could not be resisted. And this still supposes him to know what is absolutely decreed concerning his actions and final state;

state; or, wherein would he acquiesce? Yea, he proposes a liberty of acquiescing, where he supposes not liberty. For how could he in that case acquiesce, except it were determined, that he should certainly do so? We see men full as careful about working out their own salvation, who are persuaded, it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure, as Dr Benson can be, who is satisfied, his will is free from any necessity, arising from a divine decree about his actions. However free he thought himself, in seeking to be satisfied about this question, the true consequence of it is, in fact, his being a professed adversary to absolute predestination; as we see he is in his review. And whether he by this is prepared for happiness or misery, before his Lawgiver and Judge; a predestinarian will say, he has been appointed to it by his Creator and Sovereign Lord.

In the next place, he wanted to be satisfied; by this enquiry, if his undertaking the care of souls would be to any purpose; seeing it could answer no end to persuade such as have no power, nor could do any thing but what they did, as chained down to one course of action by an irreversible decree; in which case, arguments and motives, &c. could avail nothing.

It seems then he set himself to the sacred work of the ministry, knowing this, that those of whose souls he undertook the care, had power to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, and mind, and their neighbour as themselves, and so to live. For, if he knew they had not power to do this, he could not propose to persuade them to it. He could not, in this case, say to his hearers, as the Lord said to the Jewish lawyer, enquiring how he should regulate his actions to prepare himself for happiness, *This do, and thou shalt live.* For he concluded, this could answer no end, if they had not power. And surely he could not propose to set aside this condition of life,

and teach his people to prepare themselves for happiness without regard to it.

But even in persuading men to prepare themselves for happiness in his own way, he concluded it would be to no purpose, if they could not do any thing but what they did, as chained down to one course of action by an irreverfible decree.

Yet fupposing men chained down to one course of action, if perfuafion, with arguments and motives, be a link of that chain; it must, in that cafe, be to very certain purpofe. For would Dr Benfon's perfuafions be to no purpose, would they answer no end, if they were irrefiftibly decreed as the means to the end of bringing fome men into a course of good actions, and fixing them in that course? And as he could not know but this might be the cafe, he might even have fet himself to the work of the ministry upon this fame fupposition, as many fucceffful ministers had done before him. He might have encouraged himself as the Lord did, when he faid, *All that the Father hath given to me, fhall come unto me.* He might have fet himself to that work in the view expreffed by Paul in thefe words, *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increafe.* And 2 Tim. ii. 25.

The Doctor makes the queftion, about which he wanted to be fatisfied, the fame with this, Whether the fcripture-texts, fpeaking of this fubject, be to be underftood literally or figuratively? If underftood literally, he cannot then endeavour to regulate his own actions, nor can he undertake the care of fouls; but if figuratively, then he may fet himself, to prepare for happiness, and perfuade others to do fo with hope of fuccefs.

Here we have a tacit acknowledgment, that the letter of the fcripture-texts on this fubject is againft him. But by his ftudy for fatisfaction on this queftion, he has found out the fense of thofe texts which

fpeak



ſpeak figuratively, to be only for conditional decrees. And this is to be made out of a long diſcourſe, that takes up the greateſt part of his review, ſerving to inſtruct us in this point, that when God condeſcends to our capacity, ſpeaking of himſelf to us after the manner of men, we are not for this to think of any imperfection in him. And ſo, when his foreknowledge, and decrees, and his counſel, and purpoſe, are ſpoken of and repreſented as recorded in a book, we are by no means to aſcribe the defects and imperfections of mens conſultations and reſolutions unto the All-perfect Diety. So likewiſe ſays every predeſtinarian. And they that contend for abſolute decrees think this makes for their purpoſe. But what muſt be the Doctor's inference from all his diſcourſe on this ſubject? Why, this muſt be inferred from it, or nothing to his point, That God's decrees, concerning the actions of men, and their final ſtate, cannot be abſolute, but muſt be only conditional. Yet it will take a much longer diſcourſe than all the review to make out this inference, or even to ſhew, that the letter of the ſcripture, that ſpeaks of God's decrees as if they were abſolute, yet means, when figuratively underſtood, that they are not abſolute, but conditional.

He would next make ſomewhat to his purpoſe out of this, that the phraſes of the New Teſtament on this ſubject are borrowed from the Old, ſpeaking of the Jews as choſen and ſeparated to God, from the rejected Gentiles, who ſerved idols, and calling them the ſons of God, &c.; and theſe phraſes are applied to the church of the New Teſtament, conſiſting of as many Jews, and alſo Gentiles, as believed in Chriſt, diſtinguiſhed from the unbelievers.

This might ſay ſomething, if he could make it appear, that the election of the Old Teſtament, the figure of that of the New, was conditional. But where ſhall we find evidence for this? Shall we begin at Abraham, and ſay, that he was choſen, and cal-

led from among the servers of other gods, because he was not serving these gods? We cannot say this, without expressly contradicting Joshua, chap. xxiv. 2. Shall we next say, that the election of Jacob to be heir of the land of promise, and the rejection of Esau from that, before they were born, or had done good or evil, was only conditional? And what then was the condition? And then let Moses tell us what was the condition of the election of Jacob's family, from among all the families of the earth, to be God's holy nation and peculiar people; let him tell for what excellency in them, God loved them beyond other people, Deut. vii. 6. 7. 8. and ix. 4. 5. 6.

If then, we must understand the New Testament speaks of the election of the true Israel by what the Old said of the election of Israel after the flesh; that election is clearly not at all conditional. And this is all the light he has brought us to let us see, that the scriptures, figuratively understood, speak only of conditional decrees.

He allows that absolute decrees are very agreeable in some cases to the divine perfection: for he says, concerning the inanimate parts of the creation, his decrees are absolute. And he owns, they are so absolute, that we cannot assign any condition as to the circumstances of our life, the constitution of our body, and peculiar turn of mind. And yet it is undeniable, that, by that same constitution of body, and peculiar turn of mind, together with the circumstances we are placed in, we are chained down to a course of actions, that have a connection with our final state.

But he still contends, that God's decrees are not absolute with respect to intelligent agents, by this reason, that it would destroy their constitution, and treat them like stocks or stones, that have no understanding or agency at all,—a thing which infinite wisdom can never do.

This is fine reasoning! If God should determine an intelligent agent to act according to that understanding

standing, this would make him without understanding and action, as a stone. Thus if God, as Governor and Judge, punished the Jews by hardening them in unbelief, so that they could not believe, or if he sent strong delusion on the professors of Christianity, that they might believe a lie, and be damned, because they received not the love of the truth; then he deluded them, he hardened them, in that case, into stocks and stones, that they might have no understanding nor agency at all: and these hardened Jews, these Antichristian apostates, under the energy of error sent on them, could then no more do any fault, than stocks or stones, that have no understanding or agency at all. And the same thing may be said of the angels that fell, delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.

Yea, on the other hand, God himself, for whom it is impossible to do evil, being necessarily good by his infinite perfection; Jesus Christ, who was ordained before the world to be without spot, and so could not sin; the elect angels, who cannot fall; the children of God, who cannot sin unto death; and the saints in heaven, who cannot sin at all, being all, one way or other, necessitated to good, and chained up from evil, are no more intelligent agents than stocks or stones!

By these means he arrives at his conclusion, with the help of a distinction, giving us a twofold view of God. He says, what the most rigid predestinarian will heartily allow, "That God may be considered in two different views, *viz.* a Creator, Original Proprietor, and Lord of all; or, as their moral Governor and Judge." In the first of these views, he allows God, as Sovereign Lord and Original Proprietor of all, to appoint our constitution of body, and peculiar turn of mind, with the circumstances of our life, with perfect wisdom, but by rules that lie quite out of our sight, or by no methods of proceeding that we are acquainted with. This is the same thing  
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that the predestinarians mean by absolute decrees: and in this first view, and this view only, they ascribe to the All-perfect Deity such decrees concerning the actions and final state of men.

In the second of these views, when we consider God as our Governor and Judge, all his decrees are conditional; being the same with his clearly revealed and perfectly well known laws, and his just judgment according to them. And in this view of God, none of the predestinarians ever saw absolute decrees concerning the actions and final state of men. But they consider, that it is the same God, who is both Sovereign Lord and Judge, and that he shews himself in both views, in his supernatural work of redemption, as well as in his work of creation and natural providence. And they will affirm with this Doctor, that all election and reprobation of God, as Governor and Judge, must be conditional, or that all conditional election and reprobation must be ascribed to him as Governor and Judge. Nor will they differ from him in this, that all election and reprobation, by methods of proceeding, that lie quite out of our sight, *i. e.* all absolute election and reprobation, must be ascribed to him as Sovereign Lord and Proprietor of all.

Wherein then lies the difference? Even in this, That Dr Benson will not have any decree, fixing the actions and final state of men, ascribed to God as Sovereign Lord. And if the letter of the scripture seem to ascribe such decrees to him in that view, it must not be literally understood, but figuratively: for, when the texts are figuratively understood, they will be found to ascribe them only to God as Governor and Judge: and so these decrees are all conditional.

He has prepared an examination of the texts relating to this subject, and in the mean time, he has given us a sample of this method of understanding them, in a text or two, whereby we may judge what we are to expect from that examination. The first  
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is Rom. ix. 15. 16. where, answering an objection against the determination of the Sovereign Lord God, with respect to Jacob and Esau, the apostle says, *For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion; so then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God having mercy.* This text, according to his method, is to be understood in this manner, “He will have mercy, as he has assured us, to none but the penitent, and harden none but such as remain impenitent and incorrigible, after sufficient means have been tried upon them; and such indeed he leaves to themselves, as parents abandon hopeless and incorrigible children. And if any man should ask, why he will not save the wicked, and harden the pious and well disposed? might he not justly answer, I will shew mercy to whom I will shew mercy, and whom I see proper, I will harden or punish?”

This is one instance of understanding the texts relating to this subject, figuratively, and not literally. And here is the other, Rom. ix. 21.—*Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?* The Doctor sets aside the letter of this text, and understands it figuratively, thus: “He knows best how to manage the creation, with every individual of it,—much better than the most skillful potter to mold his different lumps of clay.”

In a lately published note on Rom. chap. ix. \* it has been observed, how the apostle demonstrates the divine sovereignty from his having mercy on whom he will, as he said to Moses.

But Dr Benson points out to us a God, that has no mercy to shew but to the penitent, the pious, and well-disposed. And upon this it may be enquired, Who was that God, which gave repentance to the Jews, that turned to Christ, after they had been guilty, with the rest of the nation, of crucifying him?

\* See vol. 3.

him? Because, the apostle says, Jesus was exalted by God's right hand to give them repentance as well as remission. Or what was God shewing, if it was not mercy, in granting to the Gentiles repentance unto life, when his hand was with them that preached the gospel to them, and many of them believed, and turned to the Lord, and when as many as were ordained to eternal life believed? Or what was it but divine mercy that distinguished Paul from his brethren the Jews, with whom he was blaspheming, and persecuting Christ in ignorance and unbelief? If God shewed mercy, in giving his Son to die for the ungodly, to reconcile enemies to him by his blood, and to redeem thereby to him out of every kindred, tongue, and people, and nation without difference, if he shews mercy in raising them up with Christ from trespasses and sins, through faith of his operation; then let it be told what was the condition of his shewing all this mercy? And what shall be said of the account that is given of God's pardoning mercy, when he is represented as a creditor frankly forgiving two debtors, who had nothing to pay, the one owing but fifty pence, and the other five hundred?

But the Doctor has no notion of this mercy, nor of the God that shews mercy at this rate. He acknowledges no mercy shewed by God, but the respect manifested in judgment to the penitent, the pious, and well-disposed beyond the wicked and impenitent. And perhaps, he acknowledges not that God, before whom there is no standing in judgment without a perfect righteousness. But if God deal better with one than another in the view of his being better, we may call this equity and justice; but it cannot be called mercy, without confounding the sense and use of words, and the nature of things.

If rewarding him that is fit to be rewarded, or more fit than he that is fit for punishment, be mercy; then what shall we call judgment in distinction from mercy?

The object of mercy is the worthless and the miserable. And this mercy cannot be seen in God, viewed only as a Lawgiver and Judge. It is only to be seen in the view of him as Sovereign Lord. We must therefore either think of God as just without mercy, or we must even submit to unconditional mercy, proceeding in the way of absolute decrees.

Besides the texts that are to be understood figuratively, as speaking literally for absolute decrees, the Doctor has found a text that speaks to him literally against such decrees. And this is that single text that was cited against absolute predestination and grace, in a marginal note, by the author of the discourse on the conversion and apostleship of St Paul, which was already considered in the conclusion of the printed note on Rom. chap. ix \*. And beside the hint already given in the beginning of these remarks, I shall now only answer the devilish inference he would make from this text, in the same way that Jesus answered Satan, when he brought scripture to him. Dr Benson would infer, that God's elect may become reprobates, from what is written, 1 Cor. ix. 27. *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway or reprobate.* And I answer him, it is written again, 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 they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us.*

\* Vol. III.

# OF MR HUTCHINSON'S PHILOSOPHY and DIVINITY.

An Extract of a Letter, dated March 8. 1759.

[First published in the *Edinburgh Magazine*, March 1759.]

\* \* \* \* \* You are not so clear about the law of nature, but that you may be *apt to see some force* in such reasoning! yea, it seems no material point to you, whether there be any law of nature or not! As by this I am made to understand plainly enough, how you are disposed toward the Hutchinsonian heresy; I think I must be as plain with you, and let you know, as well as I can, how I have been, and still am minded about it.

When I first considered Hutchinson's System of what is called *Natural Philosophy*, and his imagination of the motion of the heavenly matter in the actions of fire, light, and air; I thought here is a new world-maker, and a quite new scheme of the workmanship of God, offering to succeed the Newtonian, that had set aside and succeeded former schemes. But whereas there had been some difficulty in reconciling those other schemes to the plain language of the Bible, held sacred in Christendom, and they had rested in this, that the Bible was never designed to teach mankind philosophy; but spake to all men of the works of creation according to the appearance they made to them all: this new scheme of these works pretended, with the utmost confidence, to come with no less authority, than that of express revelation; and Moses, the sacred writer, was in the boldest manner appealed to for the truth and certainty of it.

The question then was, How is this to be seen in Moses, which never man saw in him before? And for

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for this, it was said, that by a due construction of the language wherein he wrote, it would most evidently appear, though it was not so manifest in any translation. And to pave the way to the right understanding of that language, the LXX. version and Chaldee paraphrase, with helps taken from the Arabic dialect, were all so condemned, as nothing brought from these could be admitted, as any objection against the sense Hutchinson thought fit to give any Hebrew word; though without these, or some of them, it had not been possible at this time of day to understand one line of Hebrew.

The next thing was to see, if this new system could appear from this new construction of the Hebrew, so that it might be said to be revealed in the Hebrew Bible. As I attended to this, I found Hebrew words adapted to that new system, even as experiments had been adapted to different and opposite hypotheses and systems of philosophy before; but I could see no such thing as any express revelation of that scheme of God's workmanship. I could not find any thing said by Moses, like the same matter of the heavens going into the action of fire in the orb of the sun, proceeding from thence in the action of light to the bound of the world; and, because there is no void in this whole matter that fills the world, returning to that orb again in the action of air. Nor could I find it any where said in Hebrew words, that this is the made emblem of the Trinity. Nor could it appear to me any where said by Moses, that this same matter, in the action of fire, light, and air, was the *Elohim* worshipped by the oldest idolaters, in place of the invisible *Elohim* represented thereby.

Then observing what sort of divinity was to come out of this new manner of explaining the Hebrew, I found that as there was a labour to adapt several words very fancifully to the philosophy, so was there to adapt the words of Hebrew to this divinity, not altogether so new, but as little founded in the Bible,

*viz.* A Trinity, wherein one Godhead is fitly represented in a mass of matter, and Three Divine persons fitly exhibited to the view of mankind in three different modifications of that same matter.—A Christ compounded of two persons, the one divine, and the other human; the divine leaving the human to suffer, and so to make the atonement by himself.—An atonement, even a conditional, universal redemption;—with the power of man's will, independent of the divine decree, to fulfil the condition!—A Christian world, or Christendom, not Antichristian! no, not the Romish church; but such as the Mahometan world, the Deists, Arians, Socinians, Quakers, and the Low Church of England; against whom, a spirit of persecution, as violent as ever was in the Roman church, is manifest in the declaration of this whole doctrine.

While I perceived this Hutchinson setting up for an infallible interpreter of the Hebrew language, so that to deny his translations, was much the same as to deny revelation, as well as to cast off common sense; it was very odd to me to see him playing in the most childish manner with Hebrew words. Hoadly, now Bishop of Winchester, being the chief of the Low Church, and so the main object of his spite, had his name turned into Hebrew letters, which sounded *Hodli*; and this is a word of the Bible, signifying *a naughty or vain person*, or some such epithet of reproach. And thus Hoadly is confuted and condemned by revelation! even as it is pointed against the Quakers by one of his disciples, calling them *Zam-zummim*. But his account of *Berith* and of *Cherubim*, on which he lays so very much stress; and which is a good sample of his manner of explaining the Hebrew, appeared to me so contrary to all the light I could have from the New Testament, as well as the Old, for understanding these words, that I thought it behoved me to be first out of my senses, before I could  
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affirm Hutchinson's sense of Hebrew words to be revelation.

You may judge then how it would go down with me, to hear it maintained with great confidence, that there is no knowledge of the eternal power and Godhead, no sense of the being of God, nor of his judgment in man, without this same revelation, *viz.* the Philosophy and Divinity which Hutchinson has been adapting to the words of the Hebrew Bible. And you are apt to see the force of reasonings for this; as for example: 1. Because they who had no view of this revelation, could not see the power of God to salvation; they could have no sense of eternal power by the things that are made, nor any dread of destruction from that power. And because they could not see one God in three persons manifested to them in the same matter, moving in three powers, they could not perceive any thing of Godhead, nor know of God at all by his works. And because they knew not the distinguishing character of the true God, amidst so many idols and vain imaginations darkening their foolish hearts; there was no such thing as any notice of God from his works in their conscience. 2. Because there are no innate ideas, as Locke saith; therefore there is no instinct in man, distinguishing him from the brutes, whereby he can perceive God in his works of creation, or be sensible of his judgment and dread his displeasure. And because, as Locke also saith, all our ideas come by our senses, all our knowledge by reflection on our sensations; and it is also manifest, that God teaches us in the scripture by emblems, metaphors, parables, allegories, types, and hieroglyphics; therefore there can be no knowledge of the Deity, without the emblem of divine works, imagined by Hutchinson, and described in his Hebrew. 3. Because Deists, and Quakers, who have the same meaning with them, hold the light of nature sufficient to guide man to happiness without any revelation, and so it is needless to speak of revelation

lation to them: The only way of confuting and confounding these base pretenders to reason and light within, is to deny the light of nature altogether: and therefore, whosoever maintains that light, however he shew the insufficiency of it, gives up the cause of revelation to these infidels, and supports them against God and his word.

And you are apt to see force in such reasoning! As you would dip a little in philosophy, I dare say you are thus apt to make a curious philosopher. I would have you next consider, if you be apt to see the force of the philosopher's essay to shew, that matter has the power of motion; or if you be apt to see the force of what Locke says for the possibility of matter's thinking, or to be, with him, not clear to deny it: and with this aptness, you will be very fit to sympathize with the poor Gentiles, who had no other *Elohim* but Hutchinson's machine.

The wisdom of the Scribe was critical skill in the letter of the Old Testament, and the wisdom of the Greek was what we call philosophy. The world by this wisdom knew not God, and remained ignorant of his character after all their labour in that wisdom. Yea, it was not by that wisdom that what is known of God by his works, was manifest in their consciences: for it served to darken their hearts as to that. And shall we now say, that without a way of explaining the Hebrew, now found out to countenance a new scheme of philosophy, we can have no knowledge of God, nor know that there is a God at all?

The Son of God came to manifest his Father's name, whom he said the world knew not; and he did this according to the Old Testament. And while he and his apostles referred always to that, and spake of it as the letter, in a parable, whereof what they declared was the spirit, and likewise the truth of the prophetic types and figures; did they ever meddle with the explication of Hebrew words to make out the truth of any thing they said from the import of  
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the roots of that language? Or, in all the contention they had with the Jews about the interpretation and sense of the Old Testament, did they once blame them for a wrong translation of any word? They made the Trinity known; but this to be understood only in Christ. We have not from them the least hint of a Trinity visible in the heavens, representing the invisible. They made no use of Hutchinson's revelation, in making God the Saviour known, or shewing his character to the world that knew it not: but in declaring it to the Gentiles that knew the least of it, they always supposed them knowing there was a God, to whom they were accountable; (Acts xiv. 15. 16. 17. and chap. xvii. 24. 28.) For they applied themselves to man's conscience, his proper instinct, where this is manifest; and they convinced all men of sin, from the knowledge of God and his law in their consciences, as you may see Paul doing, when you read Rom. i. 19. 20. 32. and chap. ii. 14. 15. The manner of the Hutchinsonians treating these and other scriptures objected to their scheme, is a too manifest evidence, that they have no ear to give to any revelation but that of Hutchinson, and that their faith is nothing else but the belief of that which is as foreign to the light of nature, and to the superadded light that shines into mens hearts from the face of Christ, by the Old and New-Testament revelation, as darkness is to the light.

What is known of God, in every man that holds the truth in unrighteousness, is manifest in them all; for God hath shewed it to them by his works; not by any system of Philosophy, far less by Hutchinson's imagination of God's works, or his fancies about his words; but by such an appearance as his works make to the conscience of every man that is capable of sin; by which they all understand his eternal power and Godhead. Even the philosophers had this light which cannot be utterly extinguished from the heart of man, however darkened. They knew God and  
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acknowledged not only eternal *power*, but also *wisdom* and *goodness*, as essential to the Maker of the world, though scrupling by their reasonings on his goodness, they were not thankful, so held the truth in unrighteousness. And as the Creator could not be beheld in his works without sovereignty, we see Nebuchadnezzar having a very lively sense of this when recovered from his brutality, and brought to think, as a man, of the divine providence about him, Dan. iv. 25. Eternal and sovereign power, wisdom, and goodness, is the eternal power and Godhead, which is manifest in all men, and shewed to them by the things that are made. And this was the only Trinity spoke of among the Gentiles: for they turned these divine attributes into persons, and spake so of divine goodness, wisdom, and power, that the fathers imagined them to be speaking of the Christian Trinity, which is only to be seen in Christ: for thus they understood Plato speaking of the *Logos* and his Father, and the soul of the world. If Hutchinson had taken this Trinity, he might have found full as much ground for it in the scripture, applying his fire, light, and air to it, as for his Trinity appearing to him in the motion of the heavens, which he imagines, and much more ground of evidence for its being known among the Heathen.

As to the scripture, 1. With respect to goodness, it tells us, God is love, manifested in giving his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. And the emblem of this divine love is fire. *Love strong as death, jealousy cruel as the grave, the coals thereof coals of fire, the flame of Jah.* 2. Wisdom is a scriptural name of the Son of his love, called also the *Logos*, which the fathers thought the same with Plato's *Logos*; and light is the scriptural emblem of him. 3. Power. The scripture calls the Holy Ghost the power of the Highest; and his emblem is the force of the action of air. And he is named *Ruach* and *Pncuma*, even as air, breath, or wind is. And as to any thing like

a Trinity known among the Heathen, besides the sovereign goodness, and wisdom, and power eternal, understood by the things made as they appeared to every man, which they imagined as three persons, there is no such thing to be heard of from among them.

After it has been so long doubted, if there be such a thing as one of mankind incapable of the sense of a Deity, and the dread of his judgment, are you ready to hearken to them that would persuade you, all mankind are really such, but they alone who have the sense to perceive and acknowledge Hutcheson's —whirligig?—*I am, &c.*

*P. S.* I thought you very far gone in the Hutchesonian way, when I found you adhering to it, even on that side from which the late Lord President Forbes declined; who was the only man that could make Hutcheson intelligible by our common capacities, and whom Hutcheson owned as his friend, though differing from him about the light of nature and conscience. In this difference the President had the experience of all mankind on his side; as is now acknowledged even by the Atheistical philosophers of this day, as you may see by some of their late essays and dissertations. They have left the old Atheistical cant about the prejudices of education, still insisted on by Hutchesonians. For after they have divested themselves of all those prejudices, they find by the history of mankind, and by experience, that the dread of an invisible power, from a consciousness of inward disorder, is deep laid in human nature. As to speculation, aside from experience, I think I mind of some common place in our school-divinity, against the Socinians denying the light of nature in the consciences of men. And what is said against innate ideas by Locke, who believed the Hottentots had no sense of a Deity, and was reckoned a Socinian, might be pled in behalf of the Socinians on that question, even as some of your Hutchesonian writers now plead

it. I have also heard some Quakers talking to this purpose, That man by the fall utterly lost all knowledge of God, who was pleased to recover him by inspiring mankind with his Spirit, or light within, the true light that lighteth every man coming into the world, even that same light that convinces men of sin. But this is only a round-about way of setting forth the undeniable fact, even the experience all mankind have of the light of nature and conscience, while, from its existence, they would infer the sufficiency of it to more than making sinners inexcusable. And the Hutchinsonian writer you have been reading, seeing the force of this inference, makes himself ridiculous, as they are, by his denying the existence of nature's light; why?—because their wild consequence from it is to him undeniable.

I have of late often wondered how it came, that some followers of Hutchinson were ready to allow that he might be wrong in more points than one; and yet were so zealously adhering to this that President Forbes could not hold, as if it were a most fundamental point. For though you think it not material, it appears now a most material point to them. But my wonder ceased, when I considered, that nothing can serve more effectually to evade the force and blunt the edge of the conviction of sin, which we labour by any means to avoid. And so, whatever they let go, this must be held fast as their shield till they can find a better. This therefore is most material to them. And it must also be material to all those who regard the gospel, and the truth as it is in Jesus; because it would shut the only door by which that truth can enter the heart of man. How vain is the pretence to support revelation by overthrowing conscience and the light of nature!

You tell me, you thought you understood nature and conscience in some of the lights wherein they were set by Hutchinsonians, better than you did some other ways of speaking on these points that you had heard.



I know not what ways of speaking you have heard, and did not understand concerning nature and conscience : but what has been long ago learned from Paul's words on that matter, (Rom. i. 19. 20. 21. 23, 32. and ii. 14. 15.) and which you have often heard, appears to me abundantly plain and agreeable to experience. Now, I cannot conceive, what light nature and conscience could be set in to your understanding by those who deny them altogether, and so set them quite out of all lights. But if you mean the lights they set Paul's words in, which you understood better than by the light others set them in ; then I must think you understand well that Paul says, The eternal power and Godhead of the Creator could not be seen from the creation ! And you likewise understand, that Paul's Gentiles, who, not having the law, were a law to themselves, were only the Christian Gentiles ! If this be the case, I see not how I can offer any scripture to your understanding, as finding you incapable to view it in any light wherein I am capable to set it. For if you cannot take it, speaking of your own experience, how shall you take it speaking of supernatural things ?

A LETTER on the Scripture-distinction  
between the LAW and the PROMISE.

I TIM. i. 6.

*From which some having swerved, have turned aside  
unto vain jangling.*

S I R,

January 29. 1751.

**I**N the paper you left with me I find some doctrine called new, concerning the Lord Jesus his being the heir of the promise, drawn from the opposition stated in the New Testament between the *law* and the *promise*, between *works* and *faith*, and between *grace* and *debt*; and this without ascertaining the precise meaning of these as they stand in the opposition. This gives me some difficulty in apprehending clearly what this new doctrine is: only with respect to something I see said of introducing Christ to the inheritance, not by his fulfilling the law, or redeeming from the curse of the law, but, in opposition to that, by a promise to him, and by a faith of his that stands in the same connection with that promise, as works do stand in with the law. It is said at last, that the apostle, in stating the above doctrine, was aware of the grand objection that would be made unto it, and stated that objection in these questions, *Wherefore then serveth the law? Is the law then against the promises of God? Do we make void the law through faith?*

Perhaps I might have received some more light to the understanding of ~~the~~ the new doctrine, by the illustration of the apostle's answers to that grand objection in these questions. But, in order to that illustration, it is said to be necessary determinately to establish what is meant by the law in revelation; yet this is not done in setting forth the new doctrine, which arises from the opposition between the *law* and the *promise*. If the meaning of these had been  
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fixed as they stand in the opposition, we would have easily understood that new doctrine; but, without this, we must still be in the dark about it, even tho' it be said to be brought to light, as a doctrine that before lay hid in the scripture.

The apostle speaks not so darkly in stating the opposition between the *law* and the *promise*; he fixes the meaning of the law in that opposition, when he says, *As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them:—And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doth them shall live in them.* As he also says in another place, *Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, The man which doth these things shall live in them.* It is evident, this law can give life to no man, but by his own personal obedience to all the commandments; every man must stand righteous, and entitled to live, alone by his own doing these things: for the law constitutes a man's own life as a debt due to his own obedience, and makes every one accursed by every transgression that he himself commits: *The soul that sinneth shall die.*

Again, he describeth the promise very clearly on the other side of the opposition, when he says, *Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the nations through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.—But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.—Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;—that the blessing of Abraham might come on the*

*the*

*the nations through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's testament, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, the testament confirmed before of God unto Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God granted it to Abraham by promise.*

In God's promise to Abraham, which he believed, the apostle sets before us his seed, which is Christ: and he sets before us blessedness in opposition to the curse, and an inheritance in Christ, the seed, for all nations. And he likewise describes how they have this blessedness, this inheritance in him: the blessedness comes to the nations through Christ, the promised seed, redeeming them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them; to him the blessing is promised, and they inherit it with him as joint heirs in his right.

When the promise to Abraham was confirmed as a testament, granting an inheritance, Gen. xxii. the seed, the heir, was represented as rising from the dead to inherit; and the death from which he arises is that of a sacrifice, while his substitution, to redeem from the curse of the law, appeared in the ram caught in the thicket: thus Abraham saw his day afar off. And there the seed, to which the inheritance is made over, as in a testament confirmed by the oath, is spoken of, not as many, but as one, ver. 17. *Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.* And the promise of the inheritance is unto that one, to whom the testament giving it was confirmed, four hundred and thirty years before the law was given by Moses.

Because

Because there was a twofold inheritance promised to him, very different, though the one was a figure of the other, the apostle calls them promises, saying, *To Abraham and his seed were the promises made.* The first of these promises was a promise of a temporal inheritance in Canaan's land for the nation of Israel, of which the promised seed was to come: the promise of this inheritance was made to Christ, the Son of God, the seed of Abraham, to come of that nation; and, by their fleshly relation to him, they inherited, in his right, as children of God, heirs and joint heirs with the seed his Son. When they were introduced to this his inheritance, God gave that nation the law, which the seed was to fulfil for all nations when he should come, and from the curse of which he was to redeem them: the apostle says, *It was ordained in the hand of a mediator; now a mediator is not of one, but God is one.* If it was in the hand of a mediator, then it was a covenant between two parties, betwixt whom he mediated; for a mediator cannot be with one single party, without another party to transact in the covenant. But God appears, in ordaining the law in the hand of a mediator, as one party. Where then is the other? Were the people, whose words Moses the mediator returned to God, saying, *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do,* capable to make good what they said? And were they then fit to stand before God the law-giver, as another party contracting with him upon his law fixing his curse to every transgression? No surely: for they were every one sinners, and so subject to the curse; and therefore God would not sustain them as a party sufficient to stand before him in his law ordained in the hand of a mediator: for he said to the mediator that brought their words to him, *O that there were such a heart in them!*

Did God then, in a solemn manner, ordain his law in the hand of a mediator, never to be obeyed? Did he do this in the view, that the words of the people  
to

to whom the law was given, saying, *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do*, should never be made good? Did he give his law to his nation, his peculiar people, for no other end but to curse them? Or, did he denounce to every transgression his curse never to be executed? It is impossible to admit a thought like this: and yet it must be admitted, if we do not find another party to obey God's voice indeed, and keep his covenant, even a representative able to redeem from the curse, by being made a curse for sinners. But this is not to be found by the law, making every one to live by his own obedience, his righteousness wrought by himself, or making every one to die by his own sin: this must be sought for in the promise of the seed to come of that nation, to which the law was given; and there indeed he is found, who is capable to answer the demand of the law as a representative, and it was in view to him that God ordained the law in the hand of a mediator: therefore, the apostle says, it was given with a view to his coming, and in a subserviency to it: for he says, it was added to the promise, *till the seed should come*, and it was *our school-master to bring us to Christ*.

Now, though this representative, found in the promise to Abraham, be quite foreign to the law, and altogether beyond the line of it, yet because the law was given to Israel, with a view to him, it bare witness to him, in what it said of *visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children*, and in the sacrifices; and pointed to the manner of his redeeming from the curse, by bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, by declaring him accursed of God, who was hanged on a tree.

Moses, in whose hand the law was given, had a view of the substitution and representation, from God's righteousness in the promise, witnessed by the law; and he proposed himself to make atonement, like that in the sacrifices, for the people, by dying for them to save the nation from perishing: but God  
would

would not take his life, who was himself a sinner, nor the life of any sinner, as an atonement, to save the transgressors of his commandments: this belonged only to that promised seed to come of Israel, whom God had in view as the fulfiller of his law, when he ordained it in the hand of a mediator to the people of whom he was to spring.

The other promise, made to that promised seed, is the promise of a heavenly and eternal inheritance for all the nations of the earth, who inherit in his right, as joint-heirs with him to whom that promise was made. When he came to inherit this promise, he was introduced to his heavenly eternal inheritance, in consequence of his coming to fulfil the law, even these two commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets, and to confirm the ten words, by doing them in their fullest extent, which he himself points out, in the sermon on the mount, and in consequence of his redeeming from the curse of that law, by being made a curse, and giving his flesh and blood a sacrifice for the life of the world.

The promise of blessedness, and of the eternal inheritance, is unto this one seed of Abraham, distinguished from the many, or from all the nations blessed in him: but it is unto him as representing all these; for they are blessed in him. The promise is unto that one seed redeeming them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them. The promise is to the Son of God, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. The promise is to that one dying for them all who were dead, that they might live from the dead with him, through his dying for them. The promise is to that one man, by whose obedience many are justified to reign in eternal life; even as they had been all condemned to die by the disobedience of one man.

This substitution, by which he became our representative, to do in our name all that the Lord had

spoken; to be made a curse for us; to redeem us from the curse, is all the grace of the promise: for all that follows on this, the promised blessing, the inheritance, and all that pertains to it, is no otherwise grace, but as it flows from this spring. The Son of God hath a natural right to God's inheritance; all that the Father hath is due to his Son; so that he could not thus receive the inheritance of grace, and by a promise, which he was to believe; for he knew, without any occasion for faith in any word of promise, that all was his own already: but condescending to be the representative of sinners, he became capable in that station, to receive the promise, and to be appointed heir of all things, by the same grace that substituted him for sinners to receive the inheritance for them.

When the Son of God was made of a woman, made under the law, he did not stand under it for himself, to obtain life for himself by his obedience; for, as there was no manner of need for this, so in this case, he had no use for grace, nor any occasion for faith, or any promise to him beside the law, according to which, he being the only man that did these things, was the only man to whom the life was due, every other man remaining accursed by his own disobedience. But the grace of God made him under the law to redeem, to fulfil all righteousness, as the representative of sinners, and he made a curse for them, as their substitute. And the promise of life to him fulfilling the law in that capacity, was a promise of grace, the same grace that gave him to be the propitiation for our sins: for there was no life due by the law to the obedience of a representative of sinners. The righteousness that he wrought is not *the righteousness which is of the law*, for that is what every man must work for himself; but it is the *righteousness which is of God, i. e.* which is of him as God, as Sovereign, and above the law, substituting his Son in the room



of sinners cursed by the law, to obey the law for them, and redeem them from its curse.

This righteousness of God, manifested without the law, is not rewarded by the law; but it is suitably recompensed by the grace from whence it came, according to the promise of the blessing to the Redeemer from the curse, the promise of the inheritance to the Son of God, made under the law to redeem, and the promise of eternal life from the dead to him humbling himself, and becoming obedient to the death, even the death of the cross. This glorious recompense of the reward of his righteousness, suitable to the dignity of the representative's person, is not of the law, but of promise made to him; and he received that reward in the same capacity, in which he did the righteousness, as the representative of the sinners whom he redeemed from the curse, and so it is mercy and grace. Therefore we find him in the Psalms pleading his righteousness for life from the dead, and at the same time pleading mercy. Thus mercy and truth are met, righteousness and peace have kissed. The promise of life to this perfect righteousness, whereby the law is magnified and made honourable, is a promise of mercy and grace far above and beyond the law, that made life only his due, who did these things and left him under the curse who did them not: for it is the promise of life and blessedness to the representative of the accursed, their Redeemer from the curse.

This is that grace and that righteousness revealed in the gospel, preached before to Abraham, when he heard God speaking of blessedness to all nations in Christ his seed, and believed him, and was justified by his faith; not by what he wrought, but by what he heard and believed: for the reward was not reckoned to him of debt, or as a debt to any work of his, even his work of faith; but it was reckoned to him of the grace which he heard and believed, even grace giving righteousness in the seed Christ,

and grace giving blessedness as the suitable reward of that righteousness. And this is that same grace, and that same righteousness revealed to us in the gospel, where we hear God testifying, and believe in him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. And to us, not working, but believing on the justifier of the ungodly, our faith is imputed for righteousness; for God makes us blessed by imputing righteousness to us without works. We live, not by our own labour, but hearing God speaking of justifying the ungodly by Christ's dying for them; we are not justified by what we work, even in believing; but by what we believe, by the hearing of faith, by the righteousness revealed without the law, the righteousness that God imputes to men without works: for it is the same thing, with the apostle, to be justified by faith and to be justified by Christ's blood; to be justified through faith, and to be justified through the redemption in Christ's blood. For, as in scripture-style, the promise stands for the thing promised, and hope for the thing hoped for; even so, faith in this same matter signifies the thing believed, in distinction from our work of faith; as when the apostle says, *But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith, which should afterward be revealed; wherefore the law was our schoolmaster unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith; but after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*

Jesus Christ the righteous himself believed that same thing that we believe, having the same Spirit of faith with him; his belief was the truth that he heard from the Father, testifying of him undertaking to fulfil all righteousness for his people, *Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.* Jesus believed that, being truly man, he was no other person than the Son of God, that he was come not to de-

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stroy the law, but to fulfil; and he that sent him was with him, as he did always those things that please the Father; that he came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many; that he came down from heaven to give his flesh and blood for the life of the world, and was to ascend up where he was before; that he abode in his Father's love, having kept his commandments; and that he ought to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory; and he expressed his faith in his prayer to his Father, where he says, *I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.—And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.* Thus he believed the promise of the inheritance as made to him, but to him as the representative of those whom the Father had given him, finishing the work he had given him to do for them, who were also to partake with him as joint heirs in the inheritance he thus received for them. He believed the promise of blessedness made to him, but to him redeeming them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them, that the blessing might come on them.

Now, as this same is the faith of all them who believe in him, raised from the dead for the justification of the ungodly, unto righteousness, or who believe to be justified freely by grace through the redemption that is in his blood; it is manifest, that not one commandment of the law is made void by it, but, on the contrary, it establishes them all respecting the promise, as made to Christ the representative who did all these things: nor does this faith hinder any one that worketh these things, from claiming life as a debt to his work, if he continue in all these things to do them; though such a man can have nothing to do with the revealed righteousness of faith; *for if there had been a law given, which could have given life,*  
*verily*

*verily righteousness should have been by the law.* Nor does this faith make void the curse of the law, but establishes the curse to every transgression, as the blessing comes upon none by the promise, but through Jesus Christ redeeming from the curse, being made a curse for them.

The blessedness of them that are of faith, and blessed with faithful Abraham, is the blessedness of the man whose iniquity is forgiven. And no man can have any thing to do with this, but he that finds himself under the curse of the law as a sinner. Every one that believeth, knows himself first to be an accursed sinner, because he believes for the remission of sins in Christ redeeming from the curse, by being made a curse for us. And every one that believeth not, remains under that curse, *the wrath of God abideth on him.* All that are of faith pray daily for forgiveness, and therefore must be continually looking unto that perfect law, obeyed by Jesus Christ the Redeemer from the curse, and, by that law which makes him that offends in one point, guilty of all, must see themselves sinners, transgressors to whom the curse is due; or how can they ask forgiveness thro' Christ's blood shed for remission? *Do we then make void the law through faith? Far be it! yea, we establish the law.* But, as far as I can understand, the new doctrine that would be set forth in the paper you left with me, it appears to me to make void both the law and faith.

I am, &c.

A PETITION to the Associate Presbytery,  
by Four Brethren ;

With a DIALOGUE upon it by Six who  
have as good a right to Judge of what is  
Testified by Jesus Christ the Lord, in the  
Scriptures, as the Associate Presbytery, or  
any other Presbytery.

*A nation, and a church of nations shall be of thee! Gen. xxxv. 11.*

*Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, I have made  
thee a father of many nations. Rom. iv. 16. 17.*

*There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.  
But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel  
unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be  
accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any preach  
any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be  
accursed. Gal i. 6.—9.*

[ First published in the year 1737. ]

*Unto the Moderator and Remanent Members of the  
Presbytery associated in the Cause of the Covenanted  
Work of Reformation, and testifying against the sever-  
al steps of defection from the same,*

The Representation and Petition of the Persons Sub-  
scribing,

*Humbly sheweth,*

**T**HAT whereas you must be looked on as the fittest  
men to convince gainfayers, by the word of  
God, and the readiest to render to every one that  
asketh you a scriptural reason of the cause for which  
you

you contend with so much zeal, as if your hope depended upon it, we judge it most proper to lay before you some difficulties we have, as to that covenanted work and state of the church, to which you are bearing witness, earnestly desiring you may take them under your serious consideration, and do your best to satisfy us, and all others, of the truth of your testimony by the word of God. For, who can be heard testifying concerning the covenant and church of God, without the scriptures? Or, who can oblige us to serve the Lord Jesus Christ without his law?

Though this may justly claim the preference to any other thing about which your time may be employed; yet, to save your time, we chuse to propose our difficulties as briefly as we can, in the manner following.

1. We even find it difficult to reconcile these nations of Britain, and Ireland, being all Christians, or disciples of Christ, and ruled by Christian magistrates, as his covenanted kingdom, to these words of his, Mark x. 42.—45. *Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the nations, [τῶν ἐθνῶν] exercise lordship over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all: For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. And, Luke xxii. 24.—30. For whether is greater he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations: and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

The more we think on this discourse, with the occasion of it, the less we are able to reconcile it with the nations made Christian, and brought or kept in  
subjection

subjection to the ministers of the gospel, by secular power.

2. Nor do we perceive how the following exhortations can apply to a nation of this world, such as Scotland, or how it could remain a nation in obeying it, viz. Luke xii. 29.—34. *And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind: for all these things do the nations of the world seek after; and your father knoweth that you have need of these things; but rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

As a nation of this world, subsisting in the pursuit of the design of this exhortation, would be a thing very extraordinary, we cannot wonder at our Lord's making such distinction as he here makes betwixt his little flock, and the nations of this world.

3. We have not yet seen any thing that is sufficient to shew us the consistency betwixt the covenanted kingdom, concerning which you testify, and our Lord's good confession that he witnessed before Pontius Pilate, concerning his kingdom, John xviii. 36. 37. And here, for the sake of brevity, we refer you to the things offered in the explication of that text, in the book intituled, *The Testimony of the King of Martyrs*, which, no doubt, you have seen.

4. Nor can we understand how our Lord's word's to the Jewish nation, Matth. xxi. 43. as applied by Peter, 1 Pet. ii. 9. 10. can be applicable to the state of the nation of Scotland, under the national covenant, or of Britain and Ireland, under the solemn league and covenant.

His words are: *Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a na-*

*tion bringing forth the fruits thereof.* And Peter says to the elect, strangers and pilgrims scattered throughout many countries, *Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

And if you please to compare this with Exod. xix. 5. 6. and Rom. xi. 17.—20. and tell us how the nations were ingrafted in the days of the apostles, and how they were to stand, it would serve much to clear this whole matter.

We have been considering the several things ordinarily insisted on, to shew a scripture-warrant for the covenanted work to which you are bearing witness; and we judge it not amiss to lay before you the exceptions which we are not able to remove, being willing, by your help, to see the weakness of them, if possible.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, The first argument, taken from the covenant the Lord made with Israel at Sinai, renewed by the kings and people of that nation, after their backslidings from it, and by the captives returned from Babylon, we are not capable to reconcile with Gal. iv. 24.—31. and Heb. viii. 6.—13.

The argument stands on this foundation, That the new covenant is not another covenant than the covenant at Sinai, but that they are two dispensations of one and the self-same covenant; contrary to the express words of the apostle, and to his whole design in these texts.

And when we consider his description of the people related to God in the new covenant, in distinction from the people to whom he stood related in that old covenant, we cannot apply it to any nation of this world; at least, it never was applicable, so far as we have heard, to the bulk of the people in Britain  
and



and Ireland, far less to the whole, no not when they took the solemn league and covenant.

And, further, when we think of Christ in the loins of Israel, the children of Abraham according to the flesh, as the foundation of the relation betwixt God and that nation; and when we view the law or covenant wherein God declared himself their God, as given to that nation of which Christ was to come, with a design that it should be fulfilled by him, as the end of that law for righteousness to every one that believeth; we have a question, If these who are pressing upon us a national covenant with God, according to that, be not thereby denying that Christ is come in the flesh? 1 John iv. 3.

2dly, The next argument from the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the nations, seems to us to serve against the apostolic explication of these prophecies, whereof we offer you one remarkable instance, Acts xv. 14.—17. *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the nations, to take out of them [εξ εθνων] a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the Prophets, as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up, that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the nations [παντα τα εθνη] upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doth all these things.*

If the word that is translated *nations*, in the Lord's commission to the apostles to *go and teach all nations*, [παντα τα εθνη] had been so translated where-ever it is used in the apostolic writings, which shew us how they executed that commission according to the prophecies, every reader of the English Bible would easily see, that national churches were never intended in the commission *to teach all nations*, nor in the prophecies of the Old Testament about the nations.

As all these prophecies go upon the footing of that promise to Abraham, *In thy seed shall all the nations of*  
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*the earth be blessed*, the Apostle explains them quite away from national churches, by his application of that grand promise, Gal. iii. 13. 14. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ;—That the blessing of Abraham might come on the nations [εἰς τὰ ἔθνη] through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

We cannot but look on every interpretation of the prophets that is not brought from the New Testament, nor directed by it, as a “ private interpretation ;” and therefore, if we should take up with an application of the Old-Testament prophecies to national churches and covenants, so very different from the apostolic application of them, we might fear our becoming some way partakers in that censure, which is insinuated by the Apostle, when he is directing Christians how to take heed to the word of Old-Testament prophecy, which was confirmed on the mount of transfiguration, 2 Pet. i. 16.—21. and ii. 1. He says, *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scriptures is of any private interpretation: for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.*

We are of opinion, that not only these who deny his Godhead, and deny him as the alone Lord of the church, are to be accounted deniers of the Lord that bought them, but they also who deny his dying testimony concerning his kingdom, and his redeeming a peculiar people out of every nation, according to the prophecies, Titus ii. 14. Rev. v. 9. and who deny his giving himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our father, Gal. i. 4. or who deny the necessary

cessary connection betwixt suffering with him in this world, and reigning with him in the world to come, 2 Tim. ii. 11. 12. and iii. 12. 13. The Apostle signifies this was to be done by men that seemed to be bought by the Lord, and not expressly, but under a cover, and by private interpretations of the prophecies of the Old Testament; so that we cannot vindicate them from this charge, who would build a worldly kingdom to Christ in the nations of this world, upon the prophecies of the Old Testament, about the nations; thus fulfilling their own lust after power, and wealth, and worldly ease, to the great reproach of Christianity. And the Apostle offers us an excellent preservative against all the feigned words whereby such false teachers draw the multitude, when he says, in the conclusion of his discourse on that subject, chap. iii. 2. *That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.* See likewise 1 John iv. 5. 6.

3dly, We hear another argument, boasted of as invincible, from a prophecy in the book of the Revelation, chap. xi. 15. But when we consider that text and context, we see not sufficient reason for this boasting: for the words of the text are, *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, (or, are become our Lord's and his Christ's,) and he shall reign for ever and ever.* And we are as sure that no kingdom of this world will stand for ever, as we are that Christ's kingdom is not of this world. The context, ver. 17. 18. represents the nations as angry at Christ's kingdom to the end; even as he said, his people should be *bated of all nations,* and should *endure it to the end,* Math. xxiv. 9.—13.

Whether we take this text in the Revelation to refer to Dan. ii. 7. or explain it by what follows, in the more particular account of the events of the seventh trumpet, especially by what is said, Rev. xx. 4.—6. and xxi. 24.—27. and xxii. 5. we cannot find the  
accomplishment.

accomplishment of it in any time before the resurrection of the just, and the putting down of all rule, and all authority and power; and then shall that promise be performed, Rev. ii. 26. *He that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father.* But till that time Christ must rule in the midst of his enemies; as it is signified that the nations are angry till his wrath come, as the recompence of their anger.

It were easy to show, from the book of the Revelation, that the followers of Jesus Christ must remain in a humble suffering state, in conformity to their leader, *the Lamb that was slain*, until the time of Antichrist's destruction, by the brightness of his second coming, even the time of their conformity to him in his resurrection from the dead. See, for instance, Rev. vii. 9. 13. 14. And you would contribute much to the removing of your difficulties about your testimony, if you should take pains to shew us, how a body-politic, a kingdom, or nation of this world, can become the kingdom of Christ, by devoting itself to conformity to him in his humiliation and sufferings in this world, in the hope of conformity to him in his resurrection and glory in the world to come.

We find the outer court not measured, *because it is given to the nations who tread the holy city under foot forty-two months*, Rev. xi. 2. And we see *the whore, or false church, sitting on many waters, i. e. peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues*, Rev. xvii. 15. *And power is given the beast over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations, and all that dwell on the earth worship him, whose names are not written in the slain Lamb's book of life, from the foundation of the world*, Rev. xiii. 7. 8. These are the nations brought under the false church, by the power of the kings of the earth that commit fornication with her. The Roman church is very confident, that the nations and kingdoms of this world

world became the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, by surrendering themselves to her, and applies the prophecies about the nations with as much assurance to the Christian kings and nations in her communion, as they can be applied to the covenanted kingdoms that cast off her uniformity, and put on another in its place; but in both these applications we must take nations and kingdoms in the very same sense, and in both we must understand the kingdom or dominion of Christ to be the rule and authority of the clergy over the nations of this world, through the power and strength of the kings of the earth given unto them to make uniformity, [ποιῆσαι μίαν γῆρα μὲν] according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, Rev. xvii. 13. 17.

If we be not satisfied in the true signs and wonders wrought in confirmation of the New Testament when it came forth, and be not willing to rest in the testimony of Jesus Christ sealed by his blood, and the testimony of his Spirit in his martyrs the apostles, which is only pure and entire in the New Testament scripture, we may hear every set of clergymen testifying of their uniformity, and their kingdom, and pleading the blood of martyrs, signs, and the wonderful concurrence of Providence, in confirmation of their testimony; but when it comes to this, the Roman church has more of this kind to pretend than any of them, though, when they insist on this, they take to themselves one of the clearest marks of Antichrist, 2 Thess. ii. 9. 10. 11.

*Atbly,* It is not easy to see how the argument for national covenanting is drawn from the practice of the churches of Macedonia, 2 Cor. viii. 1.—5. The foundation of the argument is to be sought, especially in the Apostle's saying, *That the churches of Macedonia first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.* And it must go upon such an interpretation of these words as this is, *viz.* The churches of Macedonia devoted themselves first

to the Lord, as one national church, in a covenant, whereby Macedonia became the Lord's nation, bound to employ its whole power for the establishment of Christianity, as the only religion of that country, and for the extirpation of every other; and next, they devoted themselves to the ministers of the gospel, to walk together in uniform subjection to them, and to bring the whole country into that uniformity, by the said extirpating power.

But nothing can be imagined further from the mind of the Apostle, and the case of the churches of Macedonia, than this is. It is surprising, that a foundation for any thing of this kind should be sought, in the Apostle's setting forth the rich liberality of the churches of Macedonia in their affliction and poverty, as an example of most cheerful liberal almsgiving; and especially in his setting forth their unexpected forwardness in it, as *first giving themselves* in what they gave, *to the Lord*, for the relief of his poor saints, and next *to them* whom they pressed to take the charge and trust of that gift, wherein they *gave themselves*.

When we look at the erection of the churches of Macedonia in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, Acts xvi. and xvii. we see nothing of any covenant among them, but the New Covenant or Testament, the gospel preached to them by the apostles, which came to them in power, and they believed it, and obeyed it, in the face of an adverse magistracy and mobility, so that they received the word in much affliction; and this continued, as the epistles to them inform us, Phil. i. 27.—30. 1 Thess. ii. 13. 14. 2 Thess. i. 4. And they were not suffering for any worldly kingdom, nor animated in their sufferings by any hope, but the hope of rest and glory with Christ at his coming, and his kingdom, 2 Thess. i. 5.—10. Yea, the Apostle tells us, they were *in a great trial of affliction*, when they did this notable deed of charity, and not only so, but in *deep poverty*; and therefore  
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in the worst situation in the world for working up a national covenant; but, instead of projecting any thing like this, they were very forward to make themselves yet poorer, for the relief of the saints in another nation, thus pursuing, to their power, the design of the Lord's exhortation, Luke xii. 29.—34. which we called you before to consider as no way agreeable to the design of a nation or kingdom of this world.

There is not the least insinuation, that the churches of Macedonia were one national church united in a common council of elders ruling over them: for the Apostle calls them still the churches of Macedonia; and they were as far from being the bulk of the people of that country, as their practice was from being suited to the state of it. When we narrowly consider the frame and situation of these, and all the other churches in the New Testament, with all that is said there of their practice, we have the justest ground to fear their way has been expressly abjured, under the name of Independency in some of the national engagements to which you stand bearing witness.

Having thus laid our difficulties before you, we beseech you to take them to your most serious consideration, and do your best in the way that shall seem to you most proper to satisfy us; and we likewise crave you may consider the pamphlet, intituled, *A Supplement to Mr Erskine's Sermon*, with that intituled, *The right of the Christian People, and the three directions for Reformation there proposed*; because, if no fault be found in them, they seem to point out a far shorter and plainer way of reformation to Christ's people, in all times and places, according to his word, than the way of national covenants.

If the difficulties, which we own have some weight with us, seem light in your eyes, you can the more easily remove them; and we hope you will not disdain to do an easy thing for the relief of such as you

are ready to lament, as labouring under the power of error; but if you cannot, or will not, give us any satisfaction in this matter, you cannot blame us if we dissent from you, and stand to the best light we can have from the testimony of Jesus against you.

JOHN GLAS.

JAMES CANT.

GEORGE MILLER.

ROBERT SANDEMAN.



## A DIALOGUE upon the Petition.

J. C. **I**T seems we shall get no answer to our petition.

J. G. Did you expect any but such as you have in the *judicial testimony*?

J. C. I see none in that testimony. It is true, they bestow a few words in testifying against the sectarians, for allowing the power of the keys to the community of the faithful. And in this some of the most able defenders of Presbytery are testified against as sectarians; yea, if I mistake not, the famous Gillespie \* was such a sectarian. But as to our petition, it would seem every thing is avoided that might appear to have the least reference to it. Yet, I must own, I expected they would not think it below them to offer what they had to say from the scripture, against our exceptions to their arguments for national covenants. Our Lord even answered Satan, *It is written again*, and condescended to reply to the pitiful objections of the gain-faying Jews.

R. S. To what purpose would they give themselves the trouble of reconciling these covenants with the objected texts of scripture, while their people are as firmly persuaded of the divine authority of them, as of the Bible itself; and, for ought I see, upon the same grounds? The people who wanted the judicial testimony as a prop to their faith, in this day of defection from that sort of faith, will rest satisfied, to find such men as the petitioners, standing in the testimony, with the odious (though very ancient †) name *Sectarian*, fastened upon them *in a judicial way*.

G. M. And they have nothing to fear from the objections against the covenants, as to others who  
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\* Dispute against the English Popish ceremonies, Part 3. disc. 1. and 4.

† Acts xiv. 5. 14. and xxviii. 22.

incline not to deny the covenants, for fear of the people, while the fashionable wits, who pretend to think freely, will not bestow a thought on such a controversy. A dispute of some greater moment fills their heads.

*Y. C.* It seems you think the Associate Presbytery testify only the voice of the people, as if they were their ambassadors; and insinuate, that they regard not so much what is true, as what will go cleverly down; and look on scriptural arguments brought against them, just according as they reckon they will take with the world. I confess this is no excess of charity for them.

*R. S.* They may still be minding truth, and perhaps only differ in the way of coming at it. You persuade us to see the truth of the scriptures, and the sense of them, with our own eyes; but every man that is zealous for truth, goes not this way to work. The Roman Catholics, who would burn men for their truth's sake, believe as the church believes.

*G. M.* Nor is that confined to the Papists; very firm Protestants find out their truth by the majority of voices of orthodox commentators and divines; and some never question, that the voice of the people is the voice of God.

*Y. C.* I shall not deny that the tradition of the elders, and the approbation of the multitude, hardens them against all objections that can be brought to them from the scriptures. But I cannot help thinking, that their solemn silent disdain of our objections, may even be a cover for weakness: for it would be hard to think, that they find themselves capable to answer them, and yet will not do it.

*Y. C.* You are going too fast, upon the supposition that nothing has been answered to the petition, which may prove a mistake: for as they were left to answer it in the way that should seem to them most proper, I have heard that the exception to the third argument, from Rev. xi. has been refuted from  
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the pulpit by the “Declarer and Detector of Sectarian Errors.”

R. S. Yes; they saw our Professor of divinity, who had before boasted in that argument as invincible, has been crying out against the delusion of putting off the reign of the saints till the coming of Christ to judgment, and till the resurrection.

Y. C. But did he confute that delusion, as he calls it, by the scripture, or only make a bold assertion, and raise a strong cry against it, as usual?

Y. G. I suppose he uses to back his assertions with quotations of scripture; and, according to his ordinary way of citing it in proof of what he says, he needs be in no strait.

R. S. What think you then of this text? *In my father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also.*

G. M. And what is that to the purpose? or what would he make of as many texts as can be cited, to shew, that the Lord and his people will meet at his coming, and never more be separated?

Y. G. This must be it, That as Christ went to heaven to prepare a place for them, they must be instantly taken up into heaven, when he comes again, and not stay to reign with him on the earth.

G. M. We must suppose, then, they are not to stay to judge the world, or that the judgment is to be at an end in twenty four hours. Whereas Peter, when speaking of that *day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men*, says, *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one DAY is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as ONE DAY\**.

Y. C. I would fain know what the Professor will say of the New Jerusalem (which is now above, where Christ is) *coming down from God out of heaven*. Will not the saints possess *the beloved city* † when it comes

\* 1 Pet. iii. 7. 8.

† Rev. xx. 9.

comes down? Or, is it his opinion, that it will come from heaven to be instantly taken up again?

R. S. What he will say to that, I cannot pretend to guess, till I see what Durham says of it; but, in the New Testament, I find the great day of judgment, wherein the church, will appear with Christ in glory, called *the times of restitution of all things*\*, even as the gospel-day is called *the times of refreshing*. And why may not he allow the thousand years of the saints reign on the earth to be the first of these times of restitution?

J. C. It is most certain, from John xiv. 2. and 3. and 1 Thess. iv. 16. 17. the saints will never be separated from him, after they are gathered to him, at *his appearing, and his kingdom*; but that they will instantly go to reside in the third heaven, where he now is, would be a very wide inference from these texts.

W. C. Your Professor of divinity cites scripture, I think, very much after the manner of our Quakers, and not much less against the scope of it than they, when they speak of the *light within*, as the great thing pointed at in the Bible.

R. S. I never much troubled my head with that juggling story of the Quakers *light within*; and to the best of my uptake, they seem to be covered Deists. But how come you to class our Professor with your Quakers, as citing scripture against the plain scope of it?

W. C. Because he either, with the Quakers, allegorises the scriptures that speak of the resurrection of the body, and the reign of the saints in their restored state, into the spiritual resurrection of the soul from sin, and the inward reign.—

R. S. He is more set on temporals and outwards, I dare say, than to confine it there.

W. C. — Or else, as you are insinuating, he means to shew, that the scriptures point out a reign  
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\* Acts iii. 19. 21.

on the earth for the saints in their mortal state, having all heretics and persecutors subdued under them. But nothing can be more against the whole scope of the scriptures, which testify *the sufferings of Christ, and the following glory*, and shew us the inseparable connection betwixt *suffering with him* in this life, and *reigning with him* in the life to come. And there can be no doctrine more fitly contrived than this of your Professor, to divert Christians from seeking after fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, and conformity to his death, and to move them away from the lively hope of likeness to him in his resurrection.

Now, if he will not have the saints to be *companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ* in this life while they are preserved under the *trial of faith, unto his heavenly kingdom*, but will insist for an earthly kingdom to them, let him do it; only why should it plead a foundation in the scriptures more than our Quakers light within?

And as to what you say of temporals and outwards, notwithstanding their vizard of spirituality, they can reconcile God and this world, in their own way, as well as he is able to do in his.

R. S. At this rate, you would make a great many Quakers. But whatever be in this, I am persuaded the modern opinions concerning the reign of the saints on the earth, differ widely from the faith which the first suffering Christians had of the reign of all the elect with Christ in the great day of judgment; and these opinions are, in my view, as opposite to the true spirit of Christianity, as Antichrist is to Christ.

Y. G. When the kingdom of Antichrist came, they laid aside the doctrine of the first resurrection, and the reign of the just, wherewith the first Christians comforted themselves under their sufferings, together with the doctrine of the necessary connection between suffering with Christ in this life, and reigning with him in the life to come: for, indeed, it was quite

quite inconsistent with their kingdom, as being a great mean of comfort against it. And to make the kingdoms of this world Christ's, in any other way than they became his in the time of the apostles, or to plead for a dominion of the saints over them, before the *resurrection of the just*; is perfectly Antichristian.

D. S. The strength of the brethren's testimony lies in the word *judicial*; and the force of their argument against us must be in the word *sectarian*. And when I speak what I read in the scripture, of the first resurrection, and reign of the saints, I am confuted by the word *Millenarian*. I confess I am at a great loss with this way of reasoning: for I can neither be convinced by what I do not understand, nor am I capable to make any reply to it.

R. S. If you were one of the Professors students, you would get an account of all the condemned erroneous opinions, contrary to the orthodox standards, distinguished by their proper names, as *Nevatian*, *Audean*, *Arian*, *Eutychean*, *Nestorian*, *Pelagian*, *Arminian*, *Baxterian*, *Cocceian*, *Erastian*, and the like. These would serve as beacons to keep you in the orthodox course; and if you should find scripture pleaded for any opinion new to you, because not in your standards, you needed only think to which of the condemned errors, on the right or left hand, it might be referred; and then confute it, by lifting up your hands, crying, O flat Arminianism! or Cocceianism! or Baxterianism! or (with somele's abhorrence, because it is on the right hand) even Antinomianism! Or you might express yourself in this manner, 'This is a *dangerous*, *sectarian*, or *Millenarian*, or *Latitudinarian* error.

D. S. But I wonder that I hear of no—*ITES*. Are there no errors marked that way?

R. S. There's no lack of—*ITES*; as, the *Ebionites* and *Elcesaites*; and among the Gnostics, the *Cainites* and the *Ophites*: then you have the *Marcionites*, very famous:

famous: then the *Encratites* and the *Apotactites*. And among the Montanists, the *Tascodrugites* and *Passalorynchites*. These are—*ITES* for you. And you have likewise the *Antidicomarianites*, or if you like a shorter word, the *Euchites*.—

D. S. —If you be not coining these words, you have certainly taken them off some apothecary's pots or shuttles, and are palming them on me for the names of heretics. You may just as well say *Ipecacuanbaites*.

R. S. No, truly. I own I am in good humour; but I assure you there are such names in the lists of heretics. They may indeed appear frightful to you at first; but let not that discourage you. In a little time, you will find them as familiar as the names of the drugs to the keeper of an apothecary's shop.

D. S. But, in earnest, I see nothing I could propose by this study, if it were not to make myself a sort of a bully in divinity, to fright poor people with words and names. I'll do better to steer my course by my Bible, and notice the beacons set up there. And I am sure I shall have the testimony of every man's conscience who really believes the Bible, that this is the safest course.

R. S. But not so easy as the other.

D. S. I like ease very well; but I fear that study would ease me of searching the scriptures, and of dependence on Christ as his disciple, to bring me under the yoke of human authority, and subject my faith to the dictates of the clergy about truth and error.

Yet, seeing you have got into an odd humour about words and names, I shall be content to hear you upon a word you have not yet mentioned, because it is taken to imply some truth that the Professor has been saying out of the pulpit we have the impudence to deny.

R. S. Pray what word is that?

D. S. If I mind well, it is *specifically*, or if I have heard right.

R. S. A very proper word for a Professor of divinity. But what use made he of it, or was he finding fault with us that we did not use that glorious word *specifically*?

D. S. No. He says we sectarians deny that the church of the Old Testament was *specifically* the same with the New-Testament church.

J. G. And we may take this as the answer of our exception against the first argument for national covenants.

R. S. Very probably: For such of his people as understand not this metaphysical term, will be ready to imagine a *sameness* of the Old and New-Testament church, when no other argument can evidence it.

D. S. But what means the word *specifically*?

R. S. You must learn your logics and metaphysics before you fathom the deep sense of that mighty word.

J. G. You may explain it to him by examples.

R. S. Then I must explain *generically* and *numerically*, as well as *specifically*.

D. S. I pray you, one of these terms of the clergy's trade at once. I have no mind to their business; and I fear I have not head enough for any one of this *sort* of words.

R. S. You have explained it already yourself.

D. S. You are diverting yourself with my ignorance. How have I explained a word I do not understand?

R. S. We deny that the church of the Old Testament was of the same sort with the New-Testament church; just as you say, 'These peculiar words that you call the terms of the clergy's trade are not of the same *sort* with common words. You own them to be *generically* the same, as they are *words*; but you  
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make them *specifically* different, when you call them another *sort* of words.

D. S. And is this the mystery of *specifically*? Then I have no fear of it: for the scripture makes not the Old-Testament church and the New of the same sort. I am sure *flesh* and *spirit*, *earthly* and *heavenly*, are not of the same sort; that is, say you, not *specifically* the same. Is not this the meaning of *specifically*?

R. S. I think so. But the Professor would have you own them to be of the same *sort*, and no more different than the church of Antioch, and the church of Corinth, two churches of the same *sort*. And so he allows you to deny them to be *numerically* the same, but not *specifically*.

D. S. He may say too, that the church in Corinth differs no more from the church of the first-born, than it does from the church in Antioch.

And if he will have all churches to be of the same *sort*, I shall be evens with him for once: I'll say there is indeed no other church but one; and, if he pleases, he may call it *numerically* one.

R. S. And what make you then of the church of the Old Testament?

D. S. That church was a shadow of the only true church to come, whereof Jesus Christ is the builder; as it is said, *Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after, but Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end*\*.

R. S. What say you then of the Old-Testament saints?

D. S. I say, the saints of the New-Testament are now builded together with them, into the only true church, that is *built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself (the first begotten of the dead) being the chief corner-stone* †.

3 N 2

R. S.

\* Heb. iii. 5. 6.

† Eph. ii. 19. 21. Col. i. 18.

R. S. And what will you make of all the churches you read of in the New Testament?

D. S. Each of them is a lively representation of the only true church, as they *also are builded together in him for an habitation of God through the Spirit* \*.

R. S. Why then call you them and old Israel churches, seeing there is but one true church?

D. S. Even as I call the types of Christ's sacrifice, *sacrifices*; and as I call that bread and cup in the Lord's supper his *body and blood*.

R. S. Now I have drawn out your whole error. For thus you deny the Old-Testament church and the New to be *specifically* the same; and thus you set aside the *Catholic visible church*, which you ought to distinguish from the *invisible*.

D. S. Hear me then. I own that the only true church, and its communion in Christ, as one body, is visible in every church of the saints, having communion in that one bread, and that one cup †.

I own again, that there is one visible rule for all churches, in all nations, without difference, *viz.* the Bible; and the church that comes nearest to that rule, is the most catholic church.

And again, I distinguish any such visible church from the true invisible catholic, as the *sign* from the thing *signified*.

Now tell me, if you can, what more the Professor would have. Would he have me to be a Roman Catholic?

R. S. Say a Scottish Catholic; for that is what he would have. He wants you to own the covenanted church of Scotland to be of the same sort with the covenanted church of Israel.

G. M. But I fear he cannot even grant him that favour, till he see that the nation of Scotland sprang from a promise of God, as Israel from the promise made to Abraham; and till he be sure, that God made a covenant with the nation of Scotland, according

\* Eph. ii. 22.

† 1 Cor. x. 16. 17. 18.

according to the covenant that he made with Israel, when he took them by the hand to bring them out of Egypt; yea, till he understand that Christ is to come of Scotland, according to the flesh, as he was to come of the nation of Israel.

*D. S.* That is what I hope I will never see. But if I owned the covenanted church of Scotland to be of the same sort with that of Israel, I behoved then to deny it to be catholic.

*R. S.* As how?

*D. S.* The covenanted church of Israel was a nation of this earth, separated from all other nations to God, as his kingdom, and possessing a spot of the earth as their proper inheritance. But a church of the New Testament is a people whom God takes out of any nation, without difference, for his name, and who sojourn in any country of the world, as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. This is catholic. But is there any charm in the word *specifically*, to make this of the same sort with the national church of Israel?

*R. S.* Still you mistake him. He would have all the nations of the world brought into the solemn league and covenant, and subjected to the associated presbytery that bears testimony to that covenant. And when that is, there will be a catholic church, *specifically* the same with all the nations of the world, profelyted into the church of Israel.

*D. S.* Say rather, *specifically* the same with the Jewish notion of the Messiah's kingdom. Say, *specifically* the same with the Roman Catholic, which answers to the city where our Lord was crucified.

*R. S.* You may represent the Professor as ridiculous to yourself as you please, and give his church all the ill names that the Revelation gives to Antichrist; but it is far below him to dispute with you.

*G. M.* And they who believe his judicial testimony will be sure to look on all that speak against his doctrine as dogs barking at the moon.

*J. C.* So much, then, for barking at the moon.

## A Dissertation on INCEST.

A Dispute between Mr Glas and the Presbytery of Dundee, concerning the Lawfulness of J. B.'s Marriage with J. M. his former Wife's Grandniece, in 1729.

[First published in the year 1730.]

*Mr Glas's reasons for the Lawfulness of this Marriage.*

**I**T is manifest this marriage is upon none of these degrees expressly mentioned in the Levitical law, and more fully laid open in the common table, where the several instances upon the degrees of nearness of kindred and affinity are pointed out. When the Lord takes notice of the abominations of the Heathen in this matter of incest, for which he took vengeance on them, and with which he severely discharges his people to defile themselves; and when he makes so particular a condescension on the several degrees, and explains this his law in no other part of his word; and when he makes this a case of life and death; it seems an inference very just from this, That he hath left it free for any man to marry in any degree beyond these mentioned in the law.

Yet, whatever is by just and necessary consequence deducible from God's law, is certainly in it; and therefore every such consequence must have some foundation in the law itself. And if there be any thing in the Levitical law that leads us to see a marriage unlawful upon that degree whereon J. B.'s marriage is an instance, though that degree be not very express in the law, then they who thus see it in the law must declare it unlawful, though it be really unlawful whether they see it or not: but, at the same time, it will not be easily thought, that the Lord made the life and death of the people of his kingdom to depend on a point not obvious in his law.

Now,

Now, Let us see if we find any thing in the law of God upon this subject, from which we may infer the unlawfulness of marriage upon that degree whereon J. B.'s marriage is an instance.

And, i. The law speaks not of that distinction of the lines direct, collateral, and oblique, which men have used in the explication of it, and for giving a ready up-taking of the different degrees. And no reason can be given why the express prohibition goes not so far downward upon the oblique line as upon the direct, if we have not recourse to the reason mentioned in the law; or, why there is but one degree forbidden expressly upon the oblique line, and but one upon the collateral, while there are as it were two (though they be but upon the matter one, as we shall see) upon the direct line, especially if we consider that it is far more easy by nature's light to make an inference from one generation to another upon the direct line, than upon the oblique or collateral. The presbytery seems to labour under a gross mistake, in confounding the direct line and the oblique, reckoning, that, as they draw or fancy a line from the brother to his brother's daughter through his brother, so there is such a real derivation of blood from that brother to his brother's daughter, as there is from her grandfather to her upon the direct line: and by this chimerical fancy, to which their line leads them, they must hold a higher degree of incest in the marriage of uncle and niece, than in the marriage of a brother and sister upon the collateral line; whereas, the nearness of brother and sister in blood is beyond all possibility of contradiction, presupposed unto the nearness of uncle and niece.

2. It is evident there is no room left in this law of God for drawing inferences, by taking the words or names of the related persons in stricter or larger senses: for, though there be such words made use of in this law, as occurs in other places of scripture, in a larger sense; yet that sense is plainly excluded in this law.

law. And we had been left at the utmost uncertainty if it had been otherwise, as we may see by this instance, Lev. xviii. 9. *The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, born at home or abroad, their nakedness thou shalt not uncover.* If we take father and sister, and daughter of the father, in such a sense as they frequently bear in scripture, it will be unlawful for, not cousin-germans only, but for their children and children's children still downwards, to marry together; and so no marriage, even in the collateral way, will be at all lawful: for, if any man descended of the one cousin should marry a woman descended of the other, he would in that case uncover the nakedness of his sister, the daughter of his father, and that in a scripture-sense of the words *father* and *sister*, and *daughter of the father*, and the same man is still the father in this sense of all that descend from on both the lines, which are from him direct, and so are all that stand upon these lines collaterally to one another still sons and daughters of the same father, and brothers and sisters in the scripture-sense of the word: but in this law the Lord keeps close to the strictest sense of the words, as we see ver. 10. The words *son* and *daughter* stand in their strictest sense, and the largest sense is avoided. *The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter.* Just so, ver. 14. the sense of the word *aunt* is expressly determined, *Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother; thou shalt not approach to his wife, she is thine aunt.* The presbytery have thought, that, seeing this is the reason of the prohibition that she is his aunt, this word must carry farther import than father's sister; and what should that be? It is this, as they declare, As she is the aunt of her husband's immediate nephew, her niece, so she is an aunt to her grandniece, and all in a direct line downward. And this is their authoritative sense of the reason for a man's not approaching to his father's brother's wife. It should not be thought, that they  
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are imagining the Bible was at first written in our language; and yet, even in our language, the *aunt* simply, and the *grandaunt* are different designations, and different persons; and the *aunt* will never make *grandaunt*, unless we put *grand* to it: nor should it be thought, that this presbytery is casting about to fetch in an old Popish notion into a Protestant church, That persons should not marry in such a relation as has a common name given to it. But as this their interpretation of the reason of this prohibition is wholly beside the plain mind of the Lawgiver, and founded upon their sense of an English word: so it is most evident, that the reason the Lawgiver there points out for a man's not approaching to his father's brother's wife, is, seeing that husband and wife stands for the same thing throughout this law, as being one flesh, she is the same thing to him as his father's brother, whose nakedness her's is, and she is so to him, his father's sister or his aunt. This is very clear in the text, which says, a man uncovers the nakedness of his father's brother by approaching to his wife; and was it possible for the presbytery to overlook this, and give another sense, if they had not been in the greatest haste to condemn J. B.? Thus, aunt here, as in other places, is still father's sister, Exod. vi. 20. Numb. xxvi. 29. And if it signify cousin-german in these places, according to the mind of some interpreters, then the reason hereby fetched into the Levitical law upon incest makes cousin-germans unfit for marriage.

3. Neither does this law make the least use of the notion of parentage, but in the strictest sense. We have heard how it expresses the relation betwixt the grandfather and grandchild, and gives such a reason for the prohibition, even in that law, as leaves not room for a general notion of parentage to come into this law; and as it meddles not with any general notion of parentage, so it makes no manner of use of the notion of superiority and inferiority. It forbids

equals (brother and sister) to marry, but not on the account of their equality. It forbids superiors and inferiors (the begetting parent and child, and child's child, and the uncle and niece) to marry: but not on the account of the superiority or inferiority. The wise Lawgiver goes more strictly to work than to insist in this case upon a general notion, that, if it were followed, would take in innumerable marriages that have no manner of concern with the subject of this law, or the reason of it, such as all marriages betwixt tutors and pupils, magistrates and subjects, masters and servants, elder and younger, ministers and people, learned and unlearned. And if this general notion of parentage and superiority should be rectified to the affair of kindred and affinity, it would still be unlawful for one cousin-german, or his wife, to marry the other cousin-german's child or grandchild, upon the direct line still downward, as the presbytery speaks. But if the general notion of parentage and superiority must yet be further restrained unto great nearness of kin, then that general notion is dwindled away into a particular, and the stress leans on great nearness of kin, the Lord's own reason: but who shall determine that nearness of kin to us, if it be not he who can say, *I am the Lord?* He does indeed determine it: but not a syllable speaks he in this law of a general notion of parentage, or of superiority or inferiority. The civil law, as it stood when Antichrist was growing to his height, forbids the granduncle to marry his grandniecc; for this reason, because he is unto her in place of a parent. And these foreign divines, who, by their circumstances in the countries and times wherein they lived, have been induced to explain the law of God by Justinian's law, have themselves observed a difference between that law and the law of God in this case, and have been obliged to strain exceeding hard to reconcile the commentary with the text; but they might have saved their pains

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if they had considered; that Christians made no bonds in those days of carrying points wherein the divine authority claimed a concern, much farther than God's law carried them.

4. And as little does the law of God make any mention of a reason taken from the removal of the relation from a forbidden degree on the one side, but not on the other. It is true, the relation of brother and sister is a forbidden degree, and the law forbids the marriage of uncle and niece, where the relation is removed upon one side, but not on the other, and leaves it free to cousin-germans, where the relation is removed on both sides: but does it insinuate this reason, taken from the difference which we observe betwixt these two cases? nothing like it; but declares another expressly, which will carry the thing no further than the Lord himself carries it, who stops on both hands where there is an equal distance of relation, that is, where there is an equal number of persons intervening. And why should God's own reason be neglected in this case, and another put in place of it, which he never once points to, and which carries the thing farther than it can go upon the reason he gives? And it is here to be observed, that, in the case of cousin-germans, the relation is removed only upon one side, from the forbidden degree of uncle and niece, or aunt and nephew, and stands on the other. Though there be no use made of the foresaid things in the law of God upon incest, yet we must consider how this law of his stands, and if any thing shall be found in it, from which the unlawfulness of J. B.'s marriage can be inferred, let it be declared unlawful.

The following observations upon this law may serve to clear this matter to unprejudiced minds.

1. The reason given in the introduction is precisely this, Lev. xviii. 6. *None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness; I am the Lord.* Here the Lord lays the nearness of kin

for a foundation to all the following prohibitions, which are his explications upon this general, and are all built upon this foundation; and then he declares his Sovereign authority as the absolute Lord and Lawgiver, and thereupon calls for obedience, and proceeds to determine by that his authority, what is that nearness of kin. If he had rested in the general, and left us to determine in that matter of the nearness of kin, we had been in the greatest uncertainty, and our consciences had been perplexed with numberless fancies and reasonings of our own about it, as is evident from the various reasons men have imagined to themselves against marriage, in the degrees he forbids, which reasons he never once points to, and from the Popish fancies about near kin; but because he knew he would be ready either to stop too short, or else proceed too far, in fixing the bounds where death should lie on the one side, and life on the other, he takes the matter so in his own hand, as to make the men guilty of a very criminal usurpation, who shall take upon them by their wisdom, to determine in this matter less or more, than he has thought fit to determine. *I am the Lord*, has a dreadful import here, not only to the disobedient, but also to them that take away or add, and interpose their authority where his is not interposed in this case; and this falls heavy upon the church of Rome and the Pope, who pretending to act in his name, and seeking to advance the interest and authority of that church, took upon them to forbid far beyond what he forbids. But this land is mercifully delivered from that Antichristian authority in this point; and the law of the land renders unto God what is his own in this matter, by referring wholly to his law.

2. In the prohibitions that proceed upon this ground of the nearness of kin, the Lord puts the husband and wife for the same thing, and speaks of their nakedness as one and the same, they being *no more twain*

*twain, but one flesh. The nakedness of thy father's wife is thy father's nakedness, the nakedness of thy brother's wife is thy brother's nakedness, thy father's brother's wife is thy father's sister, or thine aunt, saith the Lord.* And so he that marries his wife's brother's daughter, doth the same thing in this case, as if he married his own brother's daughter; and the like might be said of his brother's granddaughter, if the law had forbidden that far down, or in that degree; for we can make no further use of affinity here than the law does, nor can we carry it unto any degree of kin which is not there forbidden. And thus it is most true, that the man may not marry any of his wife's kindred nearer in blood than he may of his own, nor the woman of her husband's kindred nearer in blood than of her own, as says the assembly of divines at Westminster: but these foreign divines that follow the civil law in that notion, of them that are in the place of parents, and so go further than the word of God in the case of consanguinity, yet do not seem to carry the thing so far in affinity.

3. The Lord likewise expressly makes the nakedness even of the grandchild, to be unto the grandfather his own nakedness, in forbidding him to uncover it, ver. 10. *The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter, their nakedness thou shalt not uncover; for their's is thine own nakedness.*

Thus, though there be not so many persons between the grandfather and his grandchild, as between the uncle and the niece; yet the reason given for the prohibition upon this direct line, carries further than upon the other lines, where the prohibitions go merely upon the nearness of kin.

It has been said against the Papists, that marriage with the children of grandchildren is not forbidden expressly, for this reason, because it is not a supposable case, (and truly it is far less supposable than a marriage with a brother's grandchild, which is not expressly forbidden, as a marriage with a man's own grandchild

grandchild is) yet it is altogether needless and unreasonable to seek any other reason for the thing, when there is a sufficient reason evidently given in the law itself; which reason makes it plainly as unlawful for persons to uncover the nakedness of the grandchildren of their grandchildren, whose nakedness is their own nakedness, as for a man to uncover the nakedness of the grandchildren of his wife, whose nakedness is his own: so marriage with the grandchildren of a person whose nakedness is declared in the law to be our own, is expressly made unlawful to us in this law: and as the Lord does not mention this reason in forbidding upon the direct line, till he came down to the grandchild, so in the same sense wherein it can be said, that a man's grandchild's nakedness is his own, in that same very sense all that descend from him, and to whom blood is derived from him, their nakedness is his own. This the prohibition is perpetual upon the direct line: And thus far the law of nature, as known to them destitute of revelation, goes clearly along with the revealed law; and this that the Lord says of a man's own nakedness, is a clear explication of the law of nature.

But now the nakedness of them lineally descended from a person, is declared by the Lord to be the person's own nakedness, and that only unto the person from whom they are so descended, and unto the purpose of debarring the uncovering of nakedness between them. And as the Lord has thus stated it, so we cannot carry it further; neither does it indeed hold in other cases: For, 1. It cannot be thus said, that the persons lineally descended from one brother, their nakedness is the other brother's own nakedness from whom they are not all descended, and of whose flesh they are no remainder in any sense but in the sense of nearness of kin. And if the niece could not marry the uncle, because her nakedness is her father's, who is his brother, and so she is the same thing

thing to him as his brother ; then by the same reason she could not marry her uncle's son, or grandson, or any upon that direct line downwards, as the presbytery speaks, seeing their nakedness is still her uncle's nakedness, and so they would be the same thing to her in this case with her uncle ; they are indeed the same thing to him, but in no wise to her. 2. All that are lineally descended of two brothers, and of their father, are every one of them unto the brother of whom they are descended, and unto that common father, in such a manner a remainder of their flesh, as that their nakedness is their own nakedness ; and if we should thus make them to stand for the same thing, as those of whom they are descended ; and that with respect to one another, all marriages would be unlawful, because thereby all descended of the two brothers would be sisters and brothers to all generations, as being still the same, and that unto one another, with the first two brothers. And the absurdity of this needs not be further pointed out.

4. Therefore in the other degrees upon which the Lord forbids the uncovering of nakedness, he proceeds upon the ground of nearness of kin ; and by his Sovereign authority, determines that nearness which would not be fully and clearly determined by nature's light.

And he first forbids the uncovering of nakedness betwixt a brother and a sister, begotten by the same parent, ver. 9. 11. 16. Here the generating parent comes between ; and so the parties here forbidden to uncover nakedness, are at a greater distance of kin than they who are discharged to come together, because of the fore-mentioned *own nakedness*, ver. 7. 3. 10. 15. 17. yet not at such a distance but that the Lord declares them too near of kin to come together, there being but one between : and so it is unlawful for any person to uncover the nakedness of her who is nearest to the person that is nearest to him. He proceeds yet a degree farther, and forbids the uncovering  
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of nakedness betwixt the brother or sister of the begetting parent, and the child of that parent, ver. 12. 13. 14. This prohibition goes expressly upon the nearness of kin, and this is justly reckoned the lowest of the degrees forbidden in this law; for here there come more between these forbidden to come together than in the case of brother and sister, *viz.* 1<sup>st</sup>, The begetting parent of the niece or nephew. 2<sup>dly</sup>, The parent that begat that parent and his brother or sister; so that there come two between; yet hereby they are not set at such a distance but that the Lord still declares them too near to come together; and so it is unlawful for any persons to come together where the distance of kin betwixt them is only by two intervening. Here the Lord stops, and further he goes not, who says, *I am the Lord*. And it is most observable, that though there be not the same distance between the brother and sister, as there is betwixt the uncle and niece; yet he stops directly there, where the distance is precisely equal, by an equal number of persons intervening betwixt these whom he forbids not, and so allows to come together in marriage. Thus we find an equal number of persons parents coming between two cousin-germans, and between the uncle and his grandniece, and both are set at the same distance of kin, by the precise number of three persons coming between each of them.

And who shall declare to us, that a marriage in this distance of kin is unlawful, when he whom it best becomes to say, *I am the Lord*, and must be owned best to understand the matter, hath left it free?

We may fancy a thousand things to ourselves, and the most grave and learned divines, the most wise and able lawyers may give what judgment they think best; but while none of them can say, *I am the Lord*, though we be bound to pay all due deference to their judgment; yet they must point out something in this law of God, from which, as stated there,

there, a clear inference may be made, shewing, That he hath indeed forbidden J. B.'s marriage before they can warrantably declare him a transgressor of this law of God ; and if it be manifest, as it is, by what is above said, that J. B.'s marriage is upon a degree farther than the farthest, and lower than the lowest degree forbidden in the word of God, to which the law of this land does very justly refer as to the safest explication of the law of nature, and that in opposition to Antichrist, who shews himself that he is God remarkably in this point, then it must be owned, that the law of God and of this land hath made his marriage lawful ; and if his wife and he be lawfully married, can any man on earth put them asunder ?

*Answers by the Presbytery of Dundee to the Reasons for the Lawfulness of J. B.'s Marriage.*

THE inconclusiveness and falsehood of these reasons will appear from a view of the nature of nearness of kin or nearness of blood, to which all the said reasonings refer. Nearness of kin or nearness of blood has its foundation in, and rises from some family from which the persons near of kin to one another are descended, or their nearness to the persons from whom they are descended, and *vice versa* ; or from affinity by marriage, parents then being one flesh, and so one blood, all their children, though they be said to be the first degree descended from them, yet they are really parts of the parents, and of the same unmixed blood with them ; likewise the person who marries any child of a family, is by that affinity just as he was a son of the family, and is reckoned by the divine law to have the same nearness of kin to the parents and to the other children of the family. And that this is the true and genuine nature of nearness of kin will appear from Lev. xviii. where the Lord expressly forbids such and such relations to

Vol. II. † 3 P marry,

marry, because they are so near of kin to one another. And,

*1st*, A man is forbidden to marry, or to uncover the nakedness of any that has their whole blood of that family from which he is descended, or reckoned to have it by being married to one that has their whole blood of that family, *viz.* to uncover the nakedness of his mother, in the 7th verse; of his father's wife, though not his mother, in the 8th; of his sister, in the 9th; of his aunt, in the 12th, 13th, and 14th.

*2dly*, A man is forbidden to marry any descended of himself, or to uncover their nakedness, in ver. 10.; and the same is implied in ver. 7. where the grandchildren are only named in ver. 10.; yet the reason added in the close of the verse, *For theirs is thine own nakedness*, shews, that the prohibition is extended to the remotest descendents; and this the framers of J. B.'s paper have thought fit to own. Again, in like manner, a man is forbidden to *uncover the nakedness* of any descended of his wife in ver. 17. because he and she being one flesh and one blood, therefore her descendents are reckoned to him as his own; and *vice versa*, all these descendents are forbidden to uncover the nakedness of any from whom they are descended, or of them who are married, or have been married to any from whom they are descended.

And, *lastly*, A man is forbidden to uncover the nakedness of a person who is, or hath been married to one that has his whole blood of that family of which he is descended, in ver. 8. 14. 15. 16.; in all which prohibitions it is to be observed, that either both the persons have their whole blood of the same family, or that one of the persons hath in him their whole blood of that family from whom the other is descended: Or, lastly, That one of the persons is, or has been married to one that had his whole blood of that family from which the other is descended, and so the person



person that has thus been one flesh with one that had his whole blood; is reckoned by affinity to have the whole blood in himself. Now this last case is the case of J. B.; for he having been married to J. L. is reckoned to have the same relation to J. M. that J. L. had; and seeing J. L. had her whole blood of J. L. her father's family, by consequence J. B. cannot lawfully marry J. M. who is descended of the family of J. L. of which J. L. was daughter, and therefore had her whole blood of that family. From what is said, the vanity of the reasoning in p. 471. about the terms *direct line*, *collateral lines*, and *oblique lines*, will appear; for all these terms are relative and useful in explaining this subject; and the presbytery has not (as is alledged) confounded the direct line with the collateral or oblique, but have only showed, that J. B. being as a son of J. L.'s family, and consequently as deriving his whole blood from it, and J. M. being descended of the same family, he in the first degree, she in the third, though both the lines, his and hers, are direct with respect to him from whom they are descended; yet they are oblique to one another. As to what is said of this being but one degree forbidden on the collateral, and one on the oblique, and two on the direct: As to the direct, it is owned, in the close of the paper, that though there be but two expressly named, yet the prohibition is perpetual; and therefore it is false that is said here, that there are but two forbidden: as to the collateral lines, persons in the second degree may marry, *viz.* a grandson by one son or daughter of a family, may marry a granddaughter by another son or daughter; for, as they are grandchildren of that family, so each of them is grandchild to another family, and so deriving the one half of their blood from that family, and the other half from another, they may marry: but, on the oblique line, the person being a son or daughter, or married to a son or daughter of the family from which the other person

is descended, that son or son-in-law deriving, or reckoned as deriving his whole blood from that family, and the other deriving part of his blood from that same family, there is more blood betwixt them than betwixt cousin-germans, which are the nearest in blood that can marry. From what is said above, the measure which is alledged for knowing nearness in blood, *viz.* by the number of persons intervening betwixt them, is false; for no number of persons going between can make it lawful for persons on the direct line to marry, nor yet on the oblique, as above.

Further, that of parentage in the direct line, *et loco parentis* in the oblique, is necessary and certain; and therefore what is alledged by divines of this being a secondary reason of the prohibition is founded in the very nature of the thing; and all that is said by the framers of J. B.'s paper against its being a reason of the prohibition, in any sense, is idle and frivolous. As to what is said of the terms of this law in Lev. xviii. and xx. their being taken to be in a proper sense, it is answered, The words here, as in all other parts of the scripture, have a determinate sense and meaning, and are not to be extended further than is intended by the Holy Ghost; yet when it is evident, by the nature of the thing spoken of in this law, that they are not restricted, as the framers of this paper would have the latter clause of ver. 14. the reason of taking it in a large sense being as evident as the reason for taking the latter of ver. 10. in a large sense, which they themselves do; and it is strange to find men so bold to diminish the meaning of the divine law, or to take from it, when, at the same time, they are so liberal in their insinuating judgments against those that add to it; and the presbytery are not singular in taking the last clause of ver. 14. in a large sense, but have the concurrence of all divines and lawyers agreeing with them in this opinion: and as to the consequence which is drawn from it,  
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that it would make all marriages unlawful, it is altogether groundless; for this sense restricts to uncle and aunt, granduncle, great-granduncle, &c.; and the reason is obvious, *viz.* their nearness of kin to their nieces or nephews, the uncle, granduncle, or great-granduncle, and aunts in like manner deriving their whole blood from that family, from which their nieces or grand-nieces and nephews, &c. derive part of their blood.

Upon the whole, it is obvious, that man and wife being taken for one and the same thing through the whole of this law about incest, as is done, and that justly, in J. B.'s paper, that the measure by which all the forbidden degrees are to be tried or judged is this one, namely, That a person who has in him the unmixed blood of a family, or derives his whole blood from a family, is discharged to marry or approach to any who derive any part of their blood from that family, and by this nearness of kin is easily known; but how the framers of this paper have slighted, yea opposed this just rule, and have substituted another very unjust and fallacious one in the room of it, is not easy to imagine; yea, they have so unwarrantably, yet boldly, asserted that nearness of kin is only to be known from the number of persons intervening betwixt the relations in the forbidden degrees, yea to assert, that this is the reason given by the Lord, where there is not the least ground of it, or foundation for it, in the divine law.

And to conclude, whatever be advanced in J. B.'s paper, to prove the lawfulness of a woman her marrying her granduncle; yet we are still of the mind that it is neither agreeable to the law of God nor of nature, that a woman should marry one that stands in place of a parent to her by right of blood.

*Remarks on the Presbytery's Answers, by Mr Glas.*

THE only thing that deserves any consideration in these answers, is the view they give us of nearness of kin, and the rule they lay down for trying or judging of all the forbidden degrees, which we have thus in their own words.

“ The measure by which all the forbidden degrees are to be tried or judged is this one, namely, That a person who has in him the unmixed blood of a family, or derives his whole blood from a family, is discharged to marry, or approach to any who derive any part of their blood from that family; and by this nearness of kin is easily known.”

This is the sum and substance of what is now advanced by the framers of the answers, or by the presbytery, for taking off the force of the reasons, shewing the lawfulness of J. B.'s marriage: this runs thro' the whole of the answers, and by this the inconclusiveness and falsehood of the reasons for the lawfulness of the marriage appears to them. They complain that this just rule has been slighted, yea opposed by the framers of the reasons, and that they have substituted another very unjust and fallacious one in the room of it; and they are exceedingly surpris'd with this conduct. But it is as uneasy to imagine how this rule could be contemned or opposed by any till once it was cast up to them. And if this rule had been first on the field, and had been so just as it is said to be, and then set aside by any person to set up another unjust and fallacious one in the place of it, that person had been exceedingly to blame: but this is not the case; yet if this rule now found out by the presbytery, let it be never so new, be a just one contained in God's word, and shewing the unrighteousness and falsehood of other rules set up by men, why should it not take place, and others be rejected? And therefore it must be tried.

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1. Though this rule be recommended for easiness ; yet, upon a little reflection, it appears to exceed in easiness : for if the propositions wherein it is set forth be true, it is by this rule easily known, that all Adam's race are so near of kin, that there can be no lawful marriage among them ; for every man of that race derives his whole blood from that family, and has in him unmixed that one blood of which all nations on the face of the earth are made. And there is no one family from which any man derives his whole blood, without mixture with another family but that family of Adam ; and when a man descended of Adam, marries a woman of that race he uncovers the nakedness of one that derives not a part only, but the whole of her blood from that family. It is hoped, that no man will be surpris'd, that the framer of the reasons did not notice this easy rule, this measure of the nearness of kin thus stated in the divine law concerning incest.

2. If we apply this rule to J. L.'s family, the family for which it was framed, then it may be enquired, If J. L.'s son's children, in whom the presbytery says the blood is mixed, be as near of kin to J. L.'s daughter as is her brother, who, they say, has it unmixed ? If they be as near of kin to her, then it will be unlawful for them to marry with her children ; because they are in the very same nearness of kin to them as he that derives his whole blood from that family of which they are descended : and so by this rule it will be unlawful for cousin-germans to marry : But if they be set at a further distance from J. L.'s daughter than his son their father is, and that by the mixture of foreign blood, or by the generation, then are not their children again set at another degree of distance from J. L.'s daughter by another mixture of blood, or by another generation ? And if so, then does not every mixture of blood or generation make a new and further degree of distance, betwixt a person that has the blood of a family unmixed, and them  
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that derive a part of their blood from that family? How then can this be the one measure, by which all the forbidden degrees are to be tried or judged, and nearness of kin known, whereby no mixture of blood sets them that are descended of a family at any degree of distance from one that derives his whole blood of that family? Yet this must be the just rule for trying the degrees, and knowing nearness of kin, in the room of which, to the great surprize of the presbytery, some have substituted another unjust and fallacious one. Now that unjust and fallacious rule is the rule by which they that make use of it do find, that J. L. J. L.'s daughter, is at a greater distance of kin from her brother than she or any that could descend from her is from her father; and that J. L. is at a greater distance of kin from her brother's children, than she is from her brother. And futher, That J. L. is at a greater distance of kin from her brother's grandchildren than she is from his children; yea, and that J. L. is at the same very distance of kin from her brother's grandchildren, as her children, if she had any, would be from her brother's children; and, seeing she communicates as little blood to her brother's grandchildren as her children do, there is neither more nor less blood, neither a greater nor lesser degree of nearness of kin betwixt her and her brother's grandchildren, than there would be betwixt her children and her brother's children. And as the divine law says nothing from which any inference can be drawn, that God hath forbidden marriage upon one of these parallel degrees; so that law says as little to give any foundation for an inference, whereby marriage may be made unlawful upon the other. This rule, whatever the presbytery think of it, was not brought to the divine law, but found in it, and no where else; and it applies to neither more nor less than what is plain and evident in that law; neither has any feasible consequence yet been drawn from that law to shew the  
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least mistake in it. But the great evil of what is said in the reasons upon the nearness of kin, as stated in the divine law, is, that it makes J. B.'s marriage lawful, contrary to the will of the presbytery, and the judgment of lawyers, to whom the presbytery, while they profess themselves to be teachers of, and at whose mouth we should learn the law of God, do now send us to learn that law.

3. This rule laid down by the presbytery is so far from being a just measure for trying the forbidden degrees, and from bringing us easily to the knowledge of nearness of kin as they pretend, that it perplexes and confounds the forbidden degrees, and utterly darkens the affair of nearness of kin, as it is stated in God's word: for, by this rule of theirs, if the marriage of a brother and sister, where the blood is not mixed upon any side, be not lawful, it is made more heinous than the marriage of grandfather with his grandchild, or any of his posterity, where the blood of the family is unmixed only upon one side; and yet the Lord declares, That their nakedness is his own, which he does not declare as to the brother and his sister, betwixt whom no such thing takes place. And further, by this one rule of trying the degrees, and knowing the nearness of kin, it is made the same thing for a granduncle to marry his brother's or sister's grandchildren as for a grandfather to marry his own grandchildren; or their posterity, and yet the law of God makes an express distinction, Lev. xviii. 10. 12. 13. 14. But by this rule there is no manner of distinction; for in both cases, a person that hath in him the unmixed blood of a family, does neither more or less but marry another that derives part of the blood from that family; and so the uncle and niece are nearer of kin than the brother and sister, because they are as near of kin as the grandfather and grandchild, or any that descend from him, which the Lord makes a greater nearness than that of brother and sister; and yet the uncle and niece are made near of kin in the word

of God, only by virtue of the nearness of brother and sister, which is presupposed to it, ver 12. 13. 14. Is not this therefore a strange confusion of the degrees? And this is the presbytery's most just and easy rule. They also seem to confound affinity and consanguinity in such a manner, as to make J. B. who is J. M.'s granduncle by affinity, to be in the place of a parent to her by right of blood; and this evidently beyond all law and common sense. And thus men that would be wise above what is written, are left to become vain in their imaginations.

The question is grossly mistated, when it is put upon this footing, whether the instances expressly mentioned in the 18th chapter of Leviticus do so exhaust the general prohibition, ver. 6. that it may be lawful for any persons to marry together that are not expressly mentioned in the Levitical law.

J. B. never made a question of this; but it is constantly affirmed on his part, that the degrees of consanguinity and affinity, clearly pointed out in these instances, and in the reasons of the prohibitions, do so exhaust the general precept, ver. 6. that marriage cannot be unlawful upon degrees not pointed out in the following verses; and that it is an usurpation upon the divine authority, to prohibit upon any degree upon which he has not prohibited.

To this agrees the Protestant definition of Incest, and the decree of the Council of Trent is pointed against this as the doctrine of Protestants; and this is according to the definition of incest in the law of Scotland, James VI. Parl. 1. Act 19. "Therefore our Sovereign Lord, with advice and consent of my Lord Regent, and the Three Estates of this present parliament, statutes and ordains, That whatsoever person or persons, that commits the said abominable crime of incest, that is to say, whatsoever person or persons they be, that abuses their bodies with sik persons in degree as God in his word has expressly forbidden, in any time coming, as contained in the



xviii<sup>th</sup> chapter of Leviticus, shall be punished to the death.”

And, Act 15. “*Item*, Our Sovereign Lord, with advice and consent of my Lord Regent, and Three Estates of this present parliament, has statute and ordained, That the halie band of marriage, made be all estates and sorts of men and women, to be als lawful and als free as the law of God has permitted the samen to be done without exception of person or persons; and has declared and declares, That secunds in degrees of consanguinity and affinity, and all degrees outwith the samen, contained in the word of the eternal God, and that are not repugnant to the said word of God, might and may lawfully marry at all times, sen the 8<sup>th</sup> day of March, &c. and ratifies and approves all the said marriages done; sen the said day, &c.”

And this was the thing stated in the ancient discipline of the evangelical churches in the valleys of Piemont, several hundreds of years before Luther. “Articles of marriage ought to be performed according to the rules prescribed by God, and not within those degrees which he hath forbidden; and there need no scruple of conscience be made concerning what the Pope has forbidden, although we give him no money for a dispensation; for that which God hath not forbidden, may very well be done without his permission.” *Morland's History, book 1. chap. 5. p. 87.* It is true, that Luther at first restricted incest to the instances expressly mentioned in the Levitical law, but afterward he went upon the degrees upon which these instances are given, as do the Protestant divines against the Papists. Brochmand, a Lutheran divine, thus states the Protestant argument against the Papists: *Princeps et palmarium argumentum est hoc; allatum a Luth. de Capt. Babyl. viz. Rectius novisse Deum quæ personæ ad conjugium aptæ sint, et quousque se extendant cognationis gradus, quam ullus homo. Deus vero non prohibuit conjugia nisi usque ad secundum gradum in linea inæ-*  

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*quali, Leviticus 18. et 20. Quocirca conjugia in reliquis gradibus a Deo non prohibitis inita, non possunt nec debent censeri conjugia incesta. Brochmand de conjugia, quaestio 53.*

They that have given their judgment in this case against J. B. have laboured under another remarkable mistake in confounding the unequal or oblique line, as it is commonly called, with the direct line, and in overlooking this, *viz.* that the line is as direct from the common parent to his posterity, by one of his children as by the other.

The Levitical law, tho' it speaks nothing of these lines, makes a very clear distinction betwixt what we call the direct line, and the unequal or oblique, and that clearly founded in the nature of the thing. The Lord forbids the grandfather to marry the granddaughter, or the grandson to marry the grandmother, because of their own nakedness, or because there is a communication and derivation of blood betwixt them, and one of them is a part of the other's flesh, and so makes it unlawful for all them to marry together, among whom this takes place, or where this may be said, as where the Lord says it, *Theirs is thine own nakedness*; and this is perhaps insinuated in the general prohibition, ver. 6. if we look to the import of the original word: but this does not take place in the case of sister and brother, betwixt whom there is no such communication or derivation of blood, nor is there any such communication of blood from the sister to them that are descended of her brother; and therefore there can be no way of reckoning the nearness of kin in that case, but by the generations or degrees, while all that are on the direct line, are unto one another as in the same degree, and so near of kin, that the nakedness of any one of them is the others own nakedness, which is the highest degree of nearness of kin. This plain distinction is much overlooked, and a loose way of arguing is gone upon, making an inference from  
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the mother to the grandmother, as from the aunt to the grandaunt; though it be most evident, the nature of the relation in the cases of grandmother and grandaunt is vastly different, and the reason of the prohibition in God's law as to the grandmother, viz. *their own nakedness*, will never apply either to the aunt or grandaunt. Though the relation be the same, as to the matter of incest, in the case of the grandchild or great-grandchild, yet it will never follow from this, that the relation is the same in the case of niece and grandniece: and though the grandfather, and the ascendants on the direct line, be considered as one with the descendants on that line; yet this is only with respect to one another, and not with respect to any of them on another line, whose nakedness is not their own, otherwise it were most easy to demonstrate every marriage incestuous: and therefore this reason for prohibiting a man to marry his aunt, *She is thy father's near kinswoman*, will never apply to the grandaunt, the grandfather's near kinswoman, as has been with some confidence asserted, under the influence of the foresaid mistake.

The reasonings upon the 14th verse of the 18th chapter of Leviticus, against J. B. look liker the forming of the word of God according to men's judgments, than the forming of their judgment according to that word. The reason given in that 14th verse, with respect to the uncle's wife, *She is thine aunt*, does indeed shew, that the Lord carries the prohibition as far in affinity, as he does in consanguinity, but cannot extend to the grandaunt, whether we consider the sense and scope of the text, or the nature of the relation.

The text declares, as it is unlawful for a man to uncover the nakedness of his father's sister, his father's near kinswoman, or the nakedness of his mother's sister, his mother's near kinswoman; so it is unlawful for a man to uncover the nakedness of his father's or mother's brother, who is in the same  
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nearness of kin with the father or mother's sister; and then shews how a man in this case uncovers the nakedness of his father's brother, which is by approaching unto his wife, whose nakedness is thus declared to be her husband's nakedness; and so says the Lord, *Thy father's brother's wife is thine aunt, thy father's sister.* Thus it is plain, that as in the other cases of this law, the Lord carries the affinity along with the consanguinity, so he does in this case. And this is the only thing we have in the 14th verse beyond what is contained in the 12th, and 13th; so that if an inference cannot be drawn from the father's sister to the grandfather's sister, ver. 12.; neither can an inference be from the father's brother's wife unto the grandfather's brother's wife: but from the father's sister his near kinswoman, unto the grandfather's sister his near kinswoman, there is not an inference, because the grandnephew is at a farther distance of kin from the grandaunt than the nephew is from the aunt; and so the relation is not the same: for though the father's posterity be not set at a distance from him in this case by generations, seeing their nakedness is still his own, and thus they stand in the greatest nearness of kin to him, yet every generation sets them at a farther distance from his sister, whose nakedness theirs is not, otherwise the aunts daughter and daughter's daughter, &c. would be as near of kin to the nephew, and at no greater distance from him than is his aunt, whose nakedness theirs is. And it is certain, that they who descend from a common parent by the sister his daughter, are in a direct line from him and his daughter, as well as they that descend from him by the brother his son, are in a direct line from him, and from that son, and to thousands of generations, they stand every one of them with the common parent, and the brother or sister of whom they are descended, upon the direct line; so that none of them can be set at such a distance from the common parent, or from these by whom they are descended

descended from him but that still their nakedness is their own: but these that descend from the common parent upon the one line, are set at a distance from them that descend from him upon the other line, and that by every generation; for even in the first the brother is at a greater distance from the sister than he is from his father. And now let it be determined by them that can tell whether two and three make five, let it be determined whether they that descend from a common parent upon one line, be set at a greater distance of relation from them that descend from him upon another line, by two generations upon one line, or by one upon each line; and then the great question will be determined, whether the uncle and grandniece be nearer of kin to one another than are cousin-germans. Thus, neither by the aforesaid text, nor by the nature of the relation as stated in the law of God, can any inference be drawn against the lawfulness of marrying the grandaunt, from the unlawfulness of marrying the aunt: and more must be said upon the law of God for making out this inference than lawyers or divines have yet produced, before they can satisfy any impartial judge of the justness of it. It is owned, that the general statute upon the subject of incest is contained in ver. 6. *None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him.* And if this nearness of kin be not stated to us in the following verses by the Lord himself, what is the design of these following verses? And, if we be not to stand on the utmost uncertainty, must we not rest in the Popish law, where only we find a pretence of infallibility? But if we be to take this nearness of kin as the Lord himself has stated it, then let any lawyer or divine point out something in the law of God whereby it may be seen, that he hath stated this nearness of kin so as to take in the grandaunt with the aunt, and it will give satisfaction.

But the strength of the Synod's cause against J. B. lies in the judgment of lawyers and divines, which  
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is very confidently affirmed to be against the lawfulness of his marriage; and though this were universally true, as it is not; yet this their judgment must have the less weight, when it is considered, that it took its rise, not from the law of God, but from the law of the empire, as it stood in the sixth century, where they find those who are accounted to be in the place of parents forbidden to marry with them unto whom they are in the place of parents; and by this rule it is made unlawful for the uncle to marry the grandniece; but there is not the least appearance of this fancy in the law of God, or in the law of Scotland. And if they had not had any other rule of judgment in this case, but the law of God, which is the same thing with the Scottish law in this matter, it is much to be questioned, if this case would have been judged incestuous by any lawyer or divine. And J. B. cannot but think it hard, that Justinian's law, and the judgment of lawyers and divines influenced thereby, should now bind the men of this nation over to the highest censures of the church, and to death, when the law of God and of Scotland hath left them free. Lawyers have been desired to give some instances of statutes or decisions in Scotland, touching J. B.'s case; and instances have been given of foreign laws or decisions in countries where the punishment in this case is arbitrary; but there is no Scottish law nor decision yet produced that hits this case. And when it has been declared, that all incest whatsoever is capital by special statute in our law it should have also been told, that all the incest whatsoever in our law is *the abusing of the body with sik persons in degree as God in his law has expressly forbidden*, Lev. xviii. As to the instance of a man tried and condemned at Perth by the Court of Justiciary, for having carnal dealing with his wife's niece, it no wise touches this case, and it was exactly according to the law of God and of Scotland; for that man was guilty of abusing his body with such

a person in degree as God in his word hath expressly forbidden, and so was clearly guilty of incest by the law of Scotland; but having carnal dealing with the wife's grandniece is not incest by that law, because she is not sik a person in degree as God in his word hath expressly forbidden; and a decision making this to be incest by the law of Scotland, will be a new decision in Scotland. The case is very different where the punishment is arbitrary, and where it is capital; and lawyers will be less excuseable in going beyond the law of God, and of their country, in the one case than in the other. But it is altogether unaccountable to take the help of the laws of other countries, where the punishment is arbitrary, to bring a person to death, where the law of God and of his country would suffer him to live.

Much stress is laid in the unanimity of lawyers and divines in their verdict upon this point. And when that is narrowly enquired into, the ground of boasting upon this head will vanish. For are there not as eminent lawyers as have written, that have not carried incest further than the niece? And it is well known what Grotius says even as to the niece. And for the Civil law commentators that carry the prohibition down to the grandniece in consanguinity, how many are there of them that carry it that length in affinity? Yea, have not some lawyers questioned the carrying down of the affinity to the very niece; so that take it either way, J. B.'s case is far from being unanimously judged incestuous by lawyers. And further, there is such a question among them, If laws forbidding marriages beyond God's prohibition can annul a marriage, when made, unless that certification be contained in the law?

As for the judgment of divines, it labours under the same defect in point of unanimity with that of the lawyers. In the writings of several foreign divines, we do not find the prohibition carried beyond the niece; and all they that, following the Civil

laws, and the laws of their countries, have carried it down to the grandniece, have not ventured to carry it beyond the niece in affinity. As for British divines, perhaps there will not be found many among them, who, in their writings, have carried the prohibition beyond the niece.

[This cause was not decided by the Assembly, but was annually called and postponed till the death of the defendant put an end to it.]

END OF VOLUME SECOND.