

MENTAL ERRORS.



BY
JOHN FLAVEL.

The Occasions, Causes, Nature, Rise, Growth, and Remedies of Mental Errors

John Flavel, 1628-1691

THE reverend author of the ensuing treatises, having in them explained and defended several gospel-truths, unto which divers things in the writings of the reverend Dr. Crisp, deceased, do seem very opposite; whereas some of us, who subscribed a paper, the design whereof was only to testify, that we believed certain writings of the doctor's never before published, were faithfully transcribed by his son, the publisher of them, which paper is now, by the bookseller, prefixed to the whole volume; containing a large preface which we never saw until after the publication, together with all the doctor's former works that were published many years before; and are hereupon by some weak people misunderstood, as if, by that certificate, we intended an approbation of all that is contained in that volume. We declare we had no such intention: As the paper we subscribed has no word in it that gives any such intimation: But we are well pleased these later writings are published (in reference whereto we only certified our belief, which we fixedly retain of the publisher's fidelity) as they contain many passages in them that may, in some measure, remedy the hard and hurtful construction that many expressions were more liable to in the former; whereof the doctor seemed apprehensive himself, when, in the beginning of his discourse on [Titus 2:11, 12](#), he speaks thus: "Beloved, I am jealous of you with a holy jealousy," [1 Corinthians 11:2, 3](#). "Lest after the first wooing of you in Christ's name, that you might be espoused unto him; I say, I am jealous, and fear, lest as the serpent beguiled Eve, through his subtlety, namely, bewitching her to a presumptuous, licentious adventuring on God's gentleness, while she tasted the forbidden fruit; so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in him, namely, by presuming too much upon him, and adventuring to continue in sin, in hope that grace may abound. For the preventing of which dangerous miscarriage, which has been the dangerous lot of many thousands, I thought good to step in with this text, which I am persuaded will prove a seasonable warning to some at least." And this pious caution of the author herein, lest he should be misunderstood, gives us some grounds to believe that he intended them not in the more exceptionable sense. It is best if an unwary reader receives hurt, that he receives his healing also from the same hand. And whereas a paper was printed upon this occasion soon after the publication of the doctor's works, we willingly adopt so much of it as is requisite to our present purpose; which is to this effect:

'Some who subscribed this certificate, saw only the paper itself, to which subscription was desired; never having perused the works of Dr. Crisp. The certificate only concerned the son, not the father; and certified only concerning the son, That those who should subscribe it, believed him in this to deal truly; that he was not a Falsarius; that he would not say that was his father's, which was not so; a paper so sober, so modest, was (taken by itself) scarce refusable by a friend.

The son's preface, some that subscribed this certificate saw not, nor had any notice, or the least imagination of its contents; otherwise, the part of a friend had certainly been done as well in advising against much of the preface, as in subscribing the certificate.

For the works of this reverend person themselves, as it no way concerned the subscribing this certificate, to know what they were; so from the opinion that went of the author among many good men, that he was a learned, pious, good man, it was supposed they were likely to have in them, many good and useful things; to which it was only needful to think them his, not to think them perfect.

We may, in some respect, judge of books as of men; that is reckon, that though divers very valuable men have had remarkable failings, yet that, upon the whole, it is better they have lived, and been known in the world, than that they should not have lived, or have lived obscure.

The truth is (which we have often considered) that though the great doctrines of the Christian religion do make a most coherent, lovely scheme, which every one should labor to comprehend and digest in his mind; yet when the gospel first becomes effectual for the changing men's hearts, it is by God's blessing this or that passage which drops: The most discern not the series and connection of truths at first, and too little afterwards.

Upon that view of Dr. Crisp's writings we have had since the publication, we find there are many things said in them, with that good savor, quickness, and spirit, as to be very apt to make good impressions upon men's hearts; and do judge, that being greatly affected with the grace of God to sinners himself, his sermons did thereupon run much in that strain. All our minds are little and incomprehensive; we cannot receive the weight and impression of all necessary things at once, but with some inequality; so that when the seal goes deeper in some part, it is shallower in some others.

If some parts of Dr. Crisp's works be more liable to exception, the danger of hurt thereby seems, in some measure, obviated in some other: As when he says, Pag. 46. Vol. I. Sanctification of life, is an inseparable companion with the justification of a person by the free grace of Christ. And Vol. IV. p. 93. That in respect of the rules of righteousness, or the matter of obedience, we are under the law still; or else we are lawless, to live every man as seems good in his own eyes, which I know no true Christian does so much as think.

In like manner, whereas, in Vol. II. Serm. 15. and perhaps elsewhere, the doctor seems to be against evidencing our justification and union to Christ, by our sanctification and new obedience; we have the truth of God in this matter plainly delivered by him, Vol. IV. p. 36. when he teaches, that our obedience is a comfortable evidence of our being in Christ; and on that, as well as on, many accounts, necessary.

The difference between him, and other good men, seems to lie not so much in the things which the one or the other of them believe, as about their order and reference to one another; where, it is true, there may be very material difference: But we reckon, that notwithstanding what is more controvertible in these writings, there are much more material things, wherein they cannot but agree, and would have come much nearer each other, even in these things, if they did take some words or terms which come into use on the one or the other hand, in the same sense; but when one uses a word in one sense, another uses the same word (or understands it, being used) in quite another sense, here seems a vast disagreement, which proves, at length, to be verbal only, and really none at all: As let by condition, be meant a deserving cause, (in which case it is well known civilians are accustomed to take it) and the one side would never use it, concerning any good act that can be done by us, or good habit that is wrought in us, in order to our present acceptance with God, or final salvation. Let be meant by it somewhat, that, by the constitution of the gospel-covenant, and in the nature of the thing, is requisite to our present and eternal well-being, without the least notion of the desert, but utmost abhorrence of any such notion in this case; and the other side would as little refuse it. But what need is there for contending at all about a law-term, about the proper or present use whereof, there is so little agreement between them it seems best to serve, and them it offends. Let it go, and they will well enough understand one another. Again, let justification be taken for that which is complete, entire, and full, as it results at last from all its causes and concurrents; and, on the one hand, it would never be denied, that Christ's

righteousness justifies us at the bar of God in the day of judgment, as the only deserving cause; or affirmed, that our faith, repentance, sincerity, do justify us there, as any cause at all. Let justification be meant only of being justified in this or that particular respect; as for instance, against this particular accusation, of never having been a believer: And the honest mistaken prefacer would never have said, O horrid! upon its being said, Christ's righteousness does not justify us in this case: For he very well knows, Christ's righteousness will justify no man that never was a believer. But that which must immediately justify him against this particular accusation, must be proving, that he did sincerely believe; which shows his interest in Christ's righteousness, which then is the only deserving cause of his full and entire justification.

That salvation is not the end of any good work we do, which is like that of another; we are to act from life, not for life. Neither of which are to be rigidly taken, as it is likely they were never meant in the strict sense. For the former, this reverend author gives us himself the handle for a gentle interpretation, in what he presently subjoins; where he makes the end of our good works to be the manifestation of our obedience and subjection; the setting forth the praise of the glory of the grace of God; which seem to imply, that he meant the foregoing negation in a comparative, not in an absolute sense; understanding the glory of God to be more principal; and so, that by end, he meant the very ultimate end: So for the other, it is likely it was meant, that we should not act or work for life only, without aiming and endeavoring that we might come to work from life also.

For it is not with any tolerable charity supposable, that one would deliberately say the one or the other of these in the rigid sense of the words; or that he would not, upon consideration, presently unsay it, being calmly reasoned with. For it were, in (effect to abandon human nature, and to sin against a very fundamental law of our creation, not to intend our own felicity: it were to make our first and most deeply fundamental duty, in one great essential branch of it, our sin, namely, To take the Lord for our God: For to take him for our God most essentially includes our taking him for our supreme good; which we all know is included in the notion of the last end; it were to make it unlawful to strive against all sin, and particularly against sinful aversion from God; wherein lies the very death of the soul, or the sum of its misery; or to strive after perfect conformity to God in holiness, and the full fruition of him; wherein its final blessedness does principally consist.

It were to teach us to violate the great precepts of the gospel; Repent that your sins may be blotted out.—Strive to enter in at the strait gate.—Work out your salvation with fear and trembling: To obliterate the patterns and precedents set before us in the gospel. We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified.—I bear down my body, lest I should be a cast-away.—That you may save yourself, and them that hear you.

It were to suppose us bound to do more for the salvation of others, than our own salvation. We are required to save others with fear, plucking them out of the fire. Nay, we were not (by this rule strictly understood) so much as to pray for our own salvation; (which is a doing of somewhat) when no doubt, we are to pray for the success of the gospel, to this purpose, on behalf of other men.

It were to make all the threatenings of eternal death, and promises of eternal life we find in the gospel of our blessed Lord, useless; as motives to shun the one, and obtain the other: for they can be motives no way, but as the escaping of the former, and the attainment of the other, have, with us, the place and consideration of an end.

It makes what is mentioned in the scripture, as the character and commendation of the most eminent saints, a fault; as of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, etc. That they

sought the better and heavenly country; and declared plainly, that they did so; which necessarily implies their making it their end.

But let none be so harsh as to think of any good man, that he intended anything of all this; if every passage that falls from us be stretched and tortured with the utmost severity, we shall find little to do besides accusing others, and defending ourselves, as long as we live.'

A spirit of meekness and love will do more to our common peace, than all the disputations in the world.

Upon the whole, we are so well assured of the peaceful, healing temper of the present author of these treatises, that we are persuaded he designed such a course of managing the controversies wherein he has concerned himself, as to prevent, on the one hand injury to the memory of the dead; and on the other, any hurt or danger to the living.

Nor do we say thus much of him, as if he sought, or did need any letters of recommendation from us, but as counting this testimony to truth, and this expression of respect to him, a debt; to the spontaneous payment whereof, nothing more was requisite, besides such a fair occasion as the providence of God has now laid before us, inviting us hereunto.

AN EPISTLE TO THE READER

CANDID READER,

CENSURE not this treatise of errors, as an error in my prudentials, in sending it forth at such an improper time as this. I should never spontaneously have awakened sleeping controversies, after God's severe castigation of his people for them, and in the most proper and hopeful season.

And beside what I have formerly said, I think fit here to add, That if the attack had been general, and not so immediately and particularly upon that post or quarter I was set to defend, I should, with Elihu, have modestly waited until some abler and more skillful hand had undertaken the defense of this cause.

If ever I felt a temptation to envy the happiness of my brethren, it has been while I saw them quietly feeding their flocks, and myself forced to spend some part of my precious and most useful time (devoted to the same service) in combating with unquiet and erring brethren; but I see I must not be my own chooser. Notwithstanding I hope, and am in some measure persuaded, that public benefit will redound to the church from this irksome labor of mine. And that this strife will spread no farther, but the malady be cured by an antidote growing in the very place where it began: and that the Christian camp will not take a general alarm from such a single duel.

The book now in your hands consists of four parts, namely, 1. A general discourse of the causes and cures of errors, very necessary at all times (especially at this time) for the reduction and establishment of seduced and staggering Christians; and nothing of that nature having occurred to my observation among the manifold polemical tracts that are extant, I thought it might be of some use to the churches of Christ, in such a virtiginous age as we live in, if the blessing of the Lord go forth with it for benefit and establishment.

2. Next, you have here the controversies moved by my antagonist; first, about the Mosaic law, complexly taken, which he boldly pronounces to be an Adam's covenant of works: And secondly, about God's covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17. which he also makes the same with that which God made with Adam in paradise; and affirms circumcision (expressly called a seal of the righteousness of faith) to be the seal of the said covenant of works first made with Adam.

3. Finding my adversary, in the pursuit of his design, running into many Antinomian delirations, to the reproach and damage of the cause he contends for, I thought it necessary to take the principal errors of Antinomianism into examination, especially at such a time as this, when they seem to spring afresh, to the hazard of God's truth, and the church's peace; wherein I have dealt with becoming modesty and plainness, if happily I might be any way instrumental in my plain and home-way of argumentation, to detect the falsity and dangerous nature of those notions which some good men have vented, and preserve the sounder part of the church from so dangerous a contagion.

4. In the next place, I think it necessary to advertise the reader, That whereas, in my first appendix under that head of the conditionality of the new covenant, I have asserted faith to be the condition of it, and do acknowledge, that the word condition is variously used among Jurists; yet I do not use it in any sense, which implies or insinuates, that there is any such condition in the new covenant, as that in Adam's covenant was, consisting in perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience; or anything in its own nature, meritorious of the benefits promised, or capable to be performed by us in our own strength; but plainly, that it be an act of ours (though done in God's strength) which must be necessarily done before we can be actually justified or saved; and so there is found in it the true suspending nature of a condition; which is the thing I contend for, when I affirm, faith is the condition of the new covenant.

However many senses may be given of this word condition, this is the determinate sense in which I use it throughout this controversy. And whoever denies the suspending nature of faith, with respect to actual justification, pleads (according to my understanding) for the actual justification of infidels. Condition is the suspension of a grant until something future be done. And again, a condition is some future event in which the fulfilling of a grant is suspended.

Once more, my reader possibly may be stumbled at my calling faith sometimes the instrument, and sometimes the condition of our justification, when there is so great a controversy depending among learned men, with respect to the use of both those terms. I therefore desire the reader to take notice, that I dive not into that controversy here, much less presume to determine it; but finding both these notions equally opposed by our Antinomians, who reject our actual justification by faith either way, and allow to faith no other use in our actual justification, but only to manifest to us what was done from eternity; I do therefore use both those terms, namely, the conditionality and instrumentality of faith, with respect unto our justification, and show in what sense those terms are useful in this controversy, and are accommodate enough to the design and purpose for which I use them; how repugnant soever they are in that particular, wherein the learned contend about the use and application of them.

To be plain, when I say faith justifies us as an organ or instrument; my only meaning is, that it receives, or apprehends the righteousness of Christ, by which we are justified; and so speaking to the quomodo, or manner of our justification, I say, with the general suffrage of Divines, we are justified instrumentally by faith.

But in our controversy with the Antinomians where another different question is moved about the quando, or time of our actual justification; there I affirm that we are actually justified at the time of our believing, and not before; and this being the

act upon which our justification is suspended, I call faith the condition of our justification.

This I desire may be observed, lest, in my use of both these terms, my reader should think either that I am not aware of the controversy depending about those terms; or, that I do herein manifest the vacillancy of my judgment, as if I leaned sometimes to one side and sometime to another. I speak not here *ad idem*, as they do in that contest; but when I call it a condition of justification, my meaning is, that no man is justified until he believe. And when I call it an instrument, my meaning is, that it is the righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith, which does justify us when we believe. And so I find the generality of our divines calling faith sometimes a condition, and sometimes an instrument of our justification, as here I do.

And if there be any expression my reader shall meet with, which is less accurate, and may be capable of another sense, I crave that candor from him, that he interpret it according to this my declared intention.

5. Lastly, I have added to the former a short, plain, practical sermon, to promote the peace and unity of the churches of Christ, and to prevent their relapse into past follies.

In all the parts of this discourse, I have sincerely aimed at the purity and peace of the church of God; and he greatly mistakes that takes me for a man of contention. It is true, I am here contending with my brethren, but pure necessity brought me in, and an unpleasing irksomeness has attended me through it, and an hearty desire and serious motion for peace among all the professed members of Christ, shall close and finish it. Let all litigations of this nature (at least in this critical juncture) be suspended by common consent, since they waste our time, hinder our communion, embitter our spirits, impoverish practical godliness, grieve the Spirit of God and good men, make sport for our common enemies, who warm their own fingers at the fire of our contentions; and place more trust in our dividing lusts than they do in their own feeble arguments, or castrated penal laws to effect our ruin.

It is my grief (the Lord knows) to see the delightful communion the saints once enjoyed, while they walked together under the same ordinances of God, now dissolved in such a sad and scandalous degree, by the impressions of erroneous opinions, made both upon their heads and hearts. I do therefore heartily join with Budæus in his pious wish, "That God would give his people as much constancy in retaining the truths they once received, as they had joy and comfort at their first reception of them." I must, on this occasion, declare my just jealousy that the non-improvement of our baptismal covenant unto the great and solemn ends thereof, in our mortification, vivification, and regular communion with the church of Christ, into which society we are matriculated by it, is, at this day, punished upon professors in those fiery heats and fierce oppositions, unto which God seems to have delivered us at this day.

For my own part, it is my fixed resolution to provoke no good man if I can help it. But if their own intemperate zeal shall provoke them in pursuit of their errors, to destroy the very nature of God's covenant of grace with Abraham and his seed, and I have a plain call (as here I had) at once to defend God's truths, and my people's souls against them, I will earnestly contend in the cause of truth, while I can move my tongue, or make use of the pen of the scribe.

Reader, I shall appeal to you, if you be wise and impartial, Whether any man that understands the covenant of God renewed with Abraham, (which is the grand charter, by which we and our children hold and enjoy the most invaluable privileges) can endure to see it dissolved and utterly destroyed, by making it an

abolished Adam's covenant of works; and stand by as an unconcerned spectator, when challenged and provoked to speak in defense thereof.

Is there anything found in God's covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17 to make it an abolished covenant of works, which does not as injuriously bear upon, and strike at the very life of the covenant of grace, in the last and best edition of it, under which the whole church of God now stands? What is that thing (I would gladly know) in God's covenant with Abraham? Is it the promissory part of it, "I will be a God unto you, and to your seed after you?" [Genesis 17:7](#). God forbid: for the essential and sweetest part of the new covenant is contained in that promise, [Jeremiah 31:33](#). [Hebrews 8:10](#). Yet you will find my Antagonist here forced to assert, God may become a people's God in a special manner, by virtue of the abolished covenant of works; and such he makes this covenant to be.

Or does the re-stipulation Abraham and his were here required to make unto God, even to walk before him, and be perfect; does this make it an Adam's covenant of works? Surely, no. For as God there requires perfection of Abraham, so Christ requires the same perfection of all new-covenant federates now, [Matthew 5:48](#). "Be you perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect;" which is altogether as much as ever God required of Abraham and his, in [Genesis 17:1](#). Take perfection in what sense you will, either for a positive perfection, consisting in truth and sincerity; or a comparative perfection, consisting in the growth and more eminent degrees of grace; or a superlative perfection, which all new-covenant federates strive after here, [Philippians 3:12, 13](#). and shall certainly attain in Heaven, [Hebrews 12:23](#). In this also the covenant with Abraham, and with us, are truly and substantially one and the same.

Or does my mistaken friend imagine, that God required this perfection of Abraham and his, as in the first covenant he required it from Adam and all his? namely, to be performed and maintained in his own strength, under penalty of the curse. But now, though Christ command perfection, yet what duty lies in any command, answerable strength for it lies in the promise? Very well, and was it not so then? Compare the command, [Deuteronomy 10:16](#). "Circumcise therefore the fore-skins of your hearts," with the answerable gracious promise to enable them so to do, [Deuteronomy 30:6](#). "The Lord your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, to love the Lord your God."

Or lastly, Did circumcision, the sign and seal added to Abraham's covenant, make it an Adam's covenant of works? That is equally impossible with the former: for no man but such a daring man as I am concerned with, will dare to say, that a seal of the righteousness of faith (as circumcision was, [Romans 4:11](#).) can make the covenant to which it is affixed (and which I have shown in all the other substantial parts, the very same with that we are now under) to become an Adam's covenant of works.

These things I have here super-added, to leave as little as possible behind me to be an occasion of further trouble and contention. Let all strife therefore, in so plain a case, be ended: contentious spirits are not the most excellent spirits among Christians. Fire (and so contention) is more apt to catch in low-built thatched cottages, than in high-built castles and princely palaces: the higher we go, still the more peace. The highest region is most sedate and calm. Stars have the strongest influence when in conjunction. Angels (though legions) have no wars among them; and as willingly go down as up the ladder without jostling each other. And the most high God is the God of peace; let us also be the children of peace. And I do assure the persons with whom I contend, that while they hold the Head, and are tender of the church's peace, I can live in charity with them here, and hope to live in glory with them hereafter.

I remain, reader, your and the truth's friend,
JOHN FLAVEL.

THE INTRODUCTION

FINDING, by sad experience, what I before justly feared, that errors would be apt to spring up with liberty, (though the restraint of just liberty being a practical error in rulers, can never be the cure of mental errors in the subjects;) I judged it necessary, at this season, to give a succinct account of the rise, causes, and remedies of several mistakes and errors, under which, even the reformed churches among us, as well as others, do groan at this day.

I will not stay my reader long upon the etymology and derivations of the word. We all know that etymologies are no definitions: yet because they cast some light upon the nature of the thing we inquire after, it will not be lost labor to observe, that this word ERROR derives itself from three roots in the Hebrew language.

(1.) The first "word primitively signifies to deviate or decline from the true scope or path," as unskillful marksmen, or ignorant and inadvertent travelers use to do. The least variation or turning aside from the true rule and line, though it be but an hair's breadth, presently becomes an error. We read, [Judg. 20:16](#). of seven hundred Benjamites, who could every one sling stones at an hair's breadth, and not miss, àà èçèà Hebrews and not err. This, by a metaphor, is applied to the mind or judgment of man; and denotes the warpings thereof from the straight, perfect, divine law or rule, and is usually translated by the word sin.

(2.) It is derived from another word also, which signifies to wander in variable and uncertain motions: You find it in the title of the 7th Psalm, Shiggaion of David, a wandering song, or a song of variable notes and tunes, higher and lower, sharper and flatter. In both the former derivations it seems to note simple error, through mere weakness and ignorance. But then,

(3.) In its derivation from a third root, it signifies not only to err, but to cause others to err also; and so signifies a seducer, or one that is active in leading others into a wrong way; and is applied in that sense to the prophets in Israel, who seduced the people, [Ezekiel 13:10](#). The Greek verb ðëáíáù, takes in both these senses, both to go astray, and, when put transitively, to lead or cause others to go astray with us. Hence is the word ðëáíçôáé, planets, or wandering stars; the title given by the apostle Jude, verse 13. to the false teachers and seducers of his time.

An error then is any departure or deviation in our opinions or judgments from the perfect rule of the Divine law; and to this, all men, by nature, are not only liable, but inclinable. Indeed man, by nature, can do nothing else but err; [Psalm 57:3](#). He goes astray as soon as born; makes not one true step until renewed by grace, and many false ones after his renovation. The life of the holiest man is a book with many errata's; but the whole edition of a wicked man's life, is but one continued error; he who thinks he cannot err, manifestly errs in so thinking. The Pope's supposed and pretended infallibility has made him the great deceiver of the world. A good man may err, but is willing to know his error; and will not obstinately maintain it, when he once plainly discerns it.

Error and heresy, among other things differ in this: heresy is accompanied with pertinacy, and therefore the heretic is self-condemned; his own conscience

condemns him, while men labor in vain to convince him. He does not formally, and in terms, condemn himself; but he does so equivalently, while he continues to own and maintain doctrines and opinions which he finds himself unable to defend against the evidence of truth. Human frailty may lead a man into the first, but devilish pride fixes him in the last.

The word of God, which is our rule, must therefore be the only test and touchstone to try and discover errors. It is not enough to convince a man of error, that his judgment differs from other men's; you must bring it to the word, and try how it agrees or disagrees therewith; else he that charges another with error, may be found in as great or greater an error himself. None are more disposed easily to receive, and tenaciously to defend errors, than those who are the Antesignani, heads or leaders of erroneous sects; especially after they have fought in the defense of bad causes, and deeply engaged their reputation.

The following discourse justly entitles itself, A BLOW AT THE ROOT. And though you will here find the roots of many errors laid bare and open, which, comparatively, are of far different degrees of danger and malignity; which I here mention together, many of them springing from the same root: Yet I am far from censuring them alike; nor would I have any that are concerned in lesser errors to be exasperated, because their lesser mistakes are mentioned with greater and more pernicious ones; this candor I not only entreat, but justly challenge from my reader.

And because there are many general and very useful observations about errors, which will not so conveniently come under the laws of that method which governs the main part of this discourse, namely, CAUSES and CURES of error: I have therefore sorted them by themselves, and premised them to the following part in twenty observations next ensuing.

Twenty general OBSERVATIONS about the Rise and Increase of the ERRORS of the Times

OBSERVATIONS

FIRST Observation

TRUTH is the proper object, the natural and pleasant food of the understanding, [Job 12:11](#). Does not the ear (that is, the understanding by the ear) try words, as the mouth tastes meat? Knowledge is the assimilation of the understanding to the truths received by it. Nothing is more natural to man, than a desire to know: knowledge never cloy the mind, as food does the natural appetite; but as the one increases, the other is proportionably sharpened and provoked. The minds of all (that are not wholly immersed in sensuality) spend their strength in the laborious search and pursuit of truth: sometimes climbing up from the effects to the causes, and then descending again from the causes to the effects; and all to discover truth. Fervent prayer, sedulous study, fixed meditations, are the labors of inquisitive souls after truth. All the objections and counter-arguments the mind meets in its way, are but the pauses and hesitations of a bivious soul, not able to determine whether truth lies upon this side, or upon that.

Answerable to the sharpness of the mind's appetite, is the fine edge of pleasure and delight it feels in the discovery and acquisition of truth. When it has racked and tortured itself upon knotty problems, and at last discovered the truth it sought for, with what joy does the soul dilate itself, and run (as it were with open arms) to clasp and welcome it?

The understanding of man, at first, was perspicacious and clear; all truths lay obvious in their lovely order and ravishing beauty before it: God made man upright, [Ecclesiastes 7:29](#). This rectitude of his mind consisted in light and knowledge, as appears by the prescribed method of his recovery, [Colossians 3:10](#). Renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him. Truth in the mind, or the mind's union with truth, being part of the Divine image in man, reveals to us the sin and mischief of error, which is a defacing (so far as it prevails) of the image of God.

No sooner was man created but by the exercise of knowledge he soon discovered God's image in him; and by his ambition after more, lost what he had. So that now there is an haziness or cloud spread over truth by ignorance and error, the sad effects of the fall.

Observation 2. Of knowledge there are divers sorts and kinds: some is human and some divine; some speculative, and some practical; some engrafted as the notions of morality, and some acquired by painful search and study: but of all knowledge, none like that Divine and supernatural knowledge of saving truths revealed by Christ in the scriptures. Hence arises the different degrees both of the sinfulness and danger of errors, those errors being always the worst, which are committed against the most important truths revealed in the gospel.

These truths lie enfolded either in the plain words, or in the evident and necessary consequences from the words of the Holy Scripture; scripture-consequences are of great use for the refutation of errors: it was by a scripture-consequence that Christ successfully proved the resurrection against the Sadducees, Matthew 22 The Arians, and other heretics, rejected consequential proofs, and required the express words of Scripture only; hoping that way to defend and secure their errors against the arguments and assaults of the orthodox.

Some think that reason and natural light is abundantly sufficient for the direction of life; but certainly nothing is more necessary to us for that end than the written word; for though the remains of natural light have their place and use in directing us about natural and earthly things, yet they are utterly insufficient to guide us in spiritual and heavenly things, [1 Corinthians 2:14](#). "The natural man receives not the things of God," etc. [Ephesians 5:8](#). "Once were you darkness, now are you light in the Lord;" that is by a beam of heavenly light shining from the Spirit of Christ through the written word, into your minds or understandings.

It is the written word which shines upon the path of our duty, [Psalm 119:105](#). The scriptures of the Old and New Testament do jointly make the solid foundation of a Christian's faith. Hence, [Ephesians 2:20](#). we are said to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. We are bound therefore to honor Old-Testament scriptures as well as New, they being part of the Divine canon; and must not scruple to admit them as sufficient and authentic proofs for the confirmation of truths, and refutation of errors. Christ referred the people to them, [John 5:39](#). and Paul preached and disputed from them, [Acts 26:22](#).

Observation 3. Unto the attainment of Divine knowledge out of the scriptures, some things are naturally, yet less principally requisite in the subject; and something absolutely and principally necessary.

The natural qualifications desirable in the subject are clearness of apprehension, solidity of judgment, and fidelity of retention. These are desirable requisites to make the understanding susceptible of knowledge; but the irradiation of the mind, by the Spirit of God, is principally necessary, [John 16:13](#). "He shall guide you into all truth." The clearest and most comfortable light he gives to men is in the way of sanctification, called the teachings of the anointing, [1 John 2:27](#).

When this spiritual sanctifying light shines upon a mind, naturally enriched and qualified with the three fore-mentioned requisites, that mind excels others in the riches of knowledge. And yet the teachings of the Spirit, in the way of sanctification, do very much supply and recompense the defects and weaknesses of the fore-mentioned qualifications. Whence two things are highly remarkable:

1. That men of great abilities of nature, clear apprehensions in natural things, strong judgments and tenacious memories, do not only frequently fall into gross errors and damnable heresies themselves, but become Heresiarchs, or heads of erroneous factions, drawing multitudes into the same sin and misery with themselves; as Arius, Socinius, Pelagius, Bellarmine, and multitudes of others have done.

And secondly, It is no less remarkable, that men of weaker parts, but babes in comparison, through the sanctification and direction of the Spirit, for which they have humbly waited at his feet in prayer, have not only been directed and guided by him into the truth, but so confirmed and fixed therein, that they have been kept sound in their judgments in times of abounding errors; and firm in their adherence to it in days of fiercest persecution. How men of excellent natural parts have been blinded, and men of weak natural parts illuminated; see [1 Corinthians 1:26, 27](#). [Matthew 11:25](#).

Observation 4. Among the manifold impediments to the obtaining of true knowledge, and settling the mind in the truth and faith of the gospel, these three are of special remark and consideration; namely, ignorance, curiosity, and error.

Ignorance slights it, or despairs of attaining it. Truth falls into contempt among the ignorant, from sluggishness and apprehension of the difficulties that lie in the way to it, [Proverbs 24:7](#). Wisdom is too high for a fool. Curiosity runs beside or beyond it. This pride and wantonness of the mind puffs it up with a vain conceit, that it is not only able to penetrate the deepest mysteries revealed in the scriptures, but even unrevealed secrets also; [Colossians 2:18](#). "Intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." But error militates directly against it, contradicts and opposes truth, especially when an error is maintained by pride against inward convictions, or means of better information. It is bad to maintain an error for want of light; but abundantly worse to maintain it against light. This is such an affront to the Spirit of God as he usually punishes with penal ignorance, and gives them up to a spirit of error.

Observation 5. Error is binding upon the conscience as well as truth; and altogether as much, and sometimes more influential upon the affections and passions as truth is:

For it presents not itself to the soul in its own name and nature as error; but in the name and dress of truth, and under that notion binds the conscience, and vigorously influences the passions and affections; and then being more indulgent to lust than truth is, it is, for that, so much the more embraced and hugged by the deceived soul, [Acts 22:4, 5](#). The heat that error puts the soul into differs from religious zeal, as a feverish does from a natural heat; which is not indeed so benign and agreeable, but much more fervent and scorching. A mind under the power of error is restless and impatient to propagate its errors to others, and these heats prey upon, and eat up the vital spirits and powers of religion.

Observation 6. It is exceeding difficult to get out error, when once it is imbibed, and has rooted itself by an open profession.

Errors, like some sorts of weeds, having once seeded in a field or garden, it is scarce possible to subdue and destroy them; especially if they be hereditary errors, or have grown up with us from our youth; a teneris assuescere multum est, says Seneca; it is a great advantage to truth or error to have an early and long possession of the mind.

The Pharisees held many erroneous opinions about the law, as appears by their corruptive commentaries upon it, refuted by Christ, Matthew 5. But did he root them out of their heads and hearts thereby? No, no; they sooner rid him out of the world. The Sadducees held a most dangerous error about the resurrection; Christ disputed with them to the admiration of others, and proved it clearly against them; and yet we find the error remaining long after Christ's death, [2 Timothy 2:18](#). The apostles themselves had their minds tinctured with this error, that Christ should be outwardly great and magnificent in the world, and raise his followers to great honors and preferments among men. Christ plainly told them it was their mistake and error; "for the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; yet this did not rid their minds of the error; it stuck fast in them, even until his ascension to Heaven. O how hard is it to clear the heart of a good man once leavened with error! and much more hard to separate it from a wicked man.

Some have chosen rather to die than to part with their darling errors and soul-damning heresies. I have read (says Mr. Bridges) of a great Atheist who was burnt at Paris for blaspheming Christ, held fast his atheistical opinions until he came to the very stake; boasted to the priests and friars that followed him, how much more confidently he went to sacrifice his life in the strength of reason, under which he suffered, than Christ himself did; but when he began to feel torments indeed, then he roared and raged to the purpose. Vidi ego hominem, says the author: In his life he was loose, in his imprisonments sullen; and at his death mad with the horrors of conscience.

Some, indeed, have recovered the soundness of their judgments after deep corruptions by dangerous errors. Augustine was a Manichean, and fully recovered from it. So have many more; and yet multitudes hold them fast even to death, and nothing but the fire can reveal their work, and discover what is gold, and what is straw and stubble.

Observation 7. It deserves a remark, That men are not so circumspect and jealous of the corruption of their minds by errors, as they are of their bodies in times of contagion; or of their lives with respect to gross immoralities.

Spiritual dangers affect us less than corporal; and intellectual evils less than moral. Whether this be the effect of hypocrisy, the errors of the mind being more secret and invisible than those of the conversation, God only knows, man cannot positively determine.

Or whether it be the effect of ignorance, that men think there is less sin and danger in the one than in the other; not considering that an apoplexy seizing the head, is every way as mortal as a sword piercing the body: And that a vertigo will as much unfit a man for service as an ague or fever. The apostle, in [2 Peter 2:1](#) calls them damnable heresies, or heresies of destruction. An error in the mind may be as damning and destructive to the soul as an error of immorality or profaneness in the life.

Or whether it may come to pass from some remains of fear and tenderness in the conscience, which forbid men to reduce their erroneous principles into practice; there lying under many confident errors in the mind, a secret jealousy, which will not allow them to act to the full height of their professed opinions. Augustine gives this character even of Pelagius himself: I have not mentioned (says he) the name of that man without some praise, because his life was famed by many. And of Swinkfeldius it is said: His heart was much more regular than his head. Yet this falls out but rarely in the world; for loose principles naturally run into loose practices; and the errors of the head into the immoralities of life.

Observation 8. It is a great judgment of God to be given over to an erroneous mind.

For the understanding being the leading faculty, as that guides, the other powers and affections of the soul follow, as horses in a team follow the fore-horse. Now, how sad and dangerous a thing is this, for Satan to ride the fore-horse, and guide that which is to guide the life of man? That is a dreadful, spiritual, judicial stroke of God which we read of, [Romans 1:26](#). God, by a penal tradition, suffered them to run into the dregs of immorality, and pollutions of life; and that, because they abused their light, and became vain in their imaginations, verse 21.

Wild whimsies and fancies in the head usually mislead men into the puddle and mire of profaneness, and then it is commonly observed God sets some visible mark of his displeasure upon them; especially the Heresiarchs, or ring-leaders in error. Nestorius' tongue was consumed by worms. Cerenthus' brains knocked out by the fall of an house. Montanus hanged himself: It were easy to instance in multitudes of others, whom the visible hand of God has marked for a warning to others; but usually the spiritual errors of the mind are followed with a consumption and decay of religion in the soul. If grace be in the heart, where error sways its scepter in the head, yet usually there it languishes and withers. They may mistake their dropsy for growth and flourishing; and think themselves to be more spiritual, because more airy and notional; but if men would judge themselves impartially, they will certainly find that the seeds of grace thrive not in the heart, when shaded and over-dropped by an erroneous head.

Observation 9. It is a pernicious evil, to advance a mere opinion into the place and seat of an article of faith; and to lay as great a stress upon it, as they ought to do upon the most clear and fundamental point. To be as much concerned for a the upon the roof, as for the corner-stone, which unites the walls, and sustains the building.

Opinion (as one truly says) is but reason's projector, and the spy of truth; it makes, in its fullest discovery, no more than the dawning and twilight of knowledge; and yet I know not how it comes to pass, but so it is, that this idol of the mind holds such a sway and empire over all we hold, as if it were all the day we had. Matters of mere opinion, are every way cried up by some errorists, for mathematical demonstration, and articles of faith written with a sun-beam: worshiping the fancies and creatures of their own minds, more than God; and putting more trust in their ill founded opinions, than in the surer word of prophecy. Much like the Humorist that would not trust day-light, but kept his candle still burning by him; because, says he, this is not subject to eclipses, as the sun is.

And what more frequent, when controversies grow fervent, than for those that maintain the error, to boast every silly argument to be a demonstration; to upbraid and pity the blindness and dullness of their opposers as men that shut their eyes against sunbeams; yes, sometimes, to draw their presumptuous censures through the very hearts of their opposers, and to insinuate, that they must needs hold the truths of God in unrighteousness, sin against their knowledge, and that nothing keeps them from coming over to them, but pride, shame, or some worldly interest? What a complicated evil is here! Here is a proud exalting of our own opinions, and an immodest imposing on the minds of others, more clear and sound than our own, and a dangerous usurpation of God's prerogative in judging the hearts and ends of our brethren.

Observation 10. Error being conscious to itself of its own weakness, and the strong assaults that will be made upon it, evermore labors to defend and secure itself under the wings of antiquity, reason, scripture, and high pretensions to reformation and piety.

Antiquity is a venerable word, but ill used, when made a cloak for error. Truth must needs be elder than error; as the rule must necessarily be, before the aberration from it. The grey hairs of opinions are then only beauty, and a crown, when found in the

way of righteousness. Copper (says learned Du Moulin) will never become gold by age. A lie will be a lie, let it be never so ancient. We dispute not by years, but by reasons drawn from scripture. That which is now called an ancient opinion, if it be not a true opinion, was once but a new error. When you can tell us how many years are required to turn an error into truth, then we will give more heed to antiquity, when pressed into the service of error, than we now think due to it.

If antiquity will not do, reason shall be pressed to serve error's turn at a dead-lift; and, indeed, the pencil of reason can lay curious colors upon rotten timber, and varnish over erroneous principles with fair and plausible pretenses. What expert artists have the Socinians proved themselves in this matter? But because men are bound to submit human authority and reason to Divine revelation, both must give way, and strike sail to the written Word.

Hence it comes to pass, that the great patrons and factors for error, do above all things labor to gain countenance to their errors from the written word; and, to this end, they manifestly wrest and rack the scriptures to make them subservient to their opinions; not impartially studying the scriptures first, and forming their notions and opinions according to them. But they bring their erroneous opinions to the scriptures, and then, with all imaginable art and sophistry, wire-draw and force the scriptures to countenance and legitimize their opinions.

But because pretenses of piety and reformation are the strokes that gave life to the face of this idol, and gave it the nearest resemblance unto truth, these therefore never fail to be made use of, and zealously professed in the favor of error, though there be little of either many times to be found in their persons, and nothing at all in the doctrines that lay claim to it.

Observation 11. God, in all ages, in his tender care for his churches and truths, has still qualified and excited his servants for the defense of his precious truths, against the errors and heresies that have successively assaulted them.

As Providence is observed in every climate and island of the world to have provided antidotes against the poisonous plants and animals of the country, and the one is never far from the other: So is the care of his providence much more conspicuous in the case now before us. When, or wherever, venomous errors, and deadly heresies do arise, he has his servants at hand with antidotes against them.

When Arius, that cunning and deadly enemy to the Deity of Christ, struck at the very heart of our religion, faith, and comfort; a man of subtle parts and blameless life, which made his heresy much the more spreading and taking; the Lord had his well-furnished Athanasius in a readiness to resist and confound him. And as he had his Athanasius to defend the Deity of Christ, so he wanted not his Basil to defend the doctrine of the Holy Spirit against Macedonius.

So when Pelagius was busily advancing free-will, into the throne of free-grace, providence wanted not its mallet in learned and ingenious Augustine, to break him and his idol to pieces. And it is highly remarkable, (as the learned Dr. Hill observes) that Augustine was born in Africa, the same day that Pelagius was born in Britain.

When Gotteschalculus published his dangerous doctrine about predestination, the Lord drew forth Hincmarus to detect and confute that error, by evincing clearly, that God's predestination forces no man to sin.

So, from the beginning and first rise of Popery, that center and sink of errors, we have a large catalogue of the learned and famous witnesses, which, in all ages, have faithfully resisted and opposed it; and, when, notwithstanding all, it had even overrun Europe like a rapid torrent, or rather inundation of the ocean, and Germany was brought to that pass, that if the Pope had but commanded it, they would have eaten

grass or hay; then did the Lord bring forth invincible Luther, and with him a troop of learned champions, into the field against him; since which time, the cause of Popery is become desperate.

Thus the care of providence, in all ages, has been as much displayed in protecting the church against the dangers that arose from false brethren within it, as from avowed, persecuting enemies without it; and had it not been so, the rank weeds of heresies and errors had long since over-topt and choked the corn, and made the church a barren field.

Observation 12. The want of a modest suspicion, and just reflection, gives both confidence and growth to erroneous opinions.

If matters of mere opinion were kept in their proper place, under the careful guard of suspicion, they would not make that bustle and confusion in the churches they have done, and do at this day.

It is confessed, that all truths are not matters of mere opinion; neither are all opinions of equal weight and value; and therefore not to be left hanging in skepticism. And yet it is as true, that matters of opinion ought carefully to be sorted from matters of faith, and to be kept in their own rank and class, as things doubtful: while matters of faith clearly revealed, are to stand upon their own sure and firm basis. The former, namely, matters of mere opinion, we are so to hold, as upon clearer light to be ready to part with them, and give them up into the hands of truth. The other, namely, matters of faith, we are to hold with resolutions to live and die by them.

What is opinion, but the wavering of the understanding between probable arguments, for and against a point of doctrine? So that it is rather an inclination than an assertion, as being accompanied with fear, floating and inconstancy. In such cases, there should be a due concession and allowance of other men's opinions to them; and why not, while they offer as fair for the truth as we? and haply their parts, helps, and industries are not inferior to ours; it may be beyond them; and we may discern in them as much tenderness of conscience, and fear of sin, as in ourselves. In this case, a little more modest suspicion in our opinions, would do the church a great deal of right; and that which should prevail with all modest persons to exercise it, is the just reflection they may make upon their own former confident mistakes.

Observation 13. There is a remarkable involution or concatenation of errors, one linking in, and drawing another after it.

Among all erroneous sects, there is still some Helena, for whose sake the war against truth is commenced; and the other lesser errors are pressed for the sake and service of this leading darling error. As we see the whole troop of indulgences, bulls, masses, pilgrimages, purgatory, with multitudes more, flow from, and are pressed into the service of the Pope's supremacy and infallibility; so, in other sects, men are forced to entertain many other errors, which, in themselves considered, they have no great kindness for; but they are necessitated to entertain them in defense of that great, leading, darling opinion they first espoused.

Those that cry up, and trumpet abroad the sovereign power of free-will, even without the preventing grace of God, enabling men to supernatural works, as if the will alone had escaped all damage by the fall, and Adam had not sinned in that noble virgin-faculty. To defend this idol, they are forced to oppugn and deny several other great and weighty truths, as particular, eternal election, the certainty of the saints perseverance, the necessity of preventing grace in conversion: which errors are but the out-works raised in defense of that idol.

So in the baptismal controversy, men would never have adventured to deny God's covenant with Abraham, to be a covenant of grace; or to assert the ceremonial law, so full of Christ, to be an Adam's covenant of works; and circumcision, expressly called the seal of the righteousness of faith, to be the condition of Adam's covenant. Much less would they place all the elect of God in Israel, at one and the same time, under the severest curse and rigor of the law, and under the pure covenant of grace, were they not forced into these errors and absurdities by dint of argument, in defense of their darling opinion.

Observation 14. Errors abound most, and spring fastest, in the times of the church's peace, liberty, and outward prosperity, under indulgent rulers. Arianism sprung up under Constantine's mild government.

Christian, benevolent rulers are choice mercies and blessings to the church. Such as rule over men in the fear of God, are to the church, as well as civil state, "like the light of the morning, when the sun arises; even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springs out of the earth by clear shining after rain," [2 Samuel 23:4](#).

But this, as well as other mercies, is liable to abuse; and under the influences of indulgent governors, error, as well as truth, springs up, flowers and seeds. Persecution gives check to the wantonness of men's opinions, and finds them other and better work to do. Caterpillars and locusts are swept away by the bitter east winds, but swarm in halcyon days, and fall upon every green thing. So that the church rides, in this respect, more safely in the stormy sea, than in the calm harbor. Peace and prosperity is apt to cast its watchmen into a sleep; and while they sleep, the envious one sows tares, [Matthew 13:25](#).

It was under Constantine's benign government, that poison was poured out into the churches. The abuse of such an excellent mercy provokes the Lord to cut it short, and cause the clouds to gather again after the rain. We have found it so once and again (alas, that I must say again!) in this wanton and foolish nation. Professors could live quietly together, converse, fast, and pray in a Christian manner together, under common calamities and dangers: differences in opinion are suspended by consent. But no sooner do we feel a warm, sun-blast of liberty and peace, but it revives and heats our dividing lusts and corruptions, instead of our graces. The sheep of Christ fight with each other, though their furious pushing one at another is known to presage a change of weather.

Observation 15. Errors, in the tender bud, and first spring of them, are comparatively shy and modest, to what they prove afterwards, when they have spread and rooted themselves in the minds of multitudes, and when their Authors think it time to set up and jostle for themselves in the world.

They usually begin in modest scruples, conscientious doubts and queries. But having once gotten many abettors, and, among them, some that have subtlety and ability to plead and dispute their cause, they ruffle it out at another rate; glory in their numbers, piety and ability of their party; boast and glory in the conceited victories they achieved over their opposers. The mask drops off its face, and it appears with a brow of brass, becomes insolent and turbulent, both in church and state. Of which it is easy to give many pregnant instances, in the Arians of old, and more recent errors, which I shall not at present be concerned with, lest I exasperate, while I seek to heal the wound.

Should a man hear the sermons or private discourses of errorists, while the design is but forming and projecting, he should meet with little to raise his jealousy. They speak in generals, and guard their discourses with political reserves. You shall not see, though you seem to see the tendency of their discourses. Hence the apostle says, [2 Peter 2:1](#). They shall privily [or covertly] bring in damnable heresies: As the

boy in Plutarch, being asked by a stranger, What is that you carry so closely under your cloak? wittily answered, You may well know, that I intend you shall not know it, by my so carrying it.

Observation 16. Nothing gives more countenance and increase to error than a weak or feeble defense of the truth against it.

The strength of error lies much in the weakness of the advocates and defendants of truth. Every friend of truth is not fit to make a champion for it. Many love it, and pray for it, that cannot defend and dispute for it. I can die for the truths, (says the martyr) but I cannot dispute for it. Zuinglius blamed Carolostadius for undertaking the controversy of that age, because (said he) his shoulders were too weak for the burden.

It can be said of few, as Cicero speaks of one, that he undertook no cause in disputation, which he could not defend; he opposed no adversary, whom he could not overthrow. He is a rare and happy disputant, who can clear and carry every point of truth, of which he undertakes the defense. It were happy for the church, if the abilities and prudence of all her friends were commensurate and equal to their love and zeal. Every little foil, every weak or impertinent answer of a friend to truth, is quickly turned into a weapon to wound it the deeper.

Observation 17. Errors of judgment are not cured by compulsion and external force, but by rational conviction, and proper spiritual remedies.

Bodily sufferings rather spread than cure intellectual errors. I deny not but fundamental heresies, breaking forth into open blasphemies against God, and seditions in the civil state, ought to be restrained. It is no way fit men should be permitted to go up and down the world with plague-sores running upon them. Nor do I understand why men should be more cautious to preserve their bodies than their souls. But I speak here of such errors as may consist with the foundations of the Christian faith, and are not destructive of civil government. They take the ready way to spread and perpetuate them that think to root them out of the world by such improper and unwarrantable means as external force and violence. The wind never causes an earthquake until it be pent in and restrained from motion.

We neither find, nor can imagine, that those church or state Exorcists should ever be able to affect their end, who think to confine all the spirits of error within the circle of a severe uniformity. Fires, prisons, pillories, stigmatizings, mutilations, whippings, banishments, etc. are the Popish topics to confute errors. It is highly remarkable that the world, long ago, consented for the avoiding of dissent in judgment, to enslave themselves and their posterity to the most fatal and destructive heresy that ever it groaned under.

It is a rational and proper observation, long since made by Lactantius, Who can force me to believe what I will not, or not to believe what I will? The rational and gentle spirit of the gospel is the only proper and effectual method to cure the diseases of the mind.

Observation 18. Erroneous doctrines producing divisions and fierce contentions among Christians, prove a fatal stumbling-block to the world, fix their prejudices, and obstruct their conversion to Christ.

They dissolve the lovely union of the saints, and thereby scare off the world from coming into the church. This is evidently implied in that prayer of Christ, John 17. "That all his people might be one, that the world might believe the Father had sent him." There is indeed no just cause for any to take offence at the Christian reformed religion, because so many errors and heresies spring up among the professors of it, and divide them into so many sects and parties; for, in all this we find no more than

what was predicted from the beginning, [1 Corinthians 11:18, 19](#). "I hear there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it: for there must be also heresies among you," etc. And again, [Acts 20:30](#). "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them."

The very same things strongly confirm the Christian religion, which wicked men improve to the reproach and prejudice of it. When Celsus objected to the Christians the variety and contrariety of their opinions, saying, Were we willing to turn Christians, we know not of what party to be, seeing you all pretend to Christ, and yet differ so much from one another. Tertullian, the Christian Apologist, made him this wise and pertinent reply, "We are not troubled that heresies are come, seeing it was predicted that they must come" These things destroy not the credibility of the Christian religion, but increase and confirm it, by evidencing to the world the truth and certainty of Christ's predictions (which were quite beyond all human foresight) that as soon as his doctrine should be propagated, and a church raised by it, errors and heresies should spring up among them, for the trial of their faith and constancy.

Nevertheless, this no way excuses the sinfulness of errors and divisions in the church. Christ's prediction neither infuses nor excuses the evil predicted by him: for what he elsewhere speaks of scandals is as true in this case of errors; "These things must come to pass, but we be to that man by whom they come."

Observation 19. However specious and taking the pretenses of error be, and however long they maintain themselves in esteem among men, they are sure to end in the loss and shame of their authors and abettors at last.

Truth is a rock that the waves of error dash against, and evermore return in froth and foam: Yes, they foam out their own shame, says the apostle, [Jude 13](#). What Tacitus spoke of crafty counsels I may as truly apply to crafty errors: "They are pleasant in their beginning, difficult in their management, and sad in their event and issue."

Suppose a man have union with Christ, yet his errors are but as so much hay, wood, straw, stubble, built, or rather endeavored to be built upon a foundation of gold; this the fiery trial burns up; the author of them suffers loss; and though himself may be saved, yet so as by fire, 1 Corinthians 3:12, 13, 14, 15. the meaning is, he makes a narrow escape. As a man that leaps out of an house on fire from a window or battlement, with great difficulty saves his life; just so errorists shall be glad to quit their erroneous opinions which they have taken so much pains to build, and draw others into: and then, O what a shame must it be for a good man to think how many days and nights have I worse than wasted to defend and propagate an error, which might have been employed in a closer study of Christ, and my own heart! Keckerman relates a story of a vocal statue, which was thirty years a making by a cunning artist, which by the motion of its tongue with little wheels, wires, etc. could articulate the sound, and pronounce an entire sentence. This statue saluting Aquinas, surprised him, and at one stroke he utterly destroyed the curious machine, which exceedingly troubled the fond owner of it, and made him say with much concernment, "You have at one stroke destroyed the study and labor of thirty years."

Beside, what shame and trouble must it be to the zealous promoters of errors, not only to cast away so vainly and unprofitably their own time and strength, which is bad enough, but also to ensnare and allure the souls of others into the same, or worse mischief: for though God may save and recover you, those that have been misled by you may perish.

Observation 20. If ever errors be cured, and the peace and unity of the church established, men must be convinced of, and acquaint-with the occasions and causes both within and without themselves, from whence their errors do proceed; and must

both know and apply the proper rules and remedies for the prevention or cure of them.

There is much difference between an occasion and a proper cause; these two are heedfully to be distinguished. Critical and exact historians, as Polybius and Tacitus, distinguish between the beginning occasions and the real causes of a war: and so we ought, in this case of errors, carefully to distinguish them. The most excellent and innocent things in the world, such as the Scriptures of truth, the liberty of Christians, the tranquility and peace of the church (as you will hear anon) may, by the subtlety of Satan working in conjunction with the corruptions of men's hearts, become the occasions, but can never be the proper culpable causes of errors.

Accordingly, having made these twenty remarks upon the nature and growth of errors (which cannot so well be brought within the following rules of method) I shall, in the next place, proceed in the discovery both of the mere occasions, as also the proper culpable causes of errors, together with the proper preventives, and the most effectual remedies, placed together in the following order.

The occasion. The holy God, who is a God of truth, [Deuteronomy 32:4](#), and hates errors, [Revelation 2:6](#), the God of order, and hates confusions and schisms in his church, [1 Corinthians 14:33](#), is yet pleased to permit errors and heresies to arise, without whose permission they could never spring. And this he does for the trial of his people's faith and constancy, and for a spiritual punishment upon some men for the abuse of his known truths; and by the permission of these evils, he advances his own glory, and the good of his church and people. Augustine answers that question, Why does not God, since he hates errors', sweep them out of the world? Because (says he) it is an act of greater power to bring good out of evil, than not to suffer evils to be at all.

Satan's design in errors, is to cloud and darken God's name and precious truths; to destroy the beauty, strength, and order of the church. But God's ends in permitting and sending errors, are, (1.) To plague and punish men for their abuse of light, [2 Thessalonians 2:11](#). "For this cause shall God send them strong delusions," etc. (2.) To prove and try the sincerity and constancy of our hearts, [Deuteronomy 13:1](#), [3. 1 Corinthians 11:19](#), and lastly, By these things the saints are awakened to a more diligent search of the Scriptures, which are the more critically read and examined upon the trial of spirits and doctrines by them, [1 John 4:1](#). "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits." And [Revelation 2:2](#). "You have tried them that say they are apostles," etc.

The prevention. Though heresies and errors must (for the reasons assigned) break forth into the world, and God will turn them eventually unto his own glory, and the benefit of his church; yet it is a dreadful judgment to be delivered over to a spirit of error, to be the authors and abettors of them. This is a judicial stroke of God, and as ever we hope to escape, and stand clear out of the way of it, let us carefully shun these three following causes and provocations thereof.

(1.) Want of love to the truth, which God has made to shine about us in the means, or into us, by actual illumination, under the means of knowledge. [2 Thessalonians 2:10, 11](#). "Because they received not the love of the truth, God gave them up to strong delusions." They are justly plagued with error, that slight truth. False doctrines are fit plagues for false hearts.

(2.) Beware of pride and wantonness of mind. It is not so much the weakness as the wantonness of the mind, which provokes God to inflict this judgment. None likelier to make seducers than boasters, [Jude 16](#). Arius gloried, that God had revealed some things to him which were hidden from the apostles themselves. Simon Magus boasted himself to be the mighty power of God. The erroneous Pharisees loved the

praises of men. When the Papist reproached Luther that he affected to have his disciples called Lutherans, he replied, "He disdained that the children of Christ should be called by so vile a name as his."

(3.) Beware you neglect not prayer, to be kept sound in your judgments, and guided by the Spirit into all truth, [Psalm 119:10](#). "With my whole heart have I sought you; O let me not wander, or err, from your commandments." This do, and you are safe from such a judicial tradition.

Causes

The first cause. We shall next speak of the causes of error found in the evil dispositions of the subjects, which prepare and incline them to receive erroneous doctrines and opinions, and even catch at the occasions, and least sparks of temptation, as dry tinder: and among these is found,

(1.) A perverse wrangling humor at the pretended obscurity of the Scriptures. The Romish party snatch at this occasion, and make it the proper cause, when, indeed, it is but a picked occasion of the errors and mistakes among men. They tell us, the Scriptures are so difficult, obscure, and perplexed, that if private men will trust to them as their only guide, they will inevitably run into errors, and their only relief is to give up their souls to the conduct of their church; whereas, indeed, the true cause of error is not so much in the obscurity of the word, as in the corruption of the mind, [1 Timothy 6:5](#). [2 Timothy 3:8](#).

We do acknowledge there are in the Scriptures, some things hard to be understood, [2 Peter 3:16](#). the sublime and mysterious nature of the matter rendering it so; and some things hard to be interpreted, from the manner of expression: as indeed all mystical parts of Scripture, and prophetic predictions are and ought to be delivered. The Spirit of God this way designedly casts a veil over them, until the proper season of their revelation and accomplishment be come. Besides (as the learned Glassius observes) in Paul's style, there are found some peculiar words, and forms of speech, of which ordinary rules of grammar take no notice, nor give any parallel examples of: as to be buried with Christ; to be baptized into his death; to which I may add, to be circumcised in him, etc. There are also multitudes of words found in Scripture, of various and vastly different significations: and accordingly there is a diversity, and sometimes a contrariety of senses, given of them by expositors; which to an humourist, or quarrelsome wit, give an occasion to vent his errors with a plausible appearance of Scripture-consent. And indeed Tertullian says "The Scriptures are so disposed that heretics may pick occasions;" and those that will not be satisfied may be hardened. See [Mark 4:11, 12](#).

But all this notwithstanding, the great and necessary things to our salvation are so perspicuously and plainly revealed in the Scriptures, that even babes in Christ do apprehend and understand them, [Matthew 11:25](#). [1 Corinthians 1:27, 28, 29](#). And though there be difficulties in other points more remote from the foundation; yet the Spirit of God is not to be accused, but rather his wisdom to be admired herein. For (1.) this serves to excite our most intense study and diligence, which, by this difficulty is made necessary, [Proverbs 2:3, 4, 5](#). The very prophets, yes, the very angels search into these things, [1 Peter 1:11, 12](#). (2.) Hereby a standing ministry in the church is made necessary, [Nehemiah 8:8](#). [Ephesians 4:11, 12, 13](#). So that to pretend obscurity of Scripture to be the culpable cause of error, (when, indeed, the fault is in ourselves) this is too much like our father Adam, who would implicitly accuse God, to excuse himself; he laid it upon the woman which God gave him, and we upon the Scriptures which God has given us.

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The Remedies

The proper remedies and preventives in this case, are an heedful attendance to, and practice of these rules.

Rules

Rule I. Let all obscure and difficult texts of Scripture be constantly examined and expounded according to the analogy or proportion of faith, which is St. Paul's own rule, [Romans 12:6](#). "Let him that prophesies (that is expounds the Scriptures in the church) do it according to the proportion of faith." The analogy or proportion of faith, is what is taught plainly and uniformly in the whole Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as the rule of our faith and obedience. While we carefully and sincerely attend hereunto, we are secured from sinfully corrupting the word of God. Admit of no sense which interfereth with this proportion of faith. If men have no regard to this, but take liberty to rend off a single text from the body of truth to which it belongs, and put a peculiar interpretation upon it, which is absonous and discordant to other Scriptures, what woeful work will they quickly make?

Give but a Papist liberty to take that scripture, [James 2:24](#). out of the frame of scripture, "A man is justified by works, and not by faith only;" and expound it without regard to the tenor of the gospel-doctrine of justification in Paul's epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and a gross error starts up immediately. Give but a Socinian the like liberty to practice upon, [John 14:28](#). and a gross heresy shall presently look with an orthodox face.

Rule II. Never put a new sense upon words of scripture, in favor of your pre-conceived notions and opinions, nor wrest it from its general and common use and sense. This is not to interpret, but to stretch the scriptures, as that word ὁἵαυῆϊόόεί signifies, [2 Peter 3:16](#). as Hieron against Ruff speaks. We are not to make the scripture speak what we think, but what the prophet or apostle thought, whom we interpret. In 1 Corinthians 5:11, 13. we meet with the word [holy] applied to the children of believers: That word is above five hundred times used for a state of separation to God; therefore to make it signify, in that place, nothing but legitimacy, is a bold and daring practicing upon the scripture.

Rule III. Whenever you meet with an obscure place of scripture, let the context of that scripture be diligently and thoroughly searched; for it is usual with God to set up some light there, to guide us through the obscurity of a particular text. And there is much truth in the observation of the Rabbis, "There is no scruple or objection in the law, but it has a solution at the side of it."

Rule IV. Let one Testament freely cast its light upon the other; and let not men undervalue or reject an Old-Testament text, as no way useful to clear and establish a New-Testament point of faith or duty. Each Testament reflects light upon the other. The Jews reject the New Testament, and many among us sinfully slight the Old: but without the help of both, we can never understand the mind of God in either. It is a good rule in the Civil Law, "We must inspect the whole law, to know the sense of any particular law."

Rule V. Have a due regard to that sense given of obscure places of scripture, which has not only the current sense of learned expositors, but also naturally agrees with the scope of the place. A careless neglect and disregard to this, is justly blamed by the apostle, 1 Timothy 1:7.

Cause 2. A second evil temper in the subject, disposing and inclining men to receive and suck in erroneous doctrines and opinions, is the abuse of that just and due Christian Liberty allowed by Christ to all his people, to read, examine, and judge the sense of scriptures with a private judgment of discretion.

This is a glorious acquisition, and blessed fruit of reformation, to vindicate and recover that just right, and gracious grant made to us by Christ and the apostles, out of the injurious hands of our Popish enemies, who had usurped and invaded it. The exercise of this liberty, is, at once, a duty commanded by Christ, and commended in scripture. It is commanded by Christ, [John 5:39](#). Search the scriptures, says Christ to the people, [1 Corinthians 10:15](#). "I speak as to wise men; judge you what I say." And the exercise of this private judgment of discretion by the people is highly commended by St. Paul in the Bereans, [Acts 17:11](#). "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." This liberty is not allowed in that latitude in any religion, as it is in the Christian religion; nor enjoyed in its fullness as it is in the reformed religion; whose glory it is, that it allows its principles and doctrines to be critically examined and tried of all men, by the rule of the word, as well-knowing, the more it is sifted and searched by its professors, the more they will be still confirmed and satisfied in the truth of it.

But yet this gracious and just liberty of Christians suffers a double abuse; one from the Popish enemies, who injuriously restrain and deny it to the people: Another by Protestants themselves, who sinfully stretch and extend it beyond the just degree and measure in which Christ allows it to them.

The Pope injuriously restrains it, discerning the danger that must necessarily follow the concession of such a liberty to the people, to compare his superstitious and erroneous doctrines with the rule of the word.

St. Peter, in [2 Peter 1:19](#), tells the people they have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto they do well that they take heed. Certainly the Pope forgot either that he was Peter's successor, or that ever St. Peter told the people they did well to make use of that liberty which he denies them. Mr. Pool tells us of a Spaniard who used this expression to an English merchant. You people of England (says he) are happy; you have liberty to see with your own eyes, and to examine the doctrines delivered to you, upon which your everlasting life depends; but we dare not say our souls are our own, but are commanded to believe whatever our teachers tell us, be it never so unreasonable or ridiculous. This is a most injurious and sinful restraint upon it on the one side:

And then SECONDLY, It is too frequently abused, by stretching it beyond Christ's allowance and intendment upon the other side; when every ignorant and confident person shall, under pretense of liberty granted by Christ, rudely break in upon the sacred text, distort, violate, and abuse the scriptures at pleasure, by putting such strange and foreign senses upon them, as the Spirit of God never meant or intended.

How often have I heard that scripture, [Micah 4:10](#). "They shall be brought even to Babylon," confidently interpreted for almost, but not full home to Babylon, against the very grammar of the text, and the truth of the history? And so again, that place, [Isaiah 58:8](#). "The glory of the Lord shall be your re-reward," through ignorance of the word, read re-reward, that is, a double reward to his people? But these are small matters, compared with those grosser abuses of scripture by the ignorant and unlearned, which prejudice truth, and too much countenance Popish reproaches.

The Remedies

The proper way to prevent and remedy this mischief, is not by depriving any man of his just liberty, either to read or judge for himself what God speaks in his word, and think that way to cure errors; that were the same thing as to cut off the head to cure an head-ach. Leave that sinful policy with the false religion; let those only that know they do evil be afraid of coming to the light: But the proper course of

preventing the mischiefs that come this way, is by laboring to bound and contain Christians within those limits Christ himself has set unto this liberty which he has granted them. And these are such as follow.

Limitations

Limitation I. Though Christ has indulged to the lowest and weakest Christian, a liberty to read and judge of the scriptures for himself; yet he has neither thereby nor therewith granted him a liberty publicly to expound and preach the word to others: That is quite another thing.

Every man that can read the scriptures, and judge of their sense, is not thereby presently made Christ's commission-officer, publicly and authoritatively to preach and inculcate the same to others: Two things are requisite to such an employment, namely, Proper qualifications, 2 Timothy 3. And a solemn call or designation, [Romans 10:14, 15](#). The ministry is a distinct office, [Acts 20:17, 28](#). [1 Thessalonians 5:12](#). and none but qualified and ordained persons can authoritatively preach the word, 2 Timothy 1:6. [1 Timothy 4:14](#). and [5:22](#).

Christians may privately edify one another by reading the scriptures, communicating their sense one to another of them, admonishing, counseling, reproving one another in a private, fraternal way, at seasons wherein they interfere not with more public duties: But for every one that has confidence enough (and the ignorant usually are best stocked with it) to assume a liberty without due qualification or call to expound and give the sense of scripture, and pour forth his crude and unstudied notions, as the pure sense and meaning of God's spirit in the scriptures; this is what Christ never allowed, and through this flood-gate errors have broken in, and over-flowed the church of God, to the great scandal of religion, and confirmation of Popish enemies.

Limitation II. Though there be no part of scripture shut up or restrained from the knowledge or use of any Christian, yet Jesus Christ has recommended to Christians of different abilities, the study of some parts of scripture rather than others, as more proper and agreeable to their age and stature in religion.

Christians are by the apostle ranked into three classes, fathers, young men, and little children, [1 John 2:13](#). and accordingly the wisdom of Christ has directed to that sort of food which is proper for either: For there is in the word all sorts of food suitable to all ages in Christ; there is both milk for babes, and strong meat for grown Christians, [Hebrews 5:13, 14](#). Those that are unskillful in the word of righteousness, should feed upon milk, that is, the easy, plain, but most nutritive and pleasant practical doctrines of the gospel. But strong meat (says he) that is, the more abstruse, deep, and mysterious truths belongs to them that are of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil; that is, truth and error. To the same purpose he speaks, [1 Corinthians 3:2](#). "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto you were not able to bear it."

Are you a weak unstudied Christian? a babe in Christ? Then the easier and more nutritive milk of plain gospel doctrine is fitter for you, and will do you more good than the stronger meat of profound and more mysterious points; or the bones of controversy, which are too hard for you to deal with.

God has blessed this age with great variety of sound and allowed expositors in our own language, by the diligent study of which, and prayer for the illumination and guidance of the Spirit, you may not only attain unto the true sense and meaning of the more plain and obvious, but also unto greater knowledge and clearer insight into the more obscure and controverted parts of scripture.

Cause III. There is also another evil disposition in the subject, rendering it easily receptive of errors, and that is spiritual slothfulness and carelessness in a due and serious search of the whole scripture, with a sedate and rational consideration of every part and particle therein; which may give us any, though the least light, to understand the mind of God in those obscure and difficult points we search after the knowledge of.

Truth lies deep, as the rich veins of gold do, [Proverbs 2](#). If we will get the treasure, we must not only beg, as he directs, verse 3. but dig also, verse 4. else, as he speaks, [Proverbs 14:23](#). "The talk of the lips tends only to poverty." We are not to take up with that which lies uppermost, and next at hand upon the surface of the text; but to search with the most sedate and considerate mind into all parts of the written word, examining every text which has any respect to the truth we are searching for, needfully to observe the scope, antecedents, and consequents, and to value every apex, tittle, and iota; for each of these are of Divine authority, [Matthew 5:18](#). and sometimes greater weight is laid upon a small word, yes upon the addition or change of a letter in a word, as appears in the names Abram and Sarai.

It will require some strength of mind, and great sedulity to lay all parts of scripture before us, and to compare words with words and things with things, as the apostle speaks, [1 Corinthians 2:13](#). "Comparing spiritual things with spiritual." And though it be true that some important doctrines, as that of justification by faith, are methodically disposed, and thoroughly cleared and settled in one and the same context; yet it is as true that very many other points of faith and duty are not so digested, but are delivered here a little, and there a little, as he speaks, [Isaiah 28:10](#). You must not think to find all that belongs to one head or point of faith, or duty, laid together in a system or common place in scripture; but scattered abroad in several places, some in the Old Testament, and some in the New, at a great distance from one another.

Now, in our searches and inquiries after the full and satisfying knowledge of the will of God in such points, it is necessary that the whole word of God be thoroughly searched, and all those parcels brought together to an interview. Exodus Gr.

If a man would see the entire discovery that was made of Christ to the fathers under the Old Testament, he shall not find it laid together in any one prophet; but shall find that one speaks to one part of it, and another to another.

Moses gives the first general hint of it, [Genesis 3:15](#). "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." But then, if you would know more particularly of whose seed, according to the flesh, he should come, you must turn to [Genesis 22:18](#). "In your seed (says God to Abraham) shall all nations of the earth be blessed." And if you yet doubt what seed God means there, you must go to the apostle, [Galatians 3:16](#). To your seed, which is Christ. If you would further know the place of his nativity, the prophet Micah must inform you of that, [Micah 5:2](#). it should be Bethlehem Ephrata. If you inquire of the quality of his parent, another prophet gives you that, [Isaiah 7:14](#). "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel." If the time of his birth be inquired after, Moses and Daniel must inform you of that, [Genesis 49:10](#). [Daniel 4:24](#).

So under the New Testament, If a man inquire about the change of the Sabbath, he must not expect to find a formal repeal of the seventh day, and an express institution of the first day in its room; but he is to consider,

FIRST, What the Evangelist speaks, [Mark 2:28](#), That Christ is Lord of the Sabbath, and so had power not only to dispense with it, but to change it.

SECONDLY, That on the first day of the week Christ rose from the dead, [Matthew 28:1, 2](#). And that this is that great day, foretold to be the day to be solemnized upon

that account, [Psalm 118:24](#).

THIRDLY, That, accordingly, the first day of the week is emphatically stiled the Lord's day, [Revelation 1:10](#). where you find his own name written upon it.

FOURTHLY, You shall find this was the day on which the apostles and primitive Christians assembled together for the stated and solemn performance of public worship, [John 20:19](#). and other public church-acts and duties, [1 Corinthians 16:1, 2](#). And so by putting together, and considering all these particulars, we draw a just conclusion, That it is the will of God, that since the resurrection of Christ, the first day of the week should be observed as the Christian-Sabbath.

In like manner, as for the baptizing of believers' infants; we are not to expect it in the express words of a New-Testament institution or command, that infants, under the gospel, should be baptized; but God has left us to gather satisfaction about his will and our duty in that point, by comparing and considering the several scriptures of the Old and New Testament which relate to that matter; which, if we be impartial and considerate, we may do,

FIRST, By considering, that by God's express command, [Genesis 17:9, 10](#). the infant-seed of his people were taken into covenant with their parents, and the then sign of that covenant commanded to be applied to them.

SECONDLY, That though the sign be altered, the promise and covenant is still the same, and runs as it did before to believers and their children, [Acts 2:38, 39](#).

THIRDLY, That the federal holiness of our children is plainly asserted under the New Testament, [1 Corinthians 7:14](#). [Romans 11:16](#).

FOURTHLY, We shall further find, that baptism succeeds in the room of circumcision; and that, by an argument drawn from the completeness of our privileges under the New Testament no way inferior, but rather more extensive than those of the Jews, [Colossians 2:10, 11, 12](#).

FIFTHLY, We shall find that upon the conversion of any master or parent, the whole household were baptized. By putting all these things, with some others together, we may arrive to the desired satisfaction about the will of God in this matter.

But some men want abilities, and others are too sluggish and lazy to gather together, compare and weigh all these, and many more hints and discoveries of the mind of God, which would give much light unto this point; but they take an easier and cheaper way to satisfy themselves with what lies uppermost upon the surface of scripture, and so as it were by consent, let go and lose their own, and their children's blessed and invaluable privileges, for want of a little labor and patience to search the scriptures: A folly which few would be guilty of, if but a small earthly inheritance were concerned therein.

The Remedies

To cure this spiritual sluggishness, and awaken us to the most serious and diligent search after the will of God in such controversial and doubtful points, that we may not neglect the smallest hint given us about it, the following considerations will be found of great use and weight.

Considerations

Consideration 1. The most sedate, impartial, and diligent inquiries after the will of God revealed in his word, is a duty expressly enjoined by his sovereign command, which immediately and indispensably binds the conscience of every Christian to the practice of it.

Remarkable is that text to this purpose, [Romans 12:2](#). "And be not conformed to this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Here you find this duty, not only associated with, but made the very end of our nonconformity to the world, and renovation of our minds, the very things which constitute a Christian.

And to sweeten our pains in this work, that will of God, for the discovery whereof we search, is presented to us under three illustrious and alluring properties: namely, good, acceptable, and perfect. Good it must needs be, because the will and essence of God, the chief good, are not two things, but one and the same. And perfect it must needs be, because it is the beam and standard by which the actions of all reasonable creatures ought to be weighed and tried as to the moral good and evil of them. And being both good and perfect, how can it chose but, upon both accounts, be highly acceptable and grateful to an upright soul, as that epithet ἀγαπῶν, there imports. Search the scriptures, says Christ, [John 5:39](#). To the law, and to the testimony, says the prophet, [Isaiah 8:20](#). This is not matter of mere Christian liberty, but commanded duty; and at our peril be it, if we neglect it.

Consider. 2. No acts of ours can be good and acceptable to the Lord, further than it is agreeable to his will revealed in the word.

No man can be a rule to himself. He can be no more his own rule than his own end. One man cannot be a rule to another. The best of men, and their actions and examples, are only so far a rule of imitation to us, as they themselves are ruled by the Divine revealed will, [1 Corinthians 11:1](#). uncommanded acts of worship are abominable to God, and highly dangerous to ourselves; they kindle the fire of his jealousy, to the ruin and destruction of the presumptuous sinner, [Leviticus 10:1, 2](#). So that if the beauty and excellency of the will of God be not enough to allure us, the danger of acting without the knowledge of it, may justly terrify us.

Consideration 3. In this duty we tread in the footsteps of the wisest and holiest men that ever went to Heaven before us.

It is not only the characteristic note of a good man, [Psalm 1:2](#). but it has been the constant practice of the most eminent believers in all ages. The greatest prophets, who had this advantage of us, that they were the organs, or inspired instruments of discovering the will of God to others, yet were not excused from, neither did they neglect to search it diligently themselves, [1 Peter 1:10, 11](#). Daniel, that great favorite of Heaven, who had the visions and revelations of God; yet he himself diligently searched the written word, in order to the discovery of the mind of God, [Daniel 9:2](#).

Consideration 4. Every discovery of the will of God by fervent prayer, diligent, and impartial search of the scriptures, and all other allowed helps, gives the highest pleasure the mind of man is capable of in this world.

If Archimedes, upon the discovery of a mathematical truth was so transported and ravished, that he cried out, I have found it, I have found it; what pleasure then must the investigation and discovery of a Divine truth give to a sanctified soul! "Your words were found of me (says Jeremiah) and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart," [Jeremiah 15:16](#). as pleasant food to a famishing man; for now conscience is quieted, comforted, and cheered in the way of duty. A man walks not at adventure with God, as that word signifies, [Leviticus](#)

[26:40, 41](#). but has the pleasant directive light of the word and will of God, shining sweetly upon the path of his duty.

Consideration 5. By this means you shall find your faith greatly confirmed in the truth of the scriptures.

The sweet consent and beautiful harmony of all the parts of the written word is a great argument of its Divinity; and this you will clearly discern, when by a due search, you shall find things that lie at the remotest distance, to conspire and consent in one, and one part casting light, as well as adding strength to another. Thus you shall find the New Testament veiled in the Old, and the Old revealed in the New: and that such a consent of things, so distant in time and place, can never be the project and invention of man.

Consideration 6. The diligent and impartial search and inquiry after the will of God, out of no other design than to please him in the whole course of our duties, will turn to us for a testimony of the integrity and sincerity of our hearts.

Your word (said David) have I hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against you. And God will not hide his will from those that thus seek to know it. If men would apply themselves to search the word by frequent prayer and fixed meditations, upon so pure a design, not bringing their prejudiced or prepossessed minds unto it; the Spirit of the Lord would guide them into all truth, and keep them out of dangerous and destructive errors.

Cause 4. Besides the slothfulness of the mind, there is found in many persons another evil disposition preparing them easily to receive erroneous impressions; namely, the INSTABILITY and fickleness of the judgment, and unsettledness of mind about the truth of the gospel.

Of this the apostle warns us, [Ephesians 4:14](#). "That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive." None are so constant and steady in the profession of the truth, as those that are fully convinced of, and well satisfied with the grounds of it. Every professor, like every ship at sea, should have a ballast and steadiness of his own, [2 Peter 3:17](#). ready, and prepared to render a reason of the hope that is in him, [1 Peter 3:15](#). able upon all occasions to give an account of those inward motives which constrained his assent to the truth.

He who professes a truth ignorantly, cannot be rationally supposed to adhere to it constantly. He who is but half convinced of a truth, when he engages in the profession of it, must needs be a double-minded man, as the apostle calls him, [James 1:8](#). half the mind hangs one way, and half another, and so it is easily moveable this way or that, with the least breath of temptation. And hence it comes to pass they are so often at a loss about their duty and their practice; for, a doubtful mind must needs make a staggering and uncertain practice.

Erroneous teachers are called wandering stars, [Jude 13](#). which keep no certain course, as the fixed stars do, but are sometimes nearer, and sometimes remoter one from another. Thus errorists, first imbibe unsettled opinions, and then discover them in their inconstant practices. Bertius wrote a book, de Apostatia Sanctorum, and soon after turned Papist. The Socinians and Libertines teach, that a man of any persuasion in religion, may be saved, so that he walk not contrary to his own light: such doctrine directly tends to scepticism in religion.

And this instability of the judgment proceeds either from hypocrisy or weakness. Sometimes from hypocrisy: All hypocrites are double-minded men. [James 4:8](#). "The double-minded man (that is, the hypocrite) is unstable in all his ways:" one of that

number was not ashamed to say, That he had two souls in one body, one for God, and another for whoever would have it.

Sometimes instability of the mind is the effect only of weakness in the judgment, proceeding merely from want of age and growth in Christ, not having as yet attained senses exercised to discern both good and evil, [Hebrews 5:14](#). they are but children in Christ, and children are easy and credulous creatures, [Ephesians 4:14](#). presently taken with a new toy, and as soon weary of it; such a wavering and unstable temper invites temptation, and falls an easy prey into its hands.

I confess some cases may happen where the pretenses on both sides may be so fair as to put a judicious Christian to a stand what to choose; but then their deliberation will be answerable, and then they will not change their opinions every month as Sceptics do. Wherever error finds such a mutable disposition, its work is half done before it makes one assault. How many wavering professors at this day lie in temptation's way? and how great a harvest have errorists and heretics had among them? There is not a mountebank comes upon the stage, but he shall find ten times more customers for his drugs than the most learned and experienced physician. The giddy-headed multitude have more regard to novelty than truth.

The remedies

How necessary and desirable are some effectual rules and remedies in this case! O what a mercy would it be to the professors of these days to have their minds fixed, and their judgments settled in the truths of Christ? Happy is that man whose judgment is so guarded, that no dangerous error or heresy can commit a rape upon it. To this end I shall here commend the four following rules, to prevent this vertiginous malady in the heads of Christians.

Rules

Rule 1. Look warily to it, that you get a real inward implantation into Christ, and lay the foundation deep and firm in a due and serious deliberation of religion, whenever you engage in the public profession of it.

To this sense are the apostle's words, [Colossians 2:6, 7](#). "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him: rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught." Fertility and stability in Christ, a pair of inestimable blessings, depend upon a good rooting of the soul in him at first. He who thrusts a dead stick into the ground may easily pull it up again, but so he cannot do by a well-rooted tree. A color raised by violent action, or a great fire, soon dies away; but that which is natural or constitutional will hold: everything is as its foundation is; it was want of a good root, and due depth of earth, which soon turned the green corn into dry stubble, [Matthew 13:21](#).

Rule 2. Labor after an inward, experimental taste of all those truths which you profess.

This will preserve your minds from wavering and hesitation about the certainty and reality of them. We will not easily part with those truths, which have sensibly shed down those sweet influences upon our hearts, [Hebrews 10:34](#). No sophister can easily persuade a man that has tasted the sweetness of honey, that it is a bitter and unpleasant thing. You cannot easily persuade a man out of his senses.

Rule 3. Study hard and pray earnestly for satisfaction in the present truths, [2 Peter 1:12](#). "That you may be established in the truth that now is under opposition and controversy." Be not ignorant of the truths that lie in present hazard.

Antiquated opinions that are more abstracted from our present interest are no trials of the soundness of our judgments and integrity of our hearts, as the controversies and conflicts of the present times are. Every truth has its time to come upon the stage, and enter the lists; some in one age, and some in another; but Providence seems to have cast the lot of your nativity for the honor and defense of those truths with which error is struggling and conflicting in your time.

Rule 4. Lastly, Be thoroughly sensible of the benefit and good of establishment, and of the evil and danger of a wavering mind and judgment.

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, (says the apostle,) for it is a good thing that the heart be established," etc. [Hebrews 13:9](#). Established souls are the honor of the truth. It was the honor of religion in the primitive days, that when the Heathens would proverbially express an impossibility, they used to say, You may as soon turn a Christian from Christ as do it.

The sickness of professors is a stumbling-block to the world. They will say as Cato of the civil wars between Caesar and Pompey, *Quem fugiam, video, quem sequar, non video*: they know whom to avoid, but not whom to follow. And as the honor of truth, so the flourishing of your own souls depend upon it. A tree, often removed from one soil to another, can never be expected to be fruitful; it is well if it makes a shift to live.

Cause. 5. Another inward cause, disposing men to receive erroneous impressions, is an unreasonable eagerness to snatch at any doctrine or opinion that promises ease to an anxious conscience.

Men that are under the frights and terrors of conscience are willing to listen to anything that offers present relief. Of all the troubles in the world those of the mind and conscience are most intolerable: and those that are in pain are glad of ease, and readily catch at anything that seems to offer it.

This seems to be the thing which led those poor distressed wretches, intimated [Micah 6:6](#). into their gross mistakes and errors about the method of the remission of their sins. "With which shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" They were ready to purchase inward peace, and buy out their pardon at any rate. Nothing but the twinges of conscience could have extorted these things from them. Great is the efficacy and torment of a guilty conscience.

Satan, who feels more of this in himself than any other creature in the world, and knows how ready poor ignorant, but distressed sinners are to catch at anything that looks like ease or comfort, and being jealous what these troubles of conscience may issue into, prepares for them such erroneous doctrines and opinions, under the names of anodines and quieting recipes, by swallowing of which they feel some present ease; but their disease is thereby made so much the more incurable.

It is upon this account he has found such vent in the world for his penances, pilgrimages, and indulgences among the Papists. But seeing this ware will not go off among the reformed and more enlightened professors of Christianity, he changes his hand, and fits other doses under other names to quiet sick and distressed souls, before ever their frights of conscience come to settle into true repentance and faith in the blood of Christ, by dressing up, and presenting to them such opinions as these, namely,

That they may boldly apply to themselves all the promises of pardon and peace, without any respect at all to repentance or faith in themselves; that it is not at all

needful, nay, that it is illegal and sinful to have any respect to these things, forasmuch as their sins were pardoned, and they justified from eternity; and that the covenant of grace is in all respects absolute, and is made to sinners as sinners, without any regard to their faith or repentance; and whatever sins there be in them, God sees them not.

To such a charm of troubles as this, how earnestly does the ear of a distressed conscience listen? how greedily does it suck in such pleasing words? Are all sins that are pardoned, pardoned before they are committed? and, Does the covenant of grace require neither repentance nor faith antecedently to the application of the promises? How groundless then are all my fears and troubles? This, like a dose of opium, quiets, or rather stupefies the raging conscience; for, even an error in judgment, until it be detected and discovered to be so, quiets and comforts the heart as well as principles of truth; but whenever the fallacy shall be detected, whether here or hereafter, the anguish of conscience must be increased, or (which is worse) left desperate.

The remedies

To prevent and cure this mistake and error in the soul, by which it is fitted and prepared to catch any erroneous principle (which is but plausible) for its present relief and ease, I shall desire my reader seriously to ponder and consider the following queries upon this case.

Queries

Query 1. Whether by the vote of the whole rational world, a good trouble be not better than a false peace? Present ease is desirable, but eternal safety is much more so: and if these two cannot consist under the present circumstances of the soul, Whether it be not better to endure for a time those painful pangs, than feel more acute and eternal ones, by quieting conscience with false remedies before the time?

It is bad to lie tossing a few days under a laborious fever; but far worse to have that fever turned into a lethargy, or fatal apoplexy. Erroneous principles may rid the soul of its present pain and eternal hopes and safety together. Acute pains are better than a senseless stupidity. Though the present rage of conscience be not a right and kindly conviction, yet it may lead to it, and terminate in faith and union with Christ at last, if Satan do not this way practice upon it, and quench it before its time.

Query 2. Bethink yourselves seriously, whether troubles so quieted and laid asleep, will not revive and turn again upon you with a double force as soon as the virtue of the drug (I mean the erroneous principle) has spent itself?

The efficacy of truth is eternal, and will maintain the peace it gives forever; but all delusions must vanish, and the troubles which they dammed up for a time, break out with a greater force. Satan employs two sorts of witches, some to torment the bodies of men with grievous pain and anguish: but then he has his white witches at hand to relieve and ease them. And have these poor wretches any great cause, think you, to boast of the cure, who are eased of their pains at the price of their souls?

Much like unto this, are the cures of inward troubles by erroneous principles. I lament the case of blinded Papists, who by pilgrimages and offerings to the shrines of titular saints, attempt the cure of a lesser sin by committing a greater; is it because there is not a God in Israel, who is able in due season to pacify conscience with proper and durable gospel-remedies, that we suffer our troubles thus to precipitate us into the snares of Satan, for the sake of present ease?

Query 3. Read the scriptures, and inquire, Whether God's people, who have lain long under sharp inward terrors, have not at last found settlement and inward peace, by those very methods which the principles that quiet you do utterly exclude!

If you will fetch your peace from a groundless notion, that your sins were pardoned, and your persons justified from all eternity, and therefore you may apply boldly and confidently to yourselves the choicest promises and privileges in the gospel, without any regard to faith or repentance wrought by the Spirit in your souls. I am sure holy David took another course for the settlement of his conscience, [Psalm 51:6, 7, 8, 9, 10](#). And it has been the constant practice of the saints in all ages, to clear their title to the righteousness of Christ wrought without them, by the works of his Spirit wrought within them.

Cause 6. The next evil temper in the subject, preparing and disposing it for error, is an easy CREDULITY, or sequacious humor in men, rendering them apt to receive things upon trust from others, without due and thorough examination of the grounds and reasons of them themselves.

This is a disposition fitted to receive any impression seducers please to make upon them; they are said to deceive the hearts of the simple, that is credulous, but well-meaning people that suspect no harm. It is said, [Proverbs 14:15](#). "The simple believes every word." Through this sluice, or flood-gate, what a multitude of errors in Popery have overflowed the people! They are told, they are not able to judge for themselves, but must take the matters of their salvation upon trust from their spiritual guides; and so the silly people are easily seduced, and made easily receptive of the grossest absurdities their ignorant leaders please to impose upon them.

And it were to be wished, that those two points, namely, the dumb services of their ministers, and the blind obedience of the people had stayed within the Popish confines. But, alas! how many simple Protestants be there, who may be said to carry their brains in other men's heads; and like silly sheep, follow the next in the track before them; especially if their leaders have but wit and are enough to hide their errors under specious and plausible pretensions. How many poisonous drugs has Satan put off under the gilded titles of antiquity, zeal for God, higher attainments in godliness, new lights, etc. How natural is it for men to follow in the track, and be tenacious of the principles and practices of their progenitors? Multitudes seem to hold their opinions by an hereditary right, as if their faith descended to them the same way their estates do.

The emperor of Morocco told King John's ambassador, that he had lately read St. Paul's epistles; 'And truly (said he) were I now to chose my religion, I would embrace Christianity before any (religion in the world; but every man ought to die in that religion he received from his ancestors.'

Many honest, well-meaning, but weak Christians, are also easily beguiled by specious pretenses of new light, and higher attainments in reformation. This makes the weaker sort of Christians pliable to many dangerous errors, cunningly insinuated under such taking titles. What are most of the erroneous opinions now vogue'd in the world but old errors under new names and titles?

The remedies

The remedies and preventions in this case, are such as follow:

Remedy 1. It is beneath a man to profess any opinion to be his own, while the grounds and reasons of it are in other men's keeping and wholly unknown to

himself.

If a man may tell gold after his father, then sure he may, and ought to try and examine doctrines and points of faith after him. We are commanded to be ready to give an account of the hope that is in us, and not to say, This or that is my judgment or opinion, but let others give an account of the ground and reason of it.

I confess, if he who leads me into an error were alone exposed to the hazard, and I quit and free, whatever become of him, it were quite another thing: but when our Savior tells us, [Matthew 15:14](#). that both (that is, the follower as well as the leader) fall into the ditch; at my peril be it, if I follow without eyes of my own: that is but a weak building that is shored up by a prop from a neighbor's wall. How many men have ruined their estates by suretyship for others? but of all suretyship, none so dangerous as spiritual suretyship. 'We neither ought (as a late Worthy speaks) defy the judgment of the weakest, nor yet, on the other side, to deify the judgment of the strongest Christian.' He who pins his faith upon another man's sleeve, knows not where he will carry it.

Remedy 2. As you ought not to abuse your Christian privilege and liberty, to try all things, [1 Thessalonians 5:21](#). so neither on the other side to undervalue or part with it. See the things that so much concern your eternal peace with your own eyes.

I showed you before, that this liberty is abused by extending it too far; and under the notion of improving all things, many embolden themselves to innovate and entertain anything? yet, beware of bartering such a precious privilege for the fairest promises others can make in lieu of it. I would not slight nor undervalue the piety and learning of others, nor yet put out my own eyes to see by theirs.

Remedy 3. Before you adventure to espouse the opinions of others, diligently observe and mark the fruits and consequences of those opinions in the lives of the zealous abettors and propagators of them: By their fruits (says Christ) you shall know them.

When the opinion or doctrine naturally tends to looseness, or when it sucks and draws away all a man's zeal, to maintain and diffuse it, and practical religion thereby visibly languishes in their conduct, it is time for you to make a pause, before you advance one step farther towards it.

Cause 7. The next evil disposition that I shall note in the subject, is a vain CURIOSITY of mind, or an itching desire to pry into things unrevealed, at least, above our ability to search out and discover.

It is an observation, as true as ancient, that itching ears come to a scab upon the face of the church. The itch of novelty produces the scab of error. Of this disease the apostle warns us, [2 Timothy 4:3](#). "For the time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." Nothing will please them but new notions, and new modes of language, method, tone and gesture.

Sound doctrine is the only substantial and solid food that nourishes and strengthens the heart of the new creature; but vain Sceptics nauseate and despise this as trite, vulgar, cheap, and low. Nothing humours them but novelties and rarities; their unsettled brains must be wheeled about, with diverse and strange doctrines, [Hebrews 13:9](#). Novelty and variety are the only properties that commend doctrines to wanton palates: Hence it is they so boldly intrude into things they have not seen, [Colossians 2:18](#). These Cyril fitly calls the domineerings, or darings of bold spirits.

The schoolmen have filled the world with a thousand ungrounded fancies, as the distinct offices and orders of angels; and higher flights of fancy than these, which

seem to be invented for no other end or use, but to please the itching ears of the curious.

There is not only a wild and daring rashness of astrologers, presuming to foretell futurities, and the fates of kingdoms, as well as particular persons, from the conjunctions and influences of the stars; but there is also found as high a presumption and boldness among men in matters of religion.

Satan is well aware of this humor in men, and how exceeding serviceable it is to his design: and therefore, having the very knack of clawing and pleasing itching ears with taking novelties, he is never wanting to feed their minds with a pleasing variety, and fresh succession of them; new opinions are still invented, and minted, in which the dangerous hooks of error are hid: if men were once cured of this spiritual itch, and their minds reduced to that temper and sobriety, as to be pleased with, and bless God for the plain revealed truths of the gospel, Satan would drive but a poor trade, and find but few customers for his erroneous novelties.

The remedies

The proper remedies to cure this itch after novelty, or dangerous curiosity of the mind are,

Remedy 1. Due reflection upon the manifold mischiefs that have entered into the world this way.

It was this curiosity and desire to know, that overthrew our first parents, [Genesis 3:6](#). "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise; she took of the fruit thereof." The very same way by which he let in the first error, he has let thousands into the world since that day. Nothing is more common in the world, than for an old error to obtain afresh under the name of new light. Satan has the very art of turning stale errors after the mode of the present times, and make them current and passable as new discoveries, and rare novelties.

Thus he puts off Libertinism, the old sin of the world, under the title of Christian Liberty. What a troop of Pagan idolatrous rites were by this means introduced among the Papists? A great part of popery is but Ethnicismus redivivus, Heathenism revived. The Pagans Pontifex maximus, was revived under the new title of Pope. The Gentiles Washings in the Popish holy water. Their novendiale sacrum, or sacrifice nine days after the burial of the party, in the Popish Masses for the dead. Their Alvarium Fratrum, in cloisters of Monks and Friars; their Enchanters, in Popish Exorcists? their Asyla, in Popish Sanctuaries; with multitudes more of Pagan rites, quite out of date in Christendom, introduced again under new names in Popery; as was intimated, [Revelation 11:2](#). and [Revelation 13:15](#).

Remedy 2. Be satisfied that God has not left his people to seek their salvation, or spiritual substance among curious, abstruse and doubtful notions; but in the great, solid, and plainly revealed truths of the gospel, [John 17:3](#). "This is life eternal, that they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." The great concerns of our salvation are plain and easy to be understood.

Remedy 3. Vain curiosity is a dangerous snare of Satan: By such trifles as these, he devours our time, eats up our strength, and diverts our minds from the necessary and most important business of religion. While we immerse our thoughts in these pleasing, but barren contemplations, heart-work, closet-work, family-work, lie by neglected. While we are employed in garnishing the dish with flowers, and curious figures, the cunning cheat takes away the meat our souls should exist by.

Cause 8. Pride and arrogance of human reason is another evil disposition, molding and preparing the mind for errors. When men are once conceited of the strength and clearness of their own carnal reasons and apprehensions, nothing is more usual than for such men to run mad with reason into a thousand mistakes and errors. To this cause Ecclesiastical historians ascribe the errors that infest the church.

Reason, indeed, is the highest natural excellency of man; it exalts him above all earthly creatures, and, in its primitive perfection, almost equalized him with angels, [Hebrews 2:7](#). The pleasures which result from its exercises and experiments, transcend all the delights and pleasures of sense. How common is it for men to dote upon their own intellectual beauty, and glory in their victories over weaker understandings? And though the reason of fallen men is greatly wounded and weakened by sin; yet it conceits itself to be as strong and clear as ever; and, with Samson, when his locks were shorn, goes forth as before time; being neither sensible of its own weakness, or of the mysterious and unsearchable depths of scripture.

Reason is our arbiter, and guide, by the institution and law of nature, in civil and natural affairs: It is the beam, and standard, at which we weigh them: It is an home-born judge, and king in the soul: Faith comes in as a stranger to nature, and so it is dealt with, even as an intruder into reason's province, just as the Sodomites dealt with Lot: It refuses to be an underling to faith. Out of this arrogance of carnal reason, as from Pandora's Box, swarms of errors are flown abroad into the world.

By this means Socinianism first started, and has since propagated itself. They look upon it as a ridiculous, and unaccountable thing to reason, that the Son should be co-equal, and co-eternal with the Father: That God should forgive sins freely, and yet forgive none but upon full satisfaction. That Christ should make that satisfaction by his sufferings, and yet be the party offended, and so make satisfaction to himself; with many more of the like stamp.

Yes Atheism, as well as Socinianism, are births from this womb. It is proud and carnal reason, which quarrels at the creation of the world, and seems to triumph in its uncontrollable maxim, *Ex nihilo nihil Fit*: Out of nothing, comes nothing. It looks upon the doctrine of the resurrection with a deriding smile, as a thing incredible. It thinks it hard and harsh, that God should command men to turn themselves to him, and threaten them with damnation, in case of refusal; and yet, at the same time, man should not have in himself a sufficient power, and a free will to do this, without the supernatural, and preventing grace of God. It thinks it a ridiculous thing for such a great and solemn ordinance of God as baptism is, to pass upon such a subject as an infant of a week old, which is not capable to understand the ends and uses of it. Hence it is, some over-heated zealots have not stuck to say, That we have as good warrant, and reason to baptize cats, dogs, and horses, as we have to baptize infants. Oh the madness of carnal reason!

The remedies

To take down the arrogance, and prevent the mischief of carnal reasonings, let us be convinced,

Remedy 1. That it is the will of God that reason in all believers should resign to faith, and all ratiocination submit to revelation.

Reason is no better than an usurper when it presumes to arbitrate matters belonging to faith and revelation. Reason's proper place is to sit at the feet of faith, and instead of searching the secret grounds and reasons, to adore and admire the great and unsearchable mysteries of the gospel. None of God's works are unreasonable, but

many of them are above reason. It was as truly, as ingenuously said by one; Never does reason show itself more reasonable than when it ceases to reason about things that are above reason. "Where is the wise? Where is the Scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God; it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe," [1 Corinthians 1:20, 21](#). It is not reason, but faith that must save us.

The wisdom of God in the gospel is wisdom in a mystery, even hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory, 1 Corinthians 2:7. Such wisdom as the most eagle-eyed rationalists, and famed Philosophers of the world understood not. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him." But God has revealed them to us by his Spirit, *ibid.* verse 9, 10.

Remedy 2. Be convinced of the weakness and deep corruption of natural reason; and this will restrain its arrogance, and make it modest and wary.

A convinced and renewed soul is conscious to itself of its own weakness and blindness; and therefore dares not pry audaciously into the arcana cœli, nor summon the great God to its bar: it finds itself posed by the mysteries of nature, and therefore concludes itself an incompetent judge of the mysteries of faith.

The arrogance of reason is the reigning sin of the unregenerate; though it be a disease with which the regenerate themselves are infected. When conviction shall do its work upon the soul, the plumes of spiritual pride quickly fall; and it says with Job, "Once have I spoken, but I will speak no more; yes, twice, but I will proceed no further," *q. d.* I have done, father, I have done; "I have uttered things that I understand not," [Job 42:3](#). Spiritual illumination cures this ambition.

Remedy 3. Consider the manifold mischiefs and evils flowing from the pride of reason.

It does not only fill the world with errors and distractions, but it also invades the rights of Heaven, and casts a vile reflection upon the wisdom, sovereignty, and veracity of God. It lifts up itself against his wisdom, not considering that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men," [1 Corinthians 1:25](#). It spurns at his glorious sovereignty, not considering that "he gives no account of his matters," [Job 33:13](#). It questions his veracity, in saying with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" [John 3:9](#).

Cause 9. The last evil disposition I shall here take notice of in the subject, is rash and ignorant zeal; a temper preparing the mind both to propagate furiously, and receive easily, erroneous doctrines and opinions.

When there is in the soul more heat than light, when a fervent spirit is governed by a weak head; such a temper of spirit Satan desires and singles out as fittest for his purpose, especially when the heart is graceless, as well as the understanding weak. A blind horse, of an high mettle, will carry the rider into any pit, and venture over the most dangerous precipices.

Such were the superstitious Jewish Zealots; they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. This blind zeal, St. Paul charges justly upon the Jewish bigots, [Romans 10:2](#). as the proper cause of their dangerous errors about the great point of justification; and surely no man understood the evil of it more than he, who, in his unregenerate state, was transported by it to the most furious persecution of the saints, [Acts 26:11](#). and even to dotage, and extreme fondness upon the erroneous traditions of his fathers, [Galatians 1:14](#).

Blind zeal is a sword in a madman's hand. No persecutor like a conscientious one, whose erroneous conscience offers up the blood of the saints to the glory of God, [John 16:2](#). The blind but zealous Pharisees would compass sea and land to make one proselyte, [Matthew 23:15](#). as our modern Pharisees, the Jesuits, have since done, who have mingled themselves with the remotest and most barbarous nations, to draw them to the Romish errors. Of the same temper was the false teachers taxed by the apostle, [Galatians 4:17](#). they zealously affect you, but not well; yes, they would exclude you (namely, from our society and ordinances) that you might affect them.

And as it is the great instrument by which Satan propagates errors, so it makes a fit temper in the souls of the people to receive them: For, by this means error gains the possession of the affections, without passing a previous and due test by the understanding, and so gains the soul by the advantage of a surprise. Everything, by how much the more weak and ignoble it is, by so much the more it watches upon surprisals and advantages. Error cares not to endure the due examination and test of reason; and therefore seeks to gain by surprisal what it despairs of ever gaining by a plain and fair trial.

There be few Errorists in the world of Alexander's mind, who would rather lose the day than steal the victory. Hence it comes to pass, that the greatest number of those they lead captives are silly women, as the apostle speaks, who are the most affectionate, but least judicious gender.

From this blind zeal it is that they cunningly wind their erroneous opinions into all their discourses where they have any hope to prevail. A rational and modest contradiction puts them into a flame, it breaks the nearest bonds of friendship and society.

Rabshakeh in 2 Kings 18. would not treat with Hezekiah's counselors of state, but with the common people upon the wall: And error cares not to treat with sound reason, able to sift it through the scripture-search, but with the affections; as well knowing, it is in vain to make war in reason's territories without first gaining a party among the affections.

The remedies

The best defensatives against erroneous contagions, in this case, are to be found in the following particulars.

Defensatives

FIRST Defensative. Reflect seriously and sadly upon the manifold mischiefs occasioned everywhere, and in all ages of the world, by rash zeal.

Revolve church-histories and you shall find, that scarce any cruel persecution has flamed in the world, which has not been kindled by blind zeal. Turn over all the records, both of Pagan and Popish persecutions, and you shall still find these two observations confirmed and verified.

FIRST, That ignorant zeal has kindled the fires of persecution; and, SECONDLY, That the more zealous any have been for the ways of error and falsehood, still the more implacably fierce and cruel they have been to the sincere servants of God. None like a superstitious devoto to manage the devil's work of persecution thoroughly, and to purpose. They will rush violently and head-long into the blood of their dearest relations, or most eminent saints, to whose sides the devil sets this sharp spur. Superstitious zeal draws all the strength and power of the soul into that

one design; and Woe to him that stands in the way of such a man, if God interpose not between him and the stroke. It was a rational wish of him that said, God deliver me from a man of one only design.

Now consider, reader, if your judgment be weak, and your affections warm, how much you lie exposed, not only to errors which may ruin yourself, but also to tongue and hand-persecution, wherein Satan may manage your zeal for the injury or ruin of those that are better than yourself: And withal, consider how many dreadful threatenings are found in scripture against the instruments of persecution, so employed and managed by Satan.

Certainly, reader, it were better for you to stand with your naked breast before the mouth of a discharging cannon, than that your soul should stand under this guilt, before such a scripture-threatening as that, [Psalm 7:13](#). "He has also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordains his arrows against the persecutors." And none more likely to become such than those of your own temper and complexion; especially if grace be wanting in the heart, while zeal for erroneous principles eats up the affections.

Second Defensative. Consider what mischief zeal for an error will do to your own soul as well as others.

It will wholly engross your time, thoughts, and strength: so that if there be any gracious principle in you, it shall not be able to thrive and prosper. For look as a fever takes off the natural appetite from food, so will erroneous zeal take off your spiritual appetite from meditation, prayer, heart-examination, and all other the most necessary and nourishing duties of religion, by reason whereof your grace must languish.

When your soul, with David's, should be filled and feasted as with marrow and fatness, by delightful meditations of God upon your bed, you will be rolling in your mind your barren and insipid notions which yield no food or spiritual strength to your soul; you will lie musing how to dissolve the arguments and objections against your errors, when you should rather be employed in solving the just and weighty objections that lie against your sincerity and interest in Christ, which were time far better improved.

Third Defensative. Consider how baneful this inordinate zeal has been to Christian society, lamentably defacing, and almost dissolving it everywhere, to the unspeakable detriment of the churches.

We read, [Malachi 3:16](#). of a blessed time, when they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and thought upon his name. Oh happy time! Halcyon days! I myself remember the time when the zeal of the saints spent itself in provoking one another to love and good works in joint and fervent prayer, in inward, experimental, and edifying communion; my soul has them still in remembrance, and is cast down within me: for alas! alas! how do I see everywhere Christian communion turned into vain ganglings? Churches and families into mere cockpits? Men's discoursings falling as naturally into contentions about trifles as they were accustomed to do into heavenly and experimental subjects, to the unspeakable disgrace and damage of religion.

Fourth Defensative. That opinion is justly to be suspected for erroneous which comes in at the postern-door of the affections; and not openly and fairly at the right gate of an enlightened and well-satisfied judgment. It is a thief that comes in at the back-door, at least strongly to be suspected for one. Truth courts the mistress, makes its first and fairest addresses to the understanding. Error bribes the handmaid, and labors first to win the affections, that by their influence it may corrupt the judgment.

And thus you see, besides the innocent occasion, namely, God's permission of errors in the world for the trial of his people, nine proper causes of errors found in the evil dispositions of the minds of men, which prepare them to receive erroneous doctrines and impressions, namely,

1. A wrangling humor, at the pretended obscurity of Scripture.
2. The abuse of that Christian liberty purchased by Christ.
3. Slothfulness in searching the whole word of God.
4. Fickleness and instability of judgment.
5. Eagerness after anodines, to ease a distressed conscience.
6. An easy credulity, in following the judgments and examples of others.
7. Vain curiosity, and prying into unrevealed secrets.
8. The pride and arrogance of human reason.
9. Blind zeal, which spurs on the soul, and runs it upon dangerous precipices.

We next come to consider the principal, impulsive cause, by which errors are propagated and disseminated in the world.

Cause 10. Come we next, in the proper order, to consider the principal, impulsive cause of errors; which is SATAN, working upon the pre-disposed matter he finds in the corrupt nature of man. The centurists, speaking of the strange and sudden growth of errors and heresies immediately after the planting of the gospel by Christ and the apostles, ascribe it to Satan.

Satan was a liar from the beginning, and abode not in the truth: He hates it with deadly hatred, and all the children and friends of truth. And this hatred he manifests sometimes by raising furious storms of persecution against the sincere professors of it, [Revelation 3:10](#). and sometimes by clouds of heresies and errors with design to darken it. In the former he acts as a roaring lion; in the latter as a subtle serpent, [2 Corinthians 11:5](#). "I fear, lest as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety; so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

He is exceedingly skillful and dexterous in citing and wresting the scriptures to serve his vile designs and purposes; and as impudently daring as he is crafty and cunning; as appears in the history of Christ's temptation in the desert, [Matthew 4:6](#). where he cites one part of that promise, [Psalm 91:11](#). and suppresses the rest; shows the encouragement, namely, He shall give his angels charge over you; but clips off the limitation of it, namely, to keep you in all your ways: In our lawful ways, not in rash and dangerous precipices; as Bernard well glosses.

And it is worth observation, that he introduces multitudes of errors into the world under the unsuspected notions of admirable prophylactics, and approved preservatives from all mischiefs and dangers from himself. Under this notion he has neatly and covertly slid into the world, holy-water crossings, Relics of saints, and almost innumerable other superstitious rites.

Erroneous teachers are the ministers of Satan, however they transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, [2 Corinthians 11:15](#). and the subtle, dangerous errors they broach, are fitly stiled by the Spirit of God, the depths of Satan, [Revelation 2:24](#). The corrupt teachers, the Gnostics, etc. called them depths, that is great mysteries, high and marvelous attainments in knowledge; but the Spirit of God

fits a very proper epithet to them. They are satanic depths and mysteries of iniquity. Now the level and design of Satan herein is double.

FIRST, He aims at the ruin and damnation of those that vent and propagate them; upon which account the apostle calls them in 2 Peter 2:1. destructive, or (as we render it) damnable heresies. And because God will preserve the souls of his own from this moral contagion, therefore,

SECONDLY, He endeavors, by lesser errors, to busy the minds, and check the growth of grace in the souls of the saints, by employing them about things so foreign to true godliness, and the power thereof, [Hebrews 13:9](#).

The remedies

The rules for prevention and recovery are these that follow:

Rules

Rule 1. Pray earnestly, for a thorough change of the state and temper of your soul, by sound conversion and regeneration.

Conversion turns us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, [Acts 26:18](#). They are his own slaves and vassals that are taken captive by him at his will, [2 Timothy 2:16](#). A sanctified heart is a sovereign defensative against erroneous doctrines; it furnishes the soul with spiritual eyes, judicious cars, and a distinguishing taste, by which it may discern both good and evil, truth and error, [Hebrews 5:14](#). yes it puts the soul at once under the conduct of the Spirit, and protection of the promise, [John 16:13](#). and though this does not secure a man from all lesser mistakes, yet it effectually secures him from greater ones, which are inconsistent with Christ and salvation.

Rule 2. Acquaint yourselves with the wiles and methods of Satan, and be not ignorant of his devices, [2 Corinthians 2:11](#).

When once you understand the wash and paint with which he sets off the ugly face of error, you will not easily be enamored with it. Pretenses of devotion upon one side, and of purity, zeal, and reformation upon the other; though they be pleasant sounds to both ears, yet the wary soul will examine, before it receive, and admit doctrinal points under these gilded titles. Those that have made their observations upon the stratagems of Satan will heedfully observe both the tendency of doctrines, and the lives of their teachers; and if they find looseness, pride, wantonness in them, it is not a glorious title, or magnificent name that shall charm them. They know Satan can transform himself into an angel of light; and no wonder if his ministers also be transformed into ministers of righteousness, 2 Corinthians 11:14, 15.

Rule 3. Resign your minds and judgments in fervent prayer to the government of Christ, and conduct of the Spirit; and in all your addresses to God pray that he would keep them chaste and pure, and not suffer Satan to commit a rape upon them: Plead with God that part of Christ's prayer, [John 17:17](#). "Sanctify them through your truth; your word is truth;"

Rule 4. Live in the conscientious and constant practice of all those truths and duties God has already manifested to you.

This will bring you under that blessed promise of Christ, [John 7:17](#). "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Satan's greatest successes are among idle, notional, and vain professors; not humble, serious, and practical Christians.

Cause 11. Having considered and dispatched the several internal causes of error, found in the evil dispositions of the seduced, as also the impulsive cause, viz Satan, who fits suitable baits to all these sinful humours and evil tempers of the heart; we come next to consider the instrumental cause, employed by Satan in this work, namely, the false teacher, whom Satan makes use of as his seeds-man, to disseminate and scatter erroneous doctrines and principles into the minds of men, ploughed up and prepared by those evil tempers before-mentioned, as a fit soil to receive them.

The choice of instruments is a principal part of Satan's policy. Every one is not fit to be employed in such a service as this. All are not fit to be of the council of war, who yet take their places of service in the field. A rustic carried out of the field, on board a ship at sea, though he never learned his compass, nor saw a ship before, can, by another's direction, tug lustily at a rope; but he had need be an expert artist that sits at the helm and steers the course. The worst causes need the smoothest orators; and bad ware, a cunning merchant to put it off.

Deep-pated men are coveted by Satan, to manage this design: None like an eloquent Tertullus to confront a Paul, [Acts 24:1](#). A subtle Eccius to enter the list, in defense of the Popish cause, against the learned and zealous reformers. When the duke of Buckingham undertook to plead the bad cause of Richard the third, the Londoners said, They never thought it had been possible for any man to deliver so much bad matter, in such good words and quaint phrases.

The first instrument chosen by Satan to deceive man, was the serpent; because that creature was more subtle than any beast of the field. There is not a man of eminent parts, but Satan courts and solicits them for his service. St. Augustine told an ingenious, but unsanctified scholar, The devil courts your parts to adorn his cause. He surveys the world, and wherever he finds more than ordinary strength of reason, pregnancy of wit, depth of learning, and elegance of language, that is the man he looks for.

These are the men that can almost indiscernably sprinkle their errors among many precious truths, and wrap up their poisonous drugs in leaf-gold or sugar. Maresius notes of Crellius and his accomplices, That by the power of their eloquence, and sophistry of their arguments, they were able, artificially, to clothe horrible blasphemies to allure the simple.

And, like the Hyena, they can counterfeit the voice of the shepherds, to deceive and destroy the sheep. There is (says a late Worthy) an a learned kind of wickedness, a subtle art of deceiving the minds of others. Upon which account the Spirit of God sometimes compares them, 2 Peter 2:3. to cunning and cheating tradesmen, who have the very art to set a gloss upon their bad wares with fine words: they buy and sell the people with their ensnaring and feigned words. And sometimes he compares them to cunning gamesters, that have the art and sleight of hand, to cog the die, to deceive the unskillful, and win their game, [Ephesians 4:14](#).

And sometimes the Spirit of God compares them to witches themselves, [Galatians 3:1](#). Foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? How many strange fates have been done upon the bodies of men and women, by witchcraft? But far more and stranger upon the souls of men, by the magic of error. Jannes and Jambres, performed wonderful things in the sight of Pharaoh, by which they deceived and hardened him; and unto these false teachers are compared.

Such a man was Elymas the sorcerer, who labored to seduce the deputy, Sergius Paulus, though a prudent man, [Acts 13:7-10](#). Oh full of all subtlety, and all mischief, you child of the devil! says Paul unto him. the art of seduction from the ways of truth and holiness, discovers a man to be both the child and scholar of the devil.

But as the wise and painful ministers of Christ, who turn many to righteousness, shall have double glory in Heaven; so those subtle and most active agents for the devil, who turn many from the ways of righteousness, will have a double portion of misery in Hell.

The Remedies

The proper remedies in this case are principally two.

Remedy 1. Pray fervently, and labor diligently in the use of all God's appointed means, to get more solidity of judgment, and strength of grace, to establish you in the truth, and secure your souls against the cunning craftiness of men that lie in wait to deceive.

It is the ignorance and weakness of the people, which makes the factors for errors so successful as they are. Consult the scriptures, and you shall find these cunning merchants drive the quickest and most gainful trade among the weak and injudicious. So speaks the apostle, With good words and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the simple--harmless, weak, easy souls, who have a desire to do well, but want wisdom to discern the subtleties of them that mean ill; who are void both of fraud in themselves, and suspicion of others. Oh! what success have the deceivers, their fair words and sugared speeches, sweet and taking expressions, among such innocent ones!

And who are they among whom Satan's cunning gamesters commonly win the game, and sweep the stakes, but weak Christians, credulous souls, whom for that reason the apostle calls children? The word properly signifies an infant, when it is referred to the age; but unskillful and unlearned, when referred (as it is here) to the mind. So again, [2 Peter 2:14](#). They (that is the false teachers here spoken of) beguile unstable souls, souls that are not confirmed and grounded in the principles of religion. Whence by the way, take notice of the unspeakable advantage, and necessity of being well catechized in your youth; the more judicious, the more secure.

Remedy 2. Labor to acquaint yourselves with the sleights and artifices Satan's factors and instruments generally make use of, to seduce and draw men from the truth. The knowledge of them is a good defensative against them. Now there are two common artifices of seducers, which is not safe for Christians to be ignorant of.

FIRST, They usually seek to disgrace and blast the reputations of those truths, and ministers set for their defense, which they design afterwards to overthrow and ruin, and to beget credit and reputation to those errors which they have a mind to introduce. How many precious truths of God are this day, and with this design, defamed as legal and carnal doctrines; and those that defend them, as men of an Old-Testament spirit?

Humiliation for sin, contrition of spirit, etc. fall under disgrace with many, and indeed all qualifications and pre-requisites unto coming to Christ, as things not only needless, but pernicious unto the souls of men, although they have not the least dependence upon them: yes, faith itself, as a pre-requisite unto justification, as no better than a condition pertaining to Adam's covenant.

And so for the persons of orthodox ministers: you see into what contempt the false teachers would have brought both the person and preaching of Paul himself, [2 Corinthians 10:10](#). "His bodily presence (say they) is weak, and his speech contemptible."

SECONDLY, Their other common artifice is, to insinuate their false doctrines among many acknowledged and precious truths, which only serve for a convenient vehicle to them; and besides that, to make their errors as palatable and gustful as they can to the vitiated appetite of corrupt nature. The fore-mentioned worthy has judiciously observed how artificially Satan has blended his baneful doses, to please the palate of carnal reason, spiritual pride, and the desire of fleshly liberty.

Carnal reason is that great idol which the more intelligent part of the carnal world worships. And are not the Socinian heresies as pleasant to it, as a well mixed julep to a feverish stomach.

Spiritual pride is another Diana, which obtains greatly in the world; and no doctrine like the Pelagian, and Semi-Pelagian errors to gratify it. A doctrine that sets fallen nature upon its legs again, and persuades it, it can go alone to Christ; at least, with a little external help of moral suasion, without any preventing or creating work in the soul. That goes down glib and gratefully.

And then for fleshly liberty, How does those that are fond of it rejoice in that doctrine, or opinion, which looses nature from the yoke of restraint? How does the poor deluded Papist hug himself, to think he has liberty by his religion, to let loose the reins of his lust to all sensualities, and quit himself from all that guilt by auricular confession to the priest once a year? How does the Familist smile upon that principle of his, which tells him, the gospel allows more liberty than severe legal teachers think fit to tell them of: they press repentance and faith; but Christ has done all this to your hand.

Cause 12. Having considered the several causes of errors found in the evil dispositions of the seduced, as also the impulsive and instrumental causes, namely, Satan and false teachers employed by him; I shall now proceed to discover some special and most successful methods frequently used by them, to draw the minds of men from the truth. Among which, that which comes first to consideration, is the great skill they have in representing the abuses of the ordinances of God and duties of religion, by wicked men to scare tender and weak consciences from the due use of them, and all further attendance upon them.

The abuse of Christ's holy appointments is so cunningly improved to serve this design, that the minds of many well-meaning persons receive such deep disgust at them, that they are scarce ever to be reconciled to them again. A strong prejudice is apt to drive men from one extreme upon another, as thinking they can never get far enough off from that which has been so scaringly represented to them. Thus, making good the old observation, they run from the troublesome smoke of superstition into the fire of an irreligious contempt of God's ordinances, split themselves upon Charybdis to avoid Scylla.

The Papists having deeply abused the ordinance of Baptism by their corruptive mixtures and additions of the superstitious cross, chrism, etc. Part whereof is not sufficiently purged to this day by the reformation; and finding also multitudes of carnal Protestants dangerously resting upon their supposed baptismal regeneration to the great hazard of their salvation; which mistake is but too much countenanced by some of its administrators: they take from hence such deep offence at the administration of it to any infants at all, (though the seed of God's covenanted people) that they think they can never be sharp enough in their invectives against it; nor have they patience to hear the most rational defenses of that practice.

So, for that scriptural heavenly duty of singing: what more commonly alleged against it than the abuse and ill effects of that precious ordinance? How often is the nonsense and error of the common translation, the rudeness and dullness of the metre of some Psalms, as [Psalm 7:13](#). as also the cold formality with which that

ordinance is performed by many who do but parrotize? I say, how often are these things buzzed into the ears of the people to alienate their hearts from so sweet and beneficial a duty?

And very often we find it urged to the same end, how unwarrantable and dangerous a thing it is for carnal and unregenerated persons to appropriate to themselves in singing those praises and experiences which are peculiar to the saints; not understanding or considering that the singing of Psalms is an ordinance of Christ appointed for teaching and admonition, as well as praising, [Colossians 3:16](#). "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns," etc. Thus Antinomianism took, if not its rise, yet its encouragement from the too rigorous pressing of the law upon convinced sinners.

If Satan can prevail first with wicked men to corrupt and abuse God's ordinances by superstitious mixtures and additions; and then with good men to renounce and slight them for the sake of those abuses; he fully obtains his design, and gives Christ a double wound at once; one by the hands of his avowed enemies, the other by the hands of his friends, no less grievous than the first. FIRST, wicked men corrupt Christ's ordinances, and then good men nauseate them.

The remedies

The proper remedies against errors, insinuated by the abuses of duties are such as follow:

Remedy 1. Let men consider, that there is nothing in religion so great, so sacred and excellent, but some or other have greatly corrupted, or vilely abused them.

What is there in the whole world more precious and excellent than the free-grace of God? and yet you read, [Jude 4](#). of some that turned the grace of our Lord into lasciviousness. What more desirable to Christians than the glorious liberty Christ has purchased for them by his blood, and settled upon them in the gospel-charter? A liberty from Satan, sin, and the rigor and curse of the law; and yet you read, [1 Peter 2:16](#). of them that used this liberty for a cloak of maliciousness. It is true Christ came to be a sacrifice for sin, but not a cloak for sin; to set us at liberty from the bondage of our lusts, not from the ties and duties of our obedience. Under the pretense of this liberty it was, that the Gnostics, Carpocratians, and the Menandrians of old, did not only connive at, but openly taught and practiced all manner of lewdness and impurity.

St. Augustine, in his book of heresy, makes this sad complaint, "The Menandrians (says he) do willingly embrace all impurity as the fruit of the grace of God towards men." And not only the liberty purchased by Christ, but the very person and gospel of Christ are liable to abuses; and oftentimes, through the corruptions of men's hearts, become stones of stumbling, and rocks of offence. What then? Shall we renounce the grace of God, our Christian liberty, the very gospel, yes, and person of Christ himself, because each of them have been thus vilely abused by wicked wretches? At the peril of our eternal damnation be it, if we do so. Blessed is he (says our Lord) that is not offended in me. Beware, lest by this means Satan at once wound the Lord Jesus Christ by scandal, and your soul by prejudice.

Remedy 2. Consider also, that it is the nature and temper of a gracious soul to raise his esteem, and heighten his love to those ordinances, which are most abused and disgraced by men.

The more they are abused and opposed by others, the higher they should be valued and honored by us: [Psalm 119:126, 127](#). "It is time for you, Lord, to work; for they

have made void your law; therefore I love your commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold; q. d. The more they are disgraced and abused by wicked men, the more do I honor and prize them. A like spirit with David's was found in Elijah, [1 Kings 19:14](#). I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant; thrown down your altars, and slain your prophets with the sword."

A good man will strive to honor and secure those truths and duties most, which he finds under most disgrace or danger: he loves the truth sincerely, who cleaves to it, and stands by it under all opposition. This is a good trial of the soundness of your heart, and purity of your ends in religion; such a proof as the honor and reputation of religion in the world can never give you.

In Solomon's time the Jews were very cautious how they admitted and received proselytes, suspecting that by-ends and worldly respects may draw men to it; but they were not so cautious in times of disgrace and persecution.

Remedy 3. Before you part with any ordinance or practice in religion, bethink yourselves whether you never found any spiritual blessings or advantages in that path which you are now tempted to forsake.

Had you never any spiritual meltings of your hearts and affections in that heavenly ordinance of singing? And, may there not be now thousands of mercies in your possession, in consequence to, and as the fruit of your solemn dedication to God in baptism, by your covenanted parents? For my own part, I do heartily and solemnly bless God for it upon this account; and so I hope thousands besides myself have cause to do: however, such a practice may by no means be deserted by you, because abused by others.

Cause 13. Another method and artifice by which false teachers draw multitudes of disciples after them, is, by granting to their ignorant and ambitious followers the Liberty of Prophesying: flattering them into a conceit of their excellent gifts and attainments, when God knows they had more need to be catechized and taught the principles of Christianity than undertake to expound and apply those profound mysteries unto others.

Satan has filled the church and world with errors and troubles this way.

When ignorant and inexperienced persons begin to think it a low and dull thing to sit from year to year under other men's teachings, and to imagine that they are wiser than their teachers, their pride will quickly tempt them to show their ignorance, and that mischievous ignorance will prove dangerous to the truth and troublesome to the church. The apostle forbids the ordination of a novice, lest he be puffed up, and fall into the condemnation of the devil; and in [1 Timothy 1:7](#). he shows us the reason why some swerved and turned aside unto vain janglings: and it was this, that they desired to be teachers of the law, neither understanding what they said, nor whereof they affirmed; that is, they affected to be preachers, though not able to speak congruously, with tolerable sense and reason.

I do not here censure and condemn the use and exercise of the gifts of all private Christians. There are to be found among them some persons of raised parts, and answerable modesty and humility, who may be very useful when called to service in extraordinary cases by the voice of Providence; or exercise their gifts in a probationary way, or in a due subordination unto Christ's public officers and ordinances, by and with the consent of the pastor and congregation.

But when unqualified and uncalled persons undertake such a work out of the conceit and pride of their own hearts, or are allured to it by the crafty designs of erroneous teachers, partly to overthrow a public, regular, and standing ministry in the church,

to which end the scriptures are manifestly abused, such as [Jeremiah 31:34](#). [Romans 12:6](#). 1 Corinthians 14. [1 Peter 4:10](#). with many others: this is the practice I here censure, which, like a Trojan horse, has sent forth multitudes of erroneous persons into the city of God to infest and defile it.

I cannot doubt but many a sincere Christian may be drawn into such employment, which puts him into a capacity of honoring God in a more eminent way, which is a thing desirable to an honest and zealous heart: and that the temptation may be greatly strengthened upon them by the plausible suggestions of cunning seducers, who tell them, that those ministers who oppose and condemn this practice, do it as men concerned for their own interest, as desirous to monopolize the work to themselves, and as envying the Lord's people: and that Christ has given them a greater liberty in this case, than those men will allow them. By this means they draw many after them, and fix them in their erroneous ways.

I have no mind at all here to expose the follies and mischiefs introduced this way, as neither being willing to grieve the hearts of the sincere on one side, nor gratify scoffing Atheists and profane enemies to religion upon the other side; only this I will, and must say, that by this means the sacred scriptures are most injuriously wrested, the peace and order of the church disturbed, and a great many mistakes and errors introduced.

The remedies

The prevention and cure of errors this way introduced, or likely to be introduced into the church, is by pondering and applying the following considerations.

Considerations

Consideration 1. Let all that encourage others, or undertake by others encouragement such a work as this, for which they are not competently qualified, and unto which they are not regularly called, consider seriously with themselves what danger they cast their own and other men's souls upon.

The apostle tells us, [2 Peter 3:16](#). "That the unlearned and unstable do wrest the scriptures to their own destruction." Danger enough, one would think, to scare them from it, did not the same sin of ignorance which makes them wrest the scriptures, cause them also to slight and overlook the danger of so doing.

Certainly, my friends, it is a great deal safer and more excusable, to put an ignorant rustic into an apothecary's shop to compound a medicine of drugs and spirits which he understands not, and confidently administer the same to the bodies of men, than for such persons as are led by ignorance and confidence to intermeddle with the ministerial employment; the one perhaps, by mistake, may poison men's bodies; but the other their souls. An ignorant master, or pilot, that never learned the compass, is rather to be trusted among rocks and quicksands than a proud ignorant person with the conduct of souls.

Consideration 2. What daring presumption is it to intrude ourselves into so great and weighty an employment, without any call or warrant of Christ? [Romans 10:14](#). "How shall they call upon him of whom they have not heard? and, how shall they hear without out a preacher; and how shall they preach except they be sent?"

These mysteries must be committed to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others: those abilities must be examined, [1 Timothy 3:10](#). and the exercise of them warranted by a due and orderly appointment thereunto, [1 Timothy 4:14](#). else, (as one well observes) we shall have as many senses of scripture as we have preachers, etc.

If every Phæton, that thinks himself able, shall undertake to drive the chariot of the sun, no wonder if the world be set on fire. Gifts and abilities of mind are not of themselves sufficient to make a preacher. Some lawyers at the bar may be as skillful as the judge upon the bench, but without a commission they dare not sit there.

Consideration 3. The honor you affect, to vent your unsound notions with liberty, is, in scripture-account, your greatest dishonor.

The scripture reckons false teachers among the basest of the people: The prophet that teaches lies, he is the tail, that is the basest part of the whole body of the people, [Isaiah 9:15](#). And so far is due gospel-liberty from countenancing such dangerous irregularities, that we find in a clear prophecy of gospel-times, what shame God will pour upon them, [Zech. 13:4, 5](#). "They shall be brought with shame enough to confess, I am no prophet, I am an gardener; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth."

Consideration 4. How much more safe, regular and advantageous were it for such as you, to fill your own proper places under able and faithful gospel-ministers, and to suck the breasts of fruitful ordinances, than to consume and pine away by sucking your own breasts? I mean, living upon your own weak and insufficient gifts, in the sinful neglect of Christ's appointments?

Cause 14. False teachers also propagate their errors by a spirit of Enthusiasm, the usual concomitant of erroneous doctrine; and draw away multitudes after them, by pretending to extraordinary revelations, visions, and voices from Heaven, which seem to give great credit to their way and party.

This was an old trick and practice of deceivers, [Deuteronomy 13:1](#). to give signs and wonders in confirmation of their way, which signs the Lord may permit to fall out to prove his people, verse 2, 4 though, for the most part, they are confuted by their unanswerable events.

In the beginning of our reformation by Luther, Calvin, etc. there sprang up a generation of men, called Swinkfeldians, great pretenders to revelations and visions, who were always speaking of deifications; and an higher strain of language they commonly used among themselves, than other serious Christians understood, and therefore scornfully entitled orthodox and humble Christians, who stuck to the scripture-phrase, and wholesome form of sound words, Grammatists, Vocabulists, Literalists, etc. "These men were so entangled in certain enthusiastic snares, that they thought it the highest impiety to renounce them; and they had befooled multitudes with their magnificent words of Illumination, Revelation, Deification.

Much of the same spirit was Thomas Muntzer, John of Leyden, David George, Jacob Behemen, etc. whose cloudy nonsense, enigmatical expressions, and willful obscurity, drew many into a strange admiration of them; they all pretend to an higher knowledge of mysteries than what the gospel is acquainted with; and yet give us (as Mr. Baxter well observes) neither reasons with Aristotle, nor miracles with Christ and his apostles, to cause us to believe any of their new revelations. Vide Baxter of the Sin against the Holy Spirit, p. 148.

Of the same bran were our late Familists in England, of whom Henry Nichols was the chief leader, who decried the written word as a dead letter; and set up their own fond conceits and fancies under the notion of the Spirit, against whom that heavenly and learned man, Mr. Samuel Rutherford, seasonably and successfully appeared: Hacket, Copinger, and Arthington were of the same tribe; who lived a while enrapt up in Antinomian fancies, which at last brake forth into the highest and most horrid blasphemies.

Another are they make use of to seduce the credulous is a pretense unto the spirit of prophecy; and great success they promise themselves this way among the weak, but curious vulgar. And to this end Satan has inspired and employed some cunninger heads to invent very pleasing predictions and prophecies, in favor of that party whom he designs to deceive. And how catching and bewitching these things are, gaining more respect among these vain spirits, than the divine unquestionable prophecies of scripture, this age has had full and sad experience.

Now the design of Satan in these things, is to gain credit of those sects, as people peculiarly favored and beloved of God above others; as if they were the particular favorites of Heaven, as Daniel was; and so to draw the multitude to admire their persons, and espouse their errors.

The Remedies

Now the remedies in this case are such as follow.

Remedy 1. Whatever doctrine or practice seeks credit to itself this way, falls justly thereby under suspicion, that it wants a solid scripture-foundation.

God has not left his people to seek satisfaction in such uncertain ways as these; but has given them a surer word of prophecy, to which they do well to take heed, [2 Peter 1:19](#). He has tied us to the standing rule of the word, forbidding us to give heed to any other voice or spirit, leading us another way, [Isaiah 8:19](#). [2 Thessalonians 2:1](#), [2 Galatians 1:8](#). Scripture-light is a safe and sure light, a pleasant and sufficient light.

The scripture (says Luther) is so full, that as for visions and revelations, I neither regard nor desire them. And when he himself had a vision of Christ, after a day of fasting and prayer, he cried out, Avoid Satan, I know no image of Christ, but the scriptures. An hankering mind after these things, speaks a sickly and distempered state of soul, as longing after trash in young distempered persons, does a distempered state, or ill habit of body.

Mr. William Bridges somewhere tells us of a religious lady of the Empress's bed-chamber, whose name was Gregoria, who being greatly troubled about her salvation, wrote to Gregory, that she would never cease importuning him, until he had sent her word, that he had obtained a revelation from Heaven, that she should be saved; to whom he returned this answer; You require of me that which is difficult to me, and unprofitable for you.

Remedy 2. Consider how often the world has been abused by the tricks and cheats of that officious spirit, the devil, in such ways as these.

What has propagated idolatry among Heathens and Christians more than this? Pilgrimages, monasteries, shrines of saints, holidays, etc. have been introduced by this trick. It were endless to give instances of it in the histories of former ages.

We have a notable late account of it among ourselves, in a book entitled, [A discovery of the notorious Falsehood and Dissimulation, contained in a book, stiled, The gospel way confirmed by miracles,] licensed and published 1649, wherein is laid open to the world, the free confession of Ann Wells, Matthew Hall, etc. deluding the people of Whatfield, in Suffolk, with such pretended voices, visions, prophecies, and revelations, the like have scarcely been heard of in England since the reformation. Multitudes of people were deluded by them.

At length the Lord extorted from this woman a full confession of the notorious falseness of these things, by a terrible vision of Hell; her partisans labored four days to suppress and stifle it, but to no purpose; for the horrors of conscience prevailed with her to confess the notorious dissimulations contained in that book, before the people of Whatfield and a justice of the peace. And thus the Lord out-shot Satan in his own bow.

Remedy 3. Consider how difficult, yes, and impossible it is for a man to determine, that such a voice, vision, or revelation, is of God; and that Satan cannot feign or counterfeit it; seeing he has left no certain marks by which we may distinguish one spirit from another: an albus? an ater?

Sure we are, Satan can transform himself into an angel of light; and therefore abandoning all those unsafe and uncertain ways, whereby swarms of errors have been conveyed into the world, let us cleave inseparably to the sure word of prophecy, the rule and standard of our faith and duty.

Cause 15. Another way in which false teachers discover their subtlety with great success is, in timing their assaults and nicking the proper season, when the minds of men are most apt and easy to be drawn away by their fair and specious pretenses.

Such a season as this, they find about the time of men's first conversion, or soon after their implantation into Christ. Now it is that their affections are most lively and vigorous, though their judgments be but weak. They have now such strong and deep apprehensions of the grace and love of Christ, and such transcendent zeal for him, that they easily embrace anything whereby they conceive he may be honored and exalted. They have also such deep apprehensions, and powerful aversations as to sin, that they are in danger to fly even from truth and duty itself, when it shall be artificially represented to them as sin. For not only that which is malum per se, sin indeed; but that which is male coloratum, painted with sin's colors, is apt to scare and fright them.

Besides, these young converts or novices, have not had time to confirm and root themselves in the truth; and trees newly planted, are much more easily drawn up, than those that have spread and fastened their roots in the earth. It is observable what a swarm of false teachers troubled the churches of Corinth, Galatia, and Philippi, at, and newly after, their first planting: and what danger those young Christians were in, abundantly appears in the apostle's frequent cautions and holy jealousies over them: he bids them "beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision," [Philippians 3:2](#). "I fear lest by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ," [2 Corinthians 11:3](#). he was afraid of the Galatians, lest he had bestowed upon them labor in vain, [Galatians 4:11](#). he would not give place to false brethren, no, not for an hour, [Galatians 2:5](#). charges the Romans to receive them that were weak in the faith, but not to doubtful disputations, [Romans 14:1](#). All which, and many more expressions, discover his grounded jealousy, and their extraordinary danger of seduction at their first plantation. A novice in Christianity, is the person Satan seeks for: Strong believers are not in such apparent danger as little ones in Christ, [1 John 5:21](#). Little children keep yourselves from idols.

And the reason is, because keen affections, matched with weak judgments, give a mighty advantage to seducers. Children are apt to be taken with beautiful appearances and fine shows; and erroneous teachers have the very knack to set a gloss of extraordinary sanctity upon their dangerous opinions. Hence those persons that promoted the sect of the Nicolaitans, made use of a cunning woman, who, for her skill in painting errors with the colors of truth, got the name of Jezebel, [Revelation 2:20](#). That queen was famous for the art of painting, 1 Kings 16. and so was this false prophetess: Indeed there was scarce any eminent sect of Errorists or

Heretics mentioned in church-history, but some curious feminine artist has been employed to lay the beautiful colors upon it. And the curious colors of holiness, zeal, and free grace, artificially laid upon the face of error, however wrinkled and ugly in itself, sets it off temptingly and takingly to weak and injudicious minds.

Moreover, erroneous teachers are great boasters: They usually give out to the world what extraordinary comforts they meet with in their way, which proves a strong temptation to young converts, who have been so lately in the depths of spiritual trouble, to try at least, if not embrace it, for the expected comfort's sake.

Ah, how many pious ministers in England, upon such grounds and pretenses as these, have had their spiritual children rent from them as soon as born? they have travailed as in birth for them; and no sooner did they begin to take comfort in the success of their labors, but to the great grief and discouragement of their hearts, they have been this way bereaved of them. Those that have owned them as their spiritual fathers one month, would scarce grant to own them when they have met them in the streets another month. Many sad instances I could give of this, and as remarkable as they are fresh and recent; but I silence particulars. Oh! see the advantage Satan and his instruments gain by nicking such a critical season as this is.

The cure, or remedy

The remedies in this case are twofold: the first respects the spiritual father, and the second the spiritual children; both are concerned in the danger, and the Lord help both to attend to their duty.

Remedy 1. Let all those whose ministry God blesses with the desirable fruits of conversion, look carefully after the souls of young converts.

No nurse should be more tender and careful of her charge than a minister should be; and unto the care of a tender nurse Paul compares his care over the young converts in Thessalonica, [1 Thessalonians 2:7](#). for, alas! they lie exposed to all dangers, they are credulous, and seducers cunning; they want judgment to discern truth from error; have not yet attained unto senses exercised, and age in Christ to discern good from evil; when errors are made palatable, children will be hankering after them; and seducers have the very are to make them so.

Shepherds, look to your flocks; imitate the great shepherd of the sheep, who gathers the lambs with his arms, and carries them in his bosom; visit them frequently, exhort and warn them diligently, and use all means to establish them in the present truths.

Remedy 2. Let young converts, and weak Christians, look carefully to themselves by an heedful attendance unto the following truths.

FIRST, It is not safe to try, nor upon trial likely that you should find Christ in one way, and comfort in another. God does not usually bless those ways to men's comfort and edification, into which they turn aside from that good way wherein they first met with Christ and conversion. The same ministry and ordinances, which are appointed and blessed for the one, are likewise appointed and commonly blessed for the other, [Ephesians 4:11, 12, 13](#).

SECONDLY, It is a manifest snare of the devil (and you may easily discern it) to take you off from the great work you are newly engaged in, by entangling your minds with notions that are foreign to it. Your hearts are now warm with God; Satan labors this way to cool and quench them; the cunning cheat labors to steal away the sweet and nutritive food which is before you, and lay the hard and dry bones of

barren controversies, and insipid notions in their room. Your business is not to form syllogisms, or study solutions to cunning arguments about lower and lesser matters, so much as it is by prayer, and self-examination, to clear your interest in Christ, and to solve those doubts that lie with weight upon your spirits, with reference to that great concern.

THIRDLY, It is a sad thing to grieve the hearts of those faithful ministers, that have travailed in pain for us, and rejoiced in our conversion as the seal of their ministry. Oh! serve not your godly ministers, as the hen is sometimes served, that has long brooded, brought forth, and with much care and self-denial, nourished up young partridges, which, as soon as fledged, take the wing, and return no more to her.

Cause 16. There is yet another artifice of false teachers, to draw men into errors, and that is, by pressing the consciences of those they have made some impressions upon, unto all haste and speed, openly to declare their new opinions, and avow and own them before the world; as knowing that this will rivet and fix them to all intents and purposes.

When they find men under half convictions and strong inclinations to their way, they are sure then to ply them with a thick succession of motives and arguments, to join themselves by a free and open profession, to that erroneous party, which are headed by themselves.

And the arguments usually pressed to this purpose are,

1. The danger of delay.

2. The comfort of declaring themselves.

1. They press them with the danger of the least delay, by telling them, That now they must live every day and hour in known sin, and hold the truth of God in unrighteousness, the evil whereof they skillfully aggravate; and the more tender and sensible the conscience is, the deeper impressions such discourses make, although the case indeed will not bear the weight they lay upon it, as having not that due allowance God gives of time and means of full information in matters of this nature; yes, possibly driving them into as great a snare by precipitation, and too hasty engagements under a doubting conscience.

2. They press them to a quick resolution with the expectations of abundance of comfort, inward peace and joy, which will result from a full engagement of themselves, and open declaration of their judgment; proselyting to a party being the main design they drive at.

This was the very art and method by which Satan prevailed with Eve to swallow the bait, [Genesis 3:5](#). "For God does know, that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;" q. d. The sooner you taste, the better; for the first taste will give you a godlike knowledge, and marvelous advancement of your understanding: did you but know the benefit that would accrue to you hereby, you would not delay one moment: And thus by setting before her the speedy and immediate benefits of eating he prevailed, and drew her into the fatal snare.

In this, the ministers of Satan imitate the ministers of Christ. As these press men to make haste to Christ, lest by consulting with flesh and blood, and listening to the temptations of Satan, hopeful inclinations should be blasted in the bud; so the others push men on to hasty resolutions, lest by hearkening to the voice of God's Spirit, and their own consciences, the design they have so far advanced, should be lost and disappointed. The ministers of Christ urge men to a speedy change of their company, and to associate themselves with spiritual and profitable Christians, as

well knowing of what great use this will be to confirm and strengthen them in the ways of God: So errorists, in like manner, vehemently urge them to associate with their party, as knowing how one wedges in and fixes another in the ways of error; for such causes Satan pushes on half convictions into hasty resolutions, quick dispatch being his great advantage. This the apostle intimates, [Galatians 1:6](#). "I marvel (says he) that you are so soon removed," etc. What, so soon! yes, if it had not been so soon, it might never have been at all: for errors (as one ingeniously observes) like fish, must be eaten fresh and new, or they will quickly stink.

The cure, or remedy

The remedies and preventatives in this case are such as follow:

Remedy 1. Consider that hasty engagements, in weighty and disputable matters, have cost many souls dear.

As hasty marriages have produced long and late repentance; so has the clapping up of an hasty match between the mind and error. By entertaining of strange persons, men sometimes entertain angels unawares; but by entertaining of strange doctrines, many have entertained devils unawares. It is not safe to open the door of the soul, to let in strangers in the night; let them wait until a clear day-light of information show you what they are.

Remedy 2. Weighty actions require answerable deliberations. It was the worthy saying of Augustus Caesar, "That is soon enough, that is well enough." There be many things to be considered and thoroughly weighed, before a man change his judgment and embrace a new doctrine or opinion. Luther, in his epistle to the ministers of Norimberg, cites an excellent passage out of Basil, "He who is about to separate himself from the society of his brethren, had need to consider many things even unto anxiety, to beg of God the demonstration of truth, with many tears; and to pass many solitary nights with waking eyes, before he attempt, or put such a matter into execution." By the vote of the whole rational world, time and consideration ought to be proportionate to the weight of an undertaking.

Remedy 3. The only season men have to weigh things judiciously and impartially, is before their affections be too far engaged, and their credit and reputation too much concerned.

Men are better able to weigh doctrines and opinions, while they are other men's, than when they have espoused them, and made them their own. Before an opinion be espoused, the affections do not blind and pervert the judgment, as they do afterward. Self-love pulls down the balance at that end which is next us. If therefore, by hasty resolution, you lose this only proper and advantageous season of deliberation, you are not like to find such another.

Remedy 4. Trust not to the clearness of your own unassisted eyes, nor to the strength of your single reason; but consult, in such cases, with others that are pious and judicious, especially your godly and faithful ministers; and hearken to the counsels they give you. Paul justly wondered that the Galatians were so soon removed: and well he might; for, had they not a Paul to consult with, before they gave their consent to false teachers? or, if he was at a distance from them, about the work of the Lord in remote places, had they no godly and judicious friends near them, whose prayers and assistances they might call in, as Daniel did, [Daniel 2:17](#). Woe unto him that is alone in a time of temptation, except the Lord be with him by extraordinary assistance and direction.

Remedy 5. Lastly, Suspect that opinion (as justly you may) for erroneous, that is too importunate, and pressing upon you, and will not allow you due time of consideration, and means of information: That which is a truth today will be a truth tomorrow; but that which looks like a truth today, may be detected, and look like itself, an odious error, tomorrow: And this is the reason of that post-haste that Satan and his factors make to gain our present consent, lest a speedy detection frustrate the suit, and spoil the design. The uses follow in six consequences.

Consequences

Consequence 1. From all that has been said about errors, we see in the first place, the great usefulness and plain necessity of an able, faithful standing ministry in the church.

One special end of the ministry, is the establishment of the people's souls against the errors of the times, [Ephesians 4:11, 14](#). "He gave some apostles, etc. that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men," etc. Ministers are shepherds; and without a shepherd how soon will the flock go astray? Moses was absent but a few days from the Israelites, and at his return found them all run into snares of idolatry. A sheep is animal sequax, a creature that follows a leader. One straggler may mislead a whole flock. A minister's work is not only to feed, but defend the flock. "I am set (says Paul) for the defense of the gospel," [Philippians 1:17](#). An orthodox and faithful minister is a double blessing to the people; but woe to that people, whose ministers, instead of securing them against errors, do cause them to err, [Isaiah 9:16](#). they are the dogs of the flock: Some in scripture are called dumb dogs, who, instead of barking at the thief, bite the children; but faithful ministers give warning of spiritual dangers. So did the worthy ministers of London, Worcestershire, Devon, etc. in their testimonies against errors.

Consequence 2. This discourse shows us also how little quietness and peace the church may expect, until a greater degree of light and unity be poured out upon it; what by persecutions from without it, and troubles from within, little tranquility is to be expected. It is a note of St. Bernard's, that the church has sometimes had peace sometimes from Pagan persecutors, but seldom or never any peace from her own children.

We read, [Zechariah 14:7](#). the whole state of the Christian church, from the primitive days to the end of the world, set forth under the notion of one day, and that a strange day too, the light of it shall neither be clear nor dark, nor day nor night, but an evening-time it shall be light; that is a day full of interchangeable and alternate providences; sometimes persecutions, heresies, and errors prevail, and these make that part of the day dark and gloomy; and then truth and peace break forth again, and clear up the day. Thus it has been, and thus it will be, until the evening of it, and at evening time it shall be light; then light and love shall get the ascendant of error and divisions. Most of our scuffles and contentions are for want of greater measures of both these.

Consequence 3. From the manifold causes and mischiefs of errors before-mentioned, we may also see what a choice mercy it is to be kept sound in judgment, steadfast and unmoveable in the truths and ways of Christ. A sound and steadfast Christian is a blessing in his generation, and a glory to his profession. It was an high encomium of Athanasius: He would rather lose his seat, than a syllable of God's truth. Soundness of judgment must needs be a choice blessing; because the understanding is that leading faculty which directs the will and conscience of man, and they his whole life and practice. How often, and how earnestly does Christ pray for his people, that they may be kept in the truth? It is true, orthodoxy in itself is not sufficient to any man's salvation; but the conjunction of an orthodox head, with an

honest sincere heart, does always constitute an excellent Christian, [Philippians 1:10](#). Happy is the man that has an head so hearted, and an heart so headed.

Consequence 4. By this discourse, we may further discover one great and special cause and reason of the lamentable decay of the spirit and power of religion, among the professors of the present age.

It is a complaint more just than common, that we do all fade as a leaf. And, what may be the cause? Nothing more probable, than the wasting of our time and spirits in vain janglings and fruitless controversies, which the apostle tells us, [Hebrews 13:9](#). have not profited, that is they have greatly damnified and injured them that have been occupied therein. Many controversies of these times grow up about religion, as suckers from the root and limbs of a fruit-tree, which spend the vital sap that should make it fruitful.

It is a great and sad observation made upon the state of England by some judicious persons, That after the greatest increase of religion, both intensively in the power of it, and extensively in the number of converts, what a remarkable decay it suffered both ways, when, about the year forty-four, controversies and disputations grew fervent among professors. Since that time our strength and glory have very much abated.

Consequence 5. From this discourse we may also gather the true grounds and reason of those frequent persecutions which God lets in upon his churches and people: These rank weeds call for snowy and frosty weather to subdue and kill them.

I know the enemies of God's people aim at something else; they strike at profession, yes, at religion itself; and according to their wicked intention, without timely repentance, will their reward be: But, whatever the intention of the agents be, the issues of persecution are, upon this account, greatly beneficial to the church; the wisdom of God makes them excellently useful both to prevent and cure the mischiefs and dangers of errors. If enemies were not, friends and brethren would be injurious to each other. Persecution, if it kills not, yet, at least, it gives check to the rise and growth of errors: And, if it do not perfectly redintegrate and unite the hearts of Christians, yet, to be sure, it cools and allays their sinful heats; and that two ways: (1.) By cutting out for them far better and more necessary work. Now, instead of racking their brains about unnecessary controversies, they find it high time to be searching their hearts, and examining the foundations of their faith and hope, with respect to the other world. (3.) Moreover, such times and straits discover the sincerity, zeal, and constancy of them we were jealous of, or prejudiced against before, because they followed not us.

Consequence 6. Lastly, Let us learn hence both the duty and necessity of charity and mutual forbearance; we have all our mistakes and errors one way or other; and therefore must maintain mutual charity under dissents in judgment.

I do not say but an erring brother must be reduced if possible, and that by sharp rebukes too, if gentler essays be ineffectual, [Titus 1:13](#). and the wounds of a friend have more faithful love to them than the kisses of an enemy; and if God make us instrumental by that, or any other method, to recover a brother from the error of his way, he will have great cause both to bless God, and thank the instrument who thereby saves a soul from death, and hides a multitude of sins, [James 5:20](#). It is our duty if we meet an enemy's ox or donkey going astray, to bring him back again, [Exodus 23:4](#). much more the soul of a friend. Indeed we must not make those errors that are none; nor stretch every innocent expression to that purpose; nor yet be too hasty in meddling with contention until we cannot be silent and innocent; and then, whatever the expense be, truth will repay it.

AN APPENDIX,

Containing a full and modest Reply to Mr. PHILIP CARY'S Rejoinder to my Vindiciæ Legis et Fœderis

Manifesting the badness of his Cause in the feebleness and impertinency of his Defense; and adding farther Light and Strength to the ARGUMENTS formerly produced in Defense of God's gracious Covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17 and the Right of Believers' Infants to Baptism grounded thereupon.

SIR,

NEXT to the not deserving a reproof is the due reception and improvement of it. You deserve a sharper reprehension for your temerity and obstinacy than I am willing to give you from the press; yet, in love to the truth and your own soul, reprove you I must, and I hope God will enable me to be both mild in the manner, and convincingly clear in the matter and cause thereof: It is better to lose the smiles than the souls of men. I dare not neglect the duty of a friend for fear of incurring the suspicion of an enemy. Several learned and eminent divines, who has seen what has publicly passed between you and me, have returned me their thanks, and think you ought to thank me too for the pains I have taken to set you right, hoping you will evidence your self-denial and repentance by a sincere retraction of your errors.

But how will you deceive their expectations, and unbecoming of the character given you by your friends when they shall find the true measure both of your ability and humility, drawn by your own pen in the following rejoinder!

I have thoroughly considered your reply in the manuscript you sent me, which I hear is now in the press; and in the following sheets have given a full, and (I think) a final answer to whatever is material therein: And, it so falling out, that my discourse of Errors was just going under the press, while your rejoinder was there also, I thought it not convenient to delay my reply any longer, but to have my antidote in as great readiness as might be to meet it.

One inconvenience I easily foresee, that the pages of your manuscript, which I follow, may not throughout exactly answer to the print; but every intelligent reader will easily discern, and rectify that, if my bookseller save him not that trouble, as I have desired him to do.

As to the controversy about the right of believers' infant-seed to Baptism, you have altogether adventured it the second time with the consent of your partisans, upon the three hypothesis, which (if I mistake not) I have fully confuted and baffled in my first answer: but, if my brevity occasioned any obscurity in that, I hope you shall find it sufficiently done here. Mean time you have given, and I accordingly take it for granted, that our arguments for Infant's Baptism stand in their full strength against you until you can better discharge and free your dangerous assertions from the errors and absurdities in which they are now more involved and intricated than before.

The weaker anything is the more querulous it is. If scripture argument and clear reason will not support the cause I undertake, I am resolved never to call in passionate invectives and weak evasions for my auxiliaries as you have here done. The Lord give us all clearer light, tenderer consciences, exemplary humility, and ingenuity.

A REFUTATION of the weak and impertinent Rejoinder of Mr. PHILIP CARY

Wherein he vainly attempts the Defense of his absurd THESIS to the great abuse and injury of the Laws and Covenants of God.

AND must I be dipped once more in the water-controversy? It is time for me to think of undressing myself, and making ready for my approaching rest, and employ those few minutes I have to spend in more practical and beneficial studies for my own and the church's greater advantage. And it is time for Mr. Cary to reflect upon his past follies, which have consumed too much of his own and other's time without any advantage; yes, to the apparent loss and injury of the cause he undertakes to defend.

When I received these sheets from him in vindication of his Solemn Call, I was at a stand, in my own resolutions, whether to let it pass (without any animadversions upon it) as a passionate clamor for a desperate cause; or give a short and full answer to his confused and impertinent rejoinder. But considering that I had under hand, at the same time, the foregoing Treatise of The Causes and Cure of Mental Errors, and that though my honest neighbor discovers much weakness in his way of argumentation, yet it was like to meet with some interested readers, to whom, for that reason, it would be the more suitable; and how apt such persons are to glory in the last word; but especially considering, that a little time and pains would suffice (as the case stands) to end the unseasonable controversy between us, and both clear and confirm many great and weighty points of religion: I was, upon these considerations, prevailed with against my own inclination, to cast in these few sheets as a Mantissa to the former seasonable and necessary discourse of errors, resolving to fill them with what should be worth the reader's time and pains.

As for the rude insults, uncomely reflections, and passionate expressions of my discontented friend, I shall not throw back the dirt upon him, when I wipe it off from myself; I can easily forgive and forget them too: The best men have their passions, [James 5:17](#). even sweet-briars and holy thistles have their offensive prickles. I consider my honest neighbor under the strength of a temptation; it disquiets him to see the labors of many years, and the raised expectations of so great a conquest and triumph over men of renown all frustrated by his friend and neighbor, who had done his utmost to prevent it, and often foretold him of the folly and vanity of his attempt. Everything will live as long as it can, and *natura vexata prodit seipsam*. But certainly it had been more for truth's honor and Mr. C—'s comfort to have confessed his follies humbly to God, and have laid his hand upon his mouth.

The things in controversy between us are great and weighty, namely, the true nature of the Sinai laws in their complex body: the quality of God's covenant with Abraham; and the dispensation of the New Covenant we are now under. These are things of great weight in themselves, and their due resolutions are at this time somewhat the more weighty, because my Antagonist has adventured the whole controversy of infants baptism upon them.

I have, in my *Vindiciæ Legis*, etc. stated the several questions clearly and distinctly; shown Mr. C. what is no part of the controversy, and what is the very hinge upon which it turns; desired him, if he made any reply, to keep close to the just and necessary rules of disputation, by distinguishing, limiting, or denying any of my propositions; that the matters in controversy might be put to a fair and speedy issue. But, instead of that, I meet with a flood of words rolling sometimes to this part, and then to another part of my answer, and so back again, without the steady direction of are or reason. There may, for ought I know, be some things of weight in Mr. Cary's reply, if a man could see them for words; but, without scoff or vanity, I must say of the rational part of it as the poet said of the over-dressed woman--it is the least part of it. To follow him in his irregular and extravagant way of writing, were to make myself guilty of the same folly I blame him for: I am therefore necessitated to perstringe them, and reduce all I have to say under three general heads.

I. I shall clearly evince to the world that Mr. Cary has not been able to discharge and free his own thesis from the horrid consequents and gross absurdities which I have laid to their charge in my first reply; but, instead thereof, in this feeble and unsuccessful attempt to free the former, he has entangled himself in more and greater ones.

II. That he has left my arguments standing in their full strength against him.

III. And then I shall confirm and strengthen my three positions, which destroy the cause he manages by some farther additions of scripture, reason, and authorities, which, I hope, will fully end this matter between us.

But, before I touch the particulars, two things must be premised for the reader's due information.

1. That the controversy about the true nature of the Sinai laws, both moral and ceremonial, complexly considered, is not that very hinge upon which the right of believers' infants to baptism depends; that stands as it did before, be the Sinai laws what they will: we do not derive the right of infants from any other law or covenant, but that gracious covenant which God made with Abraham, which was in being 430 years before Moses' law; and was no way injured, much less disannulled, by the addition of it, [Galatians 3:17](#). If Abraham's covenant be the same covenant of grace we are now under, the right of believers' infants to baptism is secured, whatever the Sinai covenant prove to be: which I speak not out of the least jealousy that Mr. Cary has, or ever shall be able to prove it to be a pure Adam's covenant of works; but to prevent mistakes in the reader,

2. It must be heedfully observed also, that however free, gracious, and absolute the New Covenant be, (for God forbid that I should go about to eclipse the glory of free grace, on which my soul depends for salvation) yet that will never prove Abraham's covenant to be an abolished Adam's covenant of works, unless two things more be proved, which I never expect to see, namely,

FIRST, That Abraham and his believing posterity, were bound, by the very nature and act of circumcision, to keep the whole law in their own persons, in order to their justification and salvation, as perfectly and perpetually, and under the same penalty for the least failure, as Adam was to keep the law in paradise.

SECONDLY, It must be further proved, That Abraham and all his believing offspring, who stood with him under that covenant, whereof circumcision was the initiating sign, were all saved in a different way from that in which believers are now saved under the gospel; for so it must be, if the addition of circumcision made it unto them an Adam's covenant of works. But this would be a direct contradiction to the words of the apostle, speaking of them who were under the covenant of circumcision, [Acts 15:11](#). "But we believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they." If he say, they stood, indeed, under that covenant, as a pure covenant of works, but were saved by another covenant; and so for many ages, the church of God stood absolutely under the covenant of works, and, at the same time, under the pure covenant of grace; the one altogether absolute and free, the other wholly conditional: and though these two be, in their own natures, inconsistent and destructive of each other, yet so it was, that all the saints, for many ages, were absolutely under the one, and yet purely under the other: shall I then be censured for saying he speaks pure contradiction?

Possibly my reader will be tempted to think I abuse him, and that no man of common sense can be guilty of such an horrid absurdity: I must, whatever respect I have for Mr. C. once more tell him, before the world, that this is not only his own doctrine, but that very doctrine upon which he has adventured the whole cause and

controversy of infants baptism, which I therefore say is hereby become a desperate cause.

And this brings me to my first general head, namely,

1. That Mr. Cary has not been able to free his thesis from this horrid absurdity; but by struggling to do it, has (according to the nature of errors) entangled himself in more and greater ones.

Mr. Cary, in p. 174, 175. of his Solemn Call, was by me reduced to this absurdity, which he there owns, in express words, 'That Moses, and the whole body of the children of Israel, were absolutely under (without the exception of any) the severest penalties of a dreadful curse; and that the Sinai covenant could be no other than a covenant of works, a ministration of death and condemnation, and yet, at the same time, both Moses and all the elect, were under a pure covenant of gospel-grace: and if these were two contrary covenants in themselves, and just opposite the one to the other, as, indeed, they were, we have nothing to say, but, with the apostle, O the depth, etc.

This reader, is the position which must be made good by Mr. Cary, or his cause is lost; deformed issues do not look as if they had beautiful truth for their mother; no false or absurd conclusion can regularly follow from true premises. But hence naturally and necessarily follows this.

Absurdity 1. That Abraham, Moses, and all the believers under the Old Testament, by standing absolutely under Adam's covenant of works, as a ministration of death and condemnation; and, at the same time, purely under the covenant of grace, (as Mr. C. affirms they did) must necessarily during their lives, hang in the midway between life and death, justification and condemnation; and after death, in the midway between Heaven and Hell. During life, they could neither be justified nor condemned; justified they could not be, for justification is the soul's passing from death to life, [1 John 3:14](#). [John 5:24](#). Upon a man's justification his covenant, and state are changed: but the covenant and state of no man can be so changed, as long as he remains absolutely under the severest penalties' and condemnation of the law, as Mr. C affirms they did.

Again, condemned they could not be, seeing all that are under the pure covenant of grace (as he says they were at the same time) are certainly in Christ, and to such there is no condemnation, [Romans 8:1](#). nor ever shall be. [John 5:24](#). "He who believes, shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." What remains then, but that during life they could neither be perfectly justified, nor perfectly condemned; and yet, being absolutely under the severest penalties of Adam's covenant, they were perfectly condemned; and again, being under the pure covenant of grace, they must be perfectly justified?

And then, after death, they must neither go to Heaven nor Hell; but either be annihilated, or stick midway in Limbo Patrum, (as the Papists fancy) between both. No condemned person goes to Heaven, nor any justified person to Hell. His position, therefore, which necessarily infers this gross absurdity, is justly renounced and detested by learned and orthodox divines.

The learned and accute Turretine, the late famous professor of divinity at Geneva, proving that the Sinai law could not be a pure covenant of works; brings this very medium to prove it, as a known truth, allowed by all men: 'The Israelites (says he) with whom God covenanted, were already under Abraham's covenant, which was a covenant of grace, and were saved in Christ by it; therefore they could not be under the legal covenant. Because no man can be under two covenants, specifically different, at the same time, as these two are.'

That great and renowned divine, Mr. William Strong, gives four irrefragable arguments to prove that no man can stand under both these covenants at the same time, which in co-ordination, actually destroy and make void each other. 'If the first covenant stand, there is no place for the second; and if the second stand, the first is made void. And this, says he, will fully appear, if we consider the direct contrariety in the terms of those two covenants. For, (1.) The righteousness of the first covenant is in ourselves, but the righteousness of the second is the righteousness of another, [1 John 5:11, 12](#). (2.) In the covenant of works, acceptance is first of the work, and afterwards of the person, [Genesis 4:7](#). but in the covenant of grace, the acceptance is first of the person, and then of the work, [Genesis 4:4](#). (3.) The first covenant was a covenant without a priest, but the second is a covenant with a priest. (4.) In the first covenant there is matter of glorying, but in the second there is none, [Romans 3:27](#). So that these two can never consist, except you can compound, or reconcile these four opposites in the justification of the same person.'

To the same purpose, says the excellent Mr. Samuel Bolton. 'If the law were a covenant of works, then were the Jews under a different covenant from us, and so none of them were saved, which the apostle gainsays, [Acts 15:11](#). or else they were both under a covenant of works, and a covenant of grace; but that they could not be; they are utterly inconsistent,' Ergo. And thus all sound divines speak. I may therefore say of Mr. Cary's position, as Ruveus before me did, it seems to exceed all absurdities. A man may more rationally suppose two natures, and essential forms, in one body, and place the same thing under divers species, in the predicament of substance; yes, it were more tolerable to affirm, that *ex duobus entibus per se fit unum ens per se*, than to place any (as Mr. C. places all) of God's people under two opposite covenants. If Mr. C. were absolutely under the condemnation of the law, would he not be purely justified, think you? Yet he places Abraham, Moses, and all believers with them, absolutely under the severest condemnation of the law, and the pure gospel-covenant at once.

But, to cover the shame and nakedness of his assertion, which places believers absolutely under Adam's covenant, he is gladly to make use of two fig-leaves, as Adam did.

(1.) And the first attempt he now makes, p. 4, 5, 6, 7. of his reply, is by way of retortion, by telling us, 'That the same pretended absurdities do fall as heavily, and a great deal more, on our doctrine, who affirm the Sinai law (complexly taken) to be a covenant of faith, or grace, than upon his, who makes them two essentially different covenants: because we are forced to comprize perfect doing, with the curse for non-performance, under the same covenant with believing; and that it cannot be denied, but that all the people of God were absolutely under the Sinai covenant, [Galatians 3:23](#). and [Galatians 4:4, 5](#). and consequently under the curse, [Galatians 3:10](#).' This is the sum and substance of his first answer.

Reply. I will not be tempted to expose my neighbor to derision for this his strange answer; but rather propound two sober queries to him, and the reader, namely, (1.) What orthodox divines he ever met with, and what are their names, who are forced to comprize perfect doing, with the curse for non-performance, under the same covenant with believing; and so make the two opposite covenants to be specifically one and the same? Name your men, with their books and pages; or retract, with shame and sorrow, what you have here abusively affirmed of them. Cameron, indeed, makes it a subservient covenant; the most a true, though obscure covenant of grace; but none comprize Adam's covenant with its curse in the new covenant. (2.) Whether it be imaginable, That the same absurdity can follow from their doctrine, that make the whole complex body of the Sinai law a covenant of grace, though more obscure, and so place all the people of God in those ages under it; as does necessarily follow his doctrine, who makes it a pure Adam's covenant of works, and places the church of God absolutely under the curse of it, and also under

the pure covenant of grace at the same time? If grace and grace (however different in degrees of manifestation) be as opposite and repugnant, as grace and works, as justification and condemnation are, it is time for me to lay down my pen, for I have certainly lost my understanding to guide it any further.

But Mr. Cary will say, If you do not, yet Mr. Roberts does comprise both in one covenant. I say you abuse Mr. Roberts in so affirming; for he says, in that very place you refer to, that believing in Christ was ultimately and chiefly intended in the Sinai covenant; and perfect doing was only urged upon Israel in subordination, and tendency to that believing. And upon that ground it is he affirms that covenant to be a covenant of faith, and so denominates it from the chief scope and intent of it. He sets not doing and believing, in co-ordination, or places the church under two opposite covenants, as you do; but places the law where it ought to be placed, in subordination to faith and Christ? and therefore you have abused that good man as well as me, and yourself most of all, in this your first impertinent and silly answer.

(2.) But you have one evasion more, p. 7. where you say, 'That how harsh and dreadful soever the terms, or conditions, of the legal covenant were to those that were under it, as Moses, and the whole body of the Israelites, then were; yet the grace of the gospel covenant far superseded, and was by far more victorious, powerful, and efficacious,' [Romans 5:17, 20](#).

Reply. Worse, and worse; your discourse mends like sour ale in summer. Here you fancy the two covenants (under which you place the whole church of God) to be in a conflict one with the other; condemnation and justification, struggling one with another as I told you before they would: but, however, the grace of the new covenant prevails at last, and gets the victory over the covenant of works. Very good; but then pray, Sir, if you please, answer me a plain question, or two, at your leisure.

FIRST, How far did the covenant of grace prevail against the covenant of works? Was it so far prevalent and victorious, as utterly to vanquish and disannul it, as a covenant of works to them? Or was it not? Was the victory, you speak of, a complete or a partial one? If you say it was incomplete and partial, then you leave them (as I told you before you must) partly under the promise, and partly under the curse; justified in part, and condemned in part. But if you say it was a complete and perfect victory, then it utterly dissolved its obligation as a covenant of works; then they did not remain under two opposite covenants, as you affirmed they did; but, on their believing, changed their state with their covenant, as we affirm they did.

SECONDLY, If you say it did not totally free them from the curse of the covenant of works, but, however, prevailed so far, that they were not actually damned by virtue of the curse; then be pleased to answer me one question more, How was it possible for them to be absolutely under the curse of the law, (as you affirmed they were) and yet that curse to be superseded by the covenant of grace, as here you speak?

To supersede the curse (though it be a phrase I never met with before) if it signify anything it must signify this; That the covenant of grace caused the law to omit, forbear, or give over to curse that people any more. But did, or can the law forbear, or cease to curse those that are absolutely under it, as a ministration of death and condemnation? Pray consult [Romans 3:19](#). and [Galatians 3:10](#). Are you aware what you say when you place believers absolutely under the curse of the law, and then talk of the new covenant's victory over it; and, after all this, leave them as you do, absolutely under the cursing power of the one, and still under the victorious grace of the other? For shame, my friend, give up your absurd notion, and repent of this folly; I would not willingly shame you before the world; I did all that in me lay to prevent it: but however, the only way you have left me to prevent your glorying in

your shame, is this way, to make you ashamed of your vain-glory. As for that scripture you allege to countenance your fancy, [Romans 5:17, 20](#). you might to as good purpose have opened your Bible, and have taken the first scripture that came to hand, and it would have done your position less harm; for the apostle's scope there is to demonstrate the perfection of the abounding righteousness of Christ, for the full discharge of believers from the guilt of sin and curse of Adam's covenant; and cuts the throat of your position, which it is alleged to prove.

I have stood the longer upon the clearing of this first point; because this being fully cleared, it runs through and clears the whole controversy between us. For now it will be evident to all, that neither Abraham's, nor Moses' covenant (complexly taken, as Mr. Cary takes it) could possibly be, for this reason, an Adam's covenant of works; and if not a covenant of works, then, however dark or legal the dispensations of them were, they must needs be the same covenant of grace for substance, under which we are, and so the main controversy between us is hereby at an end.

I know not how many covenants of works, or how many of grace Mr. C. fancies there are; but orthodox divines constantly affirm, That, as there were never but two ways of life to mankind, the one before the fall, by perfect doing; the other after the fall, by sincere believing: so answerably, there can be but two covenants between God and mankind, namely, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. The last of which has indeed been more obscurely, administered, and in that respect is called the old covenant; yet that and the new are essentially but one covenant; and the church of God, which for many ages stood under that old covenant, did not stand under it as an Adam's covenant, or the first covenant of works, for the undeniable reasons above given: and therefore Abraham's covenant, from whence we derive our children's title to Baptism, must of necessity be the very same covenant for substance with this new covenant, which all Abraham's believing offspring and their infant-seed, are now under. And in proving this one point, I have sufficiently confuted both Mr. C's solemn call, and this his feeble vindication of it together.

But, lest he should take this for the only absurdity proved upon him, though it be tiresome to me, and must be ungrateful to him, give me leave to touch one more among many; and that the rather because I make great use of it in this controversy, and Mr. Cary both yields and denies it. If his own words be the messengers of his meaning, either he or I must mistake their errand.

I had in my Prolegomena, distinguished of the law, as strictly taken for the ten commandments; and more largely and complexly taken, as including the ceremonial law: The former I considered according to God's intention and design in the promulgation of it, which was to add it as an appendix to the promise, [Galatians 3:19](#). And the carnal Jews mistaking and perverting the end of the law, and making it to themselves a covenant of works, by making it the very rule and reason of their justification before God, [Romans 9:31, 32, 33](#). and [10:3](#). I told him that the controversy depended upon this double sense of the law; for that it ought not to be denominated from the abused and mistaken end of it, but from God's chief scope and design in the promulgation of it; which was to add it as an appendix to the promise, as the word $\delta\eta\lambda\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ there imports; and so must be published with evangelical purposes. Let us now hear Mr. C's sense of this matter.

In his Call, p. 131. he yields the distinction in these words:

"The Jews were right enough in reference to the true nature of the law, That it was a covenant of works, etc. though they were out in respect of its proper use and intention which was not that any should attain unto life and righteousness thereby; but to show them the nature of sin, and the holiness and righteousness of God, to

convince them of their sin and misery without Christ, and their necessity of a Savior; which they being ignorant of, and still going about to establish their own righteousness, which was of the law, and refusing to submit themselves unto the righteousness of God, etc. they stumbled at that stumbling-stone, and were accordingly broken, snared, and taken, [Romans 9:31, 32, 33](#). [Romans 10:3](#). And this (says he) was the true ground of dispute between the apostle and them." This was orthodoxy spoken, and would end the controversy would he stand to it. But,

In his reply, p. 43. proving the law to be a covenant of works, from [Romans 10:15](#). he says,

"This was the nature of it in the first sanction of it, as the fruit of God's special designation and appointment; and that it is the greatest violation and perverting of scripture that can lightly be met with, to affirm that this is uttered and declared by Paul, etc. only because the Jews had perverted it, and reduced it (as they thought) to its primitive intention. And again, p. 44. he says, he has proved that it was the same with Adam's covenant in both respects, that is intentionally as well as materially considered." And once more, p. 20. he expressly denies that the law was added as an appendix to the promise; calls that a crude assertion of mine, and asks me, "Why it might not be added as an appendix rather to the first covenant of works, to reinforce that?" And after all, gushes out many slighting and opprobrious terms upon me, which I will not throw back again, but rather leave him to reconcile himself with himself.

I shall only ask Mr. C. a sober question or two, instead of recriminations, and rendering reviling for reviling.

FIRST, How were the Jews right enough in reference to the nature of the law, as it was a covenant of works, and yet out in respect of its proper use and intention, which was not that any should attain unto life and righteousness by it, but to convince them of sin, and of the necessity of a Savior; and yet the law be a covenant of works, intentionally, as well as materially considered: and that in respect of God's special designation and appointment? If God designed and appointed it in his Sinai dispensation, to be to them an Adam's covenant of works, then certainly they were not out (as you say they were) when they sought righteousness by the works of it; nor could that mistake of theirs be the ground of the controversy between the apostle and them; for it seems it was no mistake, being, by God's intention, as well as its own primitive nature, promulgated at Sinai, as a true Adam's covenant.

SECONDLY, You deny the law was added to the promise, and ask me why it might not be added to the first covenant to reinforce that, I answer, Because the scope of the place will not bear it, nor any good expositor countenance such a fancy. You make the Sinai law to be the same with that first covenant, and by so expounding the apostle, you make him say, either that the same thing was added to itself, (which must, in your own phrase, be by a correspondence of identity) or else that there are two distinct covenants of works (when indeed there is but one) and that the latter was added to the former. This is your way of expounding scripture when driven to a strait by dint of argument: nothing beside such a pure necessity could drive you upon such an absurdity.

It was added to the promise, (says Dr. Reynolds) by way of subserviency and attendance, the better to advance and make effectual the covenant itself. Mr. Strong, upon the two covenants, says, the apostle's meaning is, that the law was added as an appendix to the promise; but it may be that you had rather hear Dr. Crisp's exposition than his: for you say had it been added to the promise, it would have given life. The doctor will at once give you the true sense of the text, and with it a full answer to your objection. Though life, (says he) be not the end of the law, yet there are other sufficient uses of it, requiring the promulgation thereof: it was

published to be an appendix to the gospel, [Galatians 3:19](#). And this supposes, 1. The priority of the gospel to the law. 2. The principality of the promise of life by Christ above the law. 3. The consistence of the law and gospel. They may well stand one by another as an house and the addition to it may. That it was with such an intention added to the promise, I have met with no man that had front enough to deny or scruple it before you; and that the Jews did mistake its chief scope and use, from whence we denominate it a covenant of grace, the generality of godly and learned divines constantly affirm. See Mr. Anth. Burg. de lege, p. 227. Bolton's Bounds, p. 160, 161. Mr. Samuel Mather on the types, p. 11. with multitudes more, whose citations would even weary the reader. And what you urge from Mr. Pool's Annotations on [2 Corinthians 3:6, 7](#). it makes nothing at all to your purpose; for it is manifest, the annotator there takes the moral law in itself, strictly taken, and as set in opposition to the gospel, which it never was since the fall, but by the ignorance and infidelity of unregenerate men.

You also labor to shelter your erroneous fancy under the authority of Dr. Owen; but you manifestly abuse him in your citation; for in that very place you refer to, he speaks strictly of the covenant of works made with Adam in paradise, and plainly distinguishes it from the Sinai covenant, which sufficiently shows his judgment in the point. For these are his own words which you suppressed in the citation, 'As to the Sinai covenant, and the New Testament, with their privileges thence emerging, they belong not to our present argument.' This paragraph you willfully omit, that you might include that which his words plainly exclude. In the same place he tells you, that David's and Abraham's covenant, was for essence the covenant of grace, notwithstanding the variations made in it: But you take and leave as best suits your design.

Once more, in p. 16, 17, etc. of my *Vindiciæ legis*, you find yourself pinched with another dilemma, from [Leviticus 26:40, 41, 46](#). whence I plainly proved, that there is a promise of pardon found in the Sinai dispensation, to penitent sinners. That this promise was given at mount Sinai, by the hand of Moses, is undeniable, from verse 46. That it contained the relief of a gracious remission to penitent sinners, is as undeniable from verse 40, 41. If you say, this promise belongs to Moses' dispensation, (as verse 46. tells you it did) then, there is remission of sins found in the Sinai laws. If you say it only refers to Abraham's covenant of grace; then that covenant of grace appears to be conditional, which you utterly deny.

Now what is your reply to this? (1.) You object my own words in the *Method of Grace*, p. 326. as if you had never read the just and fair vindication I had before given you of them, p. 134, 135. of my first reply to you. At this rate men may continue controversies to the world's end. Sir, there are many witnesses, that you are very well acquainted with my *Method of Grace*. (2.) You say, p. 31. of your reply, that that covenant could not be conditional, because a condition implies merit, either of congruity or condignity. This is a further discovery of your ignorance of the nature of conditions, as well as covenants; but that point belonging to the last head of controversy between us, I shall refer it thither.

It were easy for me to instance in many more absurdities which Mr. C. cannot elucidate, and to prove them upon him as easily as to name them; but I will not press him too far; what has been named and proved already, is more than enough to convince the reader that my first argument is left standing in its full force and strength against him, namely,

ARGUMENTS

Argument 1. That proposition can never be true, which necessarily draws many horrid and gross absurdities after it, by just consequence. But so does this: Ergo.

Argument 2. My next argument, *Vindiciæ*, etc. p. 27. is as secure as the first. It was this: If Adam's covenant had one end, namely, the happiness and justification of men by their own obedience; and the law at Sinai had quite another end, namely, to bring sinners to Christ, by faith, for their righteousness; the one to keep him within himself, the other to take him quite out of himself; then the Sinai law cannot possibly be the same with Adam's covenant of works in paradise.

But so stands the case, [Romans 10:4](#). "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes."

Therefore they cannot be the same, but two different covenants:

All that touches this argument, is but three lines in the 49th page of your reply; where you say you have sufficiently answered and cleared this, in p. 169, 172. of your former discourse, from the corrupt interpretation by me fastened thereon.

Now if the reader will give himself the trouble to examine those pages, he shall find that Mr. C. there allows that very interpretation which he here calls corrupt; and says it comes all to one reckoning with his own. If this will overthrow my second argument, it is gone.

Argument 3. My third argument was drawn from [Acts 7:38](#). in this form:

If Christ himself were the angel by whom the laws were delivered to Moses, which are there called the lively oracles of God; then the law cannot be a pure Adam's covenant of works: for it is never to be imagined that ever Jesus Christ himself should deliver to Moses such a covenant, directly opposite to all the ends of his future incarnation.

But it is more than probable, from that text, that it was Christ which delivered the law to Moses on the mount. Ergo.

To this argument he says not one word, in p. 49. of his reply, where he cites a part of it, nibbling a little at that expression, [The lively oracles of God,] thinking it unimaginable the Sinai law should be such; when as the apostle Paul, [Romans 7:10](#). found the commandment to be unto death; and the apostle, [2 Corinthians 3:6, 7](#). calls it a ministration of death. I must therefore leave Mr. C. to reconcile those two scriptures. And withal, I must tell him, that Spanhemius gives the same sense I do of [Acts 7:38](#). as the current judgment of Christians against the Jews, that it was not a created angel, but Christ himself.

Argument 4. The last argument I urged, was from [Romans 9:4](#). and thus it may run.

No such covenant as by the fall had utterly lost all its promises, privileges, and blessings, and could retain nothing but curses and punishments, could possibly be numbered among the chief privileges in which God's Israel gloried.

But the law given at Sinai was numbered among their chief privileges, [Romans 9:4](#). Ergo.

To this he only says, p. 57. of his reply, 'That the law, even as it was a covenant of works, was a privilege inestimable, beyond what all others enjoyed; because the very curses and punishments annexed thereunto, in case of the least failure, were of excellent use to convince them of their sin and misery without Christ, and their necessity therefore of a Savior; which was the proper work of the law, as a covenant of works; which advantage all other nations wanting, it might well be numbered among the chief privileges they were invested with.'

But (1.) If the law were intended by God, to be an Adam's covenant to them, (as Mr. C. says it was) where then is the privilege of God's Israel above other nations? (2.) If their privilege consisted in the subserviency of that law to Christ (as he here intimates it did) then he yields the thing I contend for. For this being its chief scope and end, we do hence justly denominate it a covenant of grace, though more obscure and legally administered. And in this judgment most of our solid divines concur. Mr. Charnock on the Attributes, p. 390. is clear and judicious in the point. Mr. Samuel Bolton, in that excellent book called, The Bounds of Christian Liberty, gives nine solid arguments to prove the law was not set up at Sinai as a covenant of works. Mr. Anth. Burgess gives us six arguments to prove the same conclusion. Mr. Greenhill on Ezekiel 16 gives us demonstration from that context, that since it was a marriage-covenant, as it appears to be verse 8. it cannot possibly be a distinct covenant from the covenant of grace. The incomparable Turretin, learnedly and judiciously states this controversy; and both positively asserts, and by many arguments fully proves, that the Sinai law cannot be a pure covenant of works, or a covenant specifically distinct from the covenant of grace. It were easy to fill pages with allegations of this kind; but I hope what has been said, may suffice for this point.

But still Mr. Cary complains, that I have all this while but threatened his arguments to prove them fallacious, or to have four terms in them; and therefore he has drawn out some select arguments, as he calls them, p. 37. to try my skill upon. I will neither tire my reader in a foolish chase of such weak and impertinent arguments as he there produces, nor yet wholly neglect them, lest he glory in them as unanswerable. And therefore to show him the fate of the rest, I will only touch his first argument, which being his argumentum palmarium, deservedly leads the van to all the rest. And thus it runs upon all four.

That covenant that is not of faith, must needs be a covenant of works, yes, the very same for substance with that made with Adam.

But the scripture is express, that the law is not of faith, [Galatians 3:12](#). Ergo.

The law is considered two ways in scripture. (1.) Largely, for the whole Mosaic economy, comprehensive of the ceremonial as well as moral precepts; and that law is of faith, as the learned Turretin has proved by four scripture arguments, part second, p. 292, 293. Because it contained Christ the object of faith, etc. Because it compelled men to seek Christ by faith. Because it required that God be worshiped, which he cannot rightly be without faith. And because Paul describes the righteousness of faith in those very words whereby Moses had declared the precepts of the law, [Deuteronomy 30:11, 12, 13](#). Again, the law in scripture is taken strictly for the moral law only, considered abstractly from the promises of grace, as the legal judiciaries understood it. These are two far different senses and acceptations of the law. Your major proposition takes the law in its large complex body, as appears by your 3d page. Your minor proposition, which you would confirm by [Galatians 3:12](#). takes the law strictly and abstractly, as it is set disjunctly from, yes, in opposition to faith and the promises; and so there are two sorts of law in your argument, and consequently your argument is fallacious, as all its fellows be, and runs, (as I told you before) upon all-four.

I hope this may suffice, with respect to the Sinai covenant, controverted between me and my neighbor, to evince that it cannot be what he asserts it to be, even an Adam's covenant of works: And that I have discharged what I undertook to prove, with respect to this covenant, namely, That Mr. C. cannot free his position from the gross absurdities with which I loaded it, but endeavoring to do that, has incurred many more: that his reply has left my arguments standing in their full strength against him, and that the position I have set up against him, is well founded in scripture; and has the general concurrence and consent of learned, holy, and orthodox divines.

To conclude, Let the grave and learned Dr. Edw. Reynolds, in his excellent treatise of the USE of the Law, determine this controversy between us, p. 371, etc. where designedly handling this doctrine from [Romans 7:13](#). 'That the law was revived and promulgated anew on mount Sinai, by the ministry of Moses, with no other than evangelical and merciful purposes,' he abundantly confirms my sense and arguments, and saves me the labor of refuting the principal, and most of yours: where carrying before him the whole context of Galatians 3 from the 15th to the 23d, he clearly carries his doctrine with it, proving from verse 15. 'That God's covenant with Abraham was perpetual and immutable, and therefore all other subsequent acts of God (such as the giving of the law was) do some way or other refer unto it. (2) From 5:16. he further proves, That as God's covenant with Abraham is most constant, in regard of the wisdom and unvariableness of him that made it; so it can never expire for want of a seed to whom it is made. (3.) From verse 17. he proves, That if another law be made after the promise, which, prima specie, and, in strict construction, does imply a contradiction in the terms, and nature of the former law; then it is certain, that this latter law must be understood in some other sense, and admit of some other subordinate use, which may well consist with the being and force of the former covenant. (4.) From verse 18. he proves, that the coming of the law has not voided the promise, and that the law is not of force (as you vainly dream) towards the seed to whom the promise is made; and therefore if it be not to stand in a contradiction, it follows that it must stand in subordination to the gospel; and so tend to evangelical purposes.' (5.) He further proves his conclusion from verse 19. which shows for what end the law was added, 'It was not (says he) set up alone, as a thing in gross by itself; as an adequate, complete, solid rule of righteousness, as it was given to Adam in Paradise: much less was it published to void and disannul any precedent covenant; but so far was it from abrogating, that it was added to the promise by way of subserviency, and attendance; the better to advance and make effectual the covenant itself, and that until the seed should come, which, whether it respect Christ personal, or mystical, in either sense (says he) it confirms the point we are upon, namely, That the law has evangelical purposes. If the seed be understood of the person of Christ, then this shows that the law was put to the promise, the better to raise and stir up in men the expectations of Christ, the promised seed. But if we understand by seed, the faithful (which I rather approve;) then the apostle's meaning is this, That as long as any are either to come into the unity of Christ's body, and have the covenant of grace applied to them, etc. so long there will be use of the law, both to the unregenerate, to make them fly to Christ, and those that are already called, that they may learn to cast all their faith, hope, and expectation of righteousness upon him still. This then manifestly shows, that there was no other intention in publishing the law, but with reference to the seed: that is, with evangelical purposes to show mercy: not with reference to those that perish, who would have had condemnation enough without the law.' And further strengthens his conclusion from the last words of verse 19. 'That it was ordained by angels in the hands of a Mediator. This (says he) evidently declares, That the law was published in mercy and pacification, not in fury or revenge; (for the work of a Mediator is to negotiate peace, and treat of reconcilment between parties offended) whereas, if the Lord had intended death in the publishing of the law, he would not have proclaimed it in the hand of a Mediator, but of an executioner. (6.) From verse 20. Those words (says he) show why the law was published in the hand of a Mediator, namely, that they should not despair and sink under the fear of his wrath. For as he made a covenant of promise to Abraham, and his seed; so he is the same God still, one in his grace and mercy towards sinners. God is one, that is in sending this Mediator, he does declare to mankind, that he is at peace and unity with them again. Moses was the representative, and Christ the substantial and real Mediator. God is one, that is he carries the same purpose and intention both in the law and in the gospel; namely, benevolence, and desire of reconcilment with men. (7.) To sum up all that has been spoken touching the use of the law in a plain similitude; Suppose we a prince should proclaim a pardon to all traitors, if they should come in and plead it; and after this

should send forth his officers to attack, and imprison, examine, convince, arraign, threaten, and condemn them: Is he now contrary to himself? Has he repented of his mercy? No, but he is unwilling to lose his mercy, desirous to have the honor of his mercy acknowledged unto him. The same is the case between God and us. To Abraham he made a promise of mercy and blessedness to all that would plead interest in it for the remission of their sins; but men were secure and heedless of their state, etc. Hereupon the Lord published by Moses a severe and terrible law; yet in all this God does but pursue his first purpose of mercy, and take a course to make his gospel accounted worthy of all acceptance; which clears the general point, That God in the publication of the law by Moses, on mount Sinai, had none but merciful and evangelical intentions. And once more, The law was not published by Moses on mount Sinai, as it was given to Adam in Paradise, to justify or to save men. And p. 385. it is not given to condemn men. In consequence to all which he says, p. 388, 389. that to preach the law alone by itself, is to prevent the use of it; neither have we any power or commission so to do. It was published as an appendant to the gospel, and so must it be preached. It was published in the hand of a Mediator, and must be preached in the hand of a Mediator. It was published evangelically, and it must be so preached.'

See how this agrees now with p. 173. of your call, and how the several parts of discourse of this sound and eminent doctor (which I have been forced to sum up and contract) do abundantly confute your vain notions of the law, and cut the very nerves of your best arguments, if they had any nerves in them.

It were easy for me to represent the sense of many other eminent divines in perfect harmony with the doctrine of this great and excellent divine, who have substantially proved the point I defend against you: But it is enough.

II. Let us next examine what execution his reply has done upon my second position, set up in direct opposition to him; namely, That God's covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17 Unto which circumcision was annexed, is for its substance, the self-same covenant of grace with that which the Gentile-believers, and their Infant-seed, are now under.

Here I have abundant cause again to complain, that Mr. C. has so formed his answers, as if he had never read the book he undertakes to reply to. And I do truly believe, the greatest part of his reply was made at random, before ever my printed book was in his hands. For he has not at all considered the state of the question, as I there gave it him; nor kept himself to the just and necessary rules of disputation, as I earnestly desired he would. However, it is not complaints, but confirmation and vindication of my arguments, which is my proper work. I shall therefore recite them briefly, and vindicate and confirm them strongly; contracting all into as few words as can express the sense and argument of the point before me.

Argum. 1. If circumcision be a part of the ceremonial law, and the ceremonial law was dedicated by blood; whatever is so dedicated, is by you confessed to be no part of the covenant of works; then circumcision can be no part of the covenant of works, even by your own confession. But it is so. Ergo.

Reply. To this Mr. C. returns a tragic complaint, instead of a rational answer. Insinuates my false and gross abuse of him. Appeals to his reader. Tells him I have taken a liberty to say what I please, as if there were no future judgment to be regarded. And that I can expect no comfort another day, without repentance now. For those things that have thus passed between him and me shall again be revised and set in order before me. That he is weary of noting my miscarriages of this kind. That there is hardly a page or paragraph in my whole reply but abounds with transgressions of this nature. He begs the Lord to forgive me; and wishes he could

say, Father forgive him, for he knows not what he does: as if my sin were greater than the sin of those that stoned Stephen, or crucified Christ.

Reply. Either I am guilty or innocent in the matter here charged upon me by Mr. C. If guilty, I promise him a sincere acknowledgment. If innocent (as both my conscience and his own book will prove me to be) then I shall only say, He knows not what spirit he is of. The case must be tried by his own book, and it will quickly be decided. These are the very words in his Solemn call, p. 148. 'He (that is, Mr. Sedgwick) makes no distinction between the ceremonial covenant that was dedicated with blood, and the law written in stones that was not so dedicated. How strangely does he confound and obscure the word and truth of God, which ought to have been cleared, and distinctly declared to those he had preached or written to?' With much more, p. 149, 150, 151. where he says, 'It is plain, that the law written in stones, and the book wherein the statutes and judgments were contained, were two distinct covenants, and delivered at distinct seasons, and in a distinct method; the one with, the other without a Mediator; the one dedicated with blood and sprinkling, the other (that we read of) not so dedicated.'

Now let the reader judge whether I have deserved such tragic complaints and dreadful charges for inferring from these words, That the ceremonial law being by him pronounced a distinct covenant from the moral law, which he makes all one with Adam's covenant; delivered at a distinct season, and in a distinct method; the ceremonial law with a Mediator, the moral law without a Mediator; the ceremonial law dedicated with blood and sprinkling, the moral law not so dedicated: let him judge, I say, whether I have wronged him in saying, that by his own confession, circumcision being a part of this ceremonial law, it can therefore be no part of the covenant of works.

Exception. But Mr. Gary has two things to say for himself, (1.) That in the same place he makes the ceremonial law no other than a covenant of works: And the wrong I have done him is not distinguishing, as he did, between a covenant of works, and the covenant of works. Here, it seems, lies my guilt, upon which this dreadful outcry against me is made.

Reply. But if I should chance to prove, that there never was, is, or can be any more than one covenant of works; and that any one covenant which is distinguished from it (as he confesses the ceremonial law was) by a Mediator, and the blood of sprinkling, can be no part of that covenant of works; what then will become of Mr. C's distinction of a covenant of works, and the covenant of works? Now the matter is plain and evident, That as there never were, are, or can be more than two common heads appointed by God, namely, Adam and Christ, [1 Corinthians 15:45, 46, 47, 48.](#) [Romans 5:15, 17, 18, 19.](#) so it is impossible there should be more than two covenants, under which mankind stands, under these two common heads. And the first covenant once broken, it is utterly impossible that fallen man should ever attain life that way, or that ever God should set it up again with such an intention and scope, 'unless (as Mr. Charnock speaks) he had reduced man's body to the dust and his soul to nothing, and framed another man to have governed him by a covenant of works; but that had not been the same man that had revolted, and upon his revolt was stained and disabled.' If Mr. C. therefore be not able to prove more covenants of works with mankind than one, let him rather blush at his silly distinction between a covenant of works, and the covenant of works. For indeed he makes at least four distinct covenants of works, one with Adam, two with Moses; one moral, the other ceremonial; and a fourth with Abraham at the institution of circumcision, Genesis 17.

(2.) If it appear (as it clearly does) that as there never was, is, or can be any more than one covenant of works, so whatever covenant is distinguished from it by a Mediator, and dedication by the sprinkling of blood (as he says the ceremonial law

was) cannot possibly, for the reasons he gives, be any part or member of Adam's covenant of works; then, I hope, I have done Mr. C. no wrong in my assumption from his own words, for which he so reviles and abuses me. But this will appear as clear as the noon-day light: For a covenant with a Mediator, and dedicated by sprinkling of blood, does, and necessarily must, essentially difference such a covenant from that covenant that had no Mediator, nor dedication by blood. To deny this, were to confound law and gospel, Adam's and Christ's covenant; but the distinction between them is his own, therefore my assumption was just. That this blood was typically the blood of Christ, and that the Holy Spirit signified the one by the other, is plain from [Hebrews 9:7, 8](#). And I never met with that man that scrupled it before Mr. Cary. So then my first argument to prove Abraham's covenant of circumcision to be the covenant of grace, and not an Adam's covenant, or any part thereof, stands firm after Mr. C's passionate reply, which I hope the Lord will pardon to him, though he had scarce charity enough left to desire a pardon for his friend, who had neither wronged the truth nor him.

Argument 2. My second argument was this. If circumcision was the seal of the righteousness of faith, it did not pertain to the covenant of works, for the righteousness of faith and works are opposite.

But circumcision was the seal of the righteousness of faith, [Romans 4:11](#). Ergo.

The sum of what he answers to this, p. 72, 73, etc. (as far as I can pick his true sense out of a multitude of needless words) is this, 'He confesses this argument seems very plausible; but, however, Abraham was a believer before circumcision; and though indeed it sealed the righteousness of faith to him, yet it sealed it to him only as the father of believers; and denies that ever Jacob, or Isaac, or any other enrolled in that covenant were sealed by it; but to all the rest, beside Abraham, it was rather a token of servitude and bondage.' This is the sum and substance of his reply.

Reply. But, Sir, let me ask you two or three plain questions. (1.) What is the reason you silently slide over the question I asked you, p. 41. of my *Vindiciæ*, etc. Did you find it an hot iron which you dared not touch? It is like you did. My question was this: Had Adam's covenant a seal of the righteousness of faith annexed to it, as this had, [Romans 4:11](#). The righteousness of faith is evangelical righteousness, and this circumcision sealed. Say not it was to Abraham only that it sealed it, for it is an injurious restriction put upon the seal of a covenant which extended to the fathers as well as to Abraham: however, you admit that it sealed evangelical righteousness to Abraham, but I hope you will not say, that a seal of the covenant of works (for so you made circumcision to be) ever did, or could seal evangelical righteousness to any individual person in the world.

I find you a man of great confidence, but certainly here it failed you; not one word in reply to this. (2.) 'I told you your distinction was invented by Bellarmine, and showed you where it was confuted by Dr. Ames: but not a word to that.' (3.) I showed, 'That the extending of that seal to all believers, as well as Abraham, is most agreeable to the drift and scope of the apostle's argument, which is to prove, that both Jews and Gentiles are justified by faith, as Abraham was: and that the ground of justification is common to both: and that how great soever Abraham was, yet in this case he has found nothing whereof to glory. And is not your exposition a notable one, to prove the community of the privilege of justification, because the seal of it was peculiar to Abraham alone?' p. 47, 48.

Sir, you have spent words enough upon this head to tire your reader. But why can I not meet with one word among them that fairly advances to my argument? or answer the important questions before you, upon which the matter depends? If this be all you have to say, I must tell you, you are but a weak manager of a bad cause, which is the less hazard to truth.

Argument 3. In the covenant of circumcision, Genesis 17. God makes over himself to Abraham and his seed, to be their God, or gives them a special interest in himself.

But, in the covenant of works, God does not, since the fall, make over himself to any to be their God, by way of special interest.

Therefore the covenant of circumcision cannot be the covenant of works.

The sum of your reply, in p. 76. is under two heads.

(1.) You boldly tell me, That 'God does in the covenant of works make over himself to sinners to be their God by way of special interest; but it being upon such hard terms that it is utterly impossible for sinners that way to attain unto life, he has therefore been pleased to abolish that, and make a new covenant;' and bring [Exodus 20:1.](#) to prove it.

Reply. This is new and strange divinity with me, (1.) That God should become a people's God by way of special interest, by virtue of the broken covenant of works; this wholly alters the nature of that covenant: for then it was a law that could give life, contrary to [Galatians 3:21.](#) unless you can suppose a soul that is totally dead in sin to have a special interest in God, as his God. (2.) This answer of yours yields the controversy about the nature of the Sinai law; for this very concession of yours is the medium by which our divines prove it to be a covenant of grace. (3.) This concession of yours confounds the two covenants, by communicating the essential property and prime privilege of the covenant of grace to Adam's covenant of works. Either, therefore, expunge [Jeremiah 31:33.](#) as a covenant of grace, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" or allow that in [Genesis 17:7.](#) to be specifically the same; and that Exodus 20 though more obscurely delivered. (4.) You assert, 'That God may actually become a people's God by way of special interest, and yet the salvation of that people be suspended upon impossible terms.' You sent them before into purgatory, but by this you must send them directly to Hell: for if the salvation of God's peculiar people be upon impossible terms, it is certain they cannot be saved. And, lastly, it is an horrid reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of God, who never did, or will make any covenant wherein he takes fallen men to be his peculiar people, and make over himself to be their God; and yet not make provision for their salvation in the same covenant, but leave their salvation for many ages, upon hard and impossible terms, that is leave them under damnation.

(2.) I told you in my *Vindiciæ*, etc. p. 49. that you were gladly to cut Abraham's covenant, Genesis 17 into two parts; and make the first to be the pure covenant of grace, which is the promissory part to the 9th verse, and the restipulation, as you call it, p. 205, to be as pure a covenant of works, which I truly said was a bold action; and in so calling it, I gave it a softer name than the nature of it deserved.

The sum of what you reply to this is, 1. By denying the matter of fact, and charging me with misrepresentation; and in the next page confessing the whole charge, saying, Though the promise and the restipulation mentioned, verse 7, 8, 9. make but one and the same covenant of circumcision; yet there are two covenants mentioned in that context, the first between God and Abraham himself, verse 2, 4. the other between God and Abraham, and his natural posterity also, verse 7, 8, 9, 10. the former you call a covenant of grace, the latter a covenant of works. And p. 81. you affirm that after God had entered the covenant of grace with Abraham, verses 2, 4 that Abraham himself was required to be circumcised by the command of God, as a token of the covenant of works. And then, after some unfitting scoffs for misplacing verse 7, 8. where verse 9, 10. should be; as also of Genesis 12 for Genesis 17 (whether by the scribe, myself, or the press, I cannot say; but in each place sufficient light is given to set you right in the scope and argument of my discourse) you tell us, That however harsh and unlikely it may seem to man's carnal reason,

that the latter, to wit, the covenant of works made with Abraham, verse 9, 10. must needs make void the covenant of grace made with him, verse 2, 4. yet the apostle gives a quite contrary resolution of it, [Galatians 3:17](#). And after all, p. 79. in return to my argument, That the circumcision of Abraham and his seed, verse 9, 10. could not possibly be a condition of Adam's covenant of works from the nature of the act: because Paul himself circumcised Timothy, [Acts 16:2, 3](#). and asserts it to be a part of his liberty, [Galatians 2:3, 4](#). which could never be, if in the very nature of the act it has bound Timothy to keep the law for justification; and had been contrary to the whole scope of the apostle's doctrine: but it became an obligation only from the intention of the agent. All that you say to this, p. 95. is, 'That as for Paul's compliance with the Jews, however the case stood in that respect, this is certain, That the blessed apostle would never have expressed himself with that vehemency he does, [Galatians 5:2, 3](#). if this had been only the sense of the Jewish teachers, or that circumcision in its own nature did not oblige to the keeping of the whole law; and that this is only my corrupt gloss upon the text.'

Reply. If there be but one covenant made between God and Abraham in that 17th of Genesis, and you make two, not only numerically, but specifically distinct, yes, opposite covenants of it, then you boldly cut God's covenant with Abraham in two, and are guilty of an insufferable abuse of the covenant of God: But the former is true; therefore so is the latter. You say, p. 223, 224. of your call, 'That at the second and fourth verses God made a covenant with Abraham himself alone, but at verse 7. he makes the covenant of circumcision between himself and Abraham, and his natural seed also; and says, verse 7. And, or according to the old translation, moreover; as proceeding to speak of another covenant than what he had been before insisting on.'

Now I would soberly ask, (1.) What vouchers you have among expositors for this your rash and daring assertion? I find not a man that has trod this path before you, and I hope none will be hardy enough to follow: you certainly stand alone, and it is pity but you should. (2.) Where do you find the just parts of the new covenant in the 2d and 4th verses? Is it not altogether promissory, on God's part, without any restipulation on Abraham's? For you have excluded verse 1, 7, 10. from that which you call God's covenant of grace with him. And then for your covenant of works, verse 7, 8, 9, 10. you make this to be the promissory part of that covenant, "to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you;" and again, verse 8. "I will be their God." Was ever such a promise as this found in a covenant of works? Tell me whatever God said more in the new covenant, than he says here? O blessed covenant of work, if this be such! (3.) Tell me whether you can satisfy your own conscience with the answers you have given to my first argument against your paradoxical, yes, heterodoxical exposition? I told you, That if verse 7, 8, 9, 10. contain another covenant, namely, of works, entered by God with Abraham and his seed, it must needs make void the former covenant, verse 2, 4. for wherever the covenant of works takes place, the covenant of grace gives place; they cannot consist, as I have abundantly proved before. Do you truly think those words of the apostle, [Galatians 3:17](#). which you bring as a foundation to support your singular and sinful exposition, namely, And this I say, That the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect; do you think, I say, that in that, or any other text, the apostle opposes the two covenants made (as you fancy) with Abraham, Genesis 17. Or does he not there speak of God's covenant with Abraham, as distinguished from the law made 430 years afterward? (4.) Have you satisfied your own judgment and conscience in the reply you made to that unanswerable objection from Paul's circumcising of Timothy, [Acts 16:2, 3](#). where you have the plain matter of fact before you, that he was circumcised by Paul; and this fact of his justified as a part of the liberty he had in Christ, [Galatians 2:3, 4](#). from whence it evidently appears, That circumcision, in its own nature, did not simply and absolutely oblige men to the keeping of Moses' law for righteousness,

but only for the intention or opinion of the person. And though you call this my corrupt gloss upon the text, therein you grossly abuse me: the gloss is neither corrupt nor my own; but the unanimous judgment of all sound expositors of the text, as you might see, were you capable of seeing it, in a collection of their judgments upon that text, [Galatians 5:2, 3, 4](#). in Mr. Pool's Synopsis. And though Estius thinks the act of circumcision might be obligatory to the Gentiles, to whom the law was not given; yet it was not so to the Jews that believed, and such was Timothy. But why do I refer you to the judgment of commentators? The very reason of it may convince you. For,

If the very act of circumcision did, in its own nature, oblige all on whom it passed, to keep the whole law for their righteousness, then Paul so obliged Timothy, and all others on whom he passed it, to keep the law for their righteousness.

But Paul did not oblige Timothy, or any other on whom he passed it, by the very act of circumcision so to keep the law.

Therefore the very act of circumcision, in its own nature, did not oblige all on whom it passed, to keep the whole law for righteousness.

You may ponder this argument at your leisure, and not think to refute it at so cheap a rate, as by calling it a corrupt gloss of my own. And thus I hope I have sufficiently fortified and confirmed my third argument, to prove Abraham's covenant to be a covenant of grace. My fourth was this:

Argument 4. That which in its direct and primary end, teaches man the corruption of his nature by sin, and the mortification of sin by the Spirit of Christ, cannot be a condition of the covenant of works.

But so did circumcision in the very direct and primary end of it; therefore, etc.

Your reply to this, is, 'That when I have substantially proved that the Sinai covenant, as it contained the Passover, sacrifices, types, and appendages, under which were veiled many spiritual mysteries relating to Christ, and mortification of sin by his grace and Spirit, to be no covenant of works, but a gospel covenant; you will then grant, with me, that the present argument is convincing;' p. 66, 67. of your reply.

Reply. Sir, I take you for an honest man, and every honest man will be as good as his word; either I have fully proved against you, that the Sinai law (taken in that latitude you here express it) is not an Adam's covenant of works, or I have not. If I have not, doubtless you have reserved your more pertinent and strong replies in your own breast, and trust not to those weak and silly ones, which you see here baffled, and have only served to involve you in greater absurdities than before. But if you have brought forth all your strength, (as in such a desperate strait no man can imagine but you would) then I have fully proved the point against you; and if I have, I expect you to be sincere and candid, in making good your word, that you will then grant, with me, that this argument is convincing, to the end for which it was designed. And so I hope we have fully issued the controversy between us, relating to God's covenant with Abraham. You have indeed four arguments p. 59, 60, 61, 62. of your Reply, to prove Abraham's covenant a covenant of works, of the same nature with Adam's covenant.

(1.) Because as life was implicitly promised to Adam upon his obedience, and death explicitly threatened in case of his disobedience, which made that properly a covenant of works; so it was in the covenant of circumcision, [Genesis 17:7, 8](#). compared with verse 10, 14.

Reply. This argument or reason can never conclude; because as God never required of Abraham and his children, personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience to the

whole law for life, as he did of Adam; so the death, or cutting off, spoken of here, seems to be another thing from that threatened to Adam. Circumcision, as I told you before, was appointed to be the discriminating sign between Abraham's seed and the Heathen world; and the willful neglect thereof is here threatened with the cutting off by civil, or ecclesiastical excommunication from the commonwealth and church of Israel, as Luther, Calvin, Paræus, Musculus, etc. expound; not by the death of body and soul, as was threatened to Adam, without place for repentance, or hope of mercy.

(2.) You say Abraham's covenant could not be a covenant of faith, because faith was not reckoned to Abraham for righteousness in circumcision, but in uncircumcision, [Romans 4:9, 10](#).

Reply. This is weak reasoning; circumcision could not belong to a gospel-covenant, because Abraham was a believer before he was circumcised. You may as well deny the Lord's Supper to be the seal of a gospel-covenant, because the partakers of it, are believers before they partake of it. Beside, you cannot deny but it sealed the righteousness of faith to Abraham: and I desired you before, to prove that a seal of the covenant of works is capable of being applied to such an use and service, which you have not done, nor ever will be able to do; but politically slid by it.

(3.) You say it cannot be a covenant of grace, because it is contra-distinguished to the righteousness of faith, [Romans 4:13](#).

Reply. The law in that place is put strictly for the pure law of nature, and signifies the works of the law, which is a far different thing from the law, taken in that latitude wherein you take it. And, is not this a pretty argument, that because the promise to Abraham and his seed, was not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith; therefore the covenant God made with Abraham and his seed, Genesis 17. cannot be a gracious, but a legal covenant? This promise, mentioned [Romans 4:13](#). was made to Abraham long before the law was given by Moses; and free grace, not Abraham's legal righteousness, was the impulsive cause moving God to make that promise to Abraham and to his seed; and their enjoyment of the mercies promised, was not to be through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. By what rule of are this scripture is alleged to prove God's covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17. to be a covenant of works, I am utterly to seek: if it be only because circumcision was added to it, that is answered over and over before, and you neither have, nor can reply to it.

(4.) Lastly, It cannot (say you) be a covenant of grace, because it is represented to us, in scripture, as a bondage covenant, [Acts 15:10](#), etc. [Galatians 5:1](#).

Reply. It is time, I see, to make an end; your discourse runs low and dreggy. Do you think it is one and the same thing to say, That the ceremonial law was a yoke of bondage to them that were under it, and to say it was an Adam's covenant? Are these two parallel distinctions in your logic? Alas! Sir, there is a wide difference; the difficulty, variety, and chargeableness of those ceremonies, made them, indeed, burdensome and tiresome to that people; but they did not make the covenant to which they were annexed, to become an Adam's covenant of works; for in the very next breath, verse 11. the apostle will tell you, they were saved; yes, and tells us, that we shall be saved, even as they. So that either they that were saved under this yoke, were saved by faith in the way of free grace, as we now are: or we must be saved in the way of legal obedience, as they were. Take which you please, for one of them you must take. We shall be saved even as they, [Acts 15:10, 11](#).

If you can make no stronger opposition to my arguments than such as you have here made, your cause is lost, though your confidence and obstinacy remain: it were easy for me to fill more paper than I have written on this subject, with names of principal

note in the church of God, who, with one voice, decry your groundless position, and constantly affirm, That the law in the complex sense you take it, as it comprehends the ceremonial rites and ordinances whereunto circumcision pertains, is, and can be no other than the covenant of grace, though more obscurely administered. But because Latin authors are of little use to you, and among English ones, the judgment of Dr. Crisp, I suppose, will be instar omnium with you; I will recite it faithfully out of his sermon upon the two covenants, where he makes the old and new covenant to be, indeed, two distinct covenants of grace, (for which I see no reason at all) but proves the former to be so in these words:

It is granted of all men, that in the covenant of works there is no remission of sin, there is no notice of Christ; but the whole business or employment of the priests of the old law was altogether about remission of sins, and the exhibiting and holding forth of Christ in their fashion unto the people. In the 15th of Numbers, verse 28. (I will give you but one instance) there you shall plainly see, that the administration of the priestly office had remission of sins, as the main end of that administration. If a soul sin through ignorance, he shall bring a she-goat unto the priest, and he shall make an atonement for the soul that sins ignorantly, and it shall be forgiven him: See the main end is administering forgiveness of sins.

And that Christ was the main subject of that their ministry is plain; because the apostle says, in the verse before my text, that all that administration was but a shadow of Christ, and a figure, for the present, to represent him, as he does express in the ninth chapter of this epistle. And the truth is, the usual general gospel that all the Jews had, was in their sacrifices, and priestly observations.

'So that it is plain, the administration of their covenant was an administration of grace, and absolutely distinct from the administration of the covenant of works.' And what can be said more absolutely, and directly contradictory to your position than this is? And yet again, p. 250. speaking to that scripture, [Hebrews 8:8](#). where the apostle distinguishes of a better and a faulty, of first and second; he says, (finding fault with them) "The days come when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant I made with their fathers, when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt;" and (as Jeremiah adds it, for the apostle takes all this out of [Jeremiah 31:31](#). (although I was an husband to them, and in the close of all, your sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Here are two covenants, a new covenant, and the covenant he made with their fathers. Some may think it was the covenant of works at the promulgation of the moral law; but mark well that expression of Jeremiah, and you shall see it was the covenant of grace. "For, says he, not according to the covenant I made with their fathers, although I was an husband unto them." How can God be considered as a husband to a people under the covenant of works which was broken by man in innocence, and so become disannulled, or impossible, by the breach of it? The covenant of works run thus: Cursed is every one that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law; and in the day you sin you shall die the death. Man had sinned before God took him by the hand, to lead him out of the land of Egypt, and sin had separated man from God: How then can God be called an husband in the covenant of works? The covenant, therefore, was not a covenant of works, but such a covenant as the Lord became an husband in, and that must be a covenant of grace,' etc.

How the doctor makes good his two distinct covenants of grace, I see not, nor expect ever to see proved, and is not my present concernment to inquire; but once it is evident, by what he has here said, that the ceremonial law, whereof circumcision is a branch, can be no other than the covenant of grace. And nothing is more common among our divines, than to prove not only the Sinai law, but God's covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17. to be the covenant of grace, by this medium, That God having entered into a covenant of grace with Abraham before, would

never bring him under a covenant of works afterwards, which must nullify and void the former. And, besides, such a covenant of works as you make this was never heard of in the world, wherein God promises to be a God to Abraham and his seed in their generations, upon the rigorous and impossible terms of Adam's covenant.

By this time I presume you must feel the force of those arguments produced against your vain and groundless notions; and how little you are able to deliver your thesis from them, but the more you struggle, the more still you are entangled. Go which way you will, your absurdities follow you as your shadow. Leaving, therefore, all your absurdities upon you until God shall give you more illumination and ingenuity to discern and acknowledge them, I shall pass on to the examination of your third position, which led you into these gross mistakes; and if God shall convince you of your error in this point, I hope it may prove a means of recovering you out of the rest; which, in love to your soul, I heartily desire.

3. Your third position is, That God's covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17. can be no other than the covenant of works, because circumcision was the condition of it: For (say you) the new covenant is altogether absolute and unconditional.

Of the Conditionality of the New Covenant.

This question, Whether the covenant of grace be conditional or absolute, was moved (as a learned man observes) in the former age, by occasion of the controversy about justification, between the Protestants and Papists. Among the Protestants some denied, and others affirmed the conditionality of the gospel-covenant: Those that denied it did so for fear of mingling law and gospel, Christ's righteousness and man's, as the Papists had wickedly done before. Those that affirmed it did so out of fear also; lest the necessity of faith and holiness, being relaxed, Libertinism should be that way introduced. But if the question were duly stated, and the sense of its terms agreed upon, the gospel-covenant may be affirmed to be conditional, to secure the people of God from Libertinism, without the least diminution of the righteousness of Christ, or clouding the free grace of God.

I did, in my first answer to your call, endeavor to prevent the needless trouble you have here given yourself by a succinct state of the question; telling you the controversy between us, is not, (1.) Whether the gospel-covenant requires no duties at all of them that are under it? Nor, (2.) Whether it requires any such conditions as were in Adam's covenant, namely, perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience, under the penalty of the curse, and admitting no place of repentance? Nor, (3.) Whether any condition required by it on our part have anything in its own nature meritorious of the benefits promised? Nor, (4.) Whether we be able in our own strength, and by the power of our free will, without the preventing, as well as the assisting grace of God, to perform any such work or duty as we call a condition? These things I told you were to be excluded out of this controversy. But the only question between us is, Whether in the new covenant, some act of ours, (though it have no merit in it, nor can be done in our own single strength) be not required to be performed by us antecedently to a blessing or privilege consequent by virtue of a promise? and whether such an act or duty, being of a suspending nature to the blessing promised, it have not the true and proper nature of a gospel-condition?

In your reply, (contrary to all rule and reason) you include, and chiefly argue against the very particulars by me there excluded; and scarcely, if at all, touch the true question as it was stated, and by you ought accordingly to have been considered. I might therefore justly think myself discharged from any further concernment with you about it; for if you will include what I plainly exclude, you argue not against mine, but another man's position, which I am not concerned to defend. You here

dispute against meritorious conditions, which I explode and abhor as much as yourself. You say, p. 34. of your reply, that a condition plainly implies something of merit, by way of condignity or congruity; which is false, and turns the question from me to Papists. And were it not more for the clearing up of so great a point for the instruction and satisfaction of others, than any hope you give me of convincing you, I should not have touched this question again, unless I had found your replies more distinct and pertinent. But finding the point in controversy of great weight, I will once more tell you,

1. What the word [condition] signifies.
2. In what sense it is by us used in this controversy.
3. Establish my arguments for the conditionality of the new covenant.

And first, we grant, That neither our word [condition] nor your term [absolute,] are either of them found in scripture, with respect to God's covenanting with man; so that we contend not about the signification of a scripture term. But though the word conditional be not there, yet the thing being found there, that brings the word conditional into use in this controversy. For we know not how to express those sacred particles, *ἀέ, ἰδέ, ἅ ἰ ἰç, ἰῖῖῖ, ἁέ ἐά ἰδ̄÷*, etc. if, if not, unless, but if, except, only, and the like, which are frequently used to limit and restrain the grants and privileges of the new covenant, [Romans 10:9](#). [Matthew 18:3](#). [Mark 5:36](#). [Mark 11:26](#). [Romans 4:24](#). I say, we know not how to express the true sense and force of these particles in this controversy by any other word so fit and full as the word conditional is. Now this word condition, being a law term, is variously used among the Jurists; and the various use of the word occasions that confusion which is found in this controversy. He, therefore, that shall clearly distinguish the various senses and uses of the word, is most likely to labor with success in this controversy. I shall, therefore, briefly note the principal senses and uses of the terms, and show in what sense we here take it. Of conditions there be two sorts,

1. Antecedent.
2. Consequent conditions.

As to the latter, namely, consequent conditions, you yourself acknowledge, p. 100. 'That in the outward dispensation of the covenant many things are required of us, in order unto the participation or enjoyment of the full end of the covenant in glory.'

So then the covenant is acknowledged to be consequently conditional, which is no more than to say with the apostle, "Without holiness no man shall see God;" or that, "If any man draw back, his soul shall have no pleasure in him, etc. Our controversy therefore is not about consequent conditions, laid by God upon believers, after they are in Christ and the covenant; the covenant, so considered, a posteriori, will not be denied to be conditional. The only question is about antecedent conditions, and of these we are here to consider,

1. Such as respect the first sanction of the covenant in Christ.
2. Such as respect the application of the benefits of the covenant unto men.

As to the first sanction of the covenant in Christ, we freely acknowledge it has no previous condition on man's part, but depends purely and only upon the grace of God, and merit of Christ: So that our question proceeds about such antecedent conditions only, as respect the application of the benefits of the covenant unto men; and of these antecedent conditions, there are likewise two sorts which must be carefully distinguished.

1. Such antecedent conditions which have the force of a meritorious and impulsive cause, which being performed by the proper strength of nature, or, at most, by the help of common, assisting grace, do give a man a right to the reward or blessings of the covenant. And in this sense we utterly disclaim antecedent conditions, as I plainly told you, p. 61. of my *Vindiciæ*, etc. Or,

2. An antecedent condition signifying no more than an act of ours, which, though it be neither perfect in every degree, nor in the least meritorious of the benefit conferred, nor performed in our natural strength: yet, according to the constitution of the covenant, is required of us, in order to the blessings consequent thereupon, by virtue of the promise: And, consequently the benefits and mercies granted in the promise, in this order are, and must be, suspended by the donor or disposer of them, until it be performed. Such a condition we affirm faith to be. But here again, faith, in this sense, the condition of the new covenant is considered,

1. Essentially; or,

2. Organically and instrumentally.

In the first consideration of faith, according to its essence, it is contained under obedience, and in that respect we exclude it from justifying our persons, or entitling us to the saving mercies of the new covenant, as it is a work of ours; and so I excluded it p. 133. of my *Method of Grace*, which you ignorantly or willfully mistake, when, in your reply, p. 88, 89. you object against me: Faith, considered in this sense, is not the condition of the covenant, nor can pretend to be so, more than any other grace. But,

We consider it organically, relatively, and (as most speak) instrumentally, as it receives Christ, [John 1:12](#). and so gives us power to become the sons of God; it being impossible for any man to partake of the saving benefits of the covenant, but as he is united to Christ. "For all the promises of God are in him yes, and in him amen," [2 Corinthians 1:20](#). And united to Christ no man can be, before he be a believer; for Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, [Ephesians 3:17](#). Upon which scriptural grounds and reasons it is, that we affirm faith to be an antecedent condition to the saving benefits of the new covenant; and that it must go before them, at least in order of nature, which is that we mean, when we say faith is the antecedent condition of the new covenant. And those that deny it to be so, (as the Antinomians do, who talk of actual and personal justification from eternity, or at least from the death of Christ) must consequently assert the actual justification of infidels; and not only disturb, but destroy the whole order of the gospel, and open the sluices and flood-gates to all manner of licentiousness.

And thus our pious and learned divines generally affirm faith to be the condition of the covenant. So Mr. Jeremiah Burroughs, 'Faith, (says he) has the honor above all other graces, to be the condition of the second covenant; therefore it is certainly some great matter that faith enables us to do. Whatever keeps covenant with God, brings strength, though itself be never so weak; as Samson's hair. What is weaker than a little hair? yet, because the keeping that, was keeping covenant with God; therefore even a little hair was so great strength to Samson. Faith then, that is the condition of the covenant, in which all grace and mercy is contained, if it be kept, it will cause strength indeed to do great things.'

And as this excellent man, Mr. Burroughs, is in this sense for the conditionality of the new covenant, so are the most learned and eminent of our own divines. Dr. Edward Reynolds, assigning the differences between the two covenants, gives this for one: 'They differ in the condition (says he); there legal obedience, here only faith; and the certain consequent thereof, repentance. There is difference likewise in the manner of performing these conditions: For now God himself begins first to

work upon us, and in us, before we move or stir towards him. He does not only command us, and leave us to our created strength to obey the command; but he furnishes us with his own grace and Spirit to obey the command.'

Of the same judgment is Dr. Owen. 'Are we able (says he) of ourselves to fulfill the condition of the new Covenant? Is it not as easy for a man by his own strength to fulfill the whole law, as to repent and believe the promise of the gospel? This then is one main difference of these two covenants, That the Lord did in the Old only require the condition; now in the New, he also effects it in all the confederates, to whom the covenant is extended.' This is the man you pretended to be against conditions.

Mr. William Pemble, opening the nature of the two covenants, says, 'The law offers life unto man upon condition of perfect obedience; the gospel offers life unto man upon another condition, to wit, of repentance and faith in Christ.' And after his proofs for it, says, 'From whence we conclude firmly, That the difference between the law and the gospel, assigned by our divines, is most certain and agreeable to the scriptures, namely, That the law gives life unto the just, upon condition of perfect obedience in all things; the gospel gives life unto sinners, upon condition they repent, and believe in Christ Jesus.'

Learned and judicious Mr. William Perkins thus, 'The covenant of grace is that, whereby God freely promising Christ and his benefits, exacts again of man, that he would by faith receive Christ. And again, in the covenant of grace two things must be considered, the substance thereof, and the condition. The substance of the covenant is, That righteousness and life everlasting, is given to God's church and people by Christ. The condition is, That we, for our part, are by faith to receive the aforesaid benefits; and this condition is by grace, as well as the substance.'

That learned, humble, and painful minister of Christ, Mr. John Ball, stating the difference between the two covenants, shows that in the covenant at Sinai, in the covenant with Abraham, and that with David, that in all these covenant-expressions, there are for substance the same evangelical conditions of faith and sincerity.

Dr. Davenant thus: 'In the covenant of the gospel it is otherwise; for in this covenant, to the obtainment of reconciliation, justification, and life eternal, there is no other condition required than of true and lively faith, [John 3:16](#). 'Therefore justification, and the right to eternal life does depend on the condition of faith alone.'

Dr. Downname harmonizes with the rest in these words: 'That which is the only condition of the covenant of grace, by that alone we are justified: But faith is the condition of the covenant of grace, which is therefore called *lex fidei*. Our writers, says he, distinguishing the two covenants of God, that is, the law and the gospel, whereof one is the covenant of works, the other the covenant of grace, do teach, That the law of works is that which to justification requires works as the condition thereof: the law of faith that which to justification requires faith as the condition thereof. The former says this, Do this, and you shall live; the latter, Believe in Christ, and you shall be saved.'

But what stand I upon particular, though renowned names? You may see a whole constellation of our sound and famous divines in the assembly, thus expressing themselves about this point. 'The grace of God, say they, is manifested in the second covenant, in that he freely provides and offers to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by him, and requiring faith as the condition to interest them in him, promises and gives his Holy Spirit to all his elect, to work in them that faith with all other saving graces, and to enable them to all holy obedience, as the evidence of the truth of their faith,' etc.

And as for those ancient and modern Divines whom the Antinomians have corrupted and misrepresented, the reader may see them all vindicated, and their concurrence with those I have named evidenced by that learned and pious Mr. John Craile, in his Modest vindication of the doctrine of conditions in the covenant of grace, from p. 58. onward; a man whose name and memory is precious with me, not only upon the account of that excellent sermon he preached, and those fervent prayers he poured out many years since at my ordination; but for that learned and judicious treatise of his against Mr. Eyre, wherein he has cast great light upon this controversy, as excellent Mr. Baxter and Mr. Woodbridge have also done. But, alas! what evidence is sufficient to satisfy ignorant and obstinate men!

Sir, It pities me to see the lamentable confusion you are in; you are forced, by the evidence of truth, to yield and own the substance of what I contend for: you have yielded the covenant to be consequently conditional, in p. 84. of your Reply; you have also as plainly yielded that the application of pardoning mercy unto our souls is in order of nature, consequent unto believing, p. 31. of your Reply. From both which concessions, in your own words recited, this conclusion is evident and unavoidable, namely,

That no adult person, notwithstanding God's eternal election, and Christ's meritorious death and satisfaction, according to the constitution and order of the new covenant, can either be justified in this world, or saved in the world to come, unless he first believe.

For if the application of pardoning mercy unto our souls is in order of nature, consequent unto believing, (as you truly affirm it to be) then, according to the constitution and order of the new covenant, no application of pardoning mercy can be made to our souls before we believe. And if it be evident (as you say it is, p. 84.) that unto a full and complete enjoyment of all the promises of the covenant, faith on our part is required; then, as no man can be actually justified in this world, so neither can he be saved before, or without faith, in the world to come. And if you did but see the true suspending nature of faith, which you plainly yield, in these two concessions; you would quickly grant the conditional nature of it: for what is the proper nature and true notion of a condition but to suspend the benefits and grants of that covenant in which it is so inserted? And thus the controversy between us is fairly issued. But I doubt you understand not what you have here written, or are troubled with a very bad memory; because I find you in a far different note from this, in p. 103. of your Reply, where you say, 'That if Jesus Christ fulfilled the law, and purchased Heaven and happiness for men, (as all true Protestants hitherto have taught) then nothing can remain, but to declare this to them to incline them to believe and accept it; and to prescribe in what way and by what means they shall finally come to inherit eternal life. To affirm, therefore, that faith and repentance are the conditions of the new covenant required of us in point of duty, antecedent to the benefit of the promise, does necessarily suppose, that Christ has not done all for us, nor purchased a right to life for any but only made way that they might have it upon certain terms, or, as some say, he has merited that we might merit: but the conditions of the covenant are not to be performed by the head and members both, [Galatians 4:4](#). Christ, therefore, having in our stead performed the conditions of life, there remains nothing but a promise and the obedience of children as the fruit and effect thereof to them that believe in him, together with means of obtaining the full possession which here we want.'

Reply. Either these passages I have here cited and compared were fetched at a great distance of time, out of authors differing as much in judgment as you and I do, and so the dissonancy of them is the mere effect of oblivion and incogitancy; or else your intellectuals are more confused and weak than I am willing to suspect them to be. For if the application of pardoning mercy to our souls is in order of nature, consequent to believing, as you truly say it was, then, certainly, notwithstanding

Christ's fulfilling the law, and purchasing Heaven and happiness for men, something else must remain to be done, besides declaring this to them, to incline them to believe and accept it, or prescribing to them in what way they shall finally come to inherit eternal life. For, besides those declarations and prescriptions you talk of, faith itself must be wrought in the souls of men, or else pardoning mercy is not in order of nature, consequent unto believing, as you said it was: for all the external declarations and prescriptions in the world are not faith itself, but only the means to beget it; which may, or may not become effectual to that end.

SECONDLY, Whereas you say, this (senseless notion) is consequent upon the doctrine of all true Protestants; you grossly abuse them, and make all the true Protestants in the world guilty of worse than Arminian, or Antinomian dotage. The Antinomian, indeed, makes our actual justification to be nothing else but the manifestation or declaration of our justification from eternity, or the time of Christ's death. And the Arminian tells us, that the declaration of the gospel to men is sufficient to bring them to faith by the assisting grace of the Spirit. But your notion is worse than the very dregs of both, and yet you tack it as a just consequent to the doctrine of all true Protestants.

Reply, THIRDLY, You say, That to affirm faith and repentance to be the conditions of the new covenant required of us in point of duty, antecedent to the benefit of the promise, does necessarily suppose that Christ has not done all for us, nor purchased a right to life for any; but only made way that they might have it upon certain terms, or merited that we might merit. Here, sir, you vilely abuse all those worthy divines before-mentioned, who have made faith the condition of the new covenant, pinning upon them both Popery and Judaism. Popery, yes, the dregs of Popery, in supposing their doctrine necessarily implies that Christ has merited that we might merit. And Judaism to the height in saying, their doctrine necessarily supposes that Christ has not purchased a right of life to any. What can a Jew say more? Ah, Mr. C. can you read the words I have here recited out of blessed Burroughs, Owen, Pemble, Perkins, Davenant, Downname, yes, the whole assembly of reverend and holy divines, with multitudes more, (who have all with one mouth asserted faith to be the condition of the new covenant required on man's part in point of duty; and that men must believe before they can be justified; which is the very same thing with what I say, that it is an antecedent to the benefit of the promise) and not tremble to think of the direful charges you here draw against them? The Lord forgive your rash presumption.

FOURTHLY, Whereas you say, Christ has, in our stead, performed the conditions of life, and that there remains nothing but a promise, etc. you therein speak in the highest dialect of Antinomianism. Has not Christ, by his life and death performed the conditions of life in our stead? Yet you yourself confess, that pardoning mercy is, in order of nature, consequent to our believing; certainly then there is something more to be done beside the mere making or being of a promise; there must be the effects of the promise in our hearts, yes, the effects of those absolute promises of the first grace, Ezekiel 36. Jeremiah 32. Or else, notwithstanding Christ's performance of redemption on his part, we can neither be justified nor saved. For I do not think you intend to lay the condition of repentance, or believing upon Christ, who, in the new covenant, has laid them upon us, though, in the same covenant, he graciously undertakes to work them in us: and yet your words sound in that wild Antinomian note.

Objections

Objection 1, But, I suppose, you take my notion to be as self-repugnant as your own, when I say faith is an antecedent condition to justification; because I also say, this grace is also supernaturally wrought in us, and is not of ourselves. This staggers

you, and is the very stone you stumble at all along this controversy: for in your sense, p. 34. every condition is meritorious, by condignity, or congruity.

Reply, FIRST, What do I say more in all this than what those worthies before-mentioned, do expressly affirm? Does not Dr. Owen (the man whom you deservedly value) make conditions both in Adam's covenant and the new, with this difference, that Adam's covenant required them, but the new covenant effects them in all the foederates? Sir, We take it for no contradiction to assert, That the planting of the principle, and the assisting and exciting of the acts of faith, are the proper works of the Spirit of God, and are also contained in the absolute promises of the new covenant, [Ezekiel 36:26, 27.](#) [Jeremiah 32:39, 40.](#) And yet faith, notwithstanding this, is truly and properly our work and duty; and that upon our believing or not believing, we have, or have not, an actual interest in Christ, righteousness, and life. For though the author of faith be the Spirit of God, yet believing, is properly our act, and an act required of us by a plain command; [1 John 3:23.](#) This is the command of God, That you believe. And if its being wrought in God's strength makes it cease to be our work, I would gladly know what exposition you would give of that place, [Philippians 2:12, 13.](#) Work out your own salvation, etc. for it is God that works in you both to will and to do. And as this faith is truly and properly our work, though wrought in God's strength (for it is not God, but we that do believe) so it is wrought in us by him (by our own confession) before the application of pardoning mercy, which is consequent in order of nature thereunto: and therefore has the true nature of an antecedent condition, which is that I contend for; and did you but understand your own words, you would not contend against it.

Objection: 2. Oh, but say you, p. 34. every condition is meritorious, either by way of congruity, or condignity.

Reply, This is your ignorance of the nature of a condition, with which I find you as unacquainted, as with the nature of a covenant. A condition, while unperformed, only suspends the act of the law, or testament; it being the will of the testator, legislator, or donor, that his law, or testament, should act, or effect, when the condition is performed, and not before: But it is not essential to a condition, to be a meritorious, or impulsive cause, moving him to bestow the benefit for the sake thereof. A man freely gives another, out of his love and bounty, such an estate, or sum of money, which he shall enjoy, if he live to such a year, or day, and not before; is this *quando dies veniet*, this appointed time the meritorious, or impulsive cause of the gift? Surely no man will say it; but that it is a *causa sine qua non*, or a condition suspending the enjoyment of the gift, no man will deny, that knows what the nature of a condition is. An act meritorious, by way of congruity, is that to which a reward is not due, out of strict justice, but out of decency, or some kind of fitness. Merit of condignity is a voluntary action, for which a reward is due to a man, out of justice, and cannot be denied him, without injustice; our faith is truly the condition of the new covenant, and yet we detest the meritoriousness of it, in either sense.

Objection: 3. But you object my words to me, in my Method of Grace, where I assert the impossibility of believing without the efficacy of supernatural grace, p. 102, 103.

Reply. Sir, I own the words you quote, and am bold to challenge the most envious eye that shall read those lines, to show me the least repugnancy between what I said there, and what I have said in my *Vindiciæ Legis*, etc. p. 9. of the *Prolegomena*, and p. 61. of that book. You show your good-will to make an advantageous thrust, but your weapon is too short, and can draw no blood. But leaving these weak and impertinent cavils, let us come to your solution of my arguments, p. 98. by which I proved the conditionally of the new covenant. My first argument was this:

ARGUMENTS

Argum. 1. If we cannot be justified, or saved, until we believe, and are justified when we believe; then faith is the condition on which those subsequent benefits are suspended, etc.

Answer. The sum of your answer (without denying, distinguishing, or limiting one proposition) is this, That 'here faith is properly put into the room of perfect obedience, and is to do what perfect obedience was to do under the law: Whereas (say you) faith is only appointed as an instrument to receive and apply the righteousness of Christ, which is the alone matter of our justification before God; and faith itself is not our righteousness, as it would be, if it were a condition,' p. 105, 106.

Reply. Not to note the weakness and impertinence of this answer, I shall only take notice of what you here allow, and grant, That faith is appointed as an instrument to receive, and apply the righteousness of Christ, which is the alone matter of our justification before God. Whence I infer three conclusions.

FIRST, That we cannot be justified before God until we believe, except you can prove, that the unaccepted and unapplied righteousness of Christ, does actually justify our persons before God.

SECONDLY, That the justification of our persons before God, is and must be suspended (as by a non-performed condition) until we actually believe. Which two conclusions yield up your cause to my argument, which you here seem to oppose.

THIRDLY, That hereby you perfectly renounce, and destroy your Antinomian fancy before-mentioned, That if Christ have fulfilled the law, and purchased Heaven for men, nothing can remain but to declare this to them, etc. for it seems by this, they must receive, and apply Christ's righteousness by faith, or they cannot be justified (you say not declaratively in their own consciences, but) before God. And thus, instead of answering, you have confirmed, and yielded my first argument, and only oppose your own mistakes, not the sense, or force of my arguments, in all that you say to it, or the scriptures produced to prove it.

Argument 2. To my second argument, recited p. 94. where I argued from God's covenant with Abraham, and proved it to be conditional; and yet by you acknowledged to be a pure gospel covenant: all that you say, is, That you have dispatched that before, in your discourse about the covenant of circumcision, and therefore will say nothing to it here.

Reply. In saying nothing to it here, you have said as much as you did before, in the place you refer to; and therefore finding nothing said here, or there, I conclude you can say nothing to it at all.

Argument 3. My third argument was this: if all the promises of the gospel be absolute and unconditional, then they do not properly belong to the new covenant. That cannot properly and strictly be a covenant, which is not a mutual compact, and in which there is no restipulation, nor re-obligation: it is a naked promise, not a covenant.

To this you answer three things. In the first branch of your answer, you impudently beg the question, by saying, That you have proved already, in your replies to my former arguments, that the new covenant is wholly free and absolute. Upon this absurd *Petitio principii*, you make bold to invert my argument thus, in your second reply: 'If all the promises of the gospel be wholly absolute and unconditional, they do properly and truly belong to the new covenant; but so they are: therefore, etc.' O rare disputant! In the last place, in opposition to the sequel of my major proposition, you tell me, You will oppose the judgment of Dr. Owen on [Hebrews 8:10](#). where he says, 'That a covenant properly is a compact, or agreement, on certain terms,

stipulated by two or more parties, etc. and that the word *ἁπόθεν*, there used, signifies a covenant improperly, etc.

Reply. If you call this an opposition to the sequel of my major, either your brains or mine do want Hellebore. Does he not say the very same thing I do, That there must be a restipulation in a proper covenant? And as for the word *ἁπόθεν*, which, he says, signifies a covenant improperly, but properly is a testamentary disposition, I fully concur with him therein; but I hope a testamentary disposition may have a condition in it; to be sure such a one as I assert faith here to be, which is the free gift of God: and in this sense I showed you before, where the Doctor yields faith to be the condition of the new covenant.

Argument 4. My fourth argument was this, If all the promises of the new covenant be absolute and unconditional, and have no respect nor relation to any grace wrought in us, or duty done by us; then the trial of our interest in Christ by marks and signs of grace, is not our duty, nor can we take comfort in sanctification, as it is an evidence of our justification, etc.

Your answer, p. 120. is, That 'at this rate I may prove quidlibet a quolibet; for it does not follow, that, because the new covenant is absolute, therefore it has no respect nor relation to any grace wrought in us, nor duty done by us, or that we may not justly take comfort in sanctification, as an evidence of our justification.

Reply. If I had a mind to learn the art of proving quidlibet a quolibet, and make myself ridiculous to others, by such foolish attempts, I know no book in the world fitter to instruct me therein than yours. Certainly you have the knack of it, and give us an instance of it but now, in confuting the sequel of my major, by an allegation out of Dr. Owen, which expressly confirms and establishes it. But to the point; I would willingly know how it is possible for sanctification to be a true and certain mark and sign of justification, when (according to the Antinomian principle, which you here too much comprobate and espouse) a man may be justified before he believe, yes, before he is a man, even from the time of Christ's death, and (as others of them speak) from eternity. A true mark and sign must be proper to, and inseparable from that which it signifies. Now, if that be true which you said before, That after Christ's fulfilling of the law in his own person, etc. nothing can remain, but to declare this to men to incline them to believe and accept it, and to prescribe in what way they shall come to inherit eternal life. If this be all that can remain to us, then nothing but the declarations and prescriptions of the gospel, which are things without us, can remain to be marks and signs of justification to us: and consequently all those to whom those declarations and prescriptions are made and given, have therein the marks and evidences of their justification. But I am truly weary of such stuff, I am sure the apostle places vocation before justification. [Romans 8:30](#). "Whom he called, them he justified." And without an immediate testimony from Heaven, I know not how to evidence and prove my justification, but from, and by my faith, and other parts of sanctification; whereby I apprehend and apply the righteousness of Christ: if you can prove it from the declarations and prescriptions of the gospel, I cannot.

Argument 5. My fifth and last argument, ran thus: If the covenant of grace be altogether absolute and unconditional, requiring nothing to be done on our part to entitle us to its benefits, then it cannot be man's duty, in entering covenant with God, to deliberate the terms, count the cost, or give his consent by word or writing, to the terms of this covenant: for where there are no terms at all, (as in absolute promises there are none) there can be none to deliberate. But I showed you, this is man's duty, from clear and undeniable scriptures, etc.

You say, by way of answer hereunto, that 'You must tell me, that the scriptures do make a plain distinction between the new and everlasting covenant, which God has

been pleased to make with sinners in Jesus Christ; and the return of that sincere and dutiful obedience which he requires of us, by way of answer thereunto. (2.) You say, there are many things, which though promised in the covenant, and wrought in us by the grace of God; are yet duties indispensably required of us in order to the participation of the full end of the covenant in glory: and in respect hereof, we are indeed to deliberate the terms, count the cost, and give up ourselves solemnly to him, with sincere resolutions, etc. But then you thought I had understood there had been a vast difference between God's covenant with us, and our covenant with God, citing [Ezekiel 16:59, 60, 61](#). where God promises to "give them their sisters for daughters, but not by their covenant." And with this you compare Psalm 89. "My covenant will I not break;" where (you say) we find a plain distinction between God's covenant with them, and their duty to God. And lastly, you say, p. 105. that the want of a due observation of this plain scripture-distinction, between God's free and absolute covenant made with sinners in Christ, and our covenants with God by way of return thereunto, is the true reason of all our mistakes about the true nature of the gospel covenant, while we jumble and confound together that which the scriptures do so plainly distinguish.'

Reply. To your first answer, I say; it is true, the scriptures do distinguish between covenant and covenant; that of works, and that of grace. It also distinguishes the same covenant of grace for substance, according to its various administrations into the old and new covenant. It also distinguishes between the promissory part of the same covenant of grace, and the restipulatory part; not as two opposite covenants, (as you distinguish them, Genesis 17.) but as the just and necessary parts of one and the same covenant. It also distinguishes between vows made by men to God in some particular cases, and the covenant of grace between God and them. But what is all this to your purpose? Or in what point does it touch my argument? You desire me to cast mine eye upon Ezekiel 16. and Psalm 89. I have done so, and that impartially; and do assure you, I admire why you produce them against my argument. That in Ezekiel speaks of the enlargement of the church by the accession of the Gentiles to it; and the sense of those words seems to me to be this: That this enlargement of the church is a gracious addition, or something beyond what God had ever done in his former dispensations of the covenant to that people. And for Psalm 89. I know not what you mean to produce it for, unless it be to prove what I never denied, That notwithstanding our failures in duty towards God, God will still keep his covenant with us; though he will visit the iniquities of his covenant-people with a rod.

To your second answer, That we are to deliberate the terms and count the cost, with respect to those duties, which are in order to the participation of the full end of the covenant in glory: by which I suppose you mean self-denial, perseverance, etc. I have no controversy with you about that. Our question is, Whether there be no deliberations required of, or to be performed by men who are not yet in Christ by justifying faith, but under some preparatory works towards faith? And whether at the very time of their closing with Christ, there be not a consent of the will unto those terms required of them? If you say there be, (as by the places I alleged it evidently appears there are) then you yield the point I contend for. If you say they are not before, or at the time of believing, to consider any terms, or give their consent to them by word or writing; such an answer would fly in the very face of those scriptures I produced: for then a man may be in covenant without his own consent; he who deliberates not, consents not. And therefore you dared not speak it out (for which modesty I commend you) and so leave me with half an answer, not touching that part, namely, Antecedent deliberations, which were concerned in this argument. And now let your most partial friends judge, whether from this performance of yours, you have any just ground for that vain boast which concludes your answer, namely, 'That the covenants themselves, which those privileges are bottomed on; are now repealed, and that there is no room left for any other argument to infer the baptism of infants: at least, I shall willingly commit it to the judgment of all intelligent and impartial readers, Whether Mr. Cary has any real

ground in this performance of his, for such a thrasonical conclusion, such a vain and fulsome boast?

I find that with like confidence he has also attempted a reply to Mr. Joseph Whiston, a reverend, learned, and aged divine, who has accurately and successfully defended God's covenant with Abraham against Mr. Cox, and doubt not, if Mr. Cary and his party have but confidence enough to expose it to the public view, and to adventure the cause of infant-baptism upon it, the world would quickly see an end of this long-continued and unhappy controversy, which has vexed the church of God, and alienated the affections of good men; and that the wisdom of Providence has permitted and over-ruled this last attempt to the singular advantage of the truths of God, and the tranquility of good men, whose concernment (at this time especially) is rather to strengthen their faith and heighten their encouragements from God's gracious covenant, than to undermine it when all things beside it are shaking and tottering round about them.

And now, Sir, for a coronis to all those things that have been controverted between us about the covenants of God, and the right of believers, infants to baptism, resulting from one of them which I have asserted and argued against you in my first answer, and you have silently and wholly passed over in your reply, hoping to destroy them all at once, by proving God's covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17. to be a pure Adam's covenant of works; I judge it necessary, as matters now lie between us, to give the reader the grounds and reasons of my faith and practice with respect unto the ordinance of infant baptism, and that as succinctly and clearly as I can in the following Thesis; which being laid together by an unprejudiced and considerate reader, will, I think, amount to more than a strong probability, That it is the will of God that the infant seed of believers ought now to be baptized.

But here I must remind the reader, and beg him to review what I have said before in the third Cause of errors, That to arrive to satisfaction in this point, requires a due and serious search of the whole word of God; with a sedate, rational, and impartial mind; comparing one thing with another, though they lie scattered at a distance in the scriptures; some in the Old Testament and some in the New. Bring but these things to an interview, as we do in discovering the change of the Sabbath, and we may arrive unto a due satisfaction of the will of God herein. This I confess, calls for strength of mind, great sedulity, attention, and impartiality; and yet what man would think all this too much, if it were but to clear his children's title unto a small earthly inheritance? I intend not to give the reader here an account of all the arguments drawn from several scripture-topics by the strenuous defenders of infant's baptism; but to keep only to the arguments drawn from God's covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17. which is the scripture mainly controverted between us: You affirming boldly and dangerously that covenant to be no other than an Adam's covenant of works; and I justly denying and abhorring your position upon the grounds and reasons before given, which you neither have, nor ever will be able to destroy. Now that the reader, who has neither time nor ability to read the larger and more elaborate treatises on this subject, may, in one short view, see the deduction of believers' infants right to baptism from this gospel covenant of God with Abraham, I shall gather the substance of what I contend for, and lay it as clearly as I can before the eyes of my reader in, the following Thesis; which being distinctly considered as to the evident truth of each, and then rationally compared one with the other, he will see how each fortifies another, and how all together do strongly confirm this conclusion, That the infants of believers under the gospel, as they naturally descend from Abraham's spiritual seed, are therefore partakers at least of the external privileges of the visible church, and therefore ought now to be baptized.

Thesises

Thesis 1. It has pleased God, in all ages of the world, since man was created, to deal with his church and people by way of covenant, and in the same way he will still deal with them unto the end of the world.

God might have dealt with us in a supreme way of mere sovereignty and dominion, commanding what duties he pleased, and establishing his commands by what penalties he pleased, and never have brought himself under the tie and obligation of a covenant to his own creatures: but he chooses to deal familiarly with his people by way of covenanting, being a familiar way, [2 Samuel 7:19](#). Is this the manner of men, O Lord God, or, (as Junius renders it) and that after the manner of men, O Lord God! it is a way full of condescending grace and goodness: he is willing hereby his people should know what they may certainly expect from their God, as well as what their God requires of them. Hereby also he will furnish them with mighty pleas and arguments in prayer, support their faith against temptations, strengthen their hands in duties of obedience, sweeten their obedience to them, and discriminate his own people from the world.

As soon therefore as man was created and placed in paradise, being made upright and thoroughly furnished with abilities perfectly and completely to obey all the commands of his Maker, the Lord immediately entered into the covenant of works with him, and all his natural posterity in him: And in this covenant his standing or falling was according to the perfection and constancy of his personal obedience, [Genesis 2:17](#). [Galatians 3:10](#). But in this first covenant of works no provision at all was made for his recovery (in case of the least failure) by his repentance or better obedience; but the curse immediately seized both soul and body: and sin, by the fall entering into man's nature, totally disabled him to the perfect performance of any one duty, as that covenant required it to be done, [Romans 8:3](#) nor would God accept any repentance or after-endeavors in lieu of that perfect obedience due by law. So that from the fall of Adam to the end of the world this covenant ceases as a covenant of life, or a covenant able to give righteousness and life unto all mankind for evermore, [Romans 3:20](#). "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" [Galatians 2:16](#). "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." [Galatians 3:11](#). "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, is evident." And it being so evident, that righteousness and life being forever impossible to be obtained upon the terms of Adam's covenant, it must therefore be a self-evident truth, That since the fall God never did, and to the end of the world he never will open that way or door to life (thus blocked up by an absolute impossibility) for the justification and salvation of any man.

Thesis. 2. Soon after the violation and cessation of this first covenant, as a covenant of life, it pleased the Lord to open and publish the second covenant of grace by Jesus Christ, the first dawning whereof we find in [Genesis 3:15](#). where the seed is promised which shall bruise the serpent's head. And though this be but a very short, and somewhat obscure discovery of man's remedy and salvation by Christ; yet was it a joyful sound to the ears of God's people, it was even life from the dead to the believers of those times. For we may rationally conclude, That that space of time between the breaking of the first and making of the second covenant was the most dismal period of time that ever the world did or shall see. This covenant of grace now took place of the covenant of works, and comprehended all believers in the bosom of it. The covenant of works took place from the time it was made until the fall of Adam, and then was abolished as a life-giving covenant. The second covenant took place from the time it was made soon after the fall, and is to continue to the end of the world. And these only are the two covenants God has made with men; the latter succeeding the former, and commencing from its expiration; but both cannot possibly be in force together at the same time, and upon the same persons, as co-ordinate covenants of life and salvation. For in co-ordination they expel and destroy each other, [Galatians 5:4](#). "Whoever of you are justified by the law, you are fallen from grace." The first covenant was a covenant without a mediator; the

second is a covenant with a mediator. Place a believer under both at once, or put these two covenants in co-ordination, and that which results will be a pure contradiction, namely, That a man is saved without a mediator, and yet by a mediator. Moreover, if there be a way to life without a mediator, there was no need to make a covenant in and with a mediator; nor can those words of Christ be true, [John 4:6](#). "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father but by me."

The righteousness of the first covenant was within man himself; the righteousness of the second covenant is without man in Christ. Put these two in co-ordination, and that which results is as pure a contradiction as the former, namely, That a man is justified by a righteousness within him, and yet is justified by a righteousness without him, expressly contrary to the apostle's conclusion, [Romans 3:20](#). "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." It is therefore an intolerable absurdity to place believers under both these covenants at the same time; under the curse of the first, and blessing of the second. For whensoever the state of any person is changed by justification, his covenant is changed with his state, [Colossians 1:13](#). It is as unimaginable that a believer should thus stand under both covenants, as it is to imagine a man may be born of two mothers, [Galatians 4:22, 23, 24, 25](#). or a woman lawfully married to two husbands, [Romans 7:1, 2, 3, 4](#). and more absurd (if it be possible anything can be more absurd) to attribute the most glorious privilege of the covenant of grace, (namely, "I will be a God to you, and to your seed after you," [Genesis 17:7](#).) to the impotent and abolished covenant of works; both which absurdities are asserted in defense of Antipædo-baptism.

And though it be true, that after the first edition of the covenant of grace, the matter of the first covenant was represented to the Israelites in the moral law; yet that representation was intended and designed to be subservient, and added to the promise, [Galatians 3:19](#). and so (as an acute and learned divine speaks) the very decalogue or moral law itself pertained to the covenant of grace; yes, in some sort flowed out of this covenant, as it was promulged by the counsel of God to be serviceable to it; both antecedently to lead men by the conviction of sin, fear of wrath, and self-despair, to the covenant of grace; and also consequently as it is a pattern of obedience and rule of holiness. For had it been published as a covenant designed intentionally to its primitive use and end, it had totally frustrated the covenant of grace.

Thesis 3. Though the primordial light or first glimmerings of this covenant of grace, were comparatively weak and obscure; yet from the first publication of it to Adam, God in all ages has been amplifying the privileges, and heightening the glory of this second covenant in all the after expressions and editions of it unto this day, and will more and more amplify and illustrate it to the end of the world.

That first promise, [Genesis 3:15](#). is like the first small spring or head of a great river, which the farther it runs, the bigger it grows by the accession of more waters to it. Or like the sun in the heavens, which the higher it mounts, the more bright and glorious the day still grows.

In that period of time, between Adam and Abraham, we find no token of God's covenant ordered therein to be applied to the infant seed of believers. But in that second edition of the covenant to Abraham, the privileges of the covenant were amplified, and his infant-seed not only taken into the covenant (as they were before) but also added to the visible church, by receiving the token of the covenant, which then was circumcision; and so here is a great addition made to the visible church, even the whole infant off-spring of adult believers.

From that period, until the coming of the Messiah in the flesh, the Jewish church, and their infant-seed, except only some few proselytes out of the Gentile nations, made up the visible church of God, and the poor Gentiles were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, [Ephesians 2:12](#). but in this glorious third period the covenant again enlarges itself more than before, and the privileges of it are no longer limited, and restrained to the Jewish believers, and their infant-seed; but the Gentiles also are taken into the covenant, and the door of faith was opened unto them, [Acts 14:27](#). the partition-wall was now broken down, which separated the church from the Gentile world, [Ephesians 2:14](#). This was a glorious enlargement of the covenant, and many glorious prophecies and promises were fulfilled in it; such as those, [Isaiah 11:10](#). and [42:1](#), [6](#). [49:22](#). [54:3](#). [60:3](#), [5](#), [11](#), [16](#). [62:2](#), etc.

And though the covenant, as to its external part, seems to have lost ground in the breaking off of the Jewish nation from the church; yet, like the sea, what it loses in one place, it gains with advantage upon another: The addition of many Gentile nations to the church, more than recompenses for the present breaking off of that one nation of the Jews. And indeed they are broken off but for a time, for God shall engraft them in again, [Romans 11:23](#). This therefore being the design of God, and steady course of his covenant of grace, more and more to enlarge itself in all ages; nothing can be more opposite to the nature of this covenant, than to narrow and contract its privileges in its farther progress, and cut off a whole species from it, which it formerly took in.

Thesis 4. It is past all doubt and contradiction, that the infant-seed of Abraham, under the second edition of the covenant of grace, were taken with their believing parents into God's gracious covenant, had the seal of that covenant applied to them, and were thereby added to the visible church, [Genesis 17:7, 8, 9, 10, 11](#). which was a gracious privilege of the covenant superadded to all the former, and such as sweeps away all the frivolous and groundless cavils and exceptions of those that object the incapacity of infants to enter into covenant with God, or receive benefit from the external privileges of the visible church. Nor can the subtlest enemy to infant-baptism give us a convincing reason why the infants of Gentile believers are not equally capable of the same benefits that the infants of Jewish believers were, if they still stand under the same covenant that the former stood under; and God has no where repealed the gracious grant formerly made to the infant-seed of his covenant-people.

Thesis 5. It is to me clear, beyond all contradiction, from [Romans 11:17](#). "If some of the branches be broken off, and you being a wild olive-tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive-tree:" I say I can scarce desire a clearer scripture-light than this text gives, to satisfy my understanding in this case, that when God brake off the unbelieving Jews from the church, both parents and children together, the believing Gentiles, which are as truly Abraham's seed as they were, [Galatians 3:29](#). yes, the more excellent seed of Abraham, were implanted or engrafted in their room, and do as amply enjoy the privileges of that covenant, both internal and external, for themselves and for their infant-seed, as ever any members of the Jewish church did or could do.

Our adversaries in this controversy do pitifully and apparently shuffle here, and invent many strange and unintelligible distinctions to be-cloud the light of this famous text. What they are, and how they are baffled, the reader will easily discern from what has already past between my antagonist and me, in p. 108, etc. of my *Vindiciæ Legis et Fæderis*. It is plain that Abraham is the root; the olive-tree, the visible church; the sap and fatness of the olive, are church-ordinances and covenant-privileges; the Gentile believers, who are Abraham's seed according to promise, are the engrafted branches standing in the place of the natural branches, and with them,

or in like manner as they did, partaking of the root and fatness of the olive-tree, that is, as really and amply enjoying all the immunities, benefits, and privileges of the church and covenant (among which the initiating sign was one, and a chief one too) as ever the natural branches that were broken off, that is, the Jewish parents and their children, did or might have done. And to deny this, (as before was noted) is to straiten covenant-privileges in their farther progress.

Thesis 6. Suitable hereunto we find, that no sooner was the Christian church constituted, and the believing Gentiles by faith added to it, but the children of such believing parents are declared to be federally holy, [1 Corinthians 7:14](#). and the unbelieving Jews, who were superstitiously fond of circumcision, and prejudiced against baptism as an injurious innovation, are by the apostle persuaded to submit themselves to it, [Acts 2:38, 39](#). assuring them that the same promise, namely, I will be a God to you, and to your seed after you, is now as effectually sealed to them and their children by baptism, as it was in the former age by circumcision: And that the Gentiles, which are yet afar off, whenever God shall call them, shall equally enjoy the same privilege, both for themselves and for their children also.

We also find a commission given by Christ to the disciples, [Matthew 28:19, 20](#). To disciple all nations, baptizing them, etc. from which discipleship, infants ought not to be excluded, [Acts 15:10](#). Yes, we find, that as at the institution of circumcision, Abraham, the father and master of the family, was first circumcised in his own person, and then his whole household, [Genesis 17:23, 24](#). answerably, as soon as any person by conversion or public profession of faith became a visible child of Abraham, that person was first baptized, and the whole household with him or her, [Acts 16:15, 33](#). It is unreasonable to put us upon the proof, that there were infants in those houses; it being more than probable that in such frequent baptizing of households belonging to believers, there were some infants; but if there were none, it is enough for us to prove from their federal holiness, [1 Corinthians 7:14](#). and the extent of God's promises to them, [Acts 2:38, 39](#) if there had been never so many infants in those households, they might and ought to have been baptized. How the true sense and scope of the two last mentioned scriptures are maintained and vindicated against Mr. Cary's corrupt glosses and interpretations, see my *Vindiciæ Legis et Fœderis*, p. 90, 91. We do not lay the stress of infant-baptism upon such strictures as the baptizings of the household's of believers, or Christ's taking up in his arms, and blessing the little ones that were brought to him. These and many other such things found in the history of Christ, and Acts of the apostles, have their use and service to fortify that doctrine. But if we can produce no example of any believer's infant baptized, the merit of the cause lies not in the matter of fact, but covenant-right. For our adversaries themselves, if we go to the matter of fact, will be hard put to it to produce us one instance out of the New Testament of any child of a believing Christian whose baptism was deferred, or by Christ or his apostles ordered to be deferred, until he attained the years of maturity, and made a personal profession of faith himself.

Thesis 7. The change of the token and seal of the covenant from circumcision to baptism, will by no means infer the change or diversity of the covenants, especially when the latter comes into the place, and serves to the same use and end with the former, as it is manifest baptism does, from [Colossians 2:11, 12](#). as has been, I think, sufficiently argued against Mr. Cary's glosses and exceptions, p. 100, 101. of my *Vindicia Legis et Fœderis*. The covenant is still the same covenant of grace, though the external initiating sign be changed. For what is the substantial part of the covenant of grace now, but the same it was to Abraham and his seed before? Is not this our covenant of grace, [Hebrews 8:10](#). "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me "a people?" And in what words was Abraham's covenant expressed, [Genesis 17:7](#). "I will establish my covenant between, me and you, and your seed after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you." This makes Abraham's covenant, sealed to him and his seed,

as truly and properly the covenant of grace, as that which baptism now seals to believers and their seed. The rash ignorance of those that affirm, God may become a people's God in the way of special interest, by virtue of the broken and abolished covenant of works, rather deserves sharp reprehension and sad lamentation, than a confutation; which, nevertheless out of respect to my friend Mr. Cary, I have given it in its proper place in this rejoinder.

I hope by this time I have made it evident, that the defenders of infant-baptism, as it is established upon God's covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17. have not so mistaken their ground, as Mr. Cary has, by his endeavors to carry that covenant as an Adam's covenant of works, through such a multitude of other errors and absurdities, as he draws along with it in his way of reasoning.

A POSTSCRIPT TO MR. CARY

SIR,

I RESOLVED not to disturb my mind with your passionate provoking language, at least while I was busily employed in searching for reason and argument (two scarce commodities) among heaps of vain and fulsome words: Nor will I now imitate your folly and rudeness, lest I become an offender, while I am to act the part of a reprovee. When I read your title, A just and sober Reply, and presently fell in among rude insults, silly evasions, and such inartificial discourses as follow in your book, I began to challenge you in my thoughts for matching such bad stuff with so fair and lovely a title: But a second thought quickly corrected the former; for I considered, no man living could justly forbid the marriage between your book and its title, since there is not the least kindred or relation between them.

Had your answers been just, you would have observed the rules of a respondent, which you have not done; and if they had been sober, you had never been so free in your reproaches, and sparing in your arguments, as you have been. Is this the man, of whom it is said in the Epistle to his Solemn Call, That his lines are free from refection and reproach towards those of the persuasion he contends with? Is this my old friendly neighbor? It calls to my mind the Italian proverb, God keep us from our friends, and we will do what we can to keep ourselves from our enemies. And though you act the part of an enemy, you shall be my friend whether you will or not. If you will not be my friend out of love, I will make you so by a good improvement of your hatred.

I have been musing with myself, what might be the true cause of all your rage against my book; one while I thought it proceeded from want of discretion, that you were not able to distinguish between an adversary in a controversy, and an adversary to the person; but thought every blow that was given to your error, must needs be a mortal wound to your reputation. But, Sir, how close and smart soever my discourses against your errors be, I am sure they are more full of civility and respect to you, than such a reply as you have made deserves: And if, in exposing your errors, your reputation be exposed, you must blame them for occasioning it, and not me.

Sometimes I thought it an effect of your policy, that when followed close, and hard put to it, you endeavored an escape this way. And Hierom long ago told Helvidius his adversary: being vanquished by truth, he betook himself to ill language. After the same manner you act here, being no longer able to defend yourself by solid and

sober ratiocination, you trust to your faculty in incrimination; bad causes only drive men into such refuges.

In a word, I am satisfied that nothing but your extravagant zeal for your idolized opinion, could have thrown you into such disingenuous methods and artifices as these. The Ephesians were quiet enough until their Diana began to totter. Your passionate outcries signify to me, something is touched to the quick, which you are more fondly in love with than you ought. When one told Luther what hideous outcries his enemies made against him, and how they reviled him in their books; I know by their roaring (says he) that I have hit them right.

You tell me in your reply, p. 24. That you perceive I have a mighty itch to find out your absurdities. I wish, Sir, you were no more troubled with the itch after them than I am after the discovery of them. Had I affected such employments I could easily have gathered three to one out of your book more than I did; and have represented those I gathered much more odiously (and yet justly) than I did: but friendship constrained me to handle them (because yours) as gently as I could.

I might have justly charged you from what you say, p. 174, 175. of your Solemn Call, where you place all the believers on earth, without exception of any, under the covenant of works, as a ministration of death and condemnation, and the severest penalties of a dreadful curse: I might thereupon have justly charged you for presenting to the world such a monstrous sight as was never seen before since the creation, namely, a whole church of condemned and cursed believers. This I might as well have charged upon your position, and done it no wrong.

I could tell you from what you say, p. 76. of your reply, That God does indeed, in the covenant of works, make over himself to sinners, to be their God in a way of special interest; but it being upon such hard terms, that it is utterly impossible that way to attain unto life, etc. I could justly have told you, that these passages of yours drop pure nonsense upon the reader's understanding; as if salvation were impossible to be attained by the same covenant, wherein God becomes our God, and makes over himself by way of special interest to us.

Had I had an itch to expose the burlesque and ridiculous stuff which lies obvious enough in your book, I should then have told your reader, That according to your doctrine, how opposite and inconsistent soever the two covenants of works and grace are, yet the same subjects, namely, believers, may, at once, not only stand under them both, but that the same common seal, namely, circumcision, equally ratifies and confirms them both: For you allow, in your Call, p. 205. That it sealed the covenant of grace to believing Abraham, and yet was a seal of the covenant of works, yes, the very condition of that covenant, as you frequently affirm it to be. Vide p. 81. of your Reply, and Passim.

I could as easily and justly have told you, That the most malicious Papist could scarcely have invented a more horrid reproach against our famous orthodox Protestant Divines than you (I dare not say maliciously, but) ignorantly have done; when you charge such men as Mr. Francis Roberts, Mr. Obadiah Sedgwick, and, indeed, all that assert the law, complexly taken, to be an obscurer covenant of grace; that they comprise perfect doing with the consequent curse for non-performance and believing in Christ unto life and salvation in one and the same covenant: This is an intolerable abuse of yours, p. 5. of your Reply. They generally assert the law in that complex sense and latitude you take it, to be a true covenant of grace, though more obscurely administered; and that the distinction of the covenants into old and new, is no parallel distinction with that of works and grace, or of Christ's and Adam's covenant. Your public recantation of the injury you have done the very Protestant cause herein, is your unquestionable duty, yet scarce a due reparation of the injury.

In a word, I cannot but look upon it as a discovery of your great weakness, That when you meet with such a difficulty as poses your understanding, and you cannot possibly reconcile with your notion; as that of Paul's circumcising Timothy, and you affirming that the very act of circumcision did, in its own nature, oblige all on whom it passed to the perfect observation of the law for righteousness, you will rather chose to leave the blessed apostle in a contradiction to his own doctrine, than to your vain notion: For what do you say, p. 95, of your Reply? That however the case stood in that respect, this is certain, etc. It also argues weakness in you to insist upon, aggravate, jeer, and reproach at that rate you do, p. 38. of your Reply, for the mistake and mis-placing of one figure, namely, Genesis 12. for Genesis 17. as if the merit of the whole cause depended on it. The like I may say of your charging me with nonsense, for putting [Genesis 17:7, 8.](#) for [Genesis 17:9, 10.](#) when yet yourself, p. 205. of your Call, tell us, That circumcision was appointed as a sign, or token of the covenant, [Genesis 17:7, 8, 9.](#) What pitiful trifles are these to raise such a mighty triumph upon? When Dureus accused our famous Whitaker for one or two trivial, verbal mistakes, Whitaker returned him the same answer I shall give you: It is well the case of the church depends not upon such trifles.

For a conclusion; I do seriously warn all men to beware of receiving doctrines so destructive to the great truths of the gospel as these are. And I do solemnly profess I have not designedly strained them, to cast reproach upon him that published them; but the matters are so plain, that if Mr. Cary will maintain his positions, not only myself, but every intelligent reader, will be easily able to fasten all those odious consequents upon him, after all his apologies.

Sir, in a word, I dare not say but you are a good man; but since I read your two books, you have made me think more than once, of what one said of Jonah after he had read his history, that he was a strange man of a good man: Yet as strange a good man as you are, I hope to meet you with a sounder head and better spirit in Heaven.

The Second APPENDIX: Giving a brief Account of the Rise and Growth of ANTINOMIANISM; the Deduction of the principal Errors of that Sect, With modest and seasonable reflections upon them.

THE design of the following sheets, cast in as a Mantissa to the foregoing discourse of Errors, is principally to discharge and free the free grace of God from those dangerous errors, which fight against it under its own colors; partly to prevent the seduction of some that stagger; and, lastly, (though least of all) to vindicate my own doctrine, the scope and current whereof has always been, and shall ever be, to exalt the free grace of God in Christ, to draw the vilest of sinners to him, and relieve the distressed consciences of sin-burdened Christians.

But, notwithstanding my utmost care and caution, some have been apt to censure it, as if in some things it had a tang of Antinomianism: But if my public or private discourses be the faithful messengers of my judgment and heart, (as I hope they are) nothing can be found in any of them casting a friendly aspect upon any of their principles, which I here justly censure as erroneous.

Three things I principally aim at in this short Appendix.

1. To give the reader the most probable rise of Antinomianism.
2. An account of the principal errors of that sect.
3. To confirm and establish Christians against them by sound reasons, backed with scripture-authority. And,

I. Of the rise of Antinomianism

The scriptures foreseeing there would arise such a sort of men in the church, as would wax wanton against Christ, and turn his grace into lasciviousness; has not only cautioned us in general to beware of such opinions as corrupt the doctrine of free-grace, [Romans 6:1, 2](#). "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid:" But has particularly indigitated and marked those very opinions by which it would be abused, and made abundant provision against them; as namely,

1. All slighting and vilifying opinions or expressions of the holy law of God, [Romans 7:7, 12](#).
2. All opinions and principles inclining men to a careless disregard and neglect of the duties of obedience, under pretense of free grace, and liberty by Christ, James 2. Matthew 25.
3. All opinions neglecting or slighting sanctification, as the evidence of our justification, and rendering it needless or sinful to try the state of our souls, by the graces of the Spirit wrought in us, which is the principal scope of the first epistle of John.

Notwithstanding, such is the wickedness of some, and the weakness of others, that in all ages (especially the last past, and present) men have audaciously broken in upon the doctrine of free grace, and notoriously violated and corrupted it, to the great reproach of Christ, scandal of the world, and hardening of the enemies of reformation. 'Behold, (says Contzen the Jesuit, on Matthew 24.) the fruit of Protestantism, and their gospel-preaching.'

Nothing is more opposite to looseness than the free grace of God, which teaches us, That denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Nor can it without manifest violence be made pliable to such wicked purposes; and therefore the apostle tells us, [Jude 4](#). that this is done by turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness; by a corrupt abusive interpretation, to such uses and purposes as it abhors. No such wanton, licentious conclusions can be inferred from the gospel-doctrines of grace and liberty, but by wrestling them against their true scope and intent, by the wicked arts and practices of deceivers upon them.

The gospel makes sin more odious than the law did, and discovers the punishment of it in a more severe and dreadful manner, than ever it was discovered before. [Hebrews 2:2, 3](#). "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience, received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" It shows our obligations to duty to be stronger than ever, and our encouragements to holiness greater than ever, [2 Corinthians 7:1](#). and yet corrupt nature will be still tempting men to corrupt and abuse it. The more luscious the food is, the more men are apt to surfeit upon it.

This perversion and abuse of free grace and Christian liberty, is justly chargeable (though upon different accounts) both upon wicked and good men. Wicked men corrupt it designedly, that by entitling God to their sins, they might sin the more quietly and securely. So the devil instigated the Heathens to sin against the light and law of nature, by representing their gods to them as drunken and lascivious deities. So the Nicolaitans, and the school of Simon, and after them the Gnostics, and other Heretics in the very dawning of gospel-light and liberty, began presently to loose the bond of restraint from their lusts, under pretense of grace and liberty. The Etiani blushed not to teach, That sin, and perseverance in sin, could hurt the salvation of none, so that they would embrace their principles.

How vile and abominable inferences the Manichæans, Valentinians, and Cerdonites drew from the grace and liberty of the gospel, in the following ages, I had rather mourn over than recite; and if we come down to the fifteenth century, we shall find the Libertines of those days as deeply drenched in this sin, as most that went before them. Calvin mournfully observes, That under pretense of Christian liberty, they trampled all godliness under foot; the vile courses their loose opinions soon carried them into, plainly discovered for what intents and purposes they were projected and calculated: and he who reads the preface to that grave and learned Mr. Thomas Gataker's book, entitled, God's eye upon Israel, will find, That some Antinomians of our days are not much behind the worst and vilest of them. One of them cries out, Away with the law, away with the law, it cuts off a man's legs, and then bids him walk. Another says, It is as possible for Christ himself to sin, as for a child of God to sin. That if a man, by the Spirit, know himself to be in a state of grace, though he be drunk or commit murder, God sees no sin in him. With much more of the same bran, which I will not transcribe.

But others there are, whose judgments are unhappily tainted and leavened with those loose doctrines; yet being in the main godly persons, they dare not take liberty to sin, or live in the neglect of known duties, though their principles too much incline that way; but though they dare not, others will, who imbibe corrupt notions from them; and the renowned piety of the authors will be no antidote against the danger, but make the poison operate the more powerfully, by receiving it in such a vehicle. Now it is highly probable, such men as these might be charmed into such dangerous opinions, upon such accounts as these:

1. It is like some of them might have felt in themselves the anguish of a perplexed conscience under sin, and not being able to live with these terrors of the law, and dismal fears of conscience, might too hastily snatch at those doctrines which promise them relief and ease, as I noted before in the fifth Cause of my Treatise of Errors. And that this is not a guess at random, will appear from the very title page of Mr. Saltmarsh's book of free-grace, where (as an inducement to the reader to swallow his Antinomian doctrine) he shows him this curious bait.

It is (says he) an experiment of Jesus Christ upon one who has been in the bondage of a troubled conscience, at times, for the space of about twelve years, until now upon a clearer discovery of Jesus Christ in the gospel, etc.

2. Others have been induced to espouse these opinions from the excess of their zeal against the errors of the Papists, who have notoriously corrupted the doctrine of justification by free grace; decried imputed, and exalted inherent righteousness above it. The Papists have designedly and industriously sealed up the scriptures from the people, lest they should there discover those sovereign and effectual remedies, which God has provided for their distressed consciences, in the riches of his own grace, and the meritorious death of Christ; and so all their masses, pilgrimages, auricular confessions, with all their dear indulgences, should lie upon their hands as stale and cheap commodities. Oh, (said Stephen Gardiner) let not this gap of free grace be opened to the people.

But as soon as the light of reformation had discovered the free grace of God to sinners, (which is indeed the only effectual remedy of distressed consciences) and by the same light the horrid cheats of the man of sin were discovered; all good men, who were enlightened by the reformation, justly and deeply abhorred Popery, as the enemy of the grace of God and true peace of conscience, and fixed themselves upon the sound and comfortable doctrines of justification by faith through the alone righteousness of Christ. Meanwhile, thankfully acknowledging, that those who believe, ought also to maintain good works. But others there were, transported by an indiscreet zeal, who have almost bended the grace of God as far too much the other

way, and have both spoken and written many things very unfitting the grace of God, and tending to looseness and neglect of duty.

3. It is manifest, that others of them have been engulfed and sucked into those dangerous quicksands of Antinomian errors, by separating the Spirit from the written word. If once a man pretend the Spirit without the scriptures to be his rule, where will not his own deluding fancies carry him, under a vain and sinful pretense of the Spirit?

In the year 1528, when Helsar, Traier, and Seekler, were confuted by Hallerus; and their errors about oaths, magistrates and pædo-baptism, were detected by him and by Colveus at Bern, that which they had to say for themselves was, That the Spirit taught them otherwise than the letter of the Scriptures speak. So dangerous it is to separate what God has conjoined, and father our own fancies upon the Holy Spirit.

4. And it is not unlike, but a comparative weakness, and injudiciousness of mind, meeting with a fervent zeal for Christ and his glory, may induce others to espouse such taking, and plausible, though pernicious doctrines; they are not aware of the dangerous consequents of the opinions they embrace, and what looseness may be occasioned by them: I speak not of occasions taken, but given, by such opinions and expressions; a good man will draw excellent inferences of duty from the very same doctrine. Instance that of the shortness of time, from whence the apostle infers abstinence, strictness, and diligence, [1 Corinthians 7:29](#). but the Epicure infers all manner of dissolute and licentious practices, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die," [1 Corinthians 15:22](#). The best doctrines are this way liable to abuse.

But let all good men beware of such opinions and expressions, as give an handle to wicked men to abuse the grace of God, which haply the author himself dare not do, and may strongly hope others may not do: but if the principle will yield it, it is in vain to think corrupt nature will not catch at it, and make a vile use and dangerous improvement of it.

For example, If such a principle as this be asserted for a truth before the world, That men need not fear that any, or all the sins they commit, shall do them any hurt; let the author, or any man in the world, warn and caution readers (as the Antinomian author of that expression has done) not to abuse this doctrine, it is to no purpose: the doctrine itself is full of dangerous consequents, and wicked men have the best skill to infer and draw them forth, to cherish and countenance their lusts; that which the author might design for the relief of the distressed, quickly turns itself into poison, in the affections of the wicked; nor can we excuse it, by saying any gospel-truth may be thus abused; for this is one of that number, but a principle that gives offence to the godly, and encouragement to the ungodly. And so much as to the rise and occasion of Antinomian errors.

2. In the next place, let us view some of the chief doctrines commonly called Antinomian, among which there will be found a $\text{\textcircled{D}}\text{\textcircled{n}}\text{\textcircled{u}}\text{\textcircled{o}}\text{\textcircled{i}}\text{\textcircled{i}}\text{\textcircled{o}}\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{\textcircled{i}}\text{\textcircled{o}}$, the radical and most prolific error, from which most of the rest are spawned and procreated.

Errors

Error 1. I shall begin with the dangerous mistake of the Antinomians in the doctrine of justification. The article of justification is deservedly stiled by our Divines, *Articulus stantis, vel cadentis religionis*, the very pillar of the Christian religion.

In two things, however, I must do the Antinomians right: (1.) In acknowledging, that though their errors about justification be great and dangerous, yet they are not so much about the substance as about the mode of a sinner's justification; an error far inferior to that of the Papists, who depress the righteousness of Christ, and exalt their own inherent righteousness in the business of justification. (2.) I am bound in

charity to believe, that some among them do hold those errors but speculatively, while the truth lies nearer their hearts, and will not allow them to reduce their own opinions into practice. Now as to their errors about justification, the most that I have read do make Justification to be an immanent and eternal act of God; and do affirm, the elect were justified before themselves or the world had a being. Others come lower, and affirm, The elect were justified at the time of Christ's death. With these Dr. Crisp harmonizes.

Error 2. That justification by faith is no more but a manifestation to us of what was really done before we had a being. Hence Mr. Saltmarsh thus defines faith, It is, says he, a being persuaded more or less of Christ's love to us; so that when we believe, that which was hidden before does then appear. God (says another) cannot charge one sin upon that man who believes this truth, That God laid his iniquities upon Christ.

Error 3. That men ought not to doubt of their faith, or question, Whether we believe, or no: Nay, That we ought no more to question our faith than to question Christ. Saltmarsh of Free Grace, p. 92, 95.

Error 4. That believers are not bound to confess sin, mourn for it, or pray for the forgiveness of it; because it was pardoned before it was committed; and pardoned sin is no sin. See Eaton's Honeycomb, p. 446, 447.

Error 5. They say, That God sees no sin in believers, whatever sins they commit. Some of them, as Mr. Town and Mr. Eaton speak out and tell us, That God can see no adultery, no lying, no blasphemy, no cozening in believers; for though believers do fall into such enormities, yet all their sins being pardoned from eternity, they are no sins in them. Town's Assertions, p. 96, 97, 98. Eaton's Honeycomb, chapter 7. p. 136, 137. with others of a more pernicious character than these.

Error 6. That God is not angry with the elect, nor does he smite them for their sins; and to say that he does so is an injurious reflection upon the justice of God. This is avouched generally in all their writings.

Error 7. They tell us, That by God's laying our iniquities upon Christ, he became as completely sinful as we, and we as completely righteous as Christ. Vide Dr. Crisp, p. 270.

Error 8. Upon the same ground it is that they affirm, That believers need not fear either their own sins, or the sins of others; for that neither their own, nor any other men's sins can do them any hurt, nor must they do any duty for their own salvation.

Error 9. They will not allow the new covenant to be made properly with us, but with Christ for us; and that this covenant is all of it a promise, having no condition on our part. They do not absolutely deny that faith, repentance, and obedience are conditions in the new covenant; but say, They are not conditions on our part, but Christ's; and that he repented, believed, and obeyed for us. Saltmarsh of Free Grace, p. 126, 127.

Error 10. They speak very slightingly of trying ourselves by marks and signs of grace. Saltmarsh often calls it a weak, low, carnal way; but the New-England Antinomians, or Libertines, call it a fundamental error, to make sanctification an evidence of justification: that it is to light a candle to the sun; that it darkens our justification; and that the darker our sanctification is, the brighter our justification is. See their book entitled, Rise, Reign. Error 72.

In this breviatè, or summary account of Antinomian doctrines, I have only singled out, and touched some of their principal mistakes and errors into which some of them run much farther than others. But I look upon such doctrines to be in

themselves of a very dangerous nature, and the malignity and contagion would certainly spread much farther into the world than it does, had not God provided two powerful antidotes to resist the malignity, namely,

1. The scope and current of scripture.
2. The experience and practice of the saints.

(1.) These doctrines run cross to the scope and current of the scriptures, which constantly speak of all unregenerate persons (without exception of the very elect themselves, during that state) as children of wrath, even as others, without Christ, and under condemnation.

They frequently discover God's anger, and tell us his castigatory rods of affliction are laid upon them for their sins.

They represent sin as the greatest evil; most opposite to the glory of God and good of the saints; and are therefore filled with cautions and threatenings to prevent their sinning.

They call the saints frequently and earnestly, not only to mourn for their sins before the Lord; but to pray for the pardon and remission of them in the blood of Christ.

They give us a far different account of saving faith, and do not place it in a persuasion more or less of Christ's love to us, or a manifestation in our consciences of the actual remission of our sins before we had a being; but in receiving Christ as the gospel offers him for righteousness and life.

They frequently call the people of God to the examination and trial of their interest in Christ by marks and signs: and accordingly furnish them with variety of such marks from the divers parts or branches of sanctification in themselves.

They earnestly and everywhere press believers to strictness and constancy in the duties of religion, as the way wherein God would have them to walk. They infer duties from privileges; and therefore the Antinomian dialect is a wild note which the generality of serious Christians do easily distinguish from the scripture-stile and language.

(2.) The experience and practice of the saints recorded in scripture, as well as our contemporaries, or those whose lives are recorded for our imitation, do greatly secure us from the spreading malignity of Antinomianism. Converse with the living, or read the histories of dead saints, and you shall find, that in their addresses to God they still bless and praise him, for that great and wonderful change of state which was made upon them when they first believed in Christ, and on their believing passed from death to life; freely acknowledged before God, they were before their conversion equal in sin and misery with the vilest wretches in the world: they heartily mourn for their daily sins, fear nothing more than sin, no afflictions in the world go so near their hearts as sin does: they can mourn for the hardness of their hearts, that they can mourn no more for sin. They acknowledge the rods of God that are upon them, are not only the evidences of his displeasure against them for their sins, but the fruits of their uneven walking with him; and that the greatest of their afflictions is less than the least of their iniquities deserve. They fall at their Father's feet as oft as they fall into sin, humbly and earnestly suing for pardon through the blood of Christ. They are not only sensible that God sees sin in them, but that he sees such and so great evils in them, as makes them admire at his patience, that they are not consumed in their iniquities. They find cause enough to suspect their own sincerity, doubt the truth of their faith, and of their graces; and are therefore frequent and serious in the trial and examination of their own states by scripture marks and signs. They urge the commands and threatenings, as well as the promises, upon their

own hearts to promote sanctification; excite themselves to duty and watchfulness against sin; they also encourage themselves by the rewards of obedience, knowing their labor is not in vain in the Lord: and all this while they look not for that in themselves, which is only to be found in Christ; nor for that in the law, which is only to be found in the gospel; nor for that on earth which is only to be found in Heaven: this is the way that they take. And he who shall tell them their sins can do them no hurt, or their duties do them no good, speaks to them not only as a Barbarian, in a language they understand not, but in such a language as their souls detest and abhor.

Moreover, the zeal and love of Christ and his glory being kindled in their souls, they have no patience to hear such doctrines as so greatly derogate from his glory, under a pretense of honoring and exalting him: it wounds and grieves their very hearts to see the world hardened in their prejudices against reformation, and a gap opened to all licentiousness.

But, notwithstanding this double antidote and security, we find, by daily experience, such doctrines too much obtaining in the professing world. For my own part, he who searches my heart and reins, is witness, I would rather chose to have my right hand wither, and my tongue rot within my mouth, than to speak one word, or write one line to cloud and diminish the free grace of God. Let it arise and shine in its meridian glory. None owes more to it, or expects more from it than I do; and what I shall write in this controversy, is to vindicate it from those doctrines and opinions, which, under pretense of exalting it, do really militate against it. To begin therefore with the first and leading error.

Error I. That the justification of sinners is an immanent and eternal act of God, not only preceding all acts of sin, but the very existence of the sinner himself, and so perfectly abolishing sin in our persons, that we are as clean from sin as Christ himself; as some of them have spoken. To stop the progress of this error I shall,

1. Lay down the sentence of the orthodox about it.

2. Offer some reasons for the refutation of it.

- (1.) That which I take to be the truth agreed upon, and asserted by sound and reformed divines, touching gospel-justification, is by them made clear to the world, in these following scriptural distinctions of it.

Justification may be considered under a twofold respect or habitude.

1. According to God's eternal decree; or,

2. According to the execution thereof in time.

1. According to God's eternal decree and purpose; and in this respect grace is said to be "given us in Christ before the world began," [2 Timothy 1:9](#). and we are said to be "predestined to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ," [Ephesians 1:5](#).

2. According to the execution thereof in time, so they again distinguish it by considering it two ways:

1. In its impetration by Christ.

2. In its application to us.

That very mercy or privilege of justification, which God from all eternity, purely out of his benevolent love, purposed and decreed for his elect, was also in time purchased for them by the death of Christ, [Romans 5:9, 10](#). where we are said to be

"justified by his blood;" and he is said to have "made peace through the blood of his cross, to reconcile all things to himself," [Colossians 1:20](#). to be "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," [Romans 4:25](#). Once more, "That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses," [2 Corinthians 5:19](#). God the Father had in the death of Christ, a foundation of reconciliation, whereby he became propitious to his elect, that he might absolve and justify them. Again,

2. It must be considered in its application to us, which application is made in this life at the time of our effectual calling. When an elect sinner is united to Christ by faith, and so passes from death to life, from a state of condemnation into a state of absolution and favor; this is our actual justification, [Romans 5:1](#). [Acts 13:39](#). [John 5:24](#). which actual justification is again considered two ways:

1. Universally and in general, as to the state of the person.

2. Specifically and particularly, as to the acts of sin.

As soon as we are received into communion with Christ, and his righteousness is imputed by God, and received by faith, immediately we pass from a state of death and condemnation to a state of life and justification, and all sins already committed, are remitted without exception or revocation; and not only so, but a remedy is given us in the righteousness of Christ against sins to come: and though these special and particular sins we afterward fall into, do need particular pardons; yet, by the renewed acts of faith and repentance, the believer applies to himself the righteousness of Christ, and they are pardoned.

Again, they carefully distinguish between,

1. Its application by God to our persons. And,

2. Its declaration, or manifestation in us, and to us.

Which manifestation, or declaration, is either,

1. Private, in the conscience of a believer, or,

2. Public, at the bar of judgment.

And thus justification is many ways distinguished. And, notwithstanding all this, it is still actus indivisus, an undivided act, not on our part, for it is iterated in many acts; but on God's part, who at once decreed it; and on Christ's part, who by one offering purchased it, and, at the time of our vocation, universally applied it, as to the state of the person justified; and that so effectually, as no future sin shall bring that person any more under condemnation.

In this sentence or judgment the generality of reformed, orthodox divines are agreed; and the want of distinguishing (as they, according to scripture, have distinguished) has led the Antinomians into this first error about justification, and that error has led them into the most of the other errors. That this doctrine of theirs (which teaches that men are justified actually and completely, before they have a being) is an error, and has no solid foundation to support it, may be evidenced by these three reasons.

1. Because it is irrational.

2. Because it is unscriptural.

3. Because it is injurious to Christ and the souls of men.

Reasons

Reason 1. It is irrational to imagine, that men are actually justified before they have a being, by an immanent act or degree of God. Many things have been urged upon this account, to confute and destroy this fancy, and much more may be rationally urged against it: let the following particulars be weighed in the balance of reason.

1. Can we rationally suppose, that pardon and acceptance can be affirmed or predicated of that which is not? Reason tells us, *Non entis nulla sunt accidentia*; that which is not, can neither be condemned nor justified: but before the creation, or before a man's particular conception, he was not, and therefore could not in his own person be a subject of justification. Where there is no law, there is no sin; where there is no sin, there is no punishment; where there is neither sin nor punishment, there can be no guilt; (for guilt is an obligation to punishment) and where there is neither law nor sin, nor obligation to punishment, there can be no justification. He who is not capable of a charge, is not capable of a discharge. What remains then, but that either the elect must exist from eternity, or be justified in time? It is true, future beings may be considered as in the purpose and decree of God from all eternity, or as in the intention of Christ, who died intentionally for the sins of the elect, and rose again for their justification; but neither the decree of God, nor the death of Christ takes place upon any man for his actual justification, until he personally exist: for the object of justification, is a sinner actually ungodly, [Romans 4:5](#). but so no man is, or can be so from eternity. In election, men are considered without respect to good or evil done by them, [Romans 9:11](#). not so in actual justification.

2. In justification there is a change made upon the state of the person, [Romans 5:8](#), [9](#), [1 Corinthians 6:9](#), [10](#), [11](#). By justification men pass from a state of death to a state of life, [John 5:24](#). but the decree or purpose of God, in itself, makes no such actual change upon the state of any person: it has indeed the nature of a universal cause; but a universal cause produces nothing without particulars. If our state be changed, it is not by an immanent act of God: hence no such thing does transpire. A mere intention to justify us in due time and order, makes no change on our state until that come, and the particular causes have wrought. A prince may have a purpose or intention to pardon a law-condemned traitor, and free him from that condemnation in due time; but while the law that condemned him, stands in its full force and power against him, he is not justified or acquitted, notwithstanding that gracious intention, but stand still condemned. So it is with us, until by faith we are implanted into Christ. It is true Christ is a surety for all his, and has satisfied the debt; he is a common head to all his, as Adam was to all his children, [Romans 5:19](#). but as the sin of Adam condemns none but those that are in him; so the righteousness of Christ actually justifies none but those that are in him; and none are actually in him but believers: therefore, until we believe, no actual change passes, or can pass upon our states. So that this hypothesis is contrary to reason.

Reason 2. As this opinion is irrational, so it is unscriptural. For

1. The scripture frequently speaks of remission or justification as a future act, and therefore not from eternity, [Romans 4:23](#), [24](#). "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for ours also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him," etc. And, [Galatians 3:8](#). "The scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham." The gospel was preached many years before the Gentiles were justified; but if they were justified from eternity, how was the gospel preached before their justification?

2. The scripture leaves ail unbelievers, without distinction, under condemnation and wrath. The curse of the law lies upon them all until they believe, [John 3:18](#). "He who believes in him is not condemned; but he who believes not, is condemned already." And, [Ephesians 2:3](#), [12](#), [13](#). The very elect themselves were by nature the

children of wrath, even as others. They were at that time, or during that state of nature, (which takes in all that whole space between their conception and conversion) without Christ, without hope, without God in the world. But if this opinion be true, that the elect were justified from eternity, or from the time of Christ's death, then it cannot be true, that the elect by nature are children of wrath, without Christ, without hope, without God in the world; except these two may consist together, (which is absolutely impossible) that the children of wrath, without God, Christ, or hope, are actually discharged from their sins and dangers, by a free and gracious act of justification.

Objection, But does not scripture say, [Romans 8:33](#). "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" If none can charge the elect, then God has discharged them.

Solution. God has not actually discharged them, as they are elect, but as they are justified elect; for so runs the text, and clears itself in the very next words, It is God that justifies. When God has actually justified an elect person, none can charge him.

(3.) It is cross to the scripture order of justification, which places it not only after Christ's death in the place last cited, [Romans 8:33](#). but also after our actual vocation; as is plain, verse 30. "Moreover, whom he did predestine, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." It is absurd to place vocation before predestination, or glorification before justification? Sure then it must be absurd also to place justification before vocation; the one as well as the other confounds and breaks the scripture order: You may as well say, men shall be glorified that were never justified, as say they may be justified before they believed, or existed. So that you see the notion of justification from eternity, or before our actual existence, and effectual vocation, is a notion as repugnant to sacred scripture, as it is to sound reason.

Reason 3. And as it is found repugnant to reason and scripture, so it is highly injurious to Jesus Christ and the souls of men.

(1.) It greatly injures the Lord Jesus Christ, and robs him of the glory of being our Savior; for if the elect be justified from eternity, Christ cannot be the Savior of the elect, as most assuredly he is; for if Christ save them, he must save them as persons subject to perishing, either de facto or de jure. But if the elect were justified from eternity, they could, in neither respect, be subject to perishing: For he who was eternally justified, was never condemned, nor capable of condemnation; and he who never was, nor could be condemned, could never be subject to perishing; and he who never was, nor could be subject to perishing, can never truly and properly be said to be saved.

If it be said the elect were not justified until the death of Christ, I demand then what became of all them that died before the death of Christ? If they were not justified, they could not be glorified; for this is sure, from [Romans 8:30](#). that the whole number of the glorified in Heaven is made up of such as were justified on earth: Let men take heed, therefore, lest, under pretense of exalting Christ, they bereave him of the glory of being the Savior of his elect.

(2.) It bereaves him of another glorious royalty. The scripture everywhere makes our justification the result and fruit of the meritorious death of Christ, [Romans 3:24](#), [25](#). [Romans 8:3](#), [4](#). [2 Corinthians 5:19](#), [20](#). [Galatians 3:13](#), [14](#). [Ephesians 1:17](#). but if men were justified from eternity, how is their justification the fruit and result of the blood of the cross? as it plainly appears from these scriptures to be. Nay,

(3.) This opinion leaves no place for the satisfaction of justice by the blood of Christ for our sins. He did not die according to this opinion to pay our debts. And here Antinomianism and Socinianism meet, and congratulate each other: For if there were no debts owing to the justice of God from eternity, Christ could not die to pay

them; and it is manifest there were no debts due to God's justice from eternity, on the account of his elect, if the elect were from eternity justified; unless you will say, a person may be justified, and yet his debts not paid: For all justification dissolves the obligation to punishment.

If there were any debt for Christ to pay by his blood, they must either be his own debts, or the elect's. To say they were his own is a blasphemous reproach to him; and, according to this opinion, we cannot say they were the elect's; for if they were justified from eternity their debts were discharged, and their bonds cancelled from eternity. So that this opinion leaves nothing to the blood of Christ to discharge, or make satisfaction for.

(4.) And as it has been proved to be highly injurious to the Lord Jesus, so it is greatly injurious to the souls of men, as it naturally leads them into all those wild and licentious opinions, which naturally flow from it, as from the radical, prolific error, whence most of the rest derive themselves, as will immediately appear in

Error II. That justification by faith is no more but the manifestation to us of what was really and actually done before; or a being persuaded more or less of Christ's love to us; and that when persons do believe, that which was hidden before does then only appear to them.

Refutation. As the former error dangerously corrupts the doctrine of justification, so this corrupts the doctrine of faith; and therefore deserves to be exploded by all Christians.

That there is a manifestation and discovery of the special love of God and our own saving concernment in the death of Christ to some Christians at some times cannot be denied. Paul could say, [Galatians 2:20, 21](#). Christ loved him, and gave himself for him; but to say that this is the justifying act of faith, whereby a sinner passes from condemnation and death into the state of righteousness and life; this I must look upon as a great error; and that for the following reasons:

Reasons

Reason 1. Because there be multitudes of believing and justified persons in the world, who have no such manifestation, evidence, or assurance, that God laid their iniquities upon Christ, and that he died to put away their sins; but daily conflict with strong fears and doubts, whether it be so or no. There are but few among believers that attain such a persuasion and manifestation, as Antinomians make to be all that is meant in scripture by justification through faith. Many thousand new-born Christians live as the new-born babe, which neither knows its own estate, or the inheritance to which it is born.

"Not conscious of life, it lives."

A soul may be in Christ, and a justified state, without any such persuasion or manifestation, as they here speak of, [Psalm 50:10](#). and if any shall assert the contrary, he will condemn the greatest part of the generation of God's children. Now that cannot be the saving and justifying act of faith, which is not to be found in multitudes of believing and justified persons.

But manifestation, or a personal persuasion of the love of God to a man's soul, or that Christ died for him, and all his iniquities are thereby forgiven him, is not to be found in multitudes of believing and justified souls.

Therefore such a persuasion or manifestation is not that saving justifying faith which the scripture speaks of.

That faith which only justifies the person of a sinner before God must necessarily be found in all justified believers, or else a man may be justified without the least degree of justifying faith, and consequently it is not faith alone by which a man is justified before God.

Reason 2. That cannot be a justifying act of faith which is not constant and abiding with the justified person, but comes and goes, is frequently lost and recovered, the state of the person still remaining the same. And such contingent things are these persuasions and manifestations; they come and go, are won and lost, the state of the person still remaining the same. Job was as much a justified believer when he complained that God was his enemy, as when he could say, "I know that my Redeemer lives." The same may be said of David, Heman, Asaph, and the greatest number of justified believers recorded in the scripture. There be two things belonging to a justified state, (1.) That which is essential and inseparable, to wit, faith uniting the soul to Christ. (2.) That which is contingent and separable, to wit, evidence and persuasion of our interest in him. Those believers that walk in darkness and have no light have yet a real, special interest in God as their God, [Isaiah 50:10](#). Here then you find believers without persuasion or manifestation of God's love to them; which could never be, if justifying faith consisted in a personal persuasion, manifestation, or evidence of the love of God, and pardon of sin to a man's soul. That cannot be the justifying faith spoken of in scripture, without, which a justified person may live in Christ and be as much in a state of pardon, and acceptance with God, when he wants it, as when he has it. But such is persuasion, evidence, or manifestation of a man's particular interest in the love of God, or the pardon of his sins. Therefore this is not the justifying faith the scripture speaks of.

Reason 3. That only is justifying, saving faith, which gives the soul right and title to Christ, and the saving benefits which come by Christ upon all the children of God. Now, it is not persuasion that Christ is ours, but acceptance of him that gives us interest in Christ, and the saving benefits and privileges of the children of God. [John 1:12](#). "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name." So that unless the Antinomians can prove, that receiving of Christ, and personal persuasion of pardon be one and the same thing, and consequently, that all believers in the world are persuaded, or assured, that their sins are pardoned; and reject from the number of believers all tempted, deserted, dark and doubting Christians; this persuasion they speak of is not, nor can it be the act of faith, which justifies the person of a sinner before God. That which I think led our Antinomians into this error, was an unsound and unwary definition of faith, which, in their youth, they had imbibed from their catechisms, and other systems, passing without contradiction or scruple in those days; which, though it were a mistake, and has abundantly been proved to be so in latter days, yet our Antinomians will not part with a notion so serviceable to the support of the darling opinion of eternal justification.

Reason 4. A man may be strongly persuaded of the love of God to his soul, and of the pardon of his sins, and yet have no interest in Christ, nor be in a pardoned state. This was the case of the Pharisees and others, [Luke 18:9](#). [Revelation 3:17](#). therefore this persuasion cannot be justifying faith. If a persuasion be that which justifies the persuaded person, then the Pharisees and Laodiceans were justified. Oh! how common and easy is it for the worst of men to be strongly persuaded of their good condition, while humble, serious Christians doubt and stagger? I know not what such doctrine as this is useful for, but to beget and strengthen that sin of presumption, which sends down multitudes to Hell out of the professing world: For what is more common among the most carnal and unsanctified part of the world, not only such as are merely moral, but even the most flagitious and profane, than to support themselves by false persuasions of their good estate? When they are asked, in order to their conviction, what hopes of salvation they have, and how they are founded? their common answer is, Christ died for sinners, and that they are

persuaded, that whatever he has done for any other, he has done it for them as well as others: but such a persuasion comes not of him that called them, and is of dangerous consequence.

Reason 5. This doctrine is certainly unsound, because it confounds the distinction between dogmatic and saving faith; and makes it all one, to believe an axiom or proposition, and to believe savingly in Christ to eternal life. What is it to believe that God laid our iniquities upon Christ, more than the mere assent of the understanding to a scripture axiom, or proposition, without any consent of the will, to receive Jesus Christ as the gospel offers him? And this is no more than what any unregenerate person may do; yes, the very devils themselves assent to the truth of scripture axioms or propositions as well as men, [James 2:19](#). "You Believe there is one God, you do well; the devils also believe and tremble." What is more than a scripture axiom or proposition? "God laid the iniquities of us all upon Christ," [Isaiah 53:6](#). And yet (says Dr. Crisp, p. 296.) God cannot charge one sin upon that man who believes this truth, That God laid his iniquities upon Christ. The assent of the understanding may be often given to a scripture-proposition, while the heart and will remain carnal, and utterly adverse to Jesus Christ. I may believe dogmatically, that the iniquities of men were laid upon Christ, and persuade myself presumptively, that mine, as well as other men's were laid upon him; and yet remain a perfect stranger to all saving union and communion with him.

Reason 6. This opinion cannot be true, because it takes away the only support that bears up the soul of a believer in times of temptation and desertion.

For how will you comfort such a distressed soul that says, and says truly, I have no persuasion that Christ is mine, or that my sins are pardoned; but I am heartily willing to cast my poor sin-burdened soul upon him, that he may be mine; I do not certainly know that he died intentionally for me, but I lie at his feet to cleave to him, wait at the door of hope; I stay and trust upon him, though I walk in darkness and have no light. Now let such doctrines as this be preached to a soul in this condition (and we may be sure it is the condition of many thousands belonging to Christ) I say, bring this doctrine to them, and tell them, that unless they be persuaded of the love of God, and that God laid their iniquities on Christ, except they have some manifestation that their persons were justified from eternity, their accepting of Christ, consent of their wills, waiting at his feet, etc. signifies nothing; if they believe not that their particular sins were laid upon Christ, and are pardoned to them by him, they are still unbelievers, and have no part or portion in him. Whatever pretenses of spiritual comfort and relief the Antinomian doctrine makes, you see by this it really deprives a very great, if not the greatest number of God's people of their best and sweetest relief in days of darkness and spiritual distress. So that this doctrine which makes manifestation and assurance the very essence of justifying faith, appears hereby to be both a false and very dangerous doctrine. And yet there is as much or more danger to the souls of men in their

Error 3. That men ought not to doubt of their faith, or question whether they believe or no. Nay, that they ought no more to question their faith than to question Christ.

Refutation. What an easy way to Heaven is the Antinomian way? Were it but as true and safe to the soul, as it is easy and pleasing to the flesh, who would not embrace it? What a charm of the devil is prepared in those two propositions? Be but persuaded more or less of Christ's love to your soul (says Mr. Saltmarsh) and that is justifying faith. Here is a snare of the devil laid for the souls of men. And then (2.) To make it fast and sure upon the soul, and effectually to prevent the discovery of their error, tell them they need no more to doubt or question their faith than to question Christ, and the work is done to all intents.

Now that this is an error, and a very dangerous one, will appear by the following reasons.

Reasons

Reason 1. The questioning and examining of our faith is a commanded scripture-duty, [2 Corinthians 13:5](#). "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves," etc. And [2 Peter 1:10](#). "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." [1 Corinthians 10:12](#). The second epistle of John, verse 8. "Look to yourselves that we lose not the things which we have wrought:" With a multitude of other scriptures, recommending holy jealousy, serious self-trial and examination of our faith, as the unquestionable duties of the people of God. But if we ought to question our faith no more than we ought to question Christ, away then with all self-examination, and diligence to make our calling and election sure; for where there is no doubt nor danger, there is no place or room for examination, or further endeavors to make it surer than it is. How do you like this doctrine, Christians? How many be there among you, that find no more cause to question your own faith or interest in Christ, than you do to question, whether there be a Christ, or whether he shed his blood for the remission of any man's sins?

Reason 2. This is a very dangerous error, and it is the more dangerous because it leaves no way to recover a presumptuous sinner out of his dangerous mistakes; but confirms and fixes him in them to the great hazard of his eternal ruin. It cuts off all means of conviction or better information, and nails them fast to the carnal state in which they are. According to this doctrine, it is impossible for a man to think himself something, when he is nothing; or to be guilty of such a paralogism and cheat put by himself upon his own soul, [James 2:22](#). this, in effect, bids a man keep on right or wrong; he is sure enough of Heaven if he be but strongly persuaded that Christ died for him, and he shall come thither at last. Certainly this was not the counsel Christ gave to the self-deceived Laodiceans, [Revelation 3:17, 18](#). but instead of dissuading them from self-jealousy and suspicion of their condition, whether their faith and state were safe or not, he rather counsels them to buy eye-salve, that is, to labor after better information of the true state and condition they were in, and not cast away their souls by false persuasions and vain confidences.

Reason 3. This doctrine cannot be true, because it supposes every persuasion, or strong conceit of a man's own heart, to be as infallibly sure and certain, as the very fundamental doctrines of Christianity. No truth in the world can be surer than this, that Jesus Christ died for sinners. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance," [1 Timothy 1:15](#). This is a foundation-stone, a tried, precious corner-stone, a sure foundation laid by God himself, [Isaiah 28:16](#). and shall the strong conceits and confidences of men's hearts vie and compare in point of certainty with it? As well may probable, and merely conjectural propositions, compare with axioms that are self-evident, or demonstrative arguments that leave no doubts behind them. Know we not, that the heart is deceitful above all things, the most notorious cheat and imposter in the world, [Jeremiah 17:9](#). Does it not deceive all the formal hypocrites in the world, in this very point? And shall every strong conceit and presumptuous confidence, begotten of Satan by a deceitful heart, and nursed up by self-love, pass without any examination or suspicion for as infallible and assured a truth, as that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners? The Lord sweep that doctrine out of the world by reformation, which is like to sweep so many thousand souls into Hell by a remediless self-deception.

Error 4. The fourth Antinomian error before-mentioned, was this, That believers are not bound to confess their sins, or pray for the pardon of them; because their sins were pardoned before they, were committed; and pardoned sin is no sin.

Refutation. If this be true doctrine, then it will justify and make good such conclusions and inferences as these, which necessarily flow from it: namely,

1. That there is no sin in believers.

2. Or if there be, the evil is very inconsiderable. Or,

3. Whatever evil is in it, it is not the will of God that they should either confess it, mourn over it, or pray for the remission of it; whatever he requires of others, yet they need take no notice of it, so as to afflict their hearts for it; God has exempted them from such concernments: There is nothing but joy to a believer, says Mr. Eaton. But neither of these conclusions are either true or tolerable; therefore neither is the principle so which yields them.

(1.) It is not true or tolerable to affirm, that there is no sin in a believer: [1 John 1:8](#). "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "There is not a just man upon earth, that does good and sins not," [Ecclesiastes 7:20](#). "In many things we offend all," [James 3:2](#). The scriptures plainly affirm it, and the universal experience of all the saints sadly confirms it. It is true, the blood of Christ has taken away the guilt of sin, so that it shall not condemn believers; and the spirit of sanctification has taken away the dominion of sin, so that it does not reign over believers; but nothing, except glorification, utterly destroys the existence of sin in believers. The acts of sin are our acts, and not Christ's; and the stain and pollution of those sinful acts, are the burthens and infelicities of believers, even in their justified state. Dr. Crisp indeed, in p. 270, 271. calls that objection (I suppose he means distinction between the guilt of sin, and sin itself) a simple objection, and tells us, the very sin itself, as well as the guilt of it, passed off from us, and was laid upon Christ: So that speaking of the sins of blasphemy, murder, theft, adultery, lying, etc. From that time (says he) that they were laid upon Christ, you cease to be a transgressor. If you have a part in the Lord Christ, all these transgressions of your become actually the transgressions of Christ. So that now you are not an idolater, or persecutor, a thief, a murderer, and an adulterer, you are not a sinful person; Christ is made that very sinfulness before God, etc. Such expressions justly offend and grieve the hearts of Christians, and expose Christianity to scorn and contempt. Was it not enough that the guilt of our sin was laid on him, but we must imagine also, that the thing itself, sin, with all its deformity and pollution should be essentially transferred from us to Christ? No, no. After we are justified, sin dwells in us, [Romans 7:17](#). wars in us, and brings us into captivity, verse 23. burthens and oppresses our very souls, verse 24. Methinks I need not stand to prove what I should think no sound experienced Christian dares to deny, that there is much sin still remaining in the persons of the justified. He who dares to deny it, has little acquaintance with the nature of sin, and of his own heart.

(2.) It is neither true nor tolerable to say, there is no considerable evil in the sins of believers, deserving a mournful confession or petition for pardon. The desert of sin is Hell: it is an artifice of Satan to draw men to sin, by persuading them there is no great evil in it; but none except fools will believe it. Fools, indeed, make a mock of sin; but all that understand either the intrinsic evil of it, or the sad and dismal effects produced by it, are far from thinking it a light or inconsiderable evil. The sins, even of believers, greatly wrong and offend their God, [Psalm 51:4](#). and is that a light thing with us? They interrupt and clog our communion with God, [Romans 7:21](#). They grieve the good Spirit of God, [Ephesians 4:30](#). Certainly these are no inconsiderable mischiefs.

(3.) Now if there be sin in believers, and so much evil in their sins (neither of which any sober Christian will deny) then undoubtedly it is their duty to confess it freely, mourn for it bitterly, and pray for the pardon of it earnestly; unless God have any where discharged them from those duties, and told them these are none of their

concernments, and that he expects not these things from justified persons; but that these are duties properly and only belonging to other men. But on the contrary, you find the whole current of scripture running strongly and constantly in direct opposition to such idle and sinful notions. For,

(1.) He has plainly declared it to be his will, that his people should confess their sins before him, and strongly connected their confessions with their pardons, [1 John 5:9](#). and frequently suspends from them the comfortable sense of forgiveness, until their hearts be brought to this duty, [Psalm 32:5](#). compared with verses 3, 4. the more to engage them to this duty, by the sensible ease and comfort attending and following it.

(2.) He also enjoins it upon them, That they mourn for their sins, [Isaiah 22:12](#). expresses his great delight in contrition and brokenness of spirit for sin, [Isaiah 66:2](#). "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit." Christ himself pronounces a blessing upon them that mourn, [Matthew 5:4](#). Justified Paul mournfully confesses his former blasphemies, persecutions, and injuries done against Christ, [1 Timothy 1:13](#). So did Ezra, Daniel, and other eximious saints.

Objection: Yes, say some, they did indeed confess their sins committed before their justification, but not their after-sins.

Reply. According to Antinomian principles, I would demand, If all the elect were justified from eternity, what sins any of them could confess which they had committed before their justification? Or, if they were justified from the time of Christ's death, what were the sins any of us have to confess who had not a being, and therefore had not actually sinned long after the death of Christ? But I hope none will deny, that the mournful complaints the apostle makes for sin, [Romans 7:23, 24](#). were after he was a sanctified and justified person.

(3.) It is not the will of Christ to exempt any justified person upon earth from the duty of praying frequently and fervently for the remission of his sins. This the most eminent saints upon earth have done. The greatest favorites of Heaven have freely confessed, and heartily prayed for the remission of sin, [Daniel 9:4, 19](#). And that the gospel gives us no exemption from this duty, appears by Christ's injunction of it upon all his people, [Matthew 4:12](#).

Error 5. To give countenance to the former error, they say, That God sees no sin in believers, whatever sins they commit; and seek a covert for this error from [Numbers 23:21](#). and [Jeremiah 50:20](#). In the former place it is said by Balaam, "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor seen perverseness in Israel." And in the other place it is said, "In those times, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

Refutation. Now that this opinion of the Antinomians is erroneous, will appear four ways.

1. By its repugnancy to God's omniscience.
2. By its inconsistency with his dispensations.
3. By its want of a scripture-foundation.
4. By its contradictoriness to their own principles.

It is true, and we thankfully acknowledge it, that God sees no sin in believers as a judge sees guilt in a malefactor, to condemn him for it; that is a sure and comfortable truth for us: but to say he sees no sin in his children, as a displeased

father, to correct and chasten them for it, is an assertion repugnant to scripture, and very injurious to God. For,

(1.) It is injurious to God's omniscience, [Psalm 139:2](#). "You (says holy David), know my down-sitting, and my up-rising, and understand my thoughts afar off, and are acquainted with all my ways." [Job 28:24](#). "He looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole heavens." [Proverbs 15:3](#). "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." [Psalm 33:14, 15](#). "From the place of his habitation he looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth; he fashions their hearts alike, he considers all their works." He who denies that God sees his most secret sins, therein, consequentially denies him to be God.

(2.) This assertion is inconsistent with God's providential dispensations to his people. When David, a justified believer, had sinned against him in the matter of Uriah, it is said, [2 Samuel 11:27](#). "the thing that David had done displeased the Lord:" and, as the effect of that displeasure, it is said, chapter 12:15. "The Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick." Among the Corinthians some that should not be condemned with the world, were judged and chastened of the Lord for their undue approaches to his table, [1 Corinthians 11:32](#). Now, I would ask the Antinomians these two questions. QUESTION 1. Whether it can be denied, that David, under the Old Testament, and these Corinthians under the New, were justified persons; and yet the former stricken by God in his child, with its sickness and death; and the latter in like manner smitten by God in their own persons; and both for their respective sins committed against God; and yet God saw no sin in them? Did God smite them for sin, and yet behold no sin in them? Beware lest in ascribing such strokes to God, you strike at once both at his omniscience and justice. QUESTION 2. How God, upon confession and repentance, can be said to put away his people's sins (as Nathan there assures David he had done) when in the mean time he saw no sin in him, either to chastise him for, or to pardon in him? Do you think that God's afflictions, or pardons, are blindfold acts, done at random? How inconsistent is this with Divine dispensations.

(3.) This opinion is altogether destitute of a scripture-foundation; it is evident it has none in the only places alleged for it. It has no footing at all in [Numbers 23:21](#). Grave and learned Gataker has learnedly and industriously vindicated that scripture from this abuse of it by Antinomians, in his treatise upon that text, entitled, God's eye upon his Israel; where, after a learned and critical search of the text, he tells us, it sounds word for word thus from the original; "He has not beheld wrong against Jacob, nor has he seen grievance against Israel." So that the meaning is not, that God did not see sin in Israel, but that he beheld not with approbation the wrongs and injuries done by others against his Israel; and shows at large, by divers solid reasons, why the Antinomian sense cannot be the proper sense of that place, it being cross to the main tenor of the story, and truth of God's word; which shows, that God often complained of their sins, often threatened to avenge them; yes, did actually avenge them by destroying them in the wilderness; nay, Balaam himself, who uttered these words unto Balak, did not so understand them, as appears by the advice he gave to Balak, to draw them into sin, that thereby God might be provoked to withdraw his protection from them.

And for [Jeremiah 50:20](#) it makes nothing to their purpose. Many expound the sin there sought after, and not found, to be the sin of idolatry, which Israel should be purged from by their captivity, according to [Isaiah 27:9](#). But the generality of sound expositors are agreed, that by the not finding of Israel's and Judah's sin, is meant no more, but his not finding those bonds or obligations against them to eternal punishment which their sins had put them under.

(4.) In a word, this opinion clashes with their other principles. For they say, that though there was pardon and remission under the old covenant (which they allowed

to be a covenant of grace) yet it was but gradatim, and successively, as they offered sacrifices. If a man had sinned ignorantly, until he brought a sacrifice, his sin lay upon him, it may be a week, a month's distance between before they could have their pardon. Vide Dr. Crisp of the two covenants, p. 256, 257. Now I demand, If this were the state and case of all God's Israel under the Old Testament, why do these men affirm, that God can see no sin in a believer? and why do they expound the words of Balaam so contradictory to this their other opinion? For they will not deny but God sees unpardoned sins in all; and here is a week, or month, or more time allowed between the commission and remission of their sin. And so much of the fifth Antinomian error.

Error 6. That God is not angry with the elect, nor does he smite them for their sins; and to say that he does so is an injurious reflection upon the justice of God, who has received full satisfaction for all their sins from the hand of Christ.

There are several mistakes and errors in these assertions; and I suppose our Antinomians were led into them, (1.) By their abhorrence of the Popish doctrine, which errs more dangerously in the other extreme; for they wickedly assert our sufferings to be satisfactory for our sins, which is the ground of Popish penances, and voluntary self-castigations. (2.) From a groundless apprehension, that God's corrections of us for our sins are inconsistent with the fullness of Christ's satisfaction for them. Christ having paid all our debts, and dissolved our obligations to all punishment, it cannot consist with the justice of God to lay any rod upon us for our sins, after Christ has borne all that our sins deserved.

This mistake of the end of Christ's death occasions them to stumble into the other mistakes; they imagine that Christ's satisfaction abolished God's hatred of sin in believers. But this cannot be; God's antipathy to sin can never be taken away by the satisfaction of Christ, though his hatred to the persons of the redeemed be; for the hatred of sin is founded in the unchangeable nature of God: and he can as soon cease to be holy as cease to hate sin, [Habakkuk 1:13](#). Nor was Christ's death ever designed to this end; though Christ has satisfied for the sin of believers, God still hates sin in believers. His hatred to their sins, and love to their persons are not inconsistent. As a man may love his leg or arm, as they are members of his own body, and notwithstanding that love, hate the gangrene which has taken them; and lance or use painful corrosives for the cure of them.

Neither do our Antinomians distinguish as they ought, between vindictive punishments from God, the pure issues and effects of his justice and wrath against the wicked; and his paternal castigations, the pure issues of the care and love of a displeased Father. Great and manifold are the differences between his vindictive wrath upon his enemies, and the rebukes of the rod upon his children. Those are legal, these evangelical. Those out of wrath and hatred, these out of love. Those unsanctified, but these blessed and sanctified to happy ends and purposes to his people. Those for destruction, these for salvation.

To narrow the matter in controversy as much as we can, I shall lay down three concessions about God's corrections of his people.

Concessions

Concession 1. We cheerfully and thankfully acknowledge the perfection and fullness of the satisfaction of Christ for all the sins of believers; and with thankfulness do own, that if God should cast all, or any of them into an ocean of temporal troubles and distresses; in all that sea of sorrow there would not be found one drop of vindictive wrath. Christ has drunk the last drop of that cup, and left nothing for believers to suffer by way of satisfaction.

Concession 2. We grant also, that all the sufferings of believers in this world are not for their sins; but some of them are for the prevention of sin, [2 Corinthians 12:7](#). some for the trial of their graces, [James 1:2, 3](#). some for a confirming testimony to his truths, [Acts 5:41](#). Such sufferings as these have much heavenly comfort concomitant with them.

Concession 3. We do not say that God's displeasure with his people for sin, evidenced against them in the sharpest rebukes of the rod, is any argument that God's love is turned into hatred against their persons: No, his love to his people is unchangeable. Having loved his own, he loved them to the end, [John 13:1](#). Yet notwithstanding all this, three things are undeniably clear, and being thoroughly apprehended, will end this controversy.

1. That God lays his correcting rod in this world on the persons of believers.
2. That this rod of God is sometimes laid on them for their sins.
3. That these fatherly corrections of them for their sins are reconcilable to, and fully consistent with his justice, completely satisfied by the blood of Christ for all their sins.

1. That God lays his correcting rod in this world upon the persons of believers. This no man has the face to deny who believes the scriptures to be the word of God, or that the troubles of good men in this life fall not out by casualty, but by the counsel and direction of Divine Providence. He who denies the hand of God to be upon the persons of believers, in this life, in the way of painful chastisements and sufferings, must either ignorantly or willfully overlook that scripture, [Hebrews 12:8](#). "What son is he whom the father chastens not? but if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons." Nor will any sober Christian deny these troubles of believers to be the effects of God's governing Providence in the world, or once imagine or affirm them to be mere casualties and contingencies; for "affliction comes not forth of the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground," [Job 5:6](#). In what Eutopia does that good man live upon earth, that feels not the painful rod of God upon himself, nor hears the sad laments and moans of other Christians under it! This sure is undeniable, that the rod of God is everywhere upon the persons and tabernacles of the righteous; and if any doubt it, his own sense and feeling may in a little time give him a painful demonstration of it.

2. And for the second, that this rod of God is sometimes laid upon believers for their sins, methinks no sober, modest Christian in the world should doubt or deny it, when he considers, that,

1. God himself has so declared it.
2. The saints in all ages have freely confessed it to be so.

1. God himself has fully and plainly declared it to be so, [2 Samuel 12:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14](#). "Wherefore have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house," etc. Here is the sword, a terrible and painful evil upon David's house, a man after God's own heart, and that expressly for his sin in the matter of Uriah. So Moses, one of the greatest favorites of Heaven, for his sinful shifting of the Lord's work, "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses," [Exodus 4:13, 14](#). "For the multitudes of your iniquities, because your sins were increased, I have done these things unto you," says God to his own Israel, [Jeremiah 30:15](#). To instance in all the declarations made by God himself in this case, were to transcribe a great part of both testaments.

2. And, as God has declared the sins of his people to be the provoking causes of his rods upon them; so they have freely and ingenuously confessed and acknowledged

the same, [Lamentations 3:39, 40](#). "Wherefore does a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." This was spoken by Jeremiah in the name of the whole captive church; so [Psalm 38:3, 5](#). "There is no soundness in my flesh, (says David) because of your anger; neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin. My wounds stink, and are corrupt because of my foolishness." And were it not an hideous and unaccountable thing to hear a child of God, under his rod, to stand upon his own justification, and say, Lord, my sins have not deserved this at your hand, nor is it justice in you thus to chastise me after you have received satisfaction for all my sins from the hand of Christ? Would it not look like an horrid blasphemy to hear the best men in the world disputing and denying the justice of God in the troubles he lays him under? For my own part, let the Lord lay on as smartly as he will upon me, I desire to follow the holy patterns and precedents recorded in scripture for my imitation, and to say with the people of God, [Ezra 9:13](#). "You have punished me less than mine iniquities deserve." And [Micah 7:9](#). "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." And he who refuses so to do gives little evidence of the spirit of adoption in him, but a very clear proof of the pride and ignorance of his own heart. Job indeed stiffly stood upon his own vindication; but that was when he had to do with men who falsely charged him, laying those sins as the causes of his troubles, which he was innocent of, [Job 22:5, 6](#). But when he had to do with God, he disputes no more, but says, Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer you? I will lay my hand upon my mouth, q. d. I have done, Father, I have done; whether these chastisements be for my sin or no, sure I am, my sin not only deserves all this, but Hell itself; you are holy, but I am vile.

3. Nor can it at all be doubted, but that these fatherly corrections of the saints for their sins, are reconcilable to, and fully consistent with his justice, satisfied by the blood of Christ for all their sins. For, (1.) If it were not so, the just and righteous God would never have inserted such a clause of reservation in his gracious covenant with his people, to chasten them as he saw need, after he had taken them into the covenant, [Psalm 89:30, 31, 32, 33](#). "If they transgress, I will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless (says he) my loving-kindness will I not take away." That [nevertheless] clearly proves the consistency of his stripes for sin, with his loving-kindness to his people, and with Christ's satisfaction for their sins. (2.) If this were not consistent with the justice of God, to be sure he would never single them out to spend his rods upon, rather than others. It is most certain the holiest men have most lashes in this life; Asaph said, [Psalm 73:12, 14](#). "The ungodly prosper in the world, but he was chastened every morning;" and verse 5. "The wicked are not in trouble as other men." [1 Peter 4:17](#). "Judgment must begin at the house of God;" and if piety would give men an exemption from all troubles, pains and chastisements, then men might discern love or hatred by the things that are before them, contrary to [Ecclesiastes 9:1, 2](#). Neither could those that are in Christ, suffer the painful agonies of death, because of sin, expressly contrary to Paul, [Romans 8:10](#). "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." (3.) In a word, As Christ never shed his blood to extinguish or abolish God's displeasure against sin, in whoever it be found, so he never shed it to deprive his people of the manifold blessings and advantages that accrue to them by the rods of God upon them. It was never his intent to put us into a condition on earth, that would have been so much to our loss. So then if the hand of God be upon his people for sin, and consistently enough with his justice, it must be an error to say, God smites not believers for their sins, and it would be injustice in him so to do; which is their sixth error.

Error 7. They tell us, That by God's laying our iniquities upon Christ, he became as completely sinful as we, and we as completely righteous as Christ: That not only the guilt and punishment of sin was laid upon Christ, but simply the very faults that men commit, the transgression itself became the transgression of Christ; iniquity itself, not in any figure, but plainly sin itself, was laid on Christ; and that Christ

himself was no more righteous than this person is, and this person is not more sinful than Christ was.

Refutation. These two propositions will never go down with sound and orthodox Christians: the first sinks and debases Christ too low, the other exalts the sinful creature too high. The one represents the pure and spotless Lord Jesus as sinful: the other represents the sinful creature as pure and perfect: and both these propositions seem evidently to be built upon these two hypothesis. (1.) That the righteousness of Christ is subjectively and inherently in us, in the same fullness and perfection as it is in Christ; grant that, and then it will follow indeed, That Christ himself is not more righteous than the believer is. (2.) That not only the guilt and punishment of sin was laid on Christ by way of imputation: but sin itself, the very transgression, or sinfulness itself, was transferred from the elect to Christ: and that by Gods laying it on him, the sinfulness or fault itself was essentially transfused into him; and so sin itself did transire a subjecto in subjectum. Grant but this, and it can never be denied but that Christ became as completely sinful as we.

But both these hypothesis are not only notoriously false, but utterly impossible, as will be manifested by and by; but before I come to the refutation of them, it will be necessary to lay down some concessions to clear the orthodox doctrine in this controversy, and narrow the matter under debate as much as may be.

(1.) And first, We thankfully acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Surety of the New Testament, [Hebrews 7:22](#). and that as such, all the guilt and punishment of our sins were laid upon him, [Isaiah 53:5, 6](#). That is, God imputed, and he bare it in our room and stead. God the Father, as supreme Lawgiver and Judge of all, upon the transgression of the law, admitted the suretyship of Christ, to answer for the sins of men, [Hebrews 10:5, 6, 7](#). And for this very end he was made under the law, [Galatians 4:4, 5](#). And that Christ voluntarily took it upon him to answer as our Surety, whatever the law could lay to our charge; whence it became just and righteous that he should suffer.

(2.) We say, That God by laying upon, or imputing the guilt of our sins to Christ, thereby our sins became legally his; as the debt is legally the surety's debt, though he never borrowed one farthing of it: Thus God laid, and Christ took our sins upon him, though in him was no sin, [2 Corinthians 5:21](#). "He has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," that is who was clean and altogether void of sin.

(3.) We thankfully acknowledge, that Christ has so fully satisfied the law for the sins of all that are his, that the debts of believers are fully discharged, and the very last mite paid by Christ. His payment is full, and so therefore is our discharge and acquittance, [Romans 8:1, 31](#). And that, by virtue hereof, the guilt of believers is so perfectly abolished, that it shall never more bring him under condemnation, [John 5:24](#). And so in Christ they are without fault before God.

3. We likewise grant, That as the guilt of our sins was by God's imputation laid upon Christ, so the righteousness of Christ is by God imputed to believers, by virtue of their union with Christ; and becomes thereby as truly and fully theirs, for the justification of their particular persons before God, as if they themselves had in their own persons fulfilled all that the law requires, or suffered all that is threatened; No inherent righteousness in our own persons, is, or can be more truly our own, for this end and purpose, than Christ's imputed righteousness is our own. He is the Lord our righteousness, [Jeremiah 23:6](#). We are made the righteousness of God in him, [2 Corinthians 5:21](#). Yes, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them that believe, [Romans 8:4](#).

But notwithstanding all this, we cannot say, (1.) That Christ became as completely sinful as we. Or, (2.) That we are as completely righteous as Christ; and that over

and above the guilt and punishment of sin, (which we grant was laid upon Christ) sin itself simply considered, or the very transgression itself, became the sin or transgression of Christ; and consequently that we are as completely righteous as Christ, and Christ as completely sinful as we are.

1. We dare not say, that sin simply considered, as the very transgression of the law itself, as well as the guilt and punishment, became the very sin and transgression of Christ: For two things are distinctly to be considered and differenced, with respect to the law, and unto sin. As to the law, we are to consider it in,

1. Its preceptive part.

2. Its sanction.

(1.) The preceptive part of the law, which gives sin its formal nature, [1 John 3:4](#). For sin is the transgression of the law. All transgression arises from the preceptive part of the law of God: he who transgresses the precepts, sins: and under this consideration sin can never be communicated from one to another. The personal sin of one, cannot be in this respect, the personal sin of another. There is no physical transfusion of the transgression of the precept from one subject to another: this is utterly impossible; even Adam's personal sins, considered in his single private capacity, are not communicable to his posterity.

(2.) Besides the transgression of the preceptive part of the law, there is an obnoxiousness unto punishment, arising from the sanction of the law, which we call the guilt of sin; and this (as judicious Dr. Owen observes) is separable from sin: and if it were not separable from the former, no sinner in the world could either be pardoned or saved; guilt may be made another's by imputation, and yet that other not rendered formally a sinner thereby: Upon this ground, we say the guilt and punishment of our sin, was that only which was imputed unto Christ, but the very transgression of the law itself, or sin formally and essentially considered, could never be communicated or transfused from us unto him. I know but two ways in the world by which one man's sins can be imagined to become another's, namely, Either by imputation, which is legal, and what we affirm; or by essential transfusion from subject to subject (as our adversaries fancy) which is utterly impossible; and we have as good ground to believe the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation, as this wild notion of the essential transfusion of sin. Guilt arising from the sanction of the law may, and did pass from us to Christ by legal imputation; but sin itself, the very transgression itself, arising from the very preceptive part of the law, cannot so pass from us to Christ: For if we should once imagine, that the very acts and habits of sin, with the odious deformity thereof, should pass from our persons to Christ and subjectively to inhere in him, as they do in us; then it would follow,

FIRST, That our salvation would thereby be rendered utterly impossible. For such an inhesion of sin in the person of Christ is absolutely inconsistent with the hypostatic union, which union is the very foundation of his satisfaction, and our salvation. Though the Divine nature can, and does dwell in union with the pure and sinless human nature of Christ, yet it cannot dwell in union with sin.

SECONDLY, This supposition would render the blood of the cross altogether unable to satisfy for us. He could not have been the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world, if he had not been perfectly pure and spotless, [1 Peter 1:19](#).

THIRDLY, Had our sins thus been essentially transfused into Christ, the law had had a just and valid exception against him; for it accepts of nothing but what is absolutely pure and perfect. I admire, therefore, how any good men dare to call our doctrine, which teaches the imputation of our guilt and punishment to Christ, a simple doctrine; and assert, that the transgression itself became Christ's; and that thereby Christ became as completely sinful as we. And,

FOURTHLY, If the way of making our sins Christ's by imputation, be thus rejected and derided; and Christ asserted by some other way to become as completely sinful as we; then I cannot see which way to avoid it, but that the very same acts and habits of sin must inhere both in Christ and in believers also. For I suppose our adversaries will not deny, that notwithstanding God's laying the sins of believers upon Christ, there remain in all believers after their justification, sinful inclinations and aversations; a law of sin in their members, a body of sin and death. Did these things pass from them to Christ, and yet do they still inhere in them? Why do they complain and groan of indwelling sin? as Romans 7. If sin itself be so transferred from them to Christ? Sure, unless men will dare to say, the same acts and habits of sin which they feel in themselves, are as truly in Christ as in themselves, they have no ground to say, that by God's laying their iniquities upon Christ, he became as completely sinful as they are; and if they should so affirm, that affirmation would undermine the very foundation of their own salvation.

I therefore heartily subscribe to that sound and holy sentence, of a clear and learned divine, Nothing is more absolutely true, nothing more sacredly and assuredly believed by us, than that nothing which Christ did or suffered, nothing that he undertook, or underwent, did, or could constitute him subjectively, inherently, and thereupon personally a sinner, or guilty of any sin of his own. To bear the guilt or blame of other men's faults, to be alienæ culpæ reus, makes no man a sinner, unless he did unwisely and irregularly undertake it. So then this proposition, that by God's laying our sins upon Christ (in some other way, than by imputation of guilt and punishment) he became as completely sinful as we, will not, ought not to be received as the sound doctrine of the gospel. Nor yet this

Second proposition, That we are as completely righteous as Christ is; or, that Christ is not more righteous than a believer.

I cannot imagine what should induce any man so to express himself, unless it be a groundless conceit and fancy, that there is an essential transfusion of Christ's justifying righteousness into believers, whereby it becomes theirs by way of subjective inhesion, and is in them in the very same manner it is in him: and so every individual believer becomes as completely righteous as Christ. And this conceit they would gladly establish upon that text, [1 John 3:7](#). "He who does righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous."

But neither this expression, nor any other like it in the scriptures gives the least countenance to such a general and unwary position. It is far from the mind of this scripture. That the righteousness of Christ is formally and inherently ours, as it is his. Indeed it is ours relatively, not formally and inherently; not the same with his for quantity, though it be the same for verity. His righteousness is not ours in its universal value, though it be ours as to our particular use and necessity. Nor is it made ours to make us so many causes of salvation to others; but it is imputed to us as to the subjects, that are to be saved by it ourselves.

It is true, we are justified and saved by the very righteousness of Christ, and no other; but that righteousness is formally inherent in him only, and is only materially imputed to us. It was actively his, but passively ours. He wrought it, though we wear it. It was wrought in the person of God-man for the whole church, and is imputed (not transfused) to every single believer for his own concernment only. For,

(1.) It is most absurd to imagine that the righteousness of Christ should formally inhere in the person of every, or any believer, as it does in the person of the mediator. The impossibility hereof appears plainly from the incapacity of the subject. The righteousness of Christ is an infinite righteousness, because it is the righteousness of God-man, and can therefore be subjected in no other person beside him. It is capable of being imputed to a finite creature, and therefore, in the way of

imputation we are said to be made the righteousness of God in him; but though it may be imputed to a finite creature, it inheres only in the person of the Son of God, as in its proper subject. And indeed,

(2.) If it should be inherent in us, it could not be imputed to us, as it is, [Romans 4:6, 23](#). Nor need we go out of ourselves for justification, as now we must, [Philippians 3:9](#). but may justify ourselves by our own inherent righteousness. And,

(3.) What should hinder, if this infinite righteousness of Christ were infused into us, and should make us as completely righteous as Christ; but that we might justify others also as Christ does, and so we might be the saviors of the elect, as Christ is? Which is most absurd to imagine. And,

(4.) According to Antinomian principles, What need was there that we should be justified at all? or, What place is left for the justification of any sinner in the world? For, according to their opinion, the justification of the elect is an immanent act of God before the world was; and that eternal act of justification, making the elect as completely righteous as Christ himself, there could not possibly be any the least guilt in the elect to be pardoned; and consequently no place or room could be left for any justification in time. And then it must follow, that seeing Christ died in time, for sin, according to the scriptures; it must be for his own sins that he died, and not for the sins of the elect; diametrically opposite to [Romans 4:25](#). and the whole current of scripture, and faith of Christians.

It is therefore very unfitting and unworthy of a justified person, after Christ has taken all his guilt upon himself, and suffered all the punishment due thereunto in his place and room; instead of an humble and thankful admiration of his unparalleled grace therein, to throw more than the guilt and punishment of his sins upon Christ, even the transgression itself: and comparing his own righteousness with Christ's, to say he is as completely righteous as Christ himself. This is, as if a company of bankrupt debtors, arrested for their own debts, ready to be cast into prison, and not having one farthing to satisfy, after their debts have been freely and fully discharged by another, out of his immense treasure, should now compare with him, yes, and think they honor him, by telling him, that now they are as completely rich as himself.

I am well assured, no good man would embrace an opinion so derogatory to Christ's honor as this is: did he but see the odious consequences of it, doubtless he would abhor them as much as we. And as for those now in Heaven, who fell into such mistakes in the way thither, were they now acquainted with what is transacted here below, they would exceedingly rejoice in the detection of those mistakes, and bless God for the refutation of them.

Error 8. They affirm, That believers need not fear their own sins, nor the sins of others; forasmuch as neither their own, or other sins can do them any hurt, nor must they do any duty for their own good or salvation, or for eternal rewards.

That we need fear no hurt from sin, or may not aim at our own good in duty, are two propositions that sound harsh in the ears of believers. I shall consider them severally, and refute them as briefly as I can.

Proposition 1. Believers need not fear their own sins, or the sins of others; because neither our own or others sins can do us any hurt.

They seem to be induced into this error, by misunderstanding the apostle, in [Romans 8:28](#). as if the scope of that text were to assert the benefits of sin to justified persons; whereas he speaks there of adversities and afflictions befalling the saints in this life. Paræus restrains the universal expression of the apostle: for when he there says, "All things shall work together for good;" he principally intends the afflictions

of the godly, of which he treats there in that context. It maybe extended also to all providential events: All adverse and prosperous events of things without us, as Estius upon the place notes. Nothing is spoken of sin in this text. And the apostle distributing this general into particulars, verse 38. plainly shows what are the things he intended by his universal expression, verse 28. as also in what respect no creature can do the saints any hurt, namely, that they shall never be able "to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And in this respect it is true, that the sins of the elect shall not hurt them, by frustrating the purpose of God concerning their eternal salvation; or totally and finally to separate them from his love. This we grant, and yet we think it a very unwary and unsound expression, That believers need not fear their own sins, because they can do them no hurt: It is too general and unguarded a proposition to be received for truth. What if their sins cannot do them that hurt, to frustrate the purpose of God, and damn them to eternity in the world to come? Can it therefore do them no hurt at all in their present state of conflict with it in this world? For my part, I think the greatest fear of caution is due to sin, the greatest evil; and that Chrysostom spoke more like a Christian, when he said, Nil nisi peccatum timeo, I fear nothing but sin. Though sin cannot finally ruin the believer, yet it can many ways hurt and injure the believer, and therefore ought not to be misrepresented as such an innocent and harmless thing to them. In vain are so many terrible threatenings in the scriptures against it, if it can do us no hurt; and it is certain nothing can do us good, but that which makes us better and more holy: But sin can never pretend to that of all things in the world. But to come to an issue, sin may be considered three ways.

1. Formally.
2. Effectively.
3. Reductively.

FIRST, Formally, as a transgression of the preceptive part of the law of God, and under that consideration it is the most formidable evil in the whole world. The evil of evils at which every gracious heart trembles, and ought rather to chose banishment, prison, and death itself in the most terrible form, than sin, or that which is most tempting in sin, the pleasures of it; as Moses did, [Hebrews 11:25](#).

SECONDLY, Sin may be considered effectively, with respect to the manifold mischiefs and calamities it produces in the world, and the spiritual and corporeal evils it infers upon believers themselves: Though it cannot damn their souls, yet it makes war against their souls, and brings them into miserable bondage and captivity, [Romans 7:23](#). It wounds their souls, under which wounds they are feeble, and sore broken; yes, they roar by reason of the disquietness of their hearts, [Psalm 38:5, 8](#). Is war, captivity, festering, painful wounds, causing them to roar, no hurt to believers? It breaks their very bones, [Psalm 51:8](#). And is that no hurt? It draws off their minds from God, interrupts their prayers and meditations, [Romans 7:18, 19, 20, 21](#). And is there no hurt in that? It causes their graces to decline, wither, and languish to that degree, that the things which are in them are ready to die, [Revelation 3:1](#). and [Revelation 2:4](#). And is the loss of grace and spiritual strength no hurt to a believer? It hides the face of God from them, [Isaiah 59:2](#). And is there no hurt in spiritual withdrawments of God from their souls? Why then do deserted saints so bitterly lament and bemoan it? It provokes innumerable afflictions, and miseries which fall upon our bodies, relations, estates; and if sin be the cause of all these inward and outward miseries to the people of God, sure then there is some hurt in sin, for which the saints ought to be afraid of it.

THIRDLY, Sin may be considered reductively, as it is over-ruled, reduced, and finally issued by the covenant of grace. Under this consideration of sin, which rather respects the future than present state, the Antinomians only respect the hurt or evil

of it; overlooking both the former considerations of sin, which concern the present state of believers, and so rashly pronounce, Sin can do believers no hurt; an assertion tending to a great deal of looseness and licentiousness. A man drinks deadly poison, and is, after many months, recovered by the skill of an excellent physician; shall we say, There was no hurt in it, because the man died not of it? Sure, those fearful twinges he felt, his loss of strength and stomach were hurtful to him, though he escaped with life, and got this advantage by it to be more wary forever after.

And then, for other men's sins, (which they say we need not fear) it is an assertion against all the laws of charity; for the sins of wicked men eternally damn them, disturb the peace and order of the world, draw down national judgments upon the whole community, cause wars, plagues, persecutions, etc. which considerations of the sins of others opened fountains of tears in David's eyes, [Psalm 119:136](#) caused horror to take hold upon him, verse 53. and yet, if you will believe the Antinomian doctrine, believers have no need to fear, much less to be in horror (which is the extremity of fear) for other men's sins. How is Satan gratified, and temptations to sin strengthened upon the souls of men, by such indistinct, unwary, and dangerous expressions as these are? A good intention can be no sufficient salve for such assertions as these.

SECONDLY, They tell us, 'That as the saints need fear no sin for any hurt it can do them, so they must do no duty for their own good; or with an eye to their own salvation, or eternal rewards in Heaven.'

Refutation. This, as the former, is too generally and indistinctly delivered. He who distinguishes well, teaches well. The confounding of things which ought to be distinguished, easily runs men into the bogs of errors. Two things ought to have been distinguished here;

1. Ends in duties.
2. Self-ends in duties.

FIRST, Ends in duties; there are two ends in duties, one supreme and ultimate, viz, the glorifying of God, which must, and ought to take the first place of all other ends: Another secondary and subordinate, namely, the good and benefit of ourselves. To invert these, and place our own good in the room of God's glory, is sinful and unjustifiable; and he who aims only at himself in religion, is justly censured as a mercenary servant, especially if it be any external good he aims at; but spiritual good, especially the enjoyment of God, is so involved in the other, namely, the glory of God, that no man can rightly take the Lord for his God, but he must take him for his supreme good, and consequently therein may, and must have a due respect to his own happiness.

SECONDLY, Self-ends must always be distinguished into,

1. Corrupt or carnal self-ends.
2. Pure, and spiritual self-ends.

As to carnal and corrupt self-ends, inviting and moving men to the performance of religious duties; when these are the only ends men aim at, they bewray the hypocrisy of the heart, and accordingly, God charges hypocrisy upon such persons. [Hosea 7:14](#). "They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds; They assemble themselves for corn and wine," etc. God reckons not the most solemn duties animated by such ends, to be done unto him. [Zechariah 7:5](#). "Did you at all fast unto me?"

But beside these, man has a best self, a spiritual self, to regard in duty, namely, The conformity of his soul to God in holiness, and the perfect fruition of God in glory. Such holy self-ends as these are often commended, but no where condemned in scripture. It was the encomium of Moses, that "he had respect unto the recompense of reward," [Hebrews 11:26](#). These ordinate respects to our spiritual, best self, are so far from being our sin, that God both appoints and allows them for great uses and advantages to his people in their way to glory. They are, (1.) Singular encouragements to the saints under persecutions, straits, and distresses, [Hebrews 10:34](#) and to that end Christ proposes them, [Luke 12:32](#). and so the best of saints have made use of them, [2 Corinthians 4:17, 18](#). (2.) They are motives and incentives to praise and thankfulness, [1 Peter 1:3](#), [4. Colossians 1:12](#). (3.) They stir up the saints to cheerful and vigorous industry for God, [Colossians 3:23, 24](#). [1 Corinthians 15:58](#).

Now to cut off from religion all these spiritual and excellent self-respects, and to make them our sins and marks of hypocrisy, is an error very injurious to the gospel, and to the souls of men. For, (1.) It crosses the strain of the gospel, which commands us to strive for our salvation, [Luke 13:24, 25](#). [Philippians 2:12](#). [1 Timothy 4:16](#). (2.) It blames that in the saints as sinful, which the scripture notes as their excellency, and records to their praise, [Hebrews 11:26](#). (3.) It makes the laws of Christianity to thwart, and cross the very fundamental law of our creation, which inclines and obliges all men to intend their own felicity: and on this account, not only our Antinomians are blame worthy, but others also, who are far enough from their opinion, who urge humiliation for sin beyond the staple; teaching men they are not humbled enough, until they be content to be damned. (4.) It unreasonably supposes a Christian may not do that for his own soul, which he daily does, and is bound to do for other men's souls, to pray, preach, exhort, and reprove for their salvation.

Error IX. 'They will not allow the new covenant to be properly made with us, but with Christ for us. And some of them affirm, That this covenant is all of it a promise, having no condition upon our part. They acknowledge, indeed, faith, repentance, and obedience, to be conditions, but say they are not conditions on our part, but on Christ's; and consequently affirm, that he repented, believed, and obeyed for us.'

Refutation 1. The confounding of distinct covenants leads them into this error; we acknowledge there was a covenant properly made with Christ alone which we call the covenant of redemption. This covenant, indeed, though it were made for us, yet it was not made with us: It had its condition, and that condition was laid only upon Christ, namely, That he should assume our nature, and pour out his soul unto death, which condition he was solely concerned to perform; but besides this, there is a covenant of grace made with him, and with all believers in him: with him primarily, as the head, with them as the members, who personally come into this covenant, when they come into the union with him by faith. This covenant of grace is not made with Christ alone, personally considered, but with Christ and all that are his, mystically considered, and is properly made with all believers in Christ; and therefore it is called their covenant, [Zechariah 9:11](#). "As for you, also, by the blood of your covenant, I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." So when God entered into the covenant of grace with Abraham, [Genesis 17:7](#). "I will establish my covenant (says he) between me and you, and your seed after you." So when he took the people of Israel into this covenant, [Ezekiel 16:8](#). "I swore unto you, (says he) and entered into a covenant with you, and you became mine."

This covenant of grace made with believers in Christ, is not the same, nor must it be confounded with the covenant of redemption made with Christ before the world began; they are two distinct covenants: For in the covenant of grace, into which

believers are taken, there is a Mediator, and this Mediator is Christ himself. But in the other covenant of redemption, there neither was, nor could be any Mediator, which manifestly distinguishes them. Besides, in the covenant of grace, Christ bequeaths manifold and rich legacies, as he is the Testator; but no man gives a legacy to himself. This covenant is really and properly made with every believer, as he is a member of Jesus Christ, the head; and they are truly and properly confederates with God: The covenant binds them to their duties and encourages them therein by promises of strength, to be derived from Christ, to enable them thereunto.

2. We thankfully acknowledge, that the glory of the new covenant is chiefly discovered in the promises thereof; upon the best promises it is established. And all the promises are reducible to the covenant. They meet and center in it, as the rivers in the sea, or beams in the sun; but yet we cannot say, that nothing but promises is contained in this covenant: For there are duties required by it, as well as mercies promised in it.

Nor may we say, that those duties required by it are required only to be performed by Christ, and not by us; but they are required to be performed by us in his strength: Nor is it Christ that repents and believes for us, but we ourselves are to believe and repent in the strength of his grace: and until we do so actually in our own persons, we have no part or portion in the blessings and mercies of this covenant. If Christ by believing for us, give us an actual right and title to the promises and blessings of the new covenant, then it will unavoidably follow:

(1.) That men, who never repented for one sin in all their lives, may be, nay, certainly are pardoned as much as the greatest penitents in the world; because though they never repented themselves, yet Christ repented for them; expressly contrary to his own words, [Luke 13:3](#). "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish;" and contrary to his own established order, [Luke 19:47](#). [Acts 3:19](#).

(2.) It will also follow, that unbelievers, who never had union with Christ by one vital act of faith in all their lives, may be, nay, certainly shall be saved, as well as those that are actual believers: because though they be unbelievers in themselves, yet Christ believed for them; expressly contrary to [Mark 16:16](#). "He who believes not shall be damned." [John 3:36](#). "He who believes not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him." And [Luke 12:46](#). "He will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with unbelievers."

(3.) It will also follow from hence, that men may continue in a state of disobedience all their days, and yet may be saved, as well as the most obedient souls in the world; expressly contrary to [Ephesians 5:6](#). "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." And [Romans 2:8](#). "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath." And [1 Peter 4:17](#). "What shall the end of them be that obey not the gospel of God?"

This language sounds strange and harsh to the ears of Christians, a repenting Christ saving the impenitent sinner; a believing Christ saving unbelievers; an obeying Christ saving obstinate and disobedient wretches: Where does such doctrine tend, but to encourage and fix men in their impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience? But the Lord grant no poor sinner in the world may trust to this, or build his hopes of eternal life upon such a loose, sandy foundation, as this is. Reader, all that Christ has done without you, will not, cannot be effectual to your salvation, unless repentance, faith, and obedience, be wrought by the Spirit in your soul. It is "Christ in you, that is the hope of glory," [Colossians 1:27](#) beware, therefore, on what ground you build for eternity.

Error 10. 'They deny sanctification to be the evidence of justification, and deridingly tell us, this is to light a candle to the sun; and the darker our sanctification is, the brighter our justification is.'

Refutation. I am not at all surprised at this strange and absonous language; it is a false and dangerous conclusion, yet such as naturally results from, and, by a kind of necessity, follows out of their other errors: For if the elect be all justified from eternity, and that neither repentance, faith, nor obedience, be required of us in the covenant of grace; but were all required of, and performed by Christ, who repented, believed, and obeyed for us; then, indeed, I cannot understand what relation our sanctification has to our justification, or how it should be an evidence, mark, or sign thereof, or what regard is due from Christians to any grace, or work of the Spirit wrought in them, to clear up their interest in Christ to them. For we being in Christ, and in a state of justification, before we were naturally born, we must necessarily be so before we be regenerated, or new-born: and, consequently, no work of grace wrought in us, or holy duties performed by us, can be evidential of that which from eternity was done before them, and without them.

1. I grant, indeed, That many vain professors do cheat, and deceive themselves, by false, unscriptural signs and evidences, as well as by true ones misapplied.

2. I grant also, That by reason of the deceitfulness of the heart, instability of the thoughts, similar works of common grace, in hypocrites; distractions of the world, wiles of Satan, weakness of grace, and prevalency of corruptions; the clearing up of our justification by our sanctification, is a work that meets with great and manifold difficulties, which are the things that most Christians complain of.

3. 4 also grant, That the evidence of our sanctification in this, or any other method, is not essential, and absolutely necessary to the being of a Christian. A man may live in Christ, and yet not know his interest in him, or relation to him, [Isaiah 50:10](#). Some Christians, like children in the cradle, live, but understand not that they live; are born to a great inheritance, but have no knowledge of it, or present comfort in it.

4. I will further grant, That the eye of a Christian may be too intently fixed upon his own gracious qualifications; and being wholly taken up in the reflex acts of faith, may too much neglect the direct acts of faith upon Christ, to the great detriment of his soul.

But all this notwithstanding, The examination of our justification by our sanctification, is not only a lawful, and possible, but a very excellent and necessary work and duty. It is the course that Christians have taken in all ages, and that which God has abundantly blessed to the joy and encouragement of their souls.

He has furnished our souls to this end with noble, self-reflecting powers and abilities. He has answerably furnished his word with variety of marks and signs, for the same end and use. Some of these marks are exclusive, to detect and bar bold presumptuous pretenders, 1 Corinthians 6:9. [Revelation 21:8, 27](#). Some are inclusive marks, to measure the strength and growth of grace by, [Romans 4:20](#). And others are positive signs, flowing out of the very essence of grace, or the new creature, [1 John 4:13](#). "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."

He has also expressly commanded us to examine and prove ourselves; upbraided the neglecters of that duty, and enforced their duty upon them by a thundering argument, [2 Corinthians 13:5](#). "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith, prove your own selves; don't you know your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates." In a word, for this end and purpose, among others, were the scriptures written, [1 John 5:13](#). "These things have I written to you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal

life." "And therefore, to neglect this duty is exceeding dangerous; but to deny and deride it, intolerable. It may be justly feared, such men will be drowned in perdition who fall into the waters, by making a bridge over them with their own shadows.

For my own part, I truly believe, that the sweetest hours Christians enjoy in this world, are when they retire into their closets, and sit there concealed from all eyes, but him that made them; looking now into the bible, then into their own hearts, and then up to God; closely following the grand debate about their interest in Christ, until they have brought it to the happy desired issue.

And now, reader, for a close of all, I call the Searcher of hearts to witness, 'That I have not intermeddles with these controversies of Antipædo-baptism, and Antinomianism, out of any delight I take in polemical studies, or an unpeaceable contradicting humor, but out of pure zeal for the glory and truths of God; for the vindication and defense whereof I have been necessarily engaged therein. And having discharged my duty thus far, I now resolve to return (if God will permit me) to my much sweeter, and more agreeable studies; still maintaining my Christian charity for those whom I oppose; not doubting but I shall meet those in Heaven, from whom I am forced, in lesser things, to dissent and differ upon earth.'